

A CATHOLIC AND HOMOSEXUAL

The Life and Love to Which the Catholic Faith Invites Its Homosexual Members

Father James Chelich – January 2008

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Introduction

This is addressed to those who are Catholic and homosexual. Too often in conversations about morality one hears the participants discussing only what you are not supposed to do. I would like to frame the message and the conversation differently. I would like to express what the Catholic Faith would like you to have – to set out the full and rich life to which the Word of God invites you. Perhaps it has never been said to you before.

**Catholic Faith honors the call to love which God has inscribed upon your heart.
Catholic Faith values your labors in the world, and your relationships with others.
Catholic Faith believes that we are called together by Jesus to be “His Witnesses”
in the world.**

**As fellow Catholics,
we stand in encouragement and support of you as we seek with you
to live the full and rich life our Faith holds out to us.**

**We want for you, what we want for ourselves:
A life ordered by the Word of God,
A life of human warmth and tenderness, rich with right-ordered affection,
A life of supportive companionship and chaste intimacy,
A life of heroic love which makes a difference in the world.**

This is also addressed to anyone who is homosexual and wants to know what Catholic Faith believes and invites men and women to embrace as a way of life. And finally, this is addressed to the community of Catholic Faith, as an examination of conscience to...

*...test ourselves to see whether we are living in faith.
2 Corinthians 13:5*

I

The Call to Love Which God has Inscribed Upon Your Heart

Catholic Faith wants you to be successful in love.

The origin of your existence is love. Saint John writes:

*Beloved...love is of God... God is love, and he who abides
in love abides in God, and God in him... 1 John 4:7,16*

Love fashioned all things! Not any kind of love, not any definition of love, but the “One Love” (see Philippians 2:1-2) – the “One Love” that is God. God took delight in each thing He made. The Bible says He, the Love that created all things, pronounced each of them “good.” (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25) In this we see that God is not indifferent to His creation, but is drawn to embrace in love the goodness and beauty in it. The Bible also tells us that at a certain point in the beginning of things God conceived of creating an “extraordinary way” in which and through which He could embrace in love the goodness of the universe He fashioned. Human beings are this “extraordinary way.” God created us:

*‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion
Over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over the wild
Animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.’ God created man
in His image, in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them.
Genesis 1:26-27*

We are conceived by the One Love that is God. We are made in the *image* of this One Love. We are given a physical form and existence in which to grow “after” (i.e., into) the *likeness* of this One Love. In other words, we were made by Love for love. From the first moment of our existence this is our purpose. It is through us, with us and in us that God desires to touch and embrace the elements of His creation and bring them to hope, healing, and the fullness of their potential. In this amazing perspective provided by Catholic Faith, we recognize the dignity and beauty of the life of each person.

Human beings turned away from God. We turned inward upon ourselves. As we became absorbed and consumed with ourselves, we did greater and greater violence to the things we laid hold of in the world around us. We turned the God-created order of things upside down. Everything that had once been in a life-giving order was now thrown into chaos, only to settle into new patterns of suffering and pain. (Romans 1:21-32) All of us, without exception, experience the brokenness of this in some part of our human nature, our sexuality included. Yet this does not alter God’s call in creating us. With Christ and in Christ we can grow into the “likeness” in which we were made.

You were placed in this world to give love – to express the One Love that is your origin. There is some part of this created world and its life that God had in mind when He created you. He uniquely fashioned you to be an instrument of its hope, healing and the fulfillment of its life. It is important for you to discover what it is that God has uniquely fashioned you to love. And once you have discovered it, it is equally important to learn to love it rightly.

Finding the Meaning of Your Existence

People can allow anything to define their existence. For some it can be one of their talents, their family lineage, or some aspect of their physical appearance. For others it can be their wealth or social position, or a particular person to whom they have become attached. And for some it can be how they are sexually attracted to others. Catholic Faith believes that God, and God's call to love defines our existence and informs who we are and what we are worth. It does not believe that homosexual attraction or anything else should come to define a person's existence, shape their character or determine their choices about how to engage the world.

A society obsessed with sex will try to convince you that you need sex to love and be loved. The truth that the Catholic Faith teaches is that you don't need sex to be loved. *You are already loved!* Neither do you need sex to love. Only living in marriage needs sex in order to love – to love in a way that opens the path by which souls fashioned by the “One Love” may pass into physical existence and begin their journey in this world.

A Word to the Community of Faith

As a community of Catholic Faith, we need to encourage those among us with homosexual attractions to discover that which is theirs in this world to love, to love it rightly and to persist in loving it in the face of obstacles. We must strengthen them when they grow weary and offer them our joy shared in celebration when they succeed. We also need to invite them to join us in forming a shared perspective of the world in which our loves must labor, and in wondering with awe at all that God has pronounced “good” in the world around us – to see together the world in true perspective, to search together for the good in all things.

II

“We are His Witnesses”

*Catholic Faith wants you to stand confident as a witness to Jesus,
and to be faithful in your commitment to Him.*

We are His witnesses! Acts 3:32 The Book of the Acts of the Apostles repeats this expression over and over again as it sets forth the identity and mission of a Christian woman or man in the world. We are witnesses to Jesus' presence in the world and his power to restore and make all things new. Explaining how a crippled man found healing, Saint Peter said before the leaders of the people:

You and all the people of Israel must know that it was done in the name of Jesus Christ.
Acts 4:10

As people of Catholic faith, Jesus is the first object of our affection. He has the first claim on our love and loyalty. As he died to himself to live for us, we die to ourselves to live for him. Saint Paul urges us:

*Live as children of the light. Light produces every kind of goodness and justice and truth.
Be correct in your judgment of what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:6, 8-10*

We trust Jesus and believe in the truth he teaches us. With the help of his presence and his strength, we strive to order our personal lives with this truth and help shape the world with it. We believe that this truth sets a man or woman free and opens the path to justice for all.

Catholics who have a homosexual attraction are not second class witnesses to Christ. As a matter of fact, Catholic Faith believes that it is precisely in those aspects of our lives where the truth of Christ overcomes the greatest obstacles in ordering our passions and shaping our choices, that we serve Christ most effectively as witnesses to his power to restore life-giving order to all things. Our lives become signs of hope for others.

III

A Life Ordered by the Word of God

*Catholic Faith desires that your life be ordered by the Word of God
and that you share fully in the freedom it brings.*

Catholic Faith does not think of the Word of God as a constraint, limiting our options for a good life and narrowing the possibilities of human happiness. Rather, just the opposite. God takes seriously both human freedom and humanity's longing for a world in which people live in richly rewarding relationships with one another and with the elements of nature around them. The Word of God opens the path to that world. A Catholic trusts this to be true. It is the very foundation of Catholic life. Catholic Faith holds that the written Scriptures (the Bible) accurately record the Word of God, and that the meaning of the Word recorded in the Bible is accurately conveyed throughout time by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit in the Church (see 1 Timothy 3:14-15). God has given His guarantee of this (see John 16:7-14). We do not believe that there might have been an error in recording the Word of God, nor do we believe that there could be an error in our understanding of the meaning of the Word of God as it has been shared consistently over the course of time. The word God speaks to us in love "is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) It is the truth that sets us free. (John 8:32)

This is important because it allows us to embrace the Word of God with assurance and to live it with confidence. As we allow the Word of God to order our hearts and our relationships, it sets our lives on a solid foundation. The Word works within and around us – shaping the character of a complete man or woman within us, and ordering our relationships with others and the world in a life-giving way. We are not suspicious of the Bible or of the teaching authority of our Church. We embrace the Word of God the Church proclaims because it demonstrably brings freedom and gives life: it orders the disparate and often violent passions of the human heart, it forms our relationships with our fellow human beings and the natural world around us in patterns that respect the integrity of each person and element, and it brings all things into harmony with one another.

If there is ambition in us, the Word of God restrains it, shapes it, and orders it to the good, as God knows the good to be. If there is hunger in us, the Word of God gives order to the way we satisfy it. If there is anger in us, the Word of God shapes the way we express it. If there is love in us, the Word of God does the same. And if there is sexual passion in us, the Word of God restrains it, shapes it, and orders it to the good of the whole of life within us

and around us. We trust this to be true, and we support obedience to the Word in one another. This does not make for a bleak life of slavish obedience, devoid of joy and happiness. Ours is a life of purpose, deep inner peace, and the joy of connecting in a life-giving way with the good and the beautiful in every person and thing.

The Word of God Gives Order to Genital Sex

God opened His mind and heart to humanity to let us in on the design of human life. We call this “revelation” – God revealing the big picture and inner meanings of what is and what is going on. The Bible is a record of God’s revelation of the design and plan for many things, genital sex included:

God created man in His image, in the divine image God created him; male and female God created them. God blessed them saying, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.”
Genesis 1:27-28

Here God sets out the purpose of genital sex: it is for the creation of life. The sexual drive is the way we are connected to the forward impulse of creation. The sex act is the miraculous context for the creation of human life. Essentially they are both about the continuity of the human community. This is the “orientation” God gave to sex.

The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.’... That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.
Genesis 2:18, 24

As human persons, there is more to the orientation God gives to sex. Genital sex is also oriented to bonding – to a stable bond of permanent unity with a partner *suitable for the procreation of human life*. In the Bible, God makes it clear that this “*suitable partner*” for a man is a woman – one woman with whom he becomes “one body.” And this “*suitable partner*” for a woman is a man – one man with whom she becomes “one body.”

The complimentary sexual anatomy of a man and a woman also makes this clear. For human persons genital sex is a sacred bond to a person of the opposite sex for the procreation of human life. Most of us feel within us the impulse to create life. It is called the sexual drive. We possess this to be used for the creation of life and the continuity of the human community. For any number of reasons, not all of us will use the gift of genital sex: perhaps because of the demands of the vocation God calls us to embrace in the world, perhaps because we are unable to emotionally bond in the needed way with a suitable partner in marriage; perhaps for the sake of the Kingdom and the service of the Church. Whether we do or not, as men and women of Catholic Faith, we hold the gift, in sacred trust, to be used only for the purpose God intended.

So why should God care so much about sex and what we do with it? The reason is because God becomes directly involved in the use of our sexual anatomy when it is used according to its design. The designed function of human sexual anatomy and the act of genital sex is the delivery of the seed (sperm) from the male to the egg in the female and, at their joining – male and female, sperm and egg – the formation of a human embryo. Catholic faith believes that precisely at the moment of this joining and the formation of this human embryo, God pronounces a human soul into existence and joins this divinely created human person to the now growing embryo – it becomes a human being, made “in the image of God,” who from

that moment forward is called to grow into “the likeness of God.” Human genital sex was designed by God to involve God directly in a divine act of creation that would take place simultaneously with the human act of procreation. God has a direct personal claim on human genital sex.

Of all the species on our planet, we alone are, “*created in the divine image.*” We have intelligence and freedom. The orientation God gives to sex is established by instinct in the other living species of our world. In human beings it must be established by using our intelligence to recognize the truth of what God tells us, and using our freedom to choose it and order our personal lives in accord with it. For Catholics, how we order our sexual lives and how we conduct ourselves sexually is always a religious issue: it is an act of faith in God and the truth God reveals.

The Word of God Gives Order to Homosexual Attraction

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman, such a thing is abhorrent. Leviticus 18:22

Both the act of genital sex and our genital anatomy that make the act possible are sacred. They belong to God for a divine purpose: the calling a human soul into physical existence. This is why in the Bible, God calls the use of our genital anatomy in any other way or with anyone other than a partner suitable for the procreation of human life, “abhorrent.”

Our psychological, social and physical development can and does exercise an influence on who we are sexually attracted to, and to what degree of intensity we feel that attraction. The ways and degree to which we allow ourselves to act out sexually in our imagination, and physically with others, also plays a role.¹

Attraction, however, is not orientation. There is a divinely given orientation to human sex no matter where your attractions draw you. The orientation God gives to sex remains the same if you are celibate, if you are single, if you are attracted to men or to women, to one person or to many. The choice lies before every human being either to embrace this orientation and bring his or her attractions and drives into order with it, or to reject it.

Having attraction to persons of the same sex is not a sin. But if left unharnessed by a commitment to establish in ourselves the orientation God gives to human sex, this attraction might and often does impel a person to act out sexually with persons of the same sex. The Word of God in the Scriptures,² and our Catholic faith, teaches that this is wrong and when done it is a sin.³

This conviction about homosexual acts does not make someone *homophobic*. *Homophobic* means a “fear of people who are attracted to persons of the same sex.” Not only does the Catholic Faith not fear them, many women and men who knew themselves to be sexually attracted to persons of the same sex have had and continue to have an honored place in our

¹ An excellent treatment of the psychological dynamics of Homosexuality can be found in: [The Battle for Normality: A Guide for Therapy for Homosexuality](#), Gerard J. M. Van Den Aardweg, Ignatius Press.

² A excellent treatment of what the Bible says about homosexual acts is set out in: [Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate](#), Thomas E. Schmidt, InterVarsity Press.

³ A full explanation of Catholic teaching on Homosexuality is set out in [The Truth About Homosexuality](#), John F. Harvey, Ignatius Press.

ancient community of Faith. It is not *homophobic* to disagree with someone about the rightness of sexual acts between people of the same sex.

If the Word of God orders homosexual attraction away from genital sex, then where does the Word of God direct it? It directs it toward expressions of human warmth and affection, and toward chaste and richly intimate bonds of friendship and companionship. But before we explore these things, something needs to be said about the extraordinary gift God provides for those who love Him and seek to walk in His ways – a gift that makes these things humanly possible.

Grace and Sex

Jesus' disciples were overwhelmed at the thought of how to live the right-ordered life to which he was calling them. Jesus reminded them of this saving truth:

For man it is impossible, but for God all things are possible. Matthew 19:25-26

And then he added:

I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly. John 15:5

No one can do it alone. No one is supposed to do it alone. Grace is the power of God ready to come to our assistance and work on our behalf, not only in matters of sex but in all things we might experience or have to face. Grace flows from Jesus into the minds, hearts and bodies of those who walk with him. Grace works to bring things into right and life-giving order in them and around them. Many people are not aware of what grace is, or that it is available to them. Some don't see the need for it, especially if they have falsely concluded that everything is pretty much determined by forces beyond our control – that we can only “go with the flow,” and that we can never “stand against the crowd.” Grace helps us choose what is right and persevere in doing it – even when our choices cut against the drives and forces within us and the social pressures around us.

For many people the sexual drive is intense and persistent. At times, restraining it will be a trial. Grace not only makes it possible, grace does more. The grace of God is such that it brings blessings out of trial. Many women and men can testify that their minds and hearts have been opened to new dimensions of meaning, and their lives and character transformed through the experience. Dying to self to serve the truth of God always leads to resurrection and new life. The power of God to aid us in placing our humanity in right order is always present. As a matter of fact, grace is essential to the exercise of our humanity, in all of its dimensions. We need God to be fully human. God's help is there for all, and available for the asking. Jesus said:

Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you... If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to anyone who asks Him. Matthew 7:7, 11

Don't walk alone. Turn to Him daily, and ask.

A Word to the Community of Faith

We owe our homosexual brothers and sisters, with whom we share Catholic Faith, the unqualified assumption that they are committed to, and are striving to order their lives by the Word of God and the teaching of the Church – at least as much as we are, if not more. In the Church, Christ gives us to each other, both in our commitment of Faith and in our striving to live it, not as objects of mistrust, but as a source of inspiration and encouragement. As we see God’s grace at work in transforming others, we come to renewed confidence that grace will work successfully to the redemption and transformation of our own lives. We receive each other and the work of God’s grace in us as a gift – with joy and appreciation.

It is also important to remember that, at any given time, there are those who come among us in the community of Faith to hear the Word of God, even though they are not yet willing or able to yield their lives to it and put it into practice. The Church is like the great net that Saint Peter threw out from the boat at the command of Jesus. (John 21:4-6) It is cast out to capture souls for Christ and the Reign of God. When they come among us we receive these souls with delight. They come because the Spirit of God is at work in them. Should they seek it, we should be prepared to offer our witness and any encouragement we can give. At first they might only wish to listen to the Word of God preached, join us in prayer and song, and observe our way of life. If they were baptized Catholic, they refrain from receiving Holy Communion until they come to the desire to bring their life into conformity with God’s Word. We wait, pray, and anticipate with joy the yielding of their lives to Him. We honor God’s grace at work in them.

*Let us then make it our aim to work for peace
and to strengthen one another. Romans 14:19*

IV

A Life of Human Warmth and Tenderness, Rich with Right-Ordered Affection

*Catholic Faith desires that your life be filled with human warmth,
tenderness and affection. It rejoices in the goodness of these things,
and it rejoices when they bless your life.*

*Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt
mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another;
forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has
forgiven you. Over all these virtues but on love, which binds the rest together and
makes them perfect.*

Colossians 3:12-14

While Catholic Faith firmly believes that heterosexual marriage is the only arena for genital sex, it does *not* believe that it is the only arena for human warmth, tenderness and affection. A question much labored over today is, *can you be a whole human being without having genital sex?* The answer is: Yes, you can. You can establish a network of relationships that are deeply fulfilling, supportive and even tender, without the dynamics of sexual foreplay and intercourse.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. Romans 16:16

Saint Paul understood that there are a range of physical expressions of affection between people – men and women, men and men, and women and women – that can be both tender and chaste. Among these are a hand on the shoulder, a touch on the arm, sitting close to one another, holding hands, a hug, a kiss on the cheek or the forehead. American culture is notoriously ignorant of them, and even when aware of them, amazingly poor in wanting to understand or embrace them. American society is so hyper-sexualized that every act of human tenderness or affection is immediately distorted into a “statement of genital relationship.” This is devastating to a healthy human community. A great many of the other cultures of the world are not as poor as we are in this regard. Catholics in these cultures are just as Catholic as Catholics in our own. The point is that the Word of God does not preclude physical expressions of affection between people, even of the same sex; nor does the Word of God look upon them as morally suspect or dangerous in themselves. A child would die without physical affection. Adults shrivel emotionally and fail physically in its absence.

It is true that physical expressions of human warmth, tenderness and affection can have a sexual content. They can be either chaste or not. In other words, they can either urge us to genital activity or not. A physical expression of human warmth, tenderness or affection ought to be employed when it can remain chaste, and when it is acceptable and appropriate to the person receiving it. It ought to be pruned back or refrained from when it cannot or is not. This is as true of individuals with heterosexual attractions as it is of individuals with homosexual attractions. Different physical expressions “work” differently in different people. Only an individual himself can know “how he is wired,” and order both his giving and receiving of expressions of tenderness and affection in a way that does not urge him to genital sex. There is an art to expressing human warmth, tenderness and affection. It can be learned. Everyone needs to learn to weave a garment of human warmth out of expressions of tenderness and affection. Catholic Faith desires that persons with homosexual attractions will do so successfully with persons of both sexes.

What is Chastity?

It is God’s will that you grow in holiness: that you abstain from immorality, each of you guarding his (sexual) member in sanctity and honor, not in passionate desire as do the Gentiles who do not know God; and that each refrain from overreaching or cheating his brother or sister in the matter at hand...

God has called us not to immorality but to holiness; hence whoever rejects these instructions rejects, not man, but God who sends His Holy Spirit upon you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Chastity is about a right orientation to sex and the right boundaries for sex. Chastity also extends to a respect for the complete integrity of yourself and others. The Catechism of the Catholic Faith says:

The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech. (2338)

Chastity requires that we not expose ourselves to talk, magazines, books, television, movies and internet sites that are sexually suggestive and stimulating. Sexually explicit images seed themselves easily in the mind. They are driven deeper into the soil of the mind by the sexual excitement they arouse, and all too often by the acts of sexual self-stimulation and release that follow. They come to dominate the whole mental landscape, filling every mental space except those where they are forced back by moments of focused concentration. But as soon as something breaks the focus of our concentration and we relax, the images flood back. To say that this does not affect our interpersonal life defies all reason. Exposing ourselves to what is lewd and suggestive, and to pornographic images, sears the sensitivities of our soul. It blurs our perception of the boundaries that belong to our own integrity and that of others. It prompts us to reduce people to objects of sexual stimulation. We lose our ability to be attracted to, interact with, or embrace others on any level but the sexual.

For those who enter marriage, chastity requires that they engage in genital sex and any expression of affection that might lead up to it exclusively with their spouse. For those who do not enter marriage, chastity requires that they keep their relationships free of sexual foreplay and intercourse.

Chastity makes it possible for real friendships to form and guarantees what real friendship is all about: allowing us to explore and discover one another's dreams, ideas, hopes, fears, values, attitudes and behavior free from the enormous emotional tension and pressure that come with being sexually involved. Chastity makes it possible for us to form many rich friendships and, in forming them, to gain a positive, full and balanced sense of ourselves and others.

Chastity is important for successful human community. It prevents a highly charged sexual atmosphere from forming. It creates an environment in which human community can be explored and its arts learned. Chastity transforms relationship from being about sexually attracting someone, checking them out, and pairing off with them to entertain the possibilities of sexual intimacy; into being about getting to know and enjoy others, learning to relate with them in ways that are inclusive of others, and building human groupings that are warm, personal, safe and a good place to both be and grow together.

A Word to the Community of Faith

If you were to see two people of the same sex at Mass holding hands with each other while praying the "Our Father," what conclusions would your mind run to? What if they gave each other a hug at the Sign of Peace, or after Mass in the Church parking lot? What assumptions would you make? That they are gay? That they are sexually involved with one another? This is an example of the distorted way of thinking that our hyper-sexualized culture works in us. Even if they were two people with homosexual attractions, why would you not assume that they are chaste Catholics who are simply very close to one another? Doesn't a person with homosexual attractions have a right to be close to someone? Doesn't the Faith that redeems us in Christ believe that they do?

Many people, in the name of chastity, want to "play it safe" and eliminate every physical expression of affection except shaking hands. This leaves only the choice of shaking hands

or genital sex – exactly what we have in our society today. If these are the only choices available, is it surprising that so many people are choosing genital sex? It is true that expressions of affection in public *can* be unchaste, and that they *can* be “statements” announcing that those doing them are sexually involved with each other. This does not, however, mean that all expressions of affection in public *are* unchaste. Nor does it mean that *all* people who express affection, privately or publicly, *are* sexually involved. What can and sometimes does happen in the world should not distract people of Faith from addressing the question: Can a person with homosexual attractions lead a life of human warmth, tenderness and chaste affection among us? If they can’t, something is wrong.

V

A Life of Supportive Companionship and Chaste Intimacy

*Catholic Faith wants you to find friends with whom you will share
a deep love and build a life of chaste intimacy.*

One of the most important tasks in life is to build a rich and diverse circle of supportive friends – individuals who can and will honor your integrity and support your commitment to faith and virtue. Such friends and companions support and encourage you to love successfully and fully what God has called you to love. They share your sorrows, they stand by you in your struggles, and they rejoice in your accomplishments and when good things come to you.

Among these there may be one or two, and sometimes a circle of more, with whom you build a bond of commitment to support and encourage one another throughout the course of your lives. Catholic Faith does not believe that this bond should mimic marriage. In the right order for human relationship that God has revealed to us, marriage has a particular character: of the essence of marriage alone is genital sex, and of the essence of genital sex is the procreation of human life, and essential to the procreation of human life is a stable bond of unique, *exclusive* intimacy and commitment between man and woman.

The bond of committed friendship and companionship is of its own character. It is, in its own way, intimate and committed: tender yet free of genital sex, mutually supportive and honest in dialogue, and valuing above all other things, each other’s devotion to Christ and call to love that part of the world and its life which God has fashioned each to care for. Companions spend a lot of time together. They do lots of things together. They like seeing the world through each other’s eyes. A rich bond of genuine love grows between them – something quite different from sexual longing. Between committed friends and companions of the same sex who have homosexual attractions there may very well be a sexual attraction, but both are determined to order it rightly – away from genital sexual activity with each other.

And both build the dynamics of their relationship to do just that. But this is not all there is to the dynamics of their relationship. The intimacy between them is uniquely *inclusive* – it draws others around them close and affords them a sense of being received and held in sincere affection. There is no message given in their intimacy that “there is *something here that is ours* from which others must be held at a distance.” If being homosexually attracted to others and allowing God’s will and grace to bring this into right order propels a person into a way

of loving and establishing chaste and liberating intimacy with and among others, might this not truly be seen as having attained, in one profound way, a life that is truly rich and abundant?

A Word to the Community of Faith

Quite honestly, our society, and all too often the community of Faith, does not know what to do with people who are not married. We feel bad for them and hope “they find someone.” If they should find friendship with someone of the opposite sex, the first words out of our mouth are to ask, “When they are going to get married?” If they should find friendship with someone of the same sex, our thinking gets fuzzy and our thoughts run “homosexual.” It doesn’t occur to us that for some people marriage is a very bad idea for a whole lot of reasons: issues of personality, emotional balance, history of abuse, and things they might be struggling with that are just plain nobody’s business. Even less does it dawn upon us that the blessing of a close friend and companion might be just the thing for them. Do we really believe that unmarried people are supposed to go through life lonely? If not, then perhaps we should stop talking and acting like we do.

How happy are we when a person develops a close friendship with a person of the same or opposite sex? How comfortable are we around that friendship? Do we even believe that chaste companionship is possible? It is possible to affirm, strengthen and celebrate the single life without in any way diminishing the value of marriage. We need to continually find ways to do this. And unless we have certain knowledge otherwise, practicing Catholics who are close friends should be presumed to be chaste, and it should be a joy for the community of Faith that they found this blessing in each other. The task for a Faith community is to preach and teach the Word of God about genital sex and deliver the message about chastity. At the same time, it must become an environment where individuals can have chaste relationships with confidence and joy.

VI

A Life of Heroic Love Which Makes a Difference in the World

Catholic Faith expects you to love, and to love greatly!

Jesus said:

There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. John 15:13

Heroic love is a love that sacrifices itself to give life or hope, or to bring freedom to another.

Saint Paul, reflecting on the life of Jesus, wrote:

It is rare that anyone should lay down his life for a just man, though it is barely possible that for a good man one might have the courage to die. It is precisely in this that God proves His love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:7-8

Heroic Love lays down its life for someone, even if he or she is not his friend. Heroic Love doesn’t think about “what’s in it for me.” The more it is given, the more it gives away.

It is a love that is not driven by the thought of applause or even appreciation. It is a love whose greatest joy lies in the act of giving, and in the life and hope that its giving creates. The world does not love this way. Only God does. And because God does, the world first came to be and continues in existence.

Heroic Love is the love we see in Jesus. It is the way he loves us. Jesus said:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. John 15:9

We, in turn, love because we are loved and are called to love:

Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. John 13:34b

You were not born to have sex.

Contrary to what the world might tell you, you were not given the priceless gift of life just so that you could have sex. If you do not have sex you will still live and breathe. You will still laugh and cry. You will still wonder and ponder. You will still be able to craft with your mind and hand, and do your art. You will still be able to see the good and delight in the beautiful. You will still be able to establish genuine intimacy with others. You do not need to have sex to be a “real” woman or man, and having sex will not make you a complete human being. Genital sex is a potential in you for a given purpose, and you may or may not be called to that purpose in your lifetime.

You were, however, born to love!

You are given your lifetime to grow into “the likeness of God,” to learn to love as God loves, to transcend your self in a love that sacrifices self to bring healing and hope to others and to the world. To learn to love in this way you will need God, because there is much in every one of us that needs to be healed and brought into right order. God lives for you in Jesus for this very purpose. In learning to love in this way, your sexuality becomes no longer a force to be suppressed, but a force to be harnessed by God’s wisdom and grace; your sexuality becomes an impetus no longer to genital sex but to building inclusive bonds of love and circles of intimacy that fulfill you, and bring human warmth and shelter to others. To love in this way is the greatest and highest human achievement. Only by loving in this way can you become a complete human being. This is what we are about in Catholic Faith – all of us! You have a cherished and indispensable place in it.

*Love is the first word we wanted to say to you
and love is the final word we want to say to you.
You are loved in the community of Catholic Faith.*