

Cycle A 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday September 3rd, 2017

I would like to talk with you today about an uncomfortable situation that is taking place in our local community. But before I do I want to respond to objections that could be raised. For example: “Father why are we hearing about this at Sunday Mass? Besides we have children here.”..... The Sunday homily is where the **Truth** of Jesus Christ and His Church is shared with the faithful. Sometimes **Truth** is uncomfortable and the initial reaction is anger. With regards to our children, because of social media, internet, music, television, including some children’s programming; many children are already exposed to this unfortunate reality. Public schools have policies from kindergarten to 12th grade to deal with the reality, and even our Archdiocesan Catholic School System is developing appropriate policies to compassionately, morally and ethically work with individuals and families in our schools as situations may arise.

This week a fundamentalist church group is going to be protesting outside of Oak Hills High School, because the high school has a Gay-Straight Alliance Club. There will also be a counter protest by a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender group too. As for the two groups of protesters, we have freedom of speech in our country. People are free to protest, even if they are misguided or wrong. What is unfolding here is not a single event; rather this is a symptom of a greater problem occurring in culture and society at large.

What is the response to this complexity of conditions? There are three responses, and only **one** of them is authentically Catholic. The first is from the secular culture and the moral relativistic culture which would both say that this is all okay. The secularists have no moral frame work; while the moral relativists would say, “it does not matter what we do, Jesus loves everybody and everybody is going to heaven. No one would ever be sent to hell.” The second response comes from the strict fundamentalists who begin with “God hates”.... Of course they are referring directly to particular human persons. The fundamentalists have very little room for change of heart and conversion. Everyone, but the fundamentalists, is going to hell.

Thirdly and **rightly** is the Catholic response to all of this confusion. The Catholic response for people who struggle with same sex attractions or gender identity disorder is; that we must love them and walk with them in the midst of suffering. The Catholic approach is to love and listen to them. We understand that every human person wants to be loved and not to be hurt. We are concerned with the whole human person both body and soul. We want what is best for a person both on earth and in heaven. The Catechism of the Catholic teaches us: **“Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with**

other persons. and he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.”..... In short every human person has a God given dignity that we are obligated to protect and respect. As for the behaviors that are contrary to the moral and natural order we walk with them and lead them toward a relationship with Jesus Christ, and to grow in the virtue of chastity.

In the Gospels we find Jesus many times going out to the sinners. He does not condemn, rather He calls them to conversion. But first He enters into a relationship with them..... He gets to know them and they get to know Him. The examples include: The Woman at the Well, Zacchaeus, and dinning with the Tax Collectors and Sinners..... Jesus has given us the model of how to minister to those who are struggling with same sex attractions or gender identity disorder. They are people with human dignity just like us, and are in need of God’s love. Our mission is not to condemn, but to love. Love is the command of Christ. As for curing people of same sex attractions or gender identity disorder, this involves great complexities and must be left to the individual, with their families, with the mental health sciences professionals, and above all **God’s Grace**.

I leave you with this thought. I am a Courage Chaplain. Courage is a ministry of the Catholic Church for those with same sex attractions. So, I have ministered to people with same sex attractions.

One of the members said this to me a few months ago, **“I knew I needed to join Courage. I thought when I joined, that you would tear me down and tell me all the things I was doing wrong. You never did that. You just listened to me”**

This person is growing in a relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, and living a life of chastity..... The Catholic response to all of our cultural and social challenges is to encounter individuals where they are and listen to them.

May our mission give hope and lead more souls to Jesus Christ.