

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Accompaniment Resource

Full Articles Available Here

The following are synopses of a quartet of articles written over the last year in *The Message*. As we continue to celebrate the joy of the resurrection this Easter season, we pray this resource may prove fruitful in your journey, aiding in your efforts to welcome, accompany, and love those who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, as well as those striving to live out the beautiful and freeing virtue of chastity.



Disclaimer: This resource is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the Church's teachings on human sexuality and morals. For a more complete treatment of those topics, please visit the Catechism of the Catholic Church and documents such as *Humane Vitae* or the *Theology of the Body*.

The Limits of Labels

1. While the acronyms (LGBTQIA+) can help people feel seen, they can also be overwhelming and confusing. Though the labels aren't necessarily incorrect, the problem is that they don't say enough about the person. These labels reduce our identity to our experience of our sexual attraction, only one part of the person.
2. St. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* teaches us that the human body reveals the person. The body isn't only sexual, it's primarily sacramental!
3. Is there an acceptable label? As Christians, St. Mother Teresa would answer: "beloved child of God". Her answer points to our deepest and fullest identity as well as what we can do, not merely what we cannot or should not do.
4. For years, those experiencing same-sex attraction, have primarily heard, "This is what not to do," but have been starving for "This is what discipleship looks like for me." All those with the various types of gender dysphoria, too, are searching for a life filled with joy, love, and meaning. All the faithful—regardless of their experience of sexual orientation and/or gender—are called to lead lives in fidelity to the Gospel, in service to one another, and in loving, authentic, and chaste relationships that respect the dignity of each person.

Universal Call to Holiness

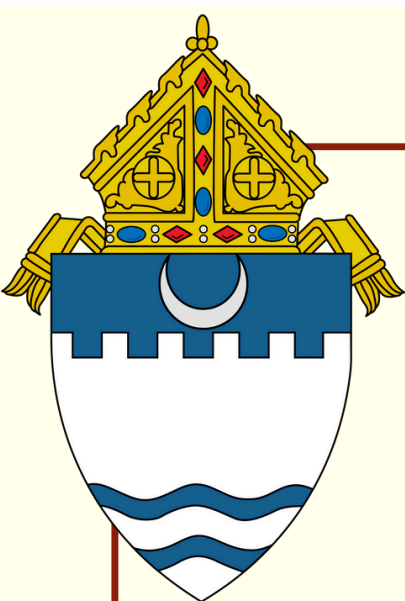
1. Holiness is a unique attribute that sets God apart from all creation. All people, not just priests and religious, are called to a life of holiness in our imitation of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 5:48).
2. The Church's teachings on sexuality are not just a list of "do not's" but are a map guiding us towards authentic love as well as our heavenly home.
3. Our brothers and sisters who experience same-sex attraction often ask God, "Why did you give me this attraction if you didn't want me to act on it?" It is important to acknowledge that creation is good, and humanity was created "very good" (cf. Gen. 1:31). However, God did not say that creation was yet perfect. What we see in Genesis is called Original Harmony. But because creation is not perfect, it suffers, to varying degrees, from its imperfections. Humanity's imperfections have always been destined to be remedied through union with God.
4. God has entrusted each of us with our sexuality, regardless of the type of attraction we experience. We all struggle to live God's call to chastity, and we need to pray, "God, I see what chastity calls me to. I see my inability to do it, please transform me by your grace."

What is Accompaniment?

1. The word “accompaniment” (“bread fellows” or “messmate”) is best reflected in the way Jesus met people: He shared meals with them and was willing to enter the “mess” of their lives.
2. The order of Jesus’ two-fold command to “go and sin no more” is intentional and important. Jesus firstly calls us to “go” and move away from circumstances where we are most inclined to sin, and to move towards settings that promote genuine connection, love, and growth.
3. Often, those with same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria feel as though they are only loved and accepted by people who openly support the LBGTQIA+ label. The Church calls us to embrace the person, but cautions against any labels that create a sense of inevitability and replace our true identity with our struggles. “We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his son.” - St. Pope John Paul II
4. Accompaniment is the virtuous friendship between the extremes of tolerance and condemnation. We must resist the notion that everything depends on us. Learning when to rely on professional help and entrusting those we accompany to our Heavenly Father’s care is a sign of genuine love and humility.

Invitation, Not Condemnation

1. Every person struggles with a lie told by the devil: that we are defined by our wounds and therefore unworthy to be loved by God or others. Like Peter, we often say, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man”. In identifying with our sins, we often disqualify ourselves from accepting God’s love and being called to serve.
2. So much of the brokenness in our world is a consequence of human attachment to sin and prideful self-reliance. As Dr. Bob Schuchts has said, “Suffering that is not transformed will be transmitted.” The transformation of our wounds is a fundamental part of Jesus’ mission, reflected in his own wounds, which remain visible, though transformed by the resurrection.
3. Our Christian witness includes an invitation to freedom. Freedom from sin and freedom from the lie that we must fix ourselves instead of allowing God to heal us and make us whole. This freedom should be a source of genuine hope in the promises of Christ.
4. This Hope in Christ frees us to discard our sinful habits and attachments – to leave everything behind and follow him.



Want to learn more?

Contact the Catholic Diocese of Evansville’s Office of Marriage, Family, & Life, or the Office of Catechesis

Other Recommended Resources: Courage International, Eden Invitation, Theology of the Body Institute, Ruah Woods Psychological Services

Scan for links to resources

