

A Resource For An Inclusive Community

A Teacher's Guide For and About Persons With Same Sex Attractions

At the outset we want to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board who have done most of the spade-work for this document, from whom we have borrowed liberally, and without whom we would not be in a position to present our own resource for an inclusive community to the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association.

June 13, 2001

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An Ecclesial Context

- 1) We are not presenting the definitive text on Catholic sexual morality in general. Our focus is a rather narrow one, i.e. a teacher's guide for dealing with persons with same-sex attractions. In the reading and application of this resource we ask that a number of considerations be kept in mind.
- 2) First, and foremost, we want to highlight the theology and spirituality of communion. The Apostolic Letter **Novo Millennio Ineunte** (par. 43) of our Holy Father gives voice to the Church's sense of her need to "put out into the deep for a catch" and to face the challenges of the future.
 - a. *To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.*
 - b. *But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up.*
 - c. *A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.*
 - d. *A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me". This makes us able to share*

their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.

- e. *A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me".*
 - f. *A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.*
 - g. *Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.*
- 3) Secondly, we explicitly affirm the Church's teaching on homosexuality.
 - 4) All persons, whether homosexual or heterosexual, share the same rights and dignity and are called to live as God's children. In its document, **"On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons"** (1986), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith affirms this truth, and condemns treatment that violates it.
 - 5) The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Everyone living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today the church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God and, by grace, his child and heir to eternal life. (#16)
 - 6) It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard to others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law. (#10)
 - 7) Furthermore, a distinction must be made between homosexual orientation and homosexual genital acts. In general, sexual orientation is not freely chosen and is, therefore, not sinful. The expression of sexual orientation in specific acts, however, does involve moral issues, as is indicated in **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**:

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (2357)

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition (2358).

- 8) Although the Catechism does say that a homosexual orientation is "intrinsically disordered," it is homosexual genital acts that are immoral.

"Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder." (#3 PCHP)

- 9) Sexual genital expression is reserved for married couples so that children which may result from this union of minds, hearts and bodies can be nurtured in a stable loving relationship. Any sexual genital expression outside the context of marriage is morally wrong. The church teaches that extra-marital, pre-marital and homosexual acts are morally wrong.

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (2359).

- 10) All of us are called to give witness to chastity, and with God's grace, to the avoidance of behaviours which are contrary to God's loving purpose in our lives.
- 11) Thirdly, parents and educators should not assume that same-sex attractions during adolescence are necessarily indicative of a fundamental homosexual orientation. It is not uncommon for young people to experience strong feelings or crushes on individuals of the same sex, or to have little overt interest in members of the opposite sex. Identity is particularly fluid during adolescence, and questions related to sexual orientation must be treated with great caution and sensitivity. What is communicated in educational settings or in families can profoundly affect individual students. All young people need compassion, understanding, acceptance, clear moral guidance, and, above all, time as they meet the challenge of integrating their sexuality.
- 12) Finally, there is more to a person than one's sexual attractions. To refer to a person as "gay" or "lesbian" in our culture is not only to use politically charged language but to succumb to a reductionist way of speaking about someone else. Such labeling is not only inaccurate but tends to re-enforce and, in some cases, legitimate an arrested psycho-sexual development. We should seek to be more precise in our language and work towards the day when we will be able to even avoid using the term "homosexual" as a noun, or as an adjective directly describing the person (i.e. the homosexual person). Although it will take more words, we should seek to speak of "persons with same-sex attractions."

Pastoral Distinctions and Notes

- 13) In every class, in every school throughout our School Districts, there may be students who are not being given an equal education. Students may be discriminated against for various reasons: ethnic background, colour, sex, beliefs, etc.
- 14) If educators are committed to helping the whole child become a mature, responsible member of society, then we must take action to meet the intellectual, spiritual, social and ethical needs of all students.
- 15) In this document, we are referring especially and particularly to a hidden minority: the students who are attracted to same sex persons.
- 16) However, in light of the current societal and educational concerns for minorities, now is the appropriate time to face and address the issue of sexual orientation. We hope this support document will help to open minds and hearts to all persons we encounter in our journey. We are particularly addressing teachers, students and support staff in our schools.
- 17) In our call by God to be fully alive and human we are all called to share with others. To share aspects of our lives, our aspirations, make us truly human. We must strive to establish a good environment for all students regardless of sexual orientation.

Discrimination

- 18) Catholic teaching states clearly that unjust discrimination based on sexual orientation is immoral and not permissible for Christians. We hope this document will help us to give mutual support to all persons within our school communities which will assist us in our struggle to build the kingdom of God, a kingdom where people choose knowledge over ignorance, wisdom over fear, a loving community over loneliness and isolation, and service over domination.
- 19) Discrimination based on sexual orientation is a strong negative attitude toward homosexuals or homosexuality. It takes many forms: fear of associating with homosexuals, an irrational fear of being considered a homosexual, a violent dislike or hatred of homosexual persons, vulgar and abusive language and jokes about homosexuals, condemnation, discrimination and even persecution of homosexuals.
- 20) Unjust discrimination against homosexual persons is widespread in our society. The Church teaches that such unjust discrimination is immoral and not permissible for Christians. In all areas of civil rights Christians must be careful to safeguard the rights of homosexual persons - and to eliminate discrimination. This teaching on non-discrimination will require much education of all members of the Church community.
- 21) Discrimination occurs on three levels: personal, institutional, and societal.

Personal:

- 22) Personal attitudes and beliefs make individuals, fear, dislike and avoid groups of people because of an unidentified difference and stereotypes about what those people are like. Accurate information and personal experience with individuals from the feared group can begin to change these beliefs and attitudes. In this

way people may be able to accept individual differences and provide services without judgment.

Institutional:

- 23) Discrimination at the institutional level results in unequal access to services. Schools and other agencies have often been structured to meet the needs of the dominant group, with the expectation that the needs of all people are the same. For youth with same-sex attractions this institutional bias may take the form of denying their existence or assuming that all clients or students are heterosexual.

Societal:

- 24) A third level of discrimination also takes place; societal organization that excludes members of marginalized groups from equal participation in the benefits and responsibilities open to members of the dominant group.
- 25) Societal discrimination both creates and perpetuates inequality because without equal access to the same supports and rights many individuals do not have equal opportunities to develop their potential as individuals. Social and health care services that deny or ignore the existence of young people with same-sex attractions among their client populations fail to provide support for a group that is at high risk and frequently most in need of support.
- 26) Discrimination not only contributes to the economic costs of dealing with the consequences of inequality - increased crime, homelessness, drug use and illness - it also deprives society as a whole of the contribution that excluded groups could make to our economic, cultural and intellectual life.
- 27) Discrimination based on sexual orientation in any form, not only oppresses homosexuals but heterosexuals as well.
- 28) Breaking the cycle involves work on all three levels of discrimination; changing personal attitudes, making institutions more accessible, and building an inclusive society wherein all share in the benefits and responsibilities according to their state in life. The Catholic community more and more is standing with those who are working for the acceptance and rights of homosexual persons.

Confidentiality:

- 29) If a student decides to talk with you about their sexual orientation, they will need a safe haven where they won't be judged and where they can be assured that the information discussed will remain confidential. It is unlikely that everything can be discussed or resolved in a single meeting. It is a process that will take some time and a great deal of understanding. The student will discuss what they feel comfortable with and it is best to follow their lead. It is not advisable to ask intrusive questions since your student may view these questions as invading their privacy. If a trusting relationship is established, the student will be able to bring up those issues which are of concern to them.
- 30) Your most important task will be to listen and to provide as accurate information as possible, when asked to do so.
- 31) Any information given to students in the process of counselling must reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church.

- 32) It may be necessary to speak with colleagues or other resource people to gain more information. When doing so, it is essential to discuss things in ways in which the student can not be identified.
- 33) In some situations, your student may talk about their extreme sadness or feeling of hopelessness. It is not easy to make judgments about the depth of a person's depression or suicidal thoughts. Don't operate alone in situations where you are feeling uneasy. Contact the psychologist or social worker, who works in your school, and talk over your concerns. Once again, it is possible to discuss issues without mentioning the student's name. They may be able to give you some direction to follow or they may be able to help you in making a referral, if this seems necessary. A psychologist, priest or social worker will also be able to advise you when issues of safety may need to take precedence over confidentiality.

Trust and Disclosure

- 34) Students with a same-sex orientation often have experienced a world that is cruel and dangerous. They may have felt that their lives were "secret", not valid and may have experienced a sense of "only-ness". Such students, just like straight students, examine their feelings, their lives and those of the people around them. In their search for a whole and healthy life, many seek the emotional support of a trusted adult. Often, this adult may not be the parent first, but a teacher.
- 35) A teacher who is entrusted with the story and the feelings of a student is truly privileged. That the student would approach the teacher is a statement, in itself, of the student's confidence in the teacher's ability to accept and understand, rather than curse, his/her experience. The teacher has a responsibility to see that trust is upheld throughout the student's process of coming to terms with his/her sexuality.
- 36) Sexual awareness is an on-going process that begins with personal awareness and gradual acceptance of one's sexual orientation which unfolds and often is subject to changes in adolescence. For some, this awareness is a time of shame, fear, self-denial and suicidal thoughts. When a young person has the confidence to disclose, there are a number of things we can do to further the path of openness and trust.
- 37) The teacher who has gained the trust of students with same-sex attractions will be one who practices respect for all individuals, communicates his or her views specifically and confidently and is open to listening to the views, feelings and needs of others. A teacher who knows that the issues of homosexuality are personal and are issues of justice and morality, as well, and whose resources of knowledge and spirit are visible to all, will be trusted. A person striving to live in Christian love is called to listen with compassion to all students.
- 38) The disclosure process can be supported by being a model of Christian assertiveness. Support can be provided by helping the student be specific about her/his issues. The trusted teacher may need to explore the following issues with the disclosing student: confusion about sex, self-image, support systems, information availability, life-context, motivations for disclosure, roles of relationship, their sexuality and their faith.
- 39) To nourish life is truly the greatest co-operative act the teacher can achieve.

Some Questions and Answers About Same Sex Attractions

1. What is homosexuality?

- 40) Sexual orientation is an essential aspect of every person's sexuality, and like gender it is a constitutive element of the whole person. Sexual orientation is defined by one's primary romantic, emotional, psychological, and social interest, whether or not that is overtly expressed. Homosexuality is much more than sexual behaviour between persons of the same sex. Homosexuality is a persistent pattern of emotional and physical attraction toward someone of the same sex. Homosexual persons have a full range of inter-personal relationships, just as heterosexual people do.
- 41) The word "homosexual" can be used to describe one aspect of a person's make-up. It can not, however, be used to truly name the whole person. Identifying people who are homosexual (among all their other characteristics) by their sexual orientation reduces the complex dimensions of their humanity to an interest in sex alone.

2. What causes homosexuality?

- 42) There are two basic theories about the origins of homosexuality: nature or nurture. Some biologist and geneticists believe, for example, that our sexual orientation is imprinted in our brain, before birth, as a result of hereditary factors. Part of the support for this position is that identical twins, who have been raised in different households, usually have the same sexual orientation. Furthermore, geneticists often find clusters of homosexual persons within families. On the other hand, the social learning theorists argue that environmental factors (i.e., being labeled as "gay" by others, early sexual experience, societal attitudes, etc.) can contribute to homosexual development among children.
- 43) Regardless of the theoretical position taken, there does seem to be consensus that it is difficult, if not impossible for an individual to change their sexual orientation. We have already learned that left-handed people are not able to change their hand preference. We have also learned that past attempts to force children to use their right hand were misguided and may have been harmful. In a similar way, most professionals no longer accept the notion that homosexuality is something that can or should be fixed. The consensus is to help youth with same-sex attractions develop self acceptance and recover from the trauma of growing up in hostile environments.

3. Isn't homosexuality just an adolescent phase?

- 44) It is believed that all young people go through a phase of attraction to others of the same sex. Although it is true that many older children and young teens prefer to be with peers of the same sex, this has more to do with socialization than sexual orientation. Some research suggests that sexual orientation is set before adolescence. Most teenagers are aware of their heterosexual or homosexual feelings, while others need extra time to resolve confusion regarding their sexual identity.

- 45) Frequently, teenagers with a homosexual attraction will date members of the opposite sex in order to fit in or to test their feelings. They may pass as heterosexual until they feel safe to "come out" and develop relationships with people of the same sex. Many persons deny their same-sex attractions; others continue to seek self understanding; and some teenagers report with certainty that they have a homosexual orientation. When asked when they first became aware of their sexual orientation, homosexual persons usually say they "always knew".

4. How does a person know that he or she is homosexual?

- 46) Understanding one's sexual orientation develops over a number of years, evolving from confusion to self-acceptance. Homosexual persons often recall feeling different from their peers during childhood, although that difference is not attributed to sexuality until years later. During puberty, identity confusion usually accompanies the onset of sexual attractions toward people of the same sex. The confusion is the result of dissonance between the person's inner feelings and the presentation of the world as heterosexual. Several years or more may elapse before he/she resolves confusion and adopts a homosexual identity. Additional time may be needed to integrate sexual feelings into a positive self identity. Acceptance is characterized by personal satisfaction, pride regarding one's sexual orientation, and energy to develop intimate relations. The process of identity acquisition is not a linear and orderly progression. It is a roller coaster struggle which hopefully results in positive self-acceptance.

5. Do adolescents choose to be homosexual?

- 47) No. As was previously mentioned, sexual orientation results from a complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors. Many theorists believe that sexual orientation is set by the time the child enters school. However, the individual may not become aware of their sexual feelings until they reach their teen years and experience puberty. Just as we can't choose the colour of our skin, we are also not able to choose our sexual orientation. What is a matter of choice is one's acceptance, self-esteem, and the way one lives out one's self-understanding.

6. Do homosexual teenagers have more problems than heterosexual teenagers?

- 48) In general, homosexuals are no more prone to having problems than the heterosexual population. Most professionals agree that homosexuality is neither an illness nor an emotional disorder. Some may experience other psychological problems due to society's pervasive negative attitude toward homosexuality.
- 49) Society's maltreatment of homosexual people ranges from subtle put-downs to public acts of violence. Because of social intolerance, teenagers with same-sex attractions are at risk for developing other psycho-social problems, such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, poor self-image, and lack of confidence. Confusion about sexual orientation, coupled with fears of disapproval or rejection, often leaves them feeling that they have no options and no one to turn to for support. Heterosexual youth who are subjected to similar forms of

ostracism, discrimination, social isolation and violence are at equal risk of developing similar psycho-social problems.

7. Do homosexual people look different from heterosexual people?

- 50) It is impossible to identify someone's sexual identity based on their physical appearance or mannerisms. Many teenagers hide their feelings from others in order to fit in. They may go to great lengths to look and act like everybody else. They can be the stars of the football team or cheerleading squad - teen fathers and mothers. Gender-atypical teenagers (feminine boys or masculine girls) may have either a heterosexual or homosexual orientation. Yet out of ignorance, these youth are often assumed to be homosexual and brutally mistreated by homophobic peers.

8. What kinds of lifestyles do homosexual people have?

- 51) Homosexuals are no different from heterosexuals except for one thing: they are attracted emotionally and sexually to persons of the same sex. They can be found in every occupation, race, religion, colour and socioeconomic class. They are found in cities, rural areas, in professional sports, in government and in private business. They are virtually unrecognizable as homosexuals unless they want to be recognized as such. In some cities, homosexuals have come together to form concentrated communities to support each other and unite against discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- 52) Homosexual relationships cover an entire range of commitments, just as heterosexual relationships do. Some homosexuals marry heterosexuals and raise families; some form long-lasting and committed homosexual relationships. Some homosexuals may enter marriage to hide their orientation to meet the expectations of family and friends. Other homosexuals may enter marriage in an attempt to "cure" their sexual orientation. Many of these marriages will exist for a lifetime, whether or not the spouse learns of their partner's sexual orientation. Other marriages are at high risk for failure as it becomes increasingly difficult for the spouse with a same-sex orientation to be less than honest with their partner.

9. How do I recognize a homosexual teenager?

- 53) You can't, but if you are sensitive to homosexual issues, the distressed teenager might recognize you. Using unrealistic stereotypes to identify homosexual teenagers not only excludes most of them from consideration, but it also perpetuates the erroneous association between homosexuality and gender atypicality. They come from all backgrounds and are identical to their heterosexual peers in interests, behaviours and appearance. Distressed homosexual teenagers act like distressed heterosexual teenagers. They may exhibit substance abuse, depression, anti-social behaviour or declining school performance. Well adjusted homosexual teenagers act like well, adjusted heterosexual teenagers. They may be a happy, average student, a member of student council, a peer helper, a cashier at your supermarket, etc.
- 54) An understanding adult will discuss and discourage the types of attitudes, language and behaviours which discriminate against youth with same-sex attractions. An understanding adult can convey openness to sexuality issues by

displaying sensitive books or pamphlets in offices or classrooms, mentioning homosexual issues in conversation, and by using inclusive and respectful language. It is important for a teenager to recognize an adult who is willing and able to help.

10. How does one's sexual orientation impact on the family?

- 55) Based on misinformation, many parents believe themselves to be responsible for their child's sexual orientation. They may experience fears and anxieties about their children's happiness and health. In our society there is a lack of a belief that children with a same-sex orientation can develop into happy and successful adults. We also lack the belief that parents can enjoy a good relationship with a homosexual son or daughter. When parents and families lack these constructive beliefs they tend to view themselves as failures and view their offspring as deviant. The unfortunate consequence is that many parents and family members end up rejecting their child. Rejections by one's parents and family is devastating, whether or not one's straight or homosexual.

11. Where can a homosexual person go for information or support?

- 56) "Courage" is an apostolate of the Roman Catholic Church whose purpose is to minister to those with same-sex attractions and their loved ones (<http://www.CourageRC.net/>).
- 57) Furthermore, diocesan offices, usually through life and family ministry programs, should know of resources and personnel, as well as support groups that can be helpful. Most populated areas also have a number of telephone help-lines where information regarding current organizations can be obtained. And many major cities have medical clinics that can deal with the health needs of homosexuals in an understanding and non-condemning atmosphere.
- 58) A word of caution when contacting agencies: you may wish to determine whether the recommendations of the organization are compatible with your Catholic beliefs, culture or family values.

12. Do homosexuals hate and fear the opposite sex?

- 59) It seems appropriate to understand sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) as a deep-seated dimension of one's personality and to recognize its relative stability in a person. A homosexual orientation produces a stronger emotional and sexual attraction toward individuals of the same sex, rather than toward those of the opposite sex. It does not rule out interest in, care for, and attraction toward members of the opposite sex.

13. Are homosexuals a threat to others?

- 60) Homosexual persons, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. They should be full, equal, participating members of the Christian community.

14. Are homosexuals condemned by the Church?

- 61) We cannot judge the spiritual condition of another because we cannot know the other's subjective disposition before God.

"Circumstances may exist ... which would reduce or remove the culpability of the individual in a given instance." (Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," #11)

"Although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God." (Catechism of the Catholic Church," 1861)

- 62) God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual. God's love is always and everywhere offered to those who are open to receiving it. St. Paul's words offer great hope:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39)

15. Can we or should we attempt to change a person's homosexual orientation?

- 63) Church documents do not encourage a homosexual person to change their orientation. Perhaps the reason is that such change is truly rare. But it is important to note that such change - particularly in the psychological area of therapy - is highly controversial, requires the highest motivation, can be costly and its outcome might very well fail.
- 64) If a homosexual person wants to seek change, we should support him or her. But to advocate such an approach is not warranted by official teaching. (So-called change therapies are highly controversial and do not guarantee change. An apparent "cure" often leads homosexual persons into marriage and family life. When the homosexuality "comes back", it can be a tragedy for the heterosexual person and his or her spouse and children.)
- 65) There seems to be no single cause of a homosexual orientation. A common opinion of experts is that there are multiple factors - genetic, hormonal, psychological - that may give rise to it. Generally, homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen. By itself, therefore, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for morality presumes the freedom to choose. (Always Our Children, NCCB, October 1997, A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children p.6)

Practical Suggestions

66) What Staff Can Do

- access accurate information about homosexuality
- not tolerate remarks or harassment in class
- take strong disciplinary action against those who victimize youth with same sex attractions (see Code of Behaviour)
- identify and develop strategies to counteract negative images and stereotypes
- provide an atmosphere of respect for all students
- be involved in working for school wide support for understanding and tolerance
- provide a safe learning environment

67) What Staff Can Do For Students

- recognize that homosexual youth have a right to their identities
- acknowledge the feelings of the person coming out
- assure the student of confidentiality where appropriate
- understand that friends and family may require a level of readiness before a homosexual person comes out to them
- acquaint yourself with good resources available for and about homosexual youth
- listen and offer non-judgmental responses that will welcome further dialogue
- be prepared to refer the student to agencies that can assist in assuring a healthy and safe coming out
- provide information regarding the teaching of the Catholic faith community re: sexual orientation
- give guidance to students regarding chastity

68) What Schools Can Do

- provide accurate information about homosexuality
- provide inservice
- promote a positive image of all persons regardless of sexual orientation
- provide curriculum materials that include relevant information pertaining to human sexuality, health, literature and social studies
- provide classes on critical health issues such as AIDS
- take responsibility for protecting youth with same-sex attractions from abuse and provide a safe learning environment
- provide counselling services that are sensitive to the needs and concerns of youth

69) What Parents Can Do

- access accurate information about homosexuality
- let the child know that he/she is still loved and cared about as an individual regardless of sexual orientation (see document Always Our Children)

70) **What Students Can Do**

- access accurate information about homosexuality
- revise personal attitudes and behaviours
- speak out against discriminatory behaviour
- respect homosexual peers
- be a positive role model of promoting the dignity of all persons