

## *Courage and EnCourage*

**Catholic Teaching** “The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Everyone living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties – but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person a “heterosexual” or a “homosexual” and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: a creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life.” *Letter from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith – October 1986*

**Courage & EnCourage** are respectively two spiritual support groups helping Catholic men and women – and their families – to live in accordance with the Catholic Church’s pastoral teaching on homosexuality.

**Courage** was founded in 1980 by His Eminence Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, and continues to be sponsored by the Archdiocese of New York. There are now approximately 90 chapters of **Courage & EnCourage** in the United States, Canada and worldwide.

**Father John Harvey, OSFS**, the Founding Director of **Courage**, has listed the goals and purposes as follows:

1. To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on homosexuality.
2. To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.
3. To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences and so ensure that none of us has to face the problems of homosexuality alone.
4. To be mindful of the truth, that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in chaste Christian life – to encourage one another in forming and sustaining them.
5. To live lives that may serve as good examples to others.

### **Format**

1. In addition to individual counseling, these support groups very often conduct their sessions with the assistance of the 12-Step format developed by Alcoholics Anonymous. When appropriate, individuals are referred to Catholic therapists.
2. The group sessions are supplemented several times each year with insights from Catholic teaching published in the *Courage Newsletter*.
3. The *Courage Handbook* – also available from the New York office – explains the goals and procedures to establish and conduct **Courage & EnCourage** group meetings.
4. **EnCourage** is the affiliate support group for friends and relatives of men & women with homosexual feelings. This support group works and prays to develop a Catholic outreach to men and women who struggle with these feelings. Contact can be made through any one of the chapters of **Courage** here in the United States and Canada or by calling the central office in New York City.
5. Individual chapters of **Courage** will also sponsor *Days of Recollection* at different times of the year to assist the members of our support groups.