

September 2015

To all US Catholic Bishops:

I am writing today because I am deeply concerned about the USCCB's official statements (in response to the June 2015 US Supreme Court ruling) indicating that US marriage equality is a 'tragic error.'

As a 49-year-old man with a homosexual orientation, raised Catholic, I feel it important to share my own testimony with you, in light of the upcoming World Meeting of Families and the October Synod.

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 complicated around age 13. At that time, I loved God very deeply—and I began to discern an attraction to other 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.

Eventually, official 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 very best way I can communicate the profound struggle I encountered at a very young age—and the impact church doctrine had on that struggle. I often hear the argument that acceptance of same-gender relationships will harm children. It has been my own experience that the reverse is true.

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-gender marriage, the hope that will be deprived from future generations of GLBT Catholics due to the misguided perceptions of the past. I honestly believe that evolution of acceptance on this issue is not a secular error, but rather a blessing in motion by the Spirit.

I appreciate that my hope to change Church doctrine with my book is a bit naive. That said, the older I get, the more I realize it is simply snowflake after snowflake that transforms the mountainside.

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

Respectfully,

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