

Terminology Guidelines for Catholic Schools

At Courage we believe the terms “gay” and “lesbian” ARE problematic in the context of Catholic theology and anthropology. Here are some reasons why:

1) When the Church speaks of “sexual identity” and says that “everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity” (CCC 2333), she is referring to our objective identity as male and female children of God designed for complementary union with one other and for communion with others; she is not referring here to the subjective experience of same-sex attractions. If a young person who is experiencing same-sex attractions is encouraged to adopt a so-called “gay” or “lesbian” identity, he/she will begin to define himself/herself according to a different understanding of sexual identity than what the Church teaches.

2) It is greatly inadequate to describe the human person by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual attractions (CDF 1986 Letter, sect. 16). When people are encouraged to self-identify as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’, they often start to think “This is WHO I AM.” As long as a person thinks this way, he or she is prevented from seeing himself or herself as he or she really is: a rational creature of God with free will, capable by the grace of God of controlling his sexual desires and, in some instances, lessening same-sex attractions and moving towards increased heterosexual attraction.

3) The common use of the terms “gay” and “lesbian” give the impression that the homosexual condition is necessarily fixed and permanent. There is scientific and empirical evidence to the contrary.

4) Individual Catholic teenagers who are experiencing same-sex attraction do need to find a safe venue to speak with someone about their concerns and fears; however, a group setting in which young people publicly identify as “gay” or “lesbian” is not advisable. There is no need to publicly label oneself as having same-sex desires, a condition that may very well be transitory. Even if the group was private, that would also be unadvisable. Young people who are gathering specifically to identify themselves as being same-sex attracted, may actually still be conflicted about their sexuality and even striving for chastity.

5) Another common effect of self-identifying as ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ and then thinking “This is WHO I AM” is the following line of thought: “Since this is WHO I AM, I have the right to find a lover of my own sex with whom I can express my sexual feelings. The Church’s moral teaching on homosexual activity can’t be right.”

We recommend a careful reading of Fr. John Harvey’s responses to the revised edition of *Always Our Children*. It can be read [here](#). Father discusses at length the problems with the terms “gay” and “lesbian” within a Catholic context.

Young Catholics who are experiencing same-sex attractions ideally should have access to both Catholic therapists and Catholic priests who solidly support the Church’s teaching on chastity. Both the therapist and the priest should hold that some people have the potential to move towards heterosexual attraction, although a same-sex attracted person is not obliged to seek to move in

that direction and should not be forced to do so. Even if that young person finds that he or she is persistently same-sex attracted as he/she goes through life, the therapist and the priest should work together to help that young person find peace as he/she grows in interior chastity in union with Christ. It's preferable that Catholic high schools provide their students with counsellors and priests and perhaps other trustworthy adult role models who can provide one-on-one guidance in a private and confidential manner.

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