Immaculate Conception Church
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Brothers and Sisters of Immaculate Conception Church,

I am told that an article on gay celibate priests for which I have been interviewed and photographed has appeared while I am out of town on a long ago scheduled 8 day silent retreat. Here is the story, which I shared with the Parish Council, Finance Board, and parish staff, when I came to Clarksville in 2015:

I was blessed by Bishop Choby with a leave of absence in 2014, which gave me space to share with my entire family and all my friends and the good folks with whom I have shared in the ministry of the Church, who already knew that I am a Catholic priest (now for 21 years) and celibate, that I am also gay. I have also shared this with Bishop Spalding. Turning 63 this year, I accepted this discovery at the age of 33.

One of my brothers asked then an honest question, "So, why do you want to be known as gay? You're celibate; you're not in a relationship; you're not going to be in a relationship; so what difference does it make?" My response was and is, "Exactly, what difference does it make?"

One of my crosses over the years has been an ongoing struggle with depression. I have referred to this in preaching, adult education, retreat experiences, and in spiritual direction. Blessed to have a medication with few side effects, I am very aware that not all who struggle with depression are so fortunate. Prayer, exercise, eating well, rest, and time with family and friends are my self-care responsibilities. In prayer and counseling I also discerned a clear call to be open about being gay and celibate as I seek to live in healthy integrity. As the old maxim goes, we are as sick as our secrets. I gave the closet a real try, and it became for me unhealthy.

The response to all this was a mostly consistent "Oh. Oh! Really!...well good for you. Now get back to work!" I will always be grateful to Bishop Choby for his care and support in my desire to remain active in this vocation of being a parish priest, and for the welcome and acceptance I have found from Bishop Spalding and from so many of you at Immaculate Conception Parish. I continue to feel great compassion, for both the faithful Catholic seeker of God who as LGBTQ at times feels disrespected, and the faithful defender of traditions who at times feels threatened. I still believe common ground can always be found at the altar of Jesus, and in teachings such as paragraph 1782 of our Catechism, on religious freedom. I still have hope.

If you would like to discuss this one on one, I would be happy to meet when I return on February 22. It remains an honor to serve you here.

Peace in Jesus Christ,

Rev. Steve Wolf