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## **The Memory of Father John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., and the Future of Courage/EnCourage**

### **Introduction**

It is an honor for me to offer some reflections on the priestly life and ministry of the beloved Father John F. Harvey, of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales. In a particular way, I treat his ministry on behalf of his brothers and sisters suffering from the homosexual condition, through the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates. In treating the Apostolates, I also consider the inspiration which Father Harvey's lifelong dedication to them offers for their future. The premise of my reflection is that the faithful and enduring love of Father Harvey for God and his neighbor, inasmuch as it was a participation in the love of Our Lord, God the Son Incarnate, is not passing but remains a living reality in the Church, in the Communion of Saints. Remembering Father Harvey, therefore, necessarily means considering the future of the gift of his priestly love in the Church.

I consider it a singular favor of God's grace to have enjoyed the friendship of Father Harvey, over some twenty-five years. Actually, I first heard about Father Harvey's priestly ministry on behalf of those struggling with same-sex attraction, when I was a seminarian and student in the School of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America, in the late 1960s. I recall, in particular, a presentation of the Church's teaching on same-sex attraction which Father Harvey gave at the University of Maryland. Over the years, I became more familiar with his writings about the homosexual condition and found them to be most helpful for my seminary formation and priestly ministry. Then, in the late 1980s, while I was serving at the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, I met Father Harvey, when he was in Rome to foster a deeper understanding of the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates.<sup>1</sup> From that time, a friendship developed, which I have always treasured.

The reflection which I now offer is based on my personal knowledge of Father Harvey and his priestly service, and on my study of his writings. It is also based on my firm conviction that the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates which he served so faithfully must continue and develop in the Church, even as they continued and developed, under the priestly care of Father Harvey, from the time when the Servant of God Cardinal Terence Cooke first asked Father Harvey to be a member of a committee which he was forming. He had formed the committee to provide for "a spiritual support group" for members of the faithful of the Archdiocese of New York, who were suffering from the homosexual condition.<sup>2</sup>

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1. After having prepared this text, I recalled that I first met Father Harvey in the mid-1980s, while I was serving as Moderator of the Curia of the Diocese of La Crosse in Wisconsin. At the time, a religious congregation had announced a public lecture by Sister Jeannine Gramick, S.S.N.D., a dissenter from the Church teaching's on the homosexual condition and homosexual acts. When the Diocesan Bishop insisted that the lecture be cancelled, he was criticized for not offering any program in its place on behalf of persons suffering from same-sex attraction. The Bishop asked my assistance in providing such a program. Knowing of Father Harvey's work, especially his writings, I telephoned him, on behalf of the Diocesan Bishop, and he graciously consented to give three days of presentations in the various parts of the Diocese. I found both the content and the manner of his presentations most impressive.

2. John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987, p. 121 [Hereafter, *THP*].

Before entering into the heart of my presentation in honor of the late and most beloved Father Harvey, I wish to express my gratitude to Father Paul N. Check, Father Harvey's successor as Director of Courage, for the invitation to offer the Holy Mass for the opening of the Annual Conference and to give the keynote address for the Annual Conference. It pleases me, in a special way, to express my deepest esteem for Father Check who is a most worthy successor to Father Harvey. Enjoying the friendship of both Father Harvey and Father Check, I know personally how much Father Check esteemed Father Harvey and how well they worked together. The Courage and EnCourage Apostolates are in good hands under the direction of Father Check.

## **The Context of My Reflection**

From the time of our first meeting, I was struck by Father's simple goodness and his fatherly care for souls suffering with same-sex attraction. Notwithstanding his keen theological mind and his manly dedication to the truth, there was a childlikeness in Father Harvey like that which Our Lord commends to us in the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> All of us know the serious challenges of carrying out an apostolate dedicated to promoting the practice of the virtue of chastity among persons who suffer from same-sex attraction. Father Harvey was not naïve about the reasons why many priests and religious avoided the very apostolate to which he was to dedicate the greater part of his religious and priestly life. Neither was he naïve about why others opposed the apostolate in favor of a so-called "pastoral" approach.<sup>4</sup> In the face of considerable misunderstanding of the apostolate and even hostility to it, Father Harvey was single-minded and single-hearted in his commitment to address the suffering of the homosexual condition with the charity which is founded on the truth of the moral law and the Gospel.

After my ordination to the episcopate on January 6, 1995, Father Harvey assisted me with my new and greater responsibilities, especially in what pertains to the pastoral care of persons suffering from the homosexual condition, a condition which, in contemporary culture, is surrounded by so much confusion and error redounding to the grave harm of individuals and society, in general. Father Harvey visited me, on several occasions, while I served as Bishop of La Crosse and Archbishop of Saint Louis. He worked with me to begin the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates in the Diocese of La Crosse and to continue and strengthen the Apostolates in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis. His generosity and tirelessness in carrying out the Apostolates was particularly striking.

I recall him, for example, after a long day of presentations and meetings with various individuals, agreeing to visit in the evening with a man suffering from the homosexual condition. The visit lasted late into the night, but Father Harvey, with gentleness and patience, tried to lead the man to understand that only the practice of chastity could bring him the happiness which he was seeking and which he had not found in a homosexual relationship, in what has been termed "a steady-lover relationship."<sup>5</sup> Although the man would not accept the truth which Father Harvey was presenting to him, Father Harvey patiently offered to speak with him again.

Throughout the entire time of my friendship with Father Harvey, I also admired, in a particular way, his steadfastness in the apostolate in the face of much incomprehension and of a lack of support, in general, from Bishops and religious superiors who, for whatever reason, were unwilling to establish and support the apostolate within their ecclesiastical jurisdictions. With realism, Father Harvey wrote in 1996: "With happy exceptions, I do not believe that the Church in America has provided a positive spiritual program for persons

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3. Cf. *Mt* 18:1-4; *Mk* 9:33-37; and *Lk* 9:46-48.

4. Cf. *THP*, pp. 120-121.

5. *THP*, p. 120.

with homosexual orientation.”<sup>6</sup> While Courage offers just such a positive spiritual program, Father Harvey suffered the frustration of a lack of endorsement and promotion of Courage among Church leaders.

Often enough, there was, at the same time, a tolerance and even encouragement of groups fostering relationships between persons of the same sex, which contradicted the moral law. Father Harvey commented: “Clerical indifference and murky messages will not inspire Catholics with these difficulties to move away from the occasions of sin where they may now be.”<sup>7</sup>

But Father Harvey never gave way to bitterness or discouragement. Firmly grounded in right reason and the teaching of the Magisterium, Father Harvey remained faithful to the apostolates of Courage and EnCourage, engaging actively in them for as long as his health permitted, expounding the truth which is the foundation of the apostolate by his writing and also by his public speaking, in various parts of the world.

What also profoundly struck me in Father Harvey was the humility with which he consistently sought to carry out more faithfully his priestly ministry in the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates. Although Father Harvey was considered to be an expert on the homosexual condition, he continued studying the matter to the greatest possible depth, reading widely the various authors on the subject. I mention two developments in his approach to the pastoral care of persons suffering from same-sex attraction, which show his disposition to change and growth, in accord with the demands of truth and charity.

During his first years in the apostolate, he, as has been common in our culture, was accustomed to refer to persons suffering from the homosexual condition as homosexuals and homosexual persons, even entitling his authoritative work on the subject, published in 1987, *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*. Over time, Father Harvey came to the understanding that the use of such terminology gives the impression that the identity of the person is the homosexual condition or the suffering of same-sex attraction, which, of course, is not true. Father Harvey describes how his pastoral friendship with persons suffering from same sex attraction led him to resist the popular tendency to identify the person with a personal condition. In 1987, he wrote:

Thirty years ago when I was not aware of the value of group spiritual support, I became one homosexual’s best friend as well as counselor, and I have had the joy of witnessing his life of virtue and dedication to the aged. Often in public conferences on the care of the homosexual person I am asked whether I use any special techniques in my counseling. I reply that I believe that I should treat homosexual persons like any other human person with a difficulty. I respond to the person, and the more I respond to the person, the more I forget he is homosexual. That is the paradox. Furthermore, I treat homosexuals as my equals, sharing their difficulties. I fully agree with the advice Bishop Mugavero gave to homosexual men and women in a pastoral letter on human sexuality, following the Vatican’s *Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics*. “We urge homosexual men and women to avoid identifying in their personhood with their sexual orientation. They are so much more as persons than this single aspect of their personality. The richness must not be lost.”<sup>8</sup>

Although Father Harvey continued to use terms like “homosexual person” and “a homosexual,” which easily convey the confusion of the person with the condition from which he suffers, it is clear that, in practice, Father

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6. John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., *The Truth about Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996, p. 23 [Hereafter, *TTH*].

7. *TTH*, p. 23.

8. *THP*, p. 163.

Harvey responded to the person suffering with the homosexual condition, in all of the richness of his personhood to which Bishop Mugavero referred. He, therefore, not only did not identify the person with the homosexual condition but even found himself forgetting that the person suffered from the condition.

Father Harvey understood that the identity of the person is an intelligent and free child of God, who suffers from an immoral inclination which his intelligence and free will, with the help of God's grace, equip him to discipline and overcome, in accord with the objective moral order. He understood that language is itself instructive. The *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, dated October 1, 1986, approved by Blessed Pope John Paul II, and signed by the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, clarifies the matter with these words:

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. Every one 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 persons as "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life.<sup>9</sup>

Using language which implies that the identity of a person is one with his inclination to homosexual acts can deceive the person into thinking that the inclination is a part or even the defining part of his nature and, therefore, not to be resisted. The person who is identified as homosexual may easily fall into the trap of thinking that God created him with such an identity, a trap which blocks him in knowing his true identity. Only in knowing his true identity does the person also know the means to deal with his condition.

Over the years of my friendship with Father Harvey, I noted a second development in his pastoral care of persons suffering from the homosexual condition. He came to understand that his priestly care must not only assist individuals with same-sex attraction to be chaste but also assist them to reorder their sexual inclinations, in accord with the law of nature. In his book, *The Truth about Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful*, Father Harvey described the development which took place in the apostolate, especially after the first annual national conference in 1989.<sup>10</sup> He wrote:

No longer would Courage be known as an organization concerned exclusively with sexual abstinence; now it would give serious consideration to encouraging individuals to move out of the condition itself, but it would not make working for such change an obligation.<sup>11</sup>

Father Harvey was concerned that Courage must continue to offer the irreplaceable help of support for chaste living to those suffering from homosexual inclinations. Such help was fundamental. At the same time, if I understood him correctly, he realized that the recognition of the disordered nature of the homosexual orientation and inclinations must, in time, at least, lead to the desire to correct one's orientation, in accord with God's plan, and to discipline and purify the inclinations.

The agents of the homosexual agenda, that is, those who flee the light of the truth of the moral law, had already objected loudly to the idea of a support group dedicated to chastity which was seen by them to

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9. "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," 1 October 1986, no. 16 [Hereafter *LtrB*].

10. Cf. *TTH*, p. 20.

11. *TTH*, p. 20.

suppress so-called legitimate sexual expression. Any talk of change of sexual orientation elicited an even more hostile reaction. Yet, Father Harvey, in his steadfast pursuit of the truth, developed the apostolate of Courage to serve, to the greatest degree possible, the freedom of its members, that is, freedom for pure and selfless love.

In order to understand more deeply the response of Father Harvey to the request that he dedicate his life to the priestly service of persons suffering from same-sex attraction, it is important to understand the foundations of his own spiritual life, of his relationship with God the Father in God the Son Incarnate through the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit into his soul. To know his spirituality, we must turn to the settings in which his relationship with God was given birth and nourished. Those fonts are his natural family and his family in the consecrated religious life, the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales.

### **The Family of Father Harvey**

Father Harvey frequently spoke to me about his parents and siblings, and about the profound influence which they exercised in his spiritual life. He was the youngest child of the four children of Patrick and Margaret (Harkins) Harvey. His mother died during his infancy. His father, in fidelity to the love with which his wife and he had formed a solid Catholic home, provided for his young family with courage and generosity. Father Harvey spoke in the most loving terms about how his father provided for his education, especially in the Catholic faith. Through his father's love, Father Harvey came to know Christ intimately, especially through the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance. His father also introduced him into the devotional life, fostering in him a deep love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially through the praying of the family Rosary.

The Catholic faith which Patrick Harvey handed on to his children had long and deep roots in his native Ireland. From his homeland, he brought a profound sense of the immensity and ceaselessness of God's love of us in Jesus Christ. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, opened by the Roman soldier's spear after He had died on the cross, was the powerful symbol of God's love experienced in the Church and in the home, the first cell of the life of the Church. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus extended the extraordinary encounters with Christ in the Sacraments into the home and into the myriad circumstances of everyday life. Through the devotion, Patrick Harvey formed his children in a deep sense of Christ's presence with them always, accompanying them along their life pilgrimage, especially in the difficult times which inevitably come, even, as the family had painfully experienced, in the premature death of the mother.

In speaking with Father Harvey about his childhood, surely marked by the tragedy of the early death of his mother, there was never any sense of bitterness or self-pity. Rather, Father Harvey could only express admiration for his father, who loved his children, also with the love of their mother, and for other relatives and friends who cared for the children and assisted them in various ways. He was likewise devoted to his surviving sister and often spoke to me about how much he appreciated whatever time they could spend together.

His spiritual life, first nurtured at home, was strongly connected with his home parish of Saint Columba, with its school, and with Northeast Catholic High School for Boys, under the care of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, the religious order which he would eventually enter. The deeply Catholic life of his home found a solid support and enrichment in the life of the parish and of the Catholic schools. On more than one occasion, Father Harvey expressed the deepest gratitude to his father for the sacrifices which he made to send him to Catholic schools, and to the religious Sisters and the priests who helped him to recognize his vocation to the priesthood in the religious life. His entrance into the novitiate of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales after

graduating from high school in 1936 was a natural development of the spiritual life in which he had been nurtured at home. At the same time, his response to the priestly and religious vocation received solid encouragement and support from his family.

Before concluding the consideration of the formation in the spiritual life, which Father Harvey received at home, I must underline the ease and affection with which Father Harvey spoke about his family, especially his dear father. Notwithstanding his many years and many life experiences, he showed a deep and abiding appreciation of the source and solid foundation of his life in Christ in the family. He readily spoke, with deepest gratitude, about his home.

Father Harvey was exactly what his title stated. He was a spiritual father to those whom he served as a priest. His fatherly identity was profoundly marked by his own father's response to the vocation of husband and father.

### **The Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales**

Hearing the call to the priesthood in the religious life, Father Harvey entered the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales. The Oblates, founded in 1875 by Father Louis Brisson and the Venerable Mary de Sales Chappuis, follow the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales, which is centered upon the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> The spirituality is summarized in the words, "Live Jesus," with which Saint Francis de Sales began his spiritual classic, *The Introduction to the Devout Life*.<sup>13</sup> Through the union of the Oblate's heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he strives to live in Jesus, every moment of his life, and, thereby, bring Jesus to the world.

The *Spiritual Directory of Saint Francis de Sales* serves as the rule of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, even as it serves as the rule of the Visitation Sisters of Holy Mary and the Oblate Sisters of Saint Francis de Sales.<sup>14</sup> In the Preface, Saint Francis de Sales exhorted his spiritual sons with these words:

I ask you, my sons, nay rather I beg and exhort you, be strong, firm, persevering, unchanging and so remain in order that nothing may separate you from Jesus Christ who has brought you together nor from that community which can keep you one with Him, so that, all of you having but one heart and one mind, He Himself may be your only mind and heart.<sup>15</sup>

The *Spiritual Directory* explains the intention of Saint Francis de Sales for his spiritual sons in the Oblates with these words: "that our whole life and all of our works be dedicated to union with God, so that we might assist in the renewal of the Church and the salvation of our neighbor by our prayer, works and good example, and that we might excel in every kind of virtue - ...."<sup>16</sup>

Centered in the love of the Heart of Jesus, the Oblate is called to give his life in pure and selfless love to all his brothers and sisters, without boundary. The spirituality of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales is marked by a total offering of heart to the Heart of Jesus, and a bringing of the healing and love from the Heart of Jesus to others. Such love is not superficial and ephemeral but deep and abiding.

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12 Cf. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/founders>, pp. 2-4.

13 Cf. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/crest>, p. 2.

14 Cf. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/spiritual-directory>, pp. 1-2.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The motto of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales is taken from the Song of Songs, a poem written to celebrate the faithful and enduring love of God for us. The motto, *Tenui nec dimittam*, “I have taken hold, and I will not let go,” refers to the tenacity of the love of the disciple for the Lord. Once the disciple has found the Lord, he will never permit that he be separated from Him.<sup>17</sup>

One with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the heart of the Oblate of Saint Francis de Sales shares, in particular, in Our Lord’s unceasing thirst for souls. Even as the compassionate love of Christ for all souls knows no measure or limit, so also the love of the Oblate is filled with compassion for every soul placed in his priestly care.

At profession, the Oblate of Saint Francis de Sales receives a cross rich in symbolism, which is modeled on the pectoral cross of Saint Francis de Sales.<sup>18</sup> The Profession Cross reminds the Oblate that he is to be one with Christ and thus, in the words of Saint Paul in his *Letter to the Colossians*, to rejoice in the sufferings which he bears for the sake of the brethren, making up in his flesh “what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the Oblate of Saint Francis de Sales accepts, with a particular urgency and engagement, the call to participate in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the salvation of all men. It is not that anything is lacking in Christ’s suffering and dying for us, except that we enter into the Paschal Mystery, so that the fruits of the Redemption may extend to every fibre of our being and to every corner of the earth.<sup>20</sup>

The essential part of community life in the vocation of the Oblate is underlined by the exhortation of Saint Francis de Sales. Communion with Christ means for the Oblate communion with his brothers. Community life is the first expression of the love of the Heart of Jesus of the Oblate; it is the first place of encounter with Christ in daily living. Living in community, the Oblate experiences directly the love which he is to bring to others and which will draw them together in community with Christ and with each other. There can be little doubt that community life exercised a major influence upon Father Harvey’s work to foster spiritual support groups, communities founded in Christ for the sake of assisting members to love as Christ loves, chastely, purely and selflessly.

Having reviewed briefly the spirituality followed by the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, one is able to understand the inspiration of Father Harvey in giving himself from his first priestly years to an apostolate which was misunderstood by many and which many avoided because of its complexity, happy to leave it to another. For Father Harvey it was quite simply a question of Christ’s love for his brothers and sisters who bore a particular burden of suffering. Bringing Christ’s love to others, especially to those in most need, meant for him as an Oblate never turning back, never betraying in any way the fidelity and perpetuity which are the marks of divine love.

One understands, too, the disposition of Father Harvey to spare no effort in loving the brethren, and, above all, to be patient and forgiving. Christ, the source of his love, taught Father Harvey to understand that the gift of his love to others bound him, in particular, with the universal Church, with the Pope and the Bishops in communion with him. No matter how much he may have wished to have had the support of more Bishops, Father Harvey never complained about the hierarchy or worked, in any way, outside of the communion of obedience to Christ and to His Vicar on earth. From beginning to end, his apostolate was at the heart of the Church.

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17 Cf. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/crest>, p. 3.

18. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/profession-cross>, p. 2.

19. *Col* 1:24.

20. Cf. <http://www.oblates.us/about-oblates/profession-cross>, p. 2.

In that respect, too, Father Harvey was tireless in seeking good and solid co-workers in the vineyard. He understood that the apostolate was not his private property, not his invention, but rather belonged to Christ Who had inspired and blessed it. He never lost track of the desire of the Servant of God Cardinal Terence Cooke to provide a means of corporate support for those, affected by the homosexual condition, who want, above all, to live a chaste life.

I have spoken chiefly of Courage, but integral to the apostolate is also EnCourage, founded in the mid-1980s for parents of sons or daughters affected by same-sex attraction. The foundation of EnCourage recognized the irreplaceable role of the family in attaining an understanding of the homosexual condition and embracing a life of chastity. The community life which is essential to the vocation to the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales helped Father Harvey to appreciate, on a deep level, the importance of assisting families with a member suffering from the homosexual condition.

Finally, I should note that Courage follows the twelve-step plan of Alcoholics Anonymous. The plan, however, is set within the context of prayer and the sacramental life. What is more, the role of the priest in giving spiritual direction is essential. In other words, membership in Courage is an invitation to grow in the spiritual life. While the twelve-step program is an integral part of Courage, the heart of the apostolate is always a personal relationship with Christ through which Christ heals and gives strength for growth in the virtue of chastity.

The spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales, in which Father Harvey was deeply immersed as a member of the Oblates, helped him to lead the Courage and Encourage Apostolates to an ever greater spiritual depth. In writing about the spiritual life of the member of the Courage apostolate, Father Harvey frequently drew upon the wisdom of his father in religion, Saint Francis de Sales. For instance, in writing about the difficulty which some members experienced in finding time for prayer, he observed: "If one is under great pressures and cannot find time for an extended period of prayer, he can at least turn the movements of his heart to God in brief aspirations, says St. Francis de Sales."<sup>21</sup> In another instance, in which Father Harvey is explaining the practice of the daily examination of conscience for the person suffering from the homosexual condition, he employs the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales. He explains:

St. Francis de Sales sees the basic motive for the examen as the desire to please Christ. One examines one's conscience because one desires to be free of sin only to be more pleasing to the Savior. One is not concerned with a sterile arithmetic of exact faults committed, but with the inner motivation of the faults, and with the affections of the heart vis à vis the person's determination to love God. The question one asks daily is: "How stands my heart before God?"<sup>22</sup>

The spirituality of the union of heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so aptly taught by Saint Francis de Sales, is particularly suited to the spiritual growth of the person affected by the homosexual condition, for what is at stake, in the end, is a right ordering of the affections which have their source in the depths of the heart.

Father Harvey saw the annual conference as a significant part of the spiritual development of the members of the Courage apostolate. Regarding the annual conferences, Father Harvey wrote, in 1996:

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21. *THP*, p. 160.

22. *THP*, p. 161.

Perhaps the most significant development of Courage since 1986 has been the success of the seven national conferences (1989-95). The evaluation papers after each conference, together with voluminous correspondence, testify to the spirit of the members throughout the United States and Canada. People look forward to coming, saving their vacation money and time for the annual three-day meeting. These conferences are the joyful “cry of the faithful”.<sup>23</sup>

The annual conferences, through the presentations, the devotional and sacramental encounters with Christ, and the conversations among participants, have contributed and promise to continue to contribute to the spiritual development of individual members and of the apostolate, in general.

## **The Future of the Courage Apostolate**

Having sought to understand a bit more deeply, at its sources, the spirituality which informed the leadership of Courage and EnCourage, given so generously and courageously by Father Harvey, from the beginning of the apostolates, our thoughts naturally turn to their future. Father Harvey’s dedicated service of the apostolates was born of profound personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, of a union of Father Harvey’s heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

For Father Harvey, the apostolates were a dynamic reality, a work which the Holy Spirit inspired the Servant of God Cardinal Terence Cooke to establish and which the Holy Spirit alone could sustain. Father Harvey saw his own service as cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit, service of God in His immeasurable and ceaseless love of His children who suffer with same-sex attraction. What direction for the future can we discover in the manner with which Father Harvey gave his life for his brothers and sisters in the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates?

First of all, the future must continue to develop the profoundly spiritual nature of the Courage Apostolate, not reducing it to a method for attaining sexual abstinence, but presenting it faithfully as a way of encountering Christ the Chaste One, in order to live chastely in Him. While the discipline of the apostolate, based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, is irreplaceable, it fundamentally opens the space within the heart to grow spiritually, to come to know Christ more fully and to love Him more ardently.

A most fruitful tool for the future development of the apostolate would be, in my judgment, a more systematic development of the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales, the spirituality the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as the full context in which sexual abstinence is practiced for the sake of a purer and more selfless love of God and neighbor. There is need to develop more fully the implications of the practice of Father Harvey to begin the recovery of the person affected by the homosexual condition by teaching “the art of meditation, or prayer of the heart.”<sup>24</sup> Prayer of the heart leads a person to recognize his true identity as a child of God, loved unconditionally by God, and to conform himself to the truth of his identity by loving God in return. Prayer of the heart is the way to the union of heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In a similar way, it is the spirituality of the union of heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus which will bring healing and strength to the family members of EnCourage. Father Harvey wisely observed:

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23. *TTH*, p. 28.

24. *THP*, p. 134. Cf. *THP*, pp. 143-144.

The real issue in dealing with parents of homosexuals is to help them develop their own relationship with the Lord. They must turn over stewardship of their child to the Lord, allowing Him to bring healing to their own hearts and to the hearts of all the family.<sup>25</sup>

Only in the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus will family members find the gift which their suffering member most needs and, in fact, desires, the gift of love which is purified of all sin and enflamed with Divine Love. What I am suggesting here is a steadfast plumbing of the significance of the second goal of Courage, namely “[t]o 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 Penance and of the Holy Eucharist.”<sup>26</sup> Through all of these spiritual practices, the deep beauty of a chaste life will be seen and embraced, and a heart will be prepared and sustained for true friendship.

The second suggestion for the future is a deepening of the doctrinal formation of members. In recounting the history of Courage, Father Harvey tells how, in the beginning, he “thought the best way to proceed was to give a systematic presentation of Catholic teaching on the truths of the Faith, on the moral law, and on the sacraments.”<sup>27</sup> He relates that the members desired “more informal discussions of those elements of the Faith that bore more directly upon their personal lives.”<sup>28</sup> While such a desire is understandable, especially in the case of persons who are struggling with immoral behaviors which have been compulsive or addictive, it is important for the complete spiritual development of the person that he come to a deeper knowledge of the Faith and its practice, a deeper knowledge of Christ alive for us in the Church, accompanying us along our pilgrim way to our lasting home in Heaven.

The insistence that only topics relating to the homosexual condition be discussed at meetings of Courage would naturally reinforce the false notion that the identity of the person is the disordered condition. Regarding the matter, Father Harvey rightly concluded:

In all this there is a danger of confining discussion at meetings only to the topic of homosexuality. As I have pointed out, it would be a mistake to exclude other questions pertinent to Christian living. A person is more than a homosexual tendency; as a Christian, one has more to think about than temptations to homosexual acts. Hence the topics discussed, while relating to homosexuality, should go beyond them.<sup>29</sup>

I would suggest that discussions touching upon the most fundamental aspects of our life in the Church be engaged at Courage meetings without an excessive concern to relate the subject matter to the homosexual condition.

Discussions to deepen the liturgical spirituality of members, for instance, would be most appropriate, for the Sacred Liturgy, especially participation in the Holy Mass and worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament, are the highest and most perfect expression of our life in Christ. In the beauty of Christ, made visible in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we identify the beauty of our life in Christ, are inspired to a fuller life in Christ, and given the grace so to live. For the person suffering from same-sex attraction, the encounter with Christ Who is the

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25. *THP*, p. 137.

26. *THP*, p. 141.

27. *THP*, p. 143.

28. *THP*, p. 143.

29. *THP*, p. 143.

fullness of beauty is, in a particular way, the encounter with the One Who reveals to us the truth of chaste love.

Central to the Courage/EnCourage Apostolates is also a deeper understanding of Christian anthropology, of the nature of man, male and female; of the integrity of conjugal love, and of marriage and family as a privileged participation in the being of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and as the hearth in which God, through the cooperation of man and woman, gives the gift of new human life to be safeguarded and nurtured. The study of Christian anthropology will not only assist the members of the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates to recognize and respect their own identity as sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, but will assist society, in general, to overcome the massive secularization which attacks both human life at its origin and the integrity of marriage and the family as the first cell of the life of society and of the Church. In this regard, I highly commend the use of the communications media, which the Apostolates are using, to make better known the Apostolates themselves and the life and work of Father Harvey as the central co-worker with the Servant of God Cardinal Terence Cooke in the foundation of the Apostolates and as the first director of the Apostolates.

Sadly, for various reasons, including the lack of a strong institutional support, the work of Courage and EnCourage remains unknown to many in the Church and in the community, at large. There is a crying need to communicate the truth which Courage and EnCourage serve with clarity and serenity. That truth, like all truth, is attractive in itself. Its effective communication will attract many to rebuild the culture of life and chaste love in our society. The communication will not be easy. There are powerful forces which will resist it and even try to prevent it. But the love of Christ, flowing from His glorious pierced Heart into our often poor and confused hearts, will give us the wisdom and strength to go forward. In the words of the emblem of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, our hearts resting in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will take hold of Divine Love and will not let go.

## Conclusion

It is my hope that these few reflections have both honored the memory of Father John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., and offered some worthy considerations of how his priestly ministry on behalf of persons suffering from same-sex attraction may continue and develop. It is further my hope that they have expressed my strong commitment to the Courage and EnCourage Apostolates, and my deepest respect and affection for their members, for Father Check and his staff, and for the priest chaplains who assist the members in the local chapters.

I conclude with words from the *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*,. The words do not mention Courage and EnCourage by name, but they describe their nature and finality:

We encourage the bishops, then, to provide pastoral care in full accord with the teaching of the Church for homosexual persons of their dioceses. No authentic pastoral program will include organizations in which homosexual persons associate with each other without clearly stating that homosexual activity is immoral. A truly pastoral approach will appreciate the need for homosexual persons to avoid the near occasions of sin.

We would heartily encourage programs in which these dangers are avoided. But we wish to make it clear that departure from the Church's teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral.

The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve.

An authentic pastoral program will assist homosexual persons at all levels of the spiritual life: through the sacraments and in particular through the frequent and sincere use of the sacrament of Reconciliation, through prayer, witness, counsel and individual care. In such a way, the entire Christian community can come to recognize its own call to assist its brothers and sisters, without deluding them or isolating them.<sup>30</sup>

In its final words, the *Letter* reminds us that the suffering of those affected by the homosexual condition "can only be intensified by error and lightened by truth."<sup>31</sup> Father John Harvey followed faithfully the mind of the Church, as it is amply and clearly stated in the *Letter*. Courage and EnCourage continue, thanks be to God, in the same way.

May God grant to our beloved Father John Harvey of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales the reward of the just. May He bless and prosper the work of Courage and EnCourage for the sake of the salvation of many souls and the building up of the civilization of divine love.

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

*Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*

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30. *LtrB*, no. 15.

31. *LtrB*, no. 18.