

*Director's Corner -  
Rev. John f. Harvey, OSFS*

**Observations on the Use of the Twelve Steps  
in Courage**

In the first years of Courage I began to use the Twelve Steps of A.A., together with the Five Goals of Courage as basic to the work of Courage. The Courage Handbook contains a formal permission from A.A. to change Goal One in this way: *We admitted that we were powerless over homosexuality, and our lives had become unmanageable.* Goal One of A.A. speaks of the alcoholic as being powerless over the addiction of alcohol. All the other steps of Courage are the same as those of A.A. Many persons in Courage are also members of A.A.

After a number of years the Courage Handbook introduced various options to the Twelve Steps, to be used along with the Twelve Step meetings. I list a few: a) a testimonial by one of the members; b) the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with sermon and a short meeting; c) a guest speaker, for example, a seminary professor to explain the Church's teaching on pornography and like questions, or d) a lecture on the meaning of sanctifying grace. There can be a balance between the Steps and Goals and the other options.

In more recent years some Courage groups seem to get lost in probing too deeply into speculative psychological questions while failing to apply the Twelve Steps to one's progress in moral virtue. In joining a Courage group one should not endeavor to change it into a reorientation program, because the Courage group plan seeks to educate persons in the practice of virtue.

A reorientation plan is primarily concerned with the psychological dynamics of the development of the sub-rational tendency called same-sex attractions, a psychological term, as distinguished from a science concerned with the moral order-with discernment of good and evil and with the development of facility in the practice of

virtue. Reorientation, however, does have a significant moral aspect. When a person recovers his natural heterosexual tendencies, he becomes free of same-sex attractions and, with the grace of God, he's able more easily to be chaste. At the same time, Courage works closely with both clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, making use of the directory of the *National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality* (NARTH).

It should be noted that when persons use the Twelve Steps properly as sources of reflection upon one's own life they are truly therapeutic-truly healing. In conducting meetings over the years I have found two conditions which draw persons with same-sex attraction to open up their minds and hearts: ANGER and LONLINESS. When persons with SSA reflect on their anger, they begin to bond with others with similar feelings. The same is true about their discussions of loneliness. In both situations much constructive planning to handle anger and loneliness follow.

Inasmuch as learning to develop interior chastity, or chastity of the heart, is the goal of Courage meetings, it follows that the proper use of the Twelve Steps is very helpful as a human instrument for opening hearts for the grace of chastity.

Since the use of the Twelve Steps should be an integral part of Courage meetings, it follows that the Director of the Courage Central Office should observe how the meetings are conducted in different places and make some suggestions.

In the last 26 years I have seen Courage units disappear, because their meetings were without accountability and without the Twelve Steps. The Steps have proven value; they are used not only in A.A., but also in S.A., H.A., and Exodus. It is not easy to use them properly. The person who prepares the Step must speak of his own experience of the Step. In presenting the Step at a meeting he hopes the other members will do likewise. In a small group meeting there may be some time left over which can be used to discuss the virtue of chastity, as found in books like, Clean of Heart by Rose Mary Scott (available from [www.cleanofofheart.com](http://www.cleanofofheart.com)). What the Courage Handbook says about other options makes

sense. Thus, at least half our meetings should be on the Steps.

Recently, a priest became the leader of a Courage group where a layman was conducting meetings. He asked me what should he do? I recommended that he consult with the lay person. There are three things a priest should do at Courage meetings: a) be ready to hear confessions at the end of meetings; b) be a resource person on theological and moral issues; c) and lead the group in prayer.

Now, I wish to examine each step. **Step One** - with formal permission of A.A., Courage changed Step One to read: I am a person with ssa and I am powerless over this condition; my life has become unmanageable. In declaring one's powerlessness, one must really believe that he is powerless. It is an act of humility to admit that by oneself one is not able to move toward God. This act of humility prepares the person to be willing to seek the help of others and that of God.

**Step Two** - Here one who has acknowledged his powerlessness turns to a power greater than himself in order to overcome his insane behavior. Every Step meeting is also a Step Two meeting. The support that members derive from the other members of the group is vital for their progress in virtue. The longer men or women go to meetings, the more they realize that each group meeting lifts them up. As each person relates to other members of the group, he begins to come out of the cell of isolation. Often beginners may think that the other members are "the power greater than oneself," but gradually they recognize that it is God working through the group.

**Step Three** - "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." Here one is going to make a decision to strive always to be chaste. One may experience the rebellion of one's emotions. One becomes fearful that he will not be able to remain chaste over the months and years. He remembers his past failures, but then he recalls what St. Augustine says in his Confessions, one partly wills to be chaste in following Christ and one partly hankers for the pleasures of the flesh. In so doing one does not really will to be chaste. Augustine goes on, *velle*

*totaliter*, which means that you will with your whole soul and heart. Thus, when one rejects lust completely, he wills chastity completely (*totaliter*). But, one makes this decision only after much prayer.

Before turning to **Step Four** one must remember that the steps must be taken in order. One does not make "a searching and fearless moral inventory of oneself" until he has made a decision to surrender his whole life into the hands of the Lord. Making this moral inventory is not done at a Courage meeting, but privately-perhaps with the help of a friend. It is similar in some ways to a general confession, but different inasmuch as it seeks to discover one's own emotional tendencies with the aim of gaining greater insight into self - coming to know the self.

**Step Five** - One gives to God and one other person an account of his life with the willingness to acknowledge his mistakes and failings. Like Step four, this step is not done at a Courage meeting; still, the leader of the Courage group can suggest ways of doing Step's four and five. When one does a fearless moral inventory, he needs God and one other person to check it out. I am afraid that Step's four and five may not receive the attention they deserve from our members. Step four is often a journal account. In Step five, one reveals himself-as best he can-to God and to a friend. Often this friend is a priest. I know a priest who was transformed in doing Step five.

**Step Six** - Is concerned with the removal of faults and sin. One is entirely ready to allow God to remove such faults and sins. This means that one is willing to acknowledge such faults and sins, and is willing to find the means to eliminate them. For example, a person is inclined to make rash judgment's about his neighbors, and in presenting Step six he can ask of the group their prayers and support in forming kinder judgments about his neighbors.

**Step Seven** - Step seven flows out of Step six, because it seeks the means of carrying out a resolution to overcome the particular tendency to make rash judgments. It can happen that one can acknowledge a difficult situation but never take steps to remedy it.

**Step's Eight and Nine** are concerned with forgiveness. Step eight seeks to review in one's life the times when your actions may have injured another person. It is meant to stir up feelings of repentance. In other situations the person doing Step eight may feel that he has been the object of injustice. He may retain feelings of resentment. In presenting Step eight one develops a resolution to make amends to others, or to forgive someone who may have offended you. Sometimes the most difficult person to forgive is yourself.

In Step eight one is acknowledging that he has a problem with forgiveness. In **Step Nine** one forms a resolution to forgive someone, or to ask for forgiveness. Step nine must be modified by the virtue of prudence. A person may have acted promiscuously years before. To protect his reputation he may have to avoid contact with such person's who may attempt to blackmail him. It is a real danger. For other reasons one may choose to reveal to his own family episodes in his own life. In many cases you express your forgiveness, or seek forgiveness through reparative prayer.

**Step Ten** - This step asks us to review our searching and fearless moral inventory and, if one discovers a weakness in our program, to acknowledge it immediately. In my judgment, if one can promptly, acknowledge a fault, sin, or mistake, he has made great progress. Generally, we are reluctant to admit our faults and mistakes.

**Step Eleven** is a vital step. In the pursuit of the spiritual life, in the endeavor to have an interior life of prayer, leading to chastity of the heart, one needs to set aside some minutes every day for meditation. One will find in St. Francis de Sales, the Introduction to the Devout Life, a section on meditation. Like other spiritual writers, he recommends the regular reading of Holy Scripture. As St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."

**Step Twelve** - This step exhorts us to spread the good news of Courage to others. This is happening in many ways, particularly on our web site and listservs. I have noticed in a younger generation of Courage members greater enthusiasm for seeking new members among their peers. In the early days of Courage many members were reluctant to bring the Good News to their brothers in the Catholic Church, probably because they didn't want to be identified as having same-sex attractions.

## Bulletin Board

### ***New Office Space and Residence for Fr. Harvey in NYC!***

Please pray for the beatification for Cardinal Cooke and hope with his intercession that the Central Office of Courage in New York City will be able to find another location when the Capuchins take over the present office space in 2008. Also, Fr. Harvey will need to find a new place to live when he's in NYC; his present residence at St. Vincent de Paul Church is slated to close this summer.

### ***The 2007 Annual Courage Conference***

It's time to start planning for the 2007 Courage Conference. Once again, the conference will be held at the University of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois (*the major seminary and school of theology for the Archdiocese of Chicago*). The dates for this event are **Thursday, August 2nd to Sunday, August 5th**. Please mark those dates on your calendar! *Further information will be listed accordingly on the Courage website or call the Central Office @ 212-268-1010.*

### ***Sports Camp***

The New Jersey Sport's Camp will be held in the **fall** after the Annual Conference in August. Unfortunately, **at this writing**, no dates have been secured for a Mid-West Sport's Camp this year. Sport's Camp is a safe and supportive environment for men to learn and/or re-learn the rules of sport, practice their skills and compete with their teammates in softball, flag football and basketball. It's great fun, excellent fellowship, liturgy and prayer. *Please continue to logon the Courage website for further information.*

### ***New Courage and Encourage Groups***

The Good Lord continues to raise up good men, women and clergy from His flock to step up and begin new Courage and Encourage chapters in the following cities: A second group in *Seattle*, Washington; *Allentown*, Pennsylvania; *Albany*, New York; *Tampa*, Florida; *Birmingham*, Alabama; and *Madison*, Wisconsin.

Also, recently we've received requests to start Courage groups in *Kampala, Uganda* and *Nigeria*.

We've been advised that new **Encourage** groups have begun in *Chicago*, Illinois; *Scranton*, Pennsylvania and *Edmonton*, Alberta, Canada. Also, Fr. John Greb has been assigned the Spiritual Director of Courage for the Diocese of Phoenix, Arizona by the Most Reverend Thomas J. Olmsted.

### ***Fr. Harvey's Latest Book - DELAYED but on the Horizon***

Fr. Harvey's upcoming book, *Homosexuality and the Catholic Church: Clear Answers to 100 Challenging Questions*, will be published by Ascension Press. The release date has once again been postponed and set for September 2007. Please check for the availability of the book in a future newsletter and on the Courage website *CourageRC.net*.

### ***Courage Participates in the 34th Annual March for Life!***

Once again, members of Courage, Encourage and Fr. Harvey, *Director of Courage*, marched in the annual *March for Life* in Washington, D.C. on January 22nd under the famous blue and white banner of Courage, "Pro-Life = Pro-Chastity." A big thank you to all that came out and marched! The theme for this year's March for Life 2007 is "**Thou Shalt Protect the Equal Right to Life of Each Innocent Human in Existence at Fertilization. No Exception! No Compromise!**"

### ***Order the Courage Videos & Continue to Spread the Word!***

Our two part video, "*Portraits of Courage*" has been a big hit since its creation back in 2001. The two video set costs \$29.95 plus shipping and handling. At this time, we're offering \$6.00 off each set when two or more sets are ordered at the same time. *Please call 1-866-BE-CHAST (1-866-232-4278) to order the videos by credit card.*

*Please note: We will soon be selling "Portraits of Courage" in DVD format! Stay tuned . . .*

#### **COURAGE CENTRAL OFFICE**

**Church of St. John the Baptist**

**210 West 31st Street**

**New York, NY 10001**

**U.S.A.**

**Phone: (212) 268-1010**

**Fax: (212) 268-7150**

**E-mail: NYCourage@aol.com**

**Website: www.CourageRC.net OR CourageRC.org**

# COURAGE

## Newsletter

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On behalf of Fr. Harvey and the Courage staff, here's to a very blessed and joy-filled Easter. May we continuously witness to His Death and Resurrection!

*"We adore Thee Christ, O Christ, and we praise Thee, Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world."*