



Coming out of Sodom

By Eric Hess

For 12 years, my life was centered on same-sex relations. I lived it: the nightlife, the drugs and the impurities. Now, because of my good bishop, I am Catholic and happy.

As best as I can determine, my same-sex attraction began in reaction to my father, who was a violent alcoholic. He often drank, came home to throw things around the house and abuse my mother in addition to threatening me and my brother. I thought he hated us. Consequently, I didn't want to be anything like him.

In my sorrow, I started looking for the love of my father in the arms of other men. At age 17, a predator took advantage of me under the teacher/pupil dynamic and I became completely mixed up about human sexuality. Over the years, one thing led to another until I moved in with a man more than 20 years my senior.

Before we go any further, it is important to realize a major cause of same-sex attraction disorder. As a former insider of the community, I can tell you that the so-called gay rights/abortion rights coalition is a proximate result of the contraceptive mentality which was predicted 40 years ago by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*. People abusing one another as sexual objects brought about a mainstream culture of death that tolerates and advocates all kinds of adultery and child abuse, including abortion. This selfish mentality also led to human embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia.

Return to my Father

From 1990 to 1994, I went to Mass off and on. In 1995, I told my "partner" that I couldn't go anymore because I was very angry with the Church. I boxed up all my crucifixes and Bibles and dropped them off at the office of the bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin with a letter renouncing the Catholic faith.

To my surprise, Bishop Raymond Burke replied with a kind letter expressing his sadness. He wrote that he would respect my decision and notify the parish where I had been baptized. Ever so gently, Bishop Burke said that he would pray for me and look forward to the time when I would reconcile with the Church.

As one of Wisconsin's most outspoken "gay" activists, I thought, "What arrogance!" Then I replied to Bishop Burke with a letter accusing him of harassment. I told him that *his* letters were unwelcome and I asked how he could dare to write to me.

My efforts failed to put him off. Bishop Burke sent one more letter

assuring me that he wouldn't write again—but if I should want to reconcile with the Church, he would welcome me back with open arms.

Indeed, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit never gave up on me. Within a few years, I spoke to a good priest, who intensely added to Bishop Burke's prayers every day in August 1998.

On August 14, the feast of Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe and the vigil of our Blessed Mother's Assumption, divine mercy penetrated my soul at a Chinese restau-



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rant—of all places. Little did I know as I entered that restaurant with my "companion" of over eight years that the Lord would seize me that very afternoon and bring me to another place outside of Sodom, to the very judgment seat of His healing mercy, the holy Sacrament of Penance.

The priest I had consulted was there. As I gazed across the room at him, an inner voice spoke to my heart. It was gentle, radiant and clear inside my soul. The voice told me, "This priest is an image of what you can *still* become, *if you will only return to Me.*"

On the way home, I solemnly told my companion, "I need to return to the Catholic Church." Although he was tearful, he lovingly responded, "Eric, I've known that for a long time. Do what you need to do in order to be happy. I knew all along that this day would come."

Next, I called Bishop Burke's

office. His secretary knew me well by then, so I told her that I wanted Bishop Burke to be the first to know that I was returning to the Church—that I was preparing for the Sacrament of Penance. She asked me to hold. When she returned, she announced that Bishop Burke wanted to schedule a meeting.

Afterwards, I confessed my sins to a local, humble, devout Catholic pastor of souls and received absolution.

As an essential part of my

recovery, a good Catholic family gave me shelter until I could find my own home.

A month after my reconciliation to God and the Church, I went to Bishop Burke's office, where he embraced me. He asked if I remembered the belongings I had turned over to him with my letter of renunciation. Of course I remembered and Bishop Burke had saved them in the diocesan archives because he believed that I would return.

For two years, I wondered if the mystical message meant that I was supposed to become a priest. Finally, I realized that I was not called to the priesthood. After all, the Vatican rules that men who have a well-established inclination to homosexuality may not be admitted to Holy Orders or monastic communities. Rather, the priest I saw at the restaurant was an *image* of what I could become—

faithful and holy through the sacraments. Like all persons—single, married and religious—I am called to chastity. It is enough for me to try and get to heaven. Therefore, I strive to faithfully live the single vocation.

Ever since my mystical experience, I rejoice because of Raymond Burke, now the prelate of Saint Louis, Missouri. While some malign Archbishop Burke for his fidelity to God, Church and all souls, I say that he is a true shepherd of the faithful and a present-day Athanasius. I tell you that he remains a mentor and an inspiration to me. Although my own biological father rejected me, Archbishop Burke became my spiritual father by lovingly representing our Father in heaven. Like the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, *Archbishop Burke was and is absolutely faithful to me.*

The key to happiness

Despite the blessing of Archbishop Burke and priests like him, I want

to stress that there are others who lead souls away from eternal life and happiness.

For example, when I recently went to confession, a priest told me something that is both a contradistinction from and a contradiction of the truth that Archbishop Burke taught me.

The apostate priest told me:

You're gay and the Church calls us to accept our sexuality. I am an ethicist—a scholar. And the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is very close to this position—and this is the position—am I going too fast for you? If you are attracted to members of the same sex, that is natural for you. And for you to deny that and resist that is to go against natural law. I believe, as an ethicist, that you can have a male roommate and be intimate—of course without genital expression. But if you do slip in that regard, it would not be a mortal sin.

This is the type of advice that convinced me to leave the Church. I heard it all too often from Protestants and various Catholic priests during the 1980s. I heard every heresy about sexuality and our Lord. Today, since I am separated from the “gay community,” I only hear such heresies from older priests in their fifties and sixties, but not priests in their forties or younger. Bad bishops and bad priests have led so many people astray about same-sex attraction alone. Yet there is no new gospel or scholarship and this spiritual malpractice must end.

As someone who suffered in the state of mortal sin for many years, I assure you that there is no happiness outside of the moral order. The only authentic response to the challenge of same-sex attraction and sin is the truth in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

In addition to God's teachings and grace, there is visible help on earth. For those who suffer from same-sex attraction, Father John Harvey established the Courage Apostolate and Encourage, which ministers to their families and friends. It is endorsed by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family. Through Courage, strugglers find the support and healthy friendships necessary to holiness and happiness, a way fully consonant with the culture of life. See more about Courage retreats, conferences and resources at www.CourageRC.net or call its New York City office at the Church of Saint John the Baptist, 212-268-1010.

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Spiritual energizer

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with His angels in His Father's glory, and then He will repay everyone according to his conduct.”

—Matthew 16:24-27

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