

Cardinal Francis George
President, USCCB
3211 Fourth St. NE
Washington DC 20017

October 21, 2009

Dear Cardinal Francis George,

I am deeply concerned about reports of an upcoming U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on marriage that reportedly includes the following statements in its draft:

"The bishops decry the rise of same-sex marriage as 'one of the most troubling developments in contemporary culture.' Same-sex marriage 'redefines the nature of marriage and the family and, as a result harms both the intrinsic dignity of every human person and the common good of society'."

As a 43-year-old Catholic man with a homosexual orientation, I feel it important to share my own testimony with you before such statements are finalized.

I was raised in the 1970s in a very Catholic household with a great respect for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I attended Catholic grammar school, high school, and some college. Through all of these experiences, I was blessed with a close sense of God's presence in my life; I held a profound awe of His legacy through our Catholic faith traditions, His sacrifice on the cross for our sins, and His involvement in our everyday journeys.

My own journey became troubled around age thirteen. At that time, I loved God very deeply – and I began to discern an attraction to boys.

This was a private struggle for many years of adolescent research and prayer. God and I collaborated to try and make sense of the feelings I held inside. There were roadblocks at every turn: the snippets in popular media that poked fun, scorn, or hate at gays without correction; the high school priest who read aloud the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and highlighted God's condemnation without explaining modern interpretations of inhospitality; the gnawing realization that my beloved church had no sacrament to honor this love I felt at my core.

Catholic resources on the topic encouraged me to form "disinterested friendships" and to "conjoin my celibate sacrifice to Christ's own." As a teen, I prepared for this lifetime of sacrifice.

By the age of 23, consumed by a profound loneliness and lack of hope for a Catholic-sanctioned, fully realized commitment to another man, I considered taking my own life, under the erroneous assumption that God would hate the "sin" of suicide less than the "sin" of a homosexual relationship.

At that time, a book saved my life. I prayerfully discovered the memoir "The Best Little Boy in the World" by Andrew Tobias. I identified so strongly with the main character that, for the first time in my life, I realized my feelings of isolation were deceptive. The book propelled me forward on my path to self acceptance.

While that book helped me tremendously, the author was not raised within a religion – and I was not able to resolve some of my internal spiritual conflict through his words. My prayer journey continued with renewed hope. I am very grateful that, after years of reflection and discernment, in May of 2000, I was able to commit my life to another man, having the full certainty that God's grace has bound us together here on earth.

With this letter I've included a copy of my own memoir, "In Jupiter's Shadow." I believe sharing this story is the best way I can communicate the profound struggle I encountered at a very young age – and the impact church doctrine had on that struggle.

As your schedule permits, I invite you to read it with an open mind – and to consider, if you move forward with statements condemning same-sex marriage, the hope that will be deprived from future generations of GLBT Catholics due to the misguided perceptions of the past.

I welcome any comments or questions you may have. And I thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Respectfully,

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Cc:

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