

ON THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY

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Making good sexual choices (part 3) by Monica Hidalgo Breaux, PhD, MSW

**pull quote: "Healthy and holy sexuality invites others to follow Christ."*

When we learn through any sinful act that love and sex are connected, our sexual arousal patterns are formed in error. Then we must painfully struggle to gain a good conscience, while attacked by ideas about sex that have nothing to do with marriage and family life. We must remind one another that it is not our fault or our choice to have immoral desires, but with God's grace we can distract ourselves from impure thoughts to avoid bad behavior. Holiness is humanly possible.

Our Church has always taught us that all sexual behavior is reserved for married couples who attempt to produce children. Marital chastity is sexual behavior that is obediently directed toward the future good of your children and your spouse. All unmarried people are called to abstain from sexual behavior and willful sexual fantasy because it leads to the slavery of sin. The Catholic Church proclaims the nature of sex is both unitive and procreative; therefore, masturbation, contraception, and same-sex behavior are objectively disordered sinful acts that are unfaithful to God's design. Healthy and holy sexuality invites others to follow Christ, who lived in obedience to God.

Experts weigh in

The Catholic Medical Association, the Society of Catholic Social Scientists and the Christian Medical and Dental Associations are among the many research-based organizations who oppose the claim that homosexuality is genetic. Sexual arousal patterns can be shaped and altered by many things, including religion, culture, abuse, exploitation and pornography. Exposure to same-sex attraction and same-sex behavior in our media is affecting the sexual thought patterns, desires and behaviors of many people. Guided by the Holy Spirit, thousands have found comfort in the arms of ministries offering respectful, compassionate help.

The American Catholic Bishops called for "a special degree of pastoral understanding and care" to address this ministry need in 1976. Fr. John Harvey has responded by modeling respect for the dignity of people with same-sex attraction in his role as the international director of Courage for 25 years. He promotes our Catholic teaching that "under no circumstances can same-sex behavior be approved, but same-sex attraction is not a personal sin and it does not make a person sick or perverse."

Courage offers spiritual support for chastity to Catholics with same-sex attraction, while Encourage ministers to the needs of their families and friends. As a ministry coordinator to both groups, I have been disturbed by the members' stories of isolation within the Church community. Members explain that is very difficult to find people who lovingly support Catholic men and women faithfully following the guidance of the Church regarding homosexuality.

Please join Bishop J. Olmsted in his prayer that the ministry of Courage will flourish in our diocese. A training workshop called "Listen and Learn" will be offered twice in the first week of May to allow parish representatives an opportunity to gain skills in directing Catholics with same-sex attraction toward a life of holiness. Participants will hear testimonies from members of local Courage chapters.