

40, in which Jesus gave the two greatest commandments: to love God with all your heart, soul & mind & to love your neighbor as yourself

SEXUALITY • breaking the silence

...ing you all he wants you to do is love him back”

...n which homosexuals to develop such negative feelings.

...rs. “A lot of people don’t think it’s normal. Some of my friends think it’s a sick mental disease,” Tim, 17, remarked. “So many people are totally against it; they’ll beat a person up.”

... Chris and Tim were among a large group of teens who engaged in a heated debate about homosexuality during a recent youth-group meeting at Assumption of the Assumption in Fairport. According to Assumption’s Max Denler, it was impossible to get a consensus agreement on the subject.

...l years, though he is, Mike’s insight into the reasons for the self-harm of many people is a lead

...“There’s such a wide spectrum of issues,” he said. Some of those issues are sparked by varying views on homosexual activity — and the acceptance of homosexuals — among Catholics.

...Official church teaching on homosexuality had been made clear in a number of documents put out by the Vatican and the U.S. Catholic bishops in recent years. In a 1986 letter to the world’s bishops, for example, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith pointed out that the “inclination” toward homosexuality is not a sin, but that homosexual activity is.

Chris echoed this position by

“It’s important to start talking about it. The silence has led teens to think, ‘Nobody loves me. Maybe God doesn’t love me, either, so I’m going to think about killing myself.’”

quoting Leviticus 18:22: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination.”

And Assumption’s Amy Rivenburgh, 17, reasoned that if God had wanted widespread homosexuality, “He would have made only men or only women.”

But while Amy feels that homosexual activity is a sin, she does not hold grudges against people with homosexual orientations.

“I believe in loving the sinner but not loving the sin,” Amy said. “I don’t think Jesus died or the cross for everybody except homosexuals.”

Amy said that it’s not up to us to decide how homosexuals should be punished — or if they should be punished at all.

“Only God knows,” she said. Amy added that she knows of teachers at Fairport High School who are openly gay, but she doesn’t think any less of them.

“I’ve got to deal with my own sins before I can go dealing with somebody else’s,” she said.

Assumption’s Allison Porray, 15, isn’t even so convinced that homosexual activity is an actual sin. She explained that she has a lesbian friend who asserts that she was born with a homosexual orientation.

Despite the 1986 letter from the Vatican, Allison believes, “It has nothing to do with the church.”

“They challenged me on it, but they pushed me deeper into the closet,” he said.

Interestingly, Amy noted, society seems to accept many forms of sexual activity that go against church teachings — as long as they occur between a man and a woman.

Recalling actor Hugh Grant’s arrest earlier this year for soliciting a female prostitute, Amy remarked that Grant’s public image did not suffer noticeably. However, she pointed out, “If he had gotten a male prostitute instead of a female, I guess he probably wouldn’t have gotten a job again.”

Allison stated that a mere mention or suspicion of homosexuality will be enough for people to prejudice somebody they are meeting for the first time.

“You just think, ‘Oh, that person’s gay,’” Allison said.

Mike at the University of Rochester does his best to overcome these biases, he said, by simply being himself.

“(Being homosexual) is a part of who I am, but it’s not all of who I am,” Mike said. “I can go to a party where I am the only gay person and have a good time with all my straight friends. But some people can’t handle that.”

Mike added that he’s a regular participant in his campus Catholic community. “As far as I’m concerned, I’m always working toward the Christian ideal in making myself a giving and forgiving person,” he remarked.

He said that his Christian philosophy is shaped by Matthew 22:37-40, in which Jesus gave the two greatest commandments: to love God with all your heart, soul and mind; and to love your neighbor as yourself. Mike emphasized that Jesus meant that commandment for everyone,

regardless of sexual orientation.

Asked if he feels that God loves him, Mike replied, “Of course. Jesus never stops loving you; all he wants you to do is love him back.”

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