

March 9, 2020 Dear Brothers:

As you well know, following the Archdiocesan Synod, Archbishop Vigneron penned the pastoral letter, *Unleash the Gospel*, to encapsulate and mine the graces received, in answer to our prayers, through Synod 16. The Archbishop specifically directs us, in the letter's Action Step 3.3B2, to provide resources for the development of a "culture of empathy and understanding throughout the Archdiocese, according to the light of the Gospel, so that those who experience the challenges of gender identity and same-sex attraction, will find support for growing as a human person in the virtue of Christ-like chastity."

Recently, the Archbishop published a pastoral note for ministry to those who experience same-sex attraction, called [*Imitating Christ's Charity and Chastity*](#), and the Archdiocese has been taking appropriate steps to prepare for its implementation. The Archbishop has appointed priest chaplains for this important ministry with the specific charge to support and invigorate the Courage and EnCourage apostolates. This step is intended to help ensure that no one is left behind in our missionary efforts to share the Good News. As you recall, we recently gathered at Sacred Heart Major Seminary for a seminar presented by representatives from Courage International in order to become better equipped as a presbyterate to minister well to our brothers and sisters who experience same-sex attraction and to join with them more fully in our efforts to *Unleash the Gospel*.

As you know, Dignity Detroit has long operated its ministry in the Archdiocese of Detroit while rejecting some of the Church's teachings on sexual morality. These teachings, though challenging, promote human flourishing and bring joy when received with open hearts. This situation is thus a source of sadness, for those who reject the teachings deprive themselves of the blessings that come with living a life in Christ. In response to Synod 16's call to offer the Holy Spirit our "whole-hearted yes," I wish to communicate through this letter that a Mass for Dignity Detroit members – one which rejects Church teaching on human sexuality – is not possible in any parish church, chapel, or diocesan facility, and is indeed forbidden everywhere in the Archdiocese of Detroit. This will no doubt be difficult for some to hear, but it arises from heartfelt pastoral concern for members of Dignity Detroit.

As we endeavor to provide a culture of empathy and understanding throughout the Archdiocese according to the light of the Gospel, it is essential that the Church not seem to condone Dignity Detroit's competing vision for growth in holiness. While elements of that vision, such as Dignity Detroit's outreach to the poor, are commendable, the organization's rejection of the Church's teaching on chastity is incompatible with the path of sanctification on which Christ bids his Church to travel and is at odds with the important work of the Courage and EnCourage apostolates. Please be aware that I have communicated this with respect and genuine affection to the membership of Dignity Detroit, along with a heartfelt invitation for them to join us in our missionary efforts to promote the New Evangelization and to participate in a ministry to the same-sex attracted that is faithful to the teachings of Christ's Church.

This step is part of our effort to marshal all our human resources for the missionary pivot now underway in the Archdiocese of Detroit. The timeline established through the work of *Synod 16* and championed in *Unleash the Gospel* makes our path clear. I've been asked why this was not addressed previously, and I assume the answer is that a pastoral approach employing the principle of *Lex gradualitatis* was in place, though I have nothing to base this on except a presumption of charity. Beyond this presumption, I have no further information as I was not yet part of the team entrusted with this portion of pastoral care to men and women who experience same-sex attraction. But no matter how you view that earlier approach, I pray that you recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the present decision.

As Archbishop Allen Vigneron's delegate for the pastoral implementation of Action Step 3.3B2, and with his knowledge and full support, I ask for your assistance – and the assistance of all those ministering in the Archdiocese of Detroit – to ensure the pastoral care of those who experience same-sex attraction, to support the Courage and EnCourage apostolates, and to refrain from offering Mass anywhere in the Archdiocese of Detroit for Dignity Detroit, lest we confuse the faithful by seeming to endorse an alternative and contradictory path to sanctity. As we seek to leave no one behind in our missionary transformation and to help everyone entrusted to our care find salvation, please know that your support for the Courage and EnCourage apostolates, your prayers, and your pastoral concern for the men and women of Dignity Detroit, are greatly appreciated and will surely bear fruit for the kingdom of God.

Let us pray through the intercession of St. Joseph, patron of the Church and a model for us all,

Fraternally in Christ, Most Reverend Gerard W. Battersby