



TheCatholicSpirit.com



11/15/2007

Four points on the church's teaching about homosexuality

In God's Good Time

By Archbishop John C. Nienstedt

I was pleased that Joe Towalski, editor of [The Catholic Spirit](http://TheCatholicSpirit.com), addressed the issue of the church's teaching on homosexuality, derived as it is from an understanding of the natural moral law, and the reason why those who promote homosexual activity or a homosexual lifestyle are not permitted to speak at Catholic institutions.

I thought his presentation was balanced and quite helpful as far as it went. I propose this column as a sequel to his, in the sense of providing four footnotes, if you will, to the points he made:

- At their special assembly in Denver from June 14 to 19, 2004, just before the last presidential election, the U.S. bishops issued a document (see *Origins*, July 1, 2004, Vol. 34, no. 7) clarifying the role of Catholic politicians with respect to their stands on moral issues within the public arena.

The second to last point of that document was our collective resolve that Catholic churches, colleges and other institutions should not give "awards, honors or platforms" to persons who, whether Catholic or not, held public positions contrary to the church's defined teaching. To do so would cause scandal, leading Catholics to be confused about what is right and wrong according to the teachings of the church, prompting them to endorse or even to commit immoral behavior.

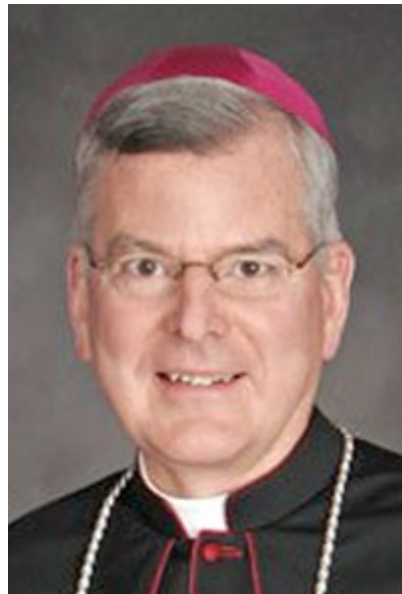
This is why it was not appropriate for Carol Curoe and her father to speak at the Church of St. Francis Cabrini in Minneapolis.

- Those who actively encourage or promote homosexual acts or such activity within a homosexual lifestyle formally cooperate in a grave evil and, if they do so knowingly and willingly, are guilty of mortal sin. They have broken communion with the church and are prohibited from receiving holy Communion until they have had a conversion of heart, expressed sorrow for their action and received sacramental absolution from a priest.
- The USCCB statement "Always Our Children" is not a normative teaching statement of the bishops' conference. I, along with the majority of bishops at the time of its publication, never had the opportunity to discuss or vote on that document in general assembly. It was written by the Committee on Marriage and Family and, with the approval of the NCCB Administrative Committee, it was published in the committee's name only (see *Origins*, Oct. 9, 1997, Vol. 27, no. 17, p. 287).

What is considered normative would be last year's document adopted by the USCCB general assembly and entitled "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care." I urge you to read and study this document, which can be ordered at: www.usccbpublishing.org.

- Finally, while we can always do more to support persons with same-sex attractions to live chastely within the community of the church, there is much that is already being done but receives little attention.

Here in the archdiocese, we have, for 10 years now, had present the support groups, Faith in Action Courage and Encourage.



Archbishop John Nienstedt

The former invites persons struggling with same-sex attractions into a regular support group of faith-filled individuals who are striving to live chastely according to the teachings of Jesus, by confronting their attractions, building healthy relationships and growing spiritually through the sacraments of penance and holy Eucharist. Much like the support groups of Alcoholics Anonymous, Courage seeks to foster a spirit of fellowship to ensure that a person knows he/she does not face personal difficulties alone.

Encourage is a similar support group for parents, family members and friends of those with same-sex attractions who want to grow spiritually themselves and to help their loved ones live chastely.

I had the privilege of initiating both chapters in the Archdiocese of Detroit 11 years ago. I have met many impressive and, I would say, heroic individuals through that movement.

To contact Courage, call (651) 291-4438. To contact Encourage, call (651) 291-4438. All phone messages are confidential. More information is available at www.archspm.org/family.

As Joe Towalski said in his editorial (Nov. 1, 2007, p.7), we must uphold the truth of our Catholic faith, which can often be quite challenging and demanding for any of us, while at the same time, welcoming into the community those who feel isolated and marginalized.

This is the same tension St. Augustine recognized of "hating the sin, but loving the sinner." It is a "careful line," but one that calls for conversion - a conversion that leads to eternal life.

God love you!