



Catholic & Gay: What Can I Do?

by CAPP-USA

Being Catholic and Gay

"I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life".
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

That seems an easy choice, right? If we have the option of life and blessings or death and curses, who wouldn't choose life!

Catholic and gay means walking in God's way, and abandoning sinful lifestyles, not the Church.

But the command: "Choose life" is more than deciding to keep on eating and breathing. God's command to choose life requires us "to love the Lord your God, to walk in God's ways, and to keep God's commandments." (Deuteronomy 30:16)

Loving God calls for an exclusive, unreserved love: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

To "walk in God's ways" and to "keep God's commandments" leads to life but also requires a change of heart.



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Jesus clarifies what it means to "choose life" in one of the harshest statements in the New Testament: "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out...if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off". Is Jesus calling for self-mutilation?

Of course not! He is saying: Stop making excuses; do not chose the curse and death; stop doing it your way.

To "Choose life" we must have a change of heart! The kind that can only come through faith in the one who teaches us: "I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life". (John 14:6) "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit". (John 15:16)

"Choosing life", "bearing fruit", living by "God's commands" is, in fact, God's gracious work in us – helping us daily to turn away from sin and self.

"God is Father and he does not disown any of his children. And 'the style' of God is 'closeness, mercy, and tenderness'. In this way (or along this path) you will find God."
Pope Francis

Is Homosexuality a Sin?

In a nutshell: "Tradition has always declared that "acts of homosexuality are intrinsically disordered...They cannot receive approval under any circumstances." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357*)

"The community of faith today, [is] in unbroken continuity with the Jewish and Christian communities within which the ancient Scriptures were written". (*On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 5*).

HOMOSEXUALITY, NOT HOMOSEXUALS, IS CONDEMNED

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32)
So, our "great task is...recapturing the ultimate meaning of life and its fundamental values. Only an awareness of the primacy of these values enables man...to bring about the true advancement of the human person in his or her whole truth...freedom and dignity." (*Familiaris Consortio, 8*).

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'Hate the sin – love the sinner' is not a cliché. The Church is here for you. Not just rhetorically but as part of her essence as the body of Christ transmitting the "good news" through history.

"[T]he Church raises men up, gives them a home and a hope, a home that is hope – the path to eternal life". (*Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), "Introduction to Christianity", San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004, p. 344.*)

"Although she constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, 'the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love, by restoring in them hope and confidence'". (*Pope Francis, 291*).

While clearly reiterating Church teaching on homosexual behavior, Pope Francis emphasizes God's love and infinite capacity for forgiveness:

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With this approach Pope Francis seeks to draw you close to the Church to experience God's love and become aware of the truth.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY

"The God who is at once truth and love calls the Church to minister to every man, woman and child with the pastoral solicitude of our compassionate Lord." (*On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 18).

The Church's teaching is not meant to curtail love but to enable it. For those troubled with their identity, patience is called for. When a person is on a path seeking wholeness, their search must be encouraged and respected – in friendship.

Individuals "must be welcomed with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Any form of unfair discrimination will be avoided against them. These people are called to carry out the will of God in their lives". (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2358).

The Church points to the peace and life-giving path of Christ's commandments.

We owe it to God, our brothers and sisters and ourselves to offer what is true – and why we believe it is true.

THE CHURCH NEVER GIVES UP

"[E]ven when man rejects the truth and goodness that the Creator proposes to him, God does not abandon him but... continues to see him and to speak to him so that he will recognize his error and open himself to divine Mercy which can heal any." (*Pope Benedict XVI*).

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What Should I Do?

"Even in the most difficult circumstances human freedom is capable of extraordinary acts of sacrifice and solidarity". (*Pope Benedict XVI*).

"Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom...they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2358).

CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

Being chaste is "easily misunderstood... if it is merely...a pointless effort at self-denial". It is not that!

Chastity “empowers those who trust in him to practice virtue in place of vice.” (*On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 12).

Being chaste means being whole and leads to a fuller life!

To “be pulled in different directions by contrasting desires or needs drains us of energy and courage. It takes the zest out of life.”

The goal is integration – which is a source of strength. “This is fundamentally what is at stake in the pursuit of chastity.”

And “[t]he way to chaste integrity passes through honest confrontation with the incoherences and passions we carry.”

“To live and love chastely is to reverence the other, refusing to see her or him as merely an instrument for the fulfilment of my purpose or desire.”

The Church does not deny “that to be a human being is to be possessed of longing”. But part of that longing includes living “as an embodied echo of a Word”. Not getting in touch with that “may imprison me in frustration, even hopelessness [because] nothing in the world seems adequate to what I really want.”

However, if I do ‘connect’ with this longing “it can also enable instances of exultantly unexpected, ecstatic recognition.” (*Quotes above are from Bishop Erik Varden*)

THE CALL TO BE HOLY

“As [you] dedicate [your] lives to understanding the nature of God’s personal call...[you] will be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance more faithfully and receive the Lord’s grace so freely offered there in order to convert [your] lives more fully to his Way.” (*On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 12).

“Fundamentally, [you] are called to enact the will of God in [your] life by joining whatever sufferings and difficulties [you] experience...to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross.” (*On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 12).

THE ETERNAL REWARD

“[B]y your witness to the truth of humanity in God’s plan, you effectively manifest fraternal love, upholding the true dignity, the true human dignity, of those who look to Christ’s Church for the guidance which comes from the light of God’s word.” (*Pope St. John Paul*, 6).

RESOURCES

In an insightful book Bishop Erik Varden fully explores the benefits and rewards of chastity.

Also, in 1978 Terrence Cardinal Cook, Archbishop of New York, invited an organization to the archdiocese which

offers a spiritual support system for men and women with homosexual orientation who desire to live chaste lives. Called "Courage", Lopez Cardinal Trujillo, Pontifical Council for the Family, later offered the Holy See's support for Courage's "helping homosexual persons to live in accordance with the laws of God and the teaching of His Church" (7 July 1994 – Prot. N216/93)

As an apostolate of the Catholic Church with chapters throughout the US and around the world, Courage International and EnCourage are, respectively, two groups helping Catholic men and women – and their families – to live in accordance with the Catholic Church's pastoral teaching on homosexuality.

Courage members are men and women who experience same-sex attractions and who have made a commitment to strive for chastity. They are inspired by the Gospel call to holiness and the Catholic Church's beautiful teachings about the goodness and inherent purpose of human sexuality.

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