

A Bit of Background

My wife Lucy and I are parents of four straight daughters and a gay son. When our son came out to us in 1993, our ignorance of homosexuality knew no boundaries. We were poster parents for the clueless. About the only thing we *did* know was that we loved our son, that he was a very special son and that we wanted him to be a part of our lives always.

As it turned out, we knew enough to start our journey. We would fill in the holes as we went along. That's not to imply it was easy, however; it wasn't. We found friends not knowing how to talk with us about it – perhaps not *wanting* to talk with us about it. We found a church unwilling and unable to function pastorally with us.

In time, however, we also found sound sources of information and understanding. We found a growing body of study and commentary by Catholic and non-Catholic theologians, historians, scientists and scholars. And, maybe most importantly, through organizations such as New Ways Ministry, PFLAG and Fortunate Families, we found other Catholic parents who related knowingly to our experience, shared our hopes and dreams and managed to keep their families and their faith largely intact.

Late in 2003, Lucy and I attended a New Ways Ministry workshop, where we met Mary Ellen and Casey Lopata, parents of a gay son and advocates for justice for our lesbian and gay children. Casey is the editor of a two-volume set of resource manuals titled "Seeds of Hope" and "More Seeds" – copies of which I took home from our Michigan meeting and marveled over. Energized by this workshop and enlightened by Casey's work, I visited with our pastor and ministry team about my writing an educational series on homosexuality. My hope was to educate and inform interested parents and other adults in our parish. If people outside our parish were looking for information as well, so much the better. No one is served by silence.

The eight-part series was written in a format designed for posting on our parish website – where we hoped the busy young families in our large parish would find it easily accessible, available at their convenience and always private. In February of 2004, we posted the first weekly installment – and added a new one each of the next seven weeks. From concept to finished product, I was blessed with the full support of my pastor, a knowing and pastorally gifted man who sensed keenly the grave threat this issue implies for the faith life of Catholic families and their relationship with the institutional Church.

We have made only slight editorial changes in the original version for this website presentation. Our hope is the series might shed some light, prompt some conversation and extend some hope.

Jerry Furlong
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