

# EnCourage

## The Catholic Review

“EnCourage” is a support group for relatives and loved ones of individuals with same-sex attraction. It was founded in 1990 with the following official goals:

1. To promote a spirit of compassion and acceptance among the members so that they may share with one another their thoughts and experiences.
2. To foster the practice of service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.
3. To encourage loved ones in the development of chaste relationships.
4. To witness by good example to others who have homosexual loved ones.

EnCourage is an offshoot of “Courage,” founded in 1980 and now worldwide, to present and promote faithfully the Church’s teaching on homosexuality and to give every support to Catholics seeking to live up to those teachings.

Recently, I was pleased to celebrate Mass for a group of EnCourage members who meet monthly in the Archdiocese of Baltimore under the guidance of one of our priests. Most of the members of EnCourage are parents who have homosexually active children. I sat in on their discussion which followed the Mass and I came away deeply impressed by the strength of their faith.

All the participants are making every effort to maintain a strong, loving relationship with their children. They are committed to the Church’s consistent teaching that homosexual actions are always objectively sinful (in contrast to homosexual inclinations) and they have made their loved ones aware of their disapproval of their homosexual lifestyle.

Hence the tension: strong love for the individual, but strong disapproval of the relationship. Hence, the need for these good Catholics people to EnCourage one

another. Parents often feel unjustifiable guilt in possibly “causing” their children’s condition. They should be reassured that no one can know with certainty how their loved ones’ homosexuality came about.

EnCourage advises that once the son or daughter is made aware of a parent’s disapproval, there is no value in repetitious moralizing or nagging. They should be convinced that the Lord’s love for their children, all their children, runs far deeper than their own love for them and should entrust the lives of their loved ones to the Lord.

A particular challenge to these parents and relatives is our culture’s promotion of the homosexual lifestyle, most especially in virtually every medium of modern communication. Even, and much more unsettling is the moral ambiguity and dissent to traditional Christian teaching on this matter, especially in some Catholic circles.

The presence of the Church to these good people in the person of a chaplain, faithfully communicating both the teaching of the Church on same-sex attraction and the love of the Church for those involved in activity opposed to that teaching, offers much needed EnCouragement. Our prayers accompany them and their loved ones.