

The Catholic Church of the
Immaculate Conception

2540 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, CA 92110 619 295-4141 FAX 619 295-4142
e-mail: parish@ic-sandiego.org Website: www.ic-sandiego.org

July 3, 2016

Rev. Richard L. Perozich, Pastor

parish@ic-sandiego.org 619-295-4141 x 11

Deacon Robert H. Fitzmorris

rfitzmor@sdccatholic.org; 858 490-8332

Liz Fielder, Manager, Serra Gifts

fielder@ic-sandiego.org 619-297-3426

Connie Rodriguez, Parish Secretary

parish@ic-sandiego.org 619-295-4141 x 10

Marsha Long, Music

pictures@marshalong.com

Parish Office Hours

Monday: Noon to 4:00 pm
Tuesday-Friday: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Mass Schedule

Daily Mass: Monday - Saturday at 8:00 am

First Friday Mass & Devotion: 8:00 am

Sunday Masses

Saturday Vigil: 5:15 P.M.

Sunday: 8:30 AM, 10:00AM, 11:30 AM, 5:15 P.M.

Holy Day Masses: 8 A.M., 7:00 P.M.

Penance: For daily Mass goes 7:30 AM. For Parish on Saturday: 4:30 to 5:00 P.M., and by appointment

Baptisms & RCIA: *By appointment only.* Please email Deacon Fitzmorris at rfitzmor@sdccatholic.org.

Weddings: By appointment only. Arrangements must be made at least **one year** in advance. Please contact the office

Funerals: *For arrangements, please call the parish office.*



History of Immaculate Conception Parish

It was here in Old Town that Saint Junípero Serra celebrated his First Holy Mass in California on July 2, 1769, near the site of the present Immaculate Conception Church, and it was on the hill overlooking Old Town that he planted the cross which marked the site of the Mission and the Presidio.

In 1849, the first parish church was established in Old Town with the name of Immaculate Conception and was dedicated in 1858. It still stands and is known as the Old Adobe Chapel on Conde Street. The cornerstone to the present Immaculate Conception Church was laid in 1868 under the direction of Father Antonio Ubach. With the population swing toward the south, it was not until July 6, 1919, that the church was dedicated by Archbishop John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles.

WE PRAY

MASS INTENTIONS

04	8 AM	<i>Weekday</i> †Laureana Asayas	RP
05	8AM	<i>St. Anthony Zaccaria; St. Elizabeth of Portugal</i> †Edna Moore	RE
06	8 AM	<i>St. Maria Goretti</i> †Roger M. Ibarra	RP
07	8 AM	<i>Weekday</i> Clarita Atienza, SI	RP
08	8 AM	<i>Weekday</i> Jill Hoppe, SI	RP
09	8 AM	<i>St. Augustine Zhao Rong & Companions; BVM</i> †Martin Morris	RP
10	5:15 PM	†Rev. Msgr. Thomas Prendergast	RP
	8:30 AM	†Florence Messina	RE
	10:00 AM	†Margaret Kelly	RP
	11:30 AM	†William Kennedy	RP
	5:15 PM	†Richard Ruiz	RP

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

JULY: Intentions of the Holy Father

Universal: That political responsibility may be lived at all levels as a high form of charity.

Evangelization: That, amid social inequalities, Latin American Christians may bear witness to love for the poor and contribute to a more fraternal society.

PRAY: SEMINARIANS IN THEOLOGY

Ord	Derek Twilliger: Priestly Ordination June 24
Ord	David Exner, Priestly Ordination June 24
Ord	Corey Tufford, Priestly Ordination June 24
1st	Manuel Del Rio, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
2nd	Oscar Lopez, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
3rd	Nathan McWeeney, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
1st	Raymond Napuli, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
1st	Michael O'Connor, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR
2nd	Eric Tamayo, North American College, Rome
3rd	Billy Zondler, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR

PRAY FOR OUR PRIESTS

04	Bishop Gilbert Chavez
05	Rev. Ricardo Chinchilla, CJM
06	Rev. Joseph Chinnici, OFM
07	Rev. Msgr. Anthony Chylewski
08	Rev. Robert Clark, SSC
09	Rev. Nicholas Clavin
10	Rev. Ronald Cochran

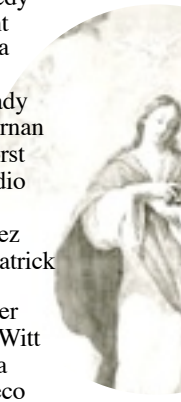
PRAY THE SCRIPTURES

Monday: Hos 2:16-22; Ps 145:2-9; Mt 9:18-26;
 Tuesday: Hos 8:4-13; Ps 115:3-10; Mt 9:32-38
 Wednesday: Hos 10:1-12; Ps 105:2-7; Mt 10:1-7
 Thursday: Hos 11:1-9; Ps 80:2-16; Mt 10:7-15
 Friday: Hos 14:2-10; Ps 51:3-17; Mt 10:16-23
 Saturday: Is 6:1-8; Ps 93:1-5; Mt 10:24-33
 Sunday: Dt 30:10-14; Ps 69:14-37; Col 1:15-20; Lk 10:25-37

PRAY FOR HEALING

Jesus we ask you to bring your peace and healing touch to those who are ill afraid or worried. Amen

Patricia Kennedy	Maria Casanova
Dorothy Kleint	Steve Stone
Dena Mendoza	Mark Brandon.
Jean Miller	Jeanne Pontius
Patricia O'Grady	Esther Salazar
Mary Jane Tiernan	Joane Anderson
Marguerite Vorst	Yolanda Garcia
Martha Zamudio	Elias Barajas
Carlos Amaya	Shirley Ilog
Mike Rodriguez	Olivia Ingram
Maguire Fitzpatrick	Grace Mulvanity
Tony Jenkins	Angelica Ortega
Peter Nalwalker	Barbara Driscoll
Bob & RobbyWitt	Lucille Miller
Frances Garcia	Reginald Custodio
Socorro Pacheco	Victoria Cardenas
Linda Lee	Dominic Castagnola
Amparo Valenzuela	John Hobbs
Phyllis Altomare	Linda Haase
Alicia Ambrose	Lauretta Watts
Inez Cerda Bull	Robert Rolli
Cosmo & Joan Busalacchi	Eleanor Anderson



PRAY FOR OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY

Jesus protect all who serve our country.

Sgt. Ahmed John Alexander	Robert Clinton Long, MC2
Natalie Augustine	Sgt. Adriana Matizel
Major Jerry Bloomquist	Wendell Miculob
Col. Mike Bodkin	LTJG Joe F. Moralez,USN
Danny Carpenter, USMC	LCPL Matthew A. Pena
LTJG Joseph Colangelo, USN	Sgt. Richard Pierce
Cpl. Samuel James Comer	Sgt. William Paul Powers and Cinco
Daniel Dinglebeck, USN	CPL Wilson Santiago
PFC David Eley, USMC	Alfred Tello
Micah Emery	Ricky Thibeault
Sgt. Christopher Escalona	Tony Tulloss
1Lt. Cortez Fabia	PFC Travis Vliet; & 3rd
Juan Carlos Galazza	Marine Aircraft Wing.
SSGT. Vincent Charles	SCPO Desiree S. Hayes, USN
Lucario	Gil Perez, US Navy

† PRAY FOR OUR DECEASED †

Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen.

Joseph Moreno	Maude Laracy
Louie Serrano	Helen Peña
Gustavo Sosa	Lydia Castillo Herrera
Floyd Watson	Bertha Lockwood
Iola Torre	Salvador Rivera
Emilie Graham	John Cervantes
Angela Cordova	Daniel Don
Ramiro Moreno	Florence Messina
Alexander Toczko	Arthur Wilbur Martinez
Jeannette Toczko	Jesse Benitez
José Teofilo Solorio	Margaret Kelly
Ray & Betty Jackson	Martha Jane Hotchkiss
Denise Cooney	Janet Meyers
Joanne Mangiameli	Hector Morales
Edna Moore	Carol Raiter
Paul Ramirez	Albina Farrie

WHERE DO WE BELONG? AN EX-GAY CATHOLIC REFLECTS ON THE ORLANDO MASSACRE

(JosephSciambra) -

FROM THE PASTOR

When I walked into the Castro District of San Francisco in 1988, I could not have picked a worse time in history to come-out as a “gay” man. It was the height of the AIDS crisis. That year alone, over 4,800, mostly “gay” men, died of AIDS in the US. The following year, the number of deaths would triple. Far into the next decade, my seemingly exuberant life became constantly interrupted as I was forced to stand by when one after another beautiful and once boundlessly hopeful young man fell silently into the grave.

Some of these dead boys I knew well, others were but among the countless shadows that brushed against me in the dimly-lit nightclubs; a few, I could hardly remember, for they existed merely as a collected catalogue of the near-faceless men I had spent a few moments with. They were those I would sometimes anonymously huddle up next to. Acts of shared mutual desperation had brought us together, and inevitably pulled us apart. Often, I would only fully recognize them in death. However, none of us wanted it this way. None of us traveled to “gay” wanting to die, no more than those similarly beautiful and hopeful young men who one night went to a local club.

But for my generation, what brought us together, even in the midst of AIDS, was a collective need to be accepted; sometimes, by anyone. For many of us had grown up as lonely and scared little boys; unsure of who we were on a most basic level of identity. But, as a child of the 1970s disco-era, where “gay” icons emerged from pop-culture for the very first time, by the time I was a teenager and avid devotee of Madonna – I was no longer embarrassed by who I thought I was. Yet, with “gay” men, at the most – making up about 4% of the population, finding like-minded allies and friends, especially in a relatively small town, was not an easy endeavor.

So, when I turned 18, with the sonorous masculine voices from the chorus of The Village People song “Go West” playing endlessly through my brain, I headed to San Francisco to be among my own kind. The first place I went to was a “gay” bar – a magical sort of place with a large dance floor crowded almost consistently with unbelievably attractive men. Earlier that night, walking down Castro Street, like a lost out-of-town tourist, the music of the Pet Shops Boys thumping through the air, drew me right through the open front door. Inside, everything I ever yearned for merged into one fantastic world of total happiness: the boy no one wanted, the scrawny kid who got knocked around, the sad little fairy who just wanted to play with the other boys, was suddenly the object of attraction; handsome and manly men bought me drinks and shoved each other aside in order to push up against me. Unlike the world at large, that I had just escaped – there was consistency and harmony here; there were occasionally some drunken and pointless arguments or fights, but, overall, everyone got along. To me, that was Truth.

Yet, apart from this public space, there were also dark recesses of the club, where men would often slip away to

meet each other. Looking back now, I can see how desperate all of us were for love and acceptance, that the grinding against each other on the dance floor was never enough. Sometimes, these brief encounters left me feeling empty, but, just before, I had been alone, and now I wasn’t. Because these “gay” enclaves provided hope, that I wasn’t the only one, and that, I see the pictures of the dead, and they remind me of the men I used to know – who died of AIDS so long ago. They, too, thought that “gay” was where they belonged. When amongst others who felt as I did, being “gay” made sense. We were looking for an identity, and the “gay” community provided us with one that fit. And, for a while – I was very happy. I was home, and I never wanted it to end.

But, it did end. Suddenly, although I recognized the always hovering reality of AIDS – it was something that happened to anybody, but me and my friends. Then people I knew began to get sick and die. It was random and quick. Some of us began to lose count. And I wondered why I was here; why we were all here. Had we been somehow marked for death? Was the unknown God of my childhood a ruthless overlord who hated us and wanted every gay man destroyed?

Those massive questions, while simply trying to survive the carnage – at the time, I could not even begin to comprehend. Later, when I was accorded a measure of calm and peace, I realized that everyone who walked into some gay bar or disco, or even a bathhouse or sex-club, went there because they had nowhere else to go. No matter what we did to ourselves, none of us deserved to die. Only we did, and, although we were terrified, we stayed put – where else could we go?

I came of age in the post-Conciliar Church of the 1970s. Then, a sort of seemingly benign indifference pervaded every aspect of Catholic education. This created a strict adherence to the subjective theory that all the long-held doctrines and teachings of the Church were inherently relative to certain individuals and situations. We were essentially told to create our own personal Jesus – to make our own world; and, that is exactly what we did. As for me, I made a “gay world and a “gay” God. When AIDS struck ever closer to me – I thought the God I created had turned against me.

The utter failure of the Catholic hierarchy in the US to swiftly and decisively clamp down on widespread dissent, specifically with regards to highly erroneous philosophies on homosexuality, became embodied in one man: Fr. John J. McNeill. In addition, there were other loud “gay” dissenters in the 1970s, namely Bishop Raymond Hunthausen, the late Fr. Robert Nugent, and Sister Jeannine Gramick; of the three, Gramick is still alive and active – wreaking havoc from outside and within the Church.

I will never forget a dear friend, one of the “gay” vanguards of the movement, who came-out in the revolutionary epoch of the 1970s, who repeatedly recommended, once he found out I had been raised Catholic, McNeill’s landmark book “The Church and the Homosexual.”

continued page 7

AROUND THE PARISH

12 July ... Ask the Pastor

On Tuesday, July 12, at 7pm, Father Rich invites all parishioners to participate in a "Ask the Pastor" meeting in Serra Hall. Questions of a religious or spiritual nature may be submitted in writing in advance of the meeting. Email: pastor@ic-sandiego.org. All are welcome. Light refreshments will be served.

15 July...Italian Night Parish Dinner

6:30 to 8:30 pm -- Serra Hall
 Dinner includes: Green salad, Chicken Marsala, Fettuccine, and Spumoni
 No-host beer and wine
 Tickets on sale in the hall or parish office.

20 July ... "American Rhythm"

Discount tickets are available for \$25 to Lamb's Theater song & dance production of "American Rhythm" on Wed., July 20, 2:00 pm. Carpool or take trolley with Fr. Rich. Please contact Sue Sullivan at ssullivan@sandiego.edu or Connie at the parish office 295 4141.

Parish Safe Environment

To report suspected sexual misconduct or child abuse within our institutions and ministries, please contact the Child and Youth Protection Office, Victims Assistance Coordinator Rodrigo Valdivia at 858-490-8310.

Courtyard Bricks ...

Bricks in honor or in memory of loved ones are available for purchase in the Gift Shop or visit the parish website. (See bulletin.)

30 July ... Faith & Family Night

SD Padres vs Reds
 5:40 p.m. -- Petco Park
 To purchase tickets, please visit PADRES.COM/FAITH
 See flyer in the bulletin board located in the hall.



2016 Baptism Schedule

July 12 **Class**
July 17 **Baptism**

Schedule is available on the parish website (ic-sandiego.org).

Written by Regina Brett, 90 years old, of the Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio.

"To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the 45 lessons life taught me. It is the most requested column I've ever written.

My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short – enjoy it.
4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and family will."

More next week...

14 July ... Lecture on Presidio Military District

San Diego History Center is sponsoring a lecture at the Junipero Serra Museum 2727 Presidio Drive that looks at life in the San Diego Presidio Military District in and around the time of Father Junipero Serra.

Dates are July 14 at 6 p.m. which will be repeated September 15 ; Lecturers for both events are:

- * Larry Banegas – a member from the Barona Reservation, and Kumeyaay and Luiseno discussing the life of the Kumeyaay who lived near and interacted with the San Diego Mission de Alcalá.
- * Iris Engstrand, Ph.D. – scholar of Spain in the New World, author, and local historian
- * Maggie Espinosa – travel journalist and author of the book On a Mission: An 800-mile Walk to Discover California's El Camino Real
- * Abel Silvas – local historian, story teller, and Southern California Mission Indian/Californio of the Acjachemen Nation and descendent with a lineage that spans the native, Spanish, Mexican, and American periods

Time: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm with refreshments, lecture and book signings.

Cost: \$20 SDHC members and general public \$25

To order tickets please call (619) 232-6203 ext. 111
 Email: rsvp@sandiegohistory.org

AROUND THE PARISH

Gifts of Treasure

With gratitude for the gifts we have received, parishioners and visitors made a joyful return to the Lord.

June 26, 2016

Total Collection: \$4,473.95
Envelopes: \$2,689.00 Plate: \$1,784.95
Total contributing households: 77

5:15 Sat	\$ 637.75
8:30 Sun	\$1067.48
10:00 Sun	\$ 859.18
11:30 Sun	\$ 630.14
5:15 Sun	\$ 924.40
Mailed	\$ 355.00

EXPENSES

June 20-24, 2016

Gas & Electric	\$1006.03
Music	\$825.00
Payroll (incl. tax)	\$3,220.07
Payroll Service	\$61.45
Pension	\$379.11

Total: \$ 5,491.66

ChurchDeposit App

Visit our parish website or pick up a brochure to learn how to make credit card donations to the parish, the building fund, or courtyard tiles.

WELCOME TO IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!

To register at the parish, please fill out the form below and drop it in the basket or call the office at 295-4141.

NAME _____
 STREET _____
 CITY/ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____

Serra Gifts...

**Street Level of Fr. Serra Hall
619-297-3426**



Open 7 days a week
 Monday - Friday 9:30 -4:00
 Saturday 10:00 to 4:00
 Sunday 9:30 to 3:00

See our online catalog at:
<http://www.ic-sandiego.org/gift-shop>

Parish Directory

During the month of July, parishioners can schedule appointments for portraits to be published in the new Parish Directory. Kick-off calls will be made after July 7. Portrait appointments will be available from August 4 through August 7.

In observance of Independence Day, the parish office and Serra Gifts will be closed on Monday, July 4.

AMORIS LÆTITIA

**ON LOVE IN THE FAMILY
OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS**

18. The Gospel goes on to remind us that children are not the property of a family, but have their own lives to lead. Jesus is a model of obedience to his earthly parents, placing himself under their charge (cf. *Lk 2:51*), but he also shows that children’s life decisions and their Christian vocation may demand a parting for the sake of the Kingdom of God (cf. *Mt 10:34-37; Lk 9:59- 62*). Jesus himself, at twelve years of age, tells Mary and Joseph that he has a greater mission to accomplish apart from his earthly family (cf. *Lk 2:48-50*). In this way, he shows the need for other, deeper bonds even within the family: “My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it” (*Lk 8:21*). All the same, in the concern he shows for children – whom the societies of the ancient Near East viewed as subjects without particular rights and even as family property – Jesus goes so far as to present them as teachers, on account of their simple trust and spontaneity towards others. “Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (*Mt 18:3-4*).

PARISH & COMMUNITY

Parish Calendar

JULY

04	Independence Day Parish Office and Serra Gifts Closed	
06	Choir Practice	6:00 PM
09	Quilting Group	9:30 AM
10	Parish Breakfast	8:30 AM
11	I.C. Seniors Luncheon	11:00 AM
12	“Ask the Pastor” Baptism Class	7:00 PM 7:00 PM
13	Choir Practice	6:00 PM
15	Italian Night Dinner	6:30 PM
16	Quilting Group	9:30 AM
20	“American Rhythm” Choir Practice	2:00 PM 6:00 PM
23	Quilting Group	9:30 AM

**FROM FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO -
Pope John Paul II**

FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO

*OF POPE JOHN PAUL II ...ON THE ROLE
OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE
MODERN WORLD 1981*

The Church at the Service of the Family

1. The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights.

Knowing that marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values, the Church wishes to speak and offer her help to those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family and seek to live it faithfully, to those who are uncertain and anxious and searching for the truth, and to those who are unjustly impeded from living freely their family lives. Supporting the first, illuminating the second and assisting the others, the Church offers her services to every person who wonders about the destiny of marriage and the family.

16 July ... MAGNIFICAT

Sat, July 16, 9am-12pm (Mass 8am) featuring speaker Heidi Hill, President/CEO of Birth Choice. \$25 includes full breakfast at The Center, 1205 Auto Park Way, Escondido.

Reservations: Rosemary Hill, (760) 505-6625, myrose@att.net, www.magnificat-nsd.com. All are welcome!

Courtyard Bricks ...

Bricks in honor or in memory of loved ones are available for purchase in the Gift Shop or visit the parish website. (See bulletin.)

Robert George in his famous address, “No more comfortable Catholicism ... noted that the world has no animosity toward a nominal Catholic who just goes to Mass, but it’s much different when it comes to one who “actually believes what the Church teaches on issues such as marriage and sexual morality and the sanctity of human life.”

**JOINT DECLARATION OF POPE
FRANCIS AND PATRIARCH KIRILL
OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA
2/12/16**

20. The family is based on marriage, an act of freely given and faithful love between a man and a woman. It is love that seals their union and teaches them to accept one another as a gift. Marriage is a school of love and faithfulness. We regret that other forms of cohabitation have been placed on the same level as this union, while the concept, consecrated in the biblical tradition, of paternity and maternity as the distinct vocation of man and woman in marriage is being banished from the public conscience.

continued from page 3

My friend, who told me that he had once incessantly wavered about his somewhat overdue-coming of age as a “gay” man, he came-out in his late-20s, said Fr. McNeill confirmed that his reoccurring misgivings were unfounded. He pointed to something specifically that McNeill had written: “Human beings do not choose their sexual orientation; they discover it as something given.” He read aloud to me passages detailing McNeill’s contention that committed relationships between those of the same sex were as “holy” as those between men and women. Presently, he was in, from what I could tell, perhaps his third or fourth “steady” relationship. But, as I told him, my generation had grown up without any heavy lingering cultural, social, or religious hang-ups about sexuality; I simply knew that I was “gay” and knew where I belonged. My friend would die of AIDS a few years later.

I never contracted HIV, nonetheless I spent much of the 1990s on a constant cycle of antibiotics, trying, sometimes ineffectually, to stave off the endless sexually transmitted infections that kept coursing through my body. When I left “gay,” not by any choice, but because of the impending reality of death, I inexplicably, and almost immediately, went to speak with a Catholic priest. I explained everything I had been through over the past decade and how I wanted to leave San Francisco and the Castro. When I finished talking, he let out a sigh and said: “But, you were born gay, that’s where you belong.” He critiqued some of my methodology, that I had gone about being “gay” in a somewhat erratic and reckless way, and that I should try to “settle down” with one man.

Today, on certain points, many priests and prelates would agree with him; one recently said: “I believe people are born the way they are born and I believe that God creates us as we are.” But, even more disturbing is this statement: “For me, this inclination is a question mark: It does not reflect the original design of God and yet it is a reality, because you are born gay.” This is probably the worst sort of misdirected paternalism in the guise of liberal mercy. It’s an epic fail: while appearing to uphold Catholic teaching that homosexuality is ultimately not part of God’s plan, at the same time, they also condemn us to it – because, after all, we were “born gay.”

In an even greater self-destructive leap, immediately following the Orlando massacre, one Florida Bishop had this to say: “...sadly it is religion, including our own, which targets, mostly verbally, and also often breeds contempt for gays, lesbians and transgender people. Attacks today on LGBT men and women often plant the seed of contempt, then hatred, which can ultimately lead to violence.”

This is decidedly not the Catholic Church and not what the Catholic Church stands for; although, I too, had to discover this for myself through trial and error. Like most “gay” men and women who crawl to the Church – we quickly discover that “pastoral” practices concerning homosexuality often depend on who you are talking to; this uncertainty in the priesthood can cause resentment, or a capitulation back to our “gay” identity – albeit in a more circumscribed form that sometimes embraces chastity. But, one thing I almost immediately knew – I did not want to go back. For, the Lord Jesus Christ had pursued me – and, on

the night of my very conversion, I was involved in a scene so dark, it went beyond any of the comparably tame encounters that routinely take place in a “gay” nightclub restroom. But, at the last moment of my life, I was given a final choice, and I chose Him. But, shouldn’t the Church offer all “gay” men and women that exact same choice? Or, must we wait until death?

Yet, to some extent, the Church has contributed to the eventual death of some gay men and women, but not in the way this Bishop from Florida is proposing. For, it is in the laxity of (and abandonment of) Catholic teachings, not in their imagined harshness, that the Church is complicit. Because, in offering no alternative to the “gay” identity – this has not bred hate, but created outright rejection. Where the Church should be a defensive refuge from the chaos, uncertainty, and violence of the world, for many “gay” men and women, the Church has actually come to symbolize this chaos and disunity – even its hypocrisy, symbolized in the all-too-public spats and sometimes malicious disagreements among the prelates during the recent Synod. Despite what appeared on paper, the Church looked conflicted and confounded. The inability of some within the Church to present a clear and concise message on homosexuality has caused many to disregard the Church outright, and to turn to the only other world they know.

Unfortunately, some in the Church, like the Bishop from Florida, continue to make the same mistakes of the past, by constantly referring to us as gay, lesbian, transgender and LGBT; we are none of those things. We were not born “gay,” and we were not born damaged; we may have been hurt along the way, but, like the rest of humanity, we can recover and heal. We do not belong to an identity, we do not belong to a movement, and we do belong to a group. So don’t talk to us as if we do. We belong to God.

Is there any one brave enough to show us the way?

I see the pictures of the dead, and they remind me of the men I used to know – who died of AIDS so long ago. They, too, thought that “gay” was where they belonged.

When will the Catholic Church welcome these men? But, not with false platitudes about being born “gay.” We must be welcomed into the Church – with Truth, and with Love.

Forty-nine precious lives were lost in one night, but since the HIV epidemic began, an estimated 311,087 “gay” men with an AIDS diagnosis have died, including an estimated 5,380 in 2012.

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 person as a “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. – Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons

Joseph Sciambra blogs at JosephSciambra.com. This article is reprinted with permission from his blog.