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Chicago Cardinal Francis George should cancel appearance at Courage conference

Maureen Fiedler | Jul. 18, 2013 NCR Today

On Wednesday, I learned Cardinal Francis George, the archbishop of Chicago, plans to celebrate Mass July 26 at the conference of Courage [1], a Catholic group that encourages lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to remain celibate in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic hierarchy.

But this year, Courage is going further -- much further. It is hosting two therapists, Bill Consiglio and Timothy Lock, affiliated with the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality [2] (NARTH), a group that promotes the view that homosexuality is a disorder that can be cured. Consiglio and Lock offer seminars for clergy and mental health providers.

The idea that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured is not only scientifically disproven, it has led to depression and even suicides among LGBT people desperate to change who they are. The American Psychiatric Association says [3] "conversion therapy," as it is commonly known, can lead to depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, and may reinforce self-hatred.

Moreover, Exodus International, a group that once touted the ability to cure homosexuality, closed its doors in mid-June [4]. The former head of Exodus, Alan Chambers, apologized to LGBT people [5] for "the pain and hurt many of you have experienced."

In addition, psychiatrist Robert Spitzer apologized in 2012 [6] for a study he did that was used to justify conversion therapy, research he now says was scientifically unsound.

Regardless of the Roman Catholic hierarchy's teachings on homosexuality, Cardinal George should dissociate himself from these bogus and harmful medical techniques.

In fact, he might tell Courage to get some real courage and cancel the speakers from NARTH.

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