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For the Immaculate Conception Parish Council:

A leave of absence from parish ministry last Fall 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 eighteen years and celibate and still both of these, that I am also gay. Now 59, I accepted this discovery at the age of 33.

One of my seven brothers asked a direct 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 a gay celibate as I seek to live in healthy integrity. As the old maxim goes, we are as sick as our secrets. Keeping the gay part of who I am in the closet was for me unhealthy.

The response to all this has been a consistent, "Oh. Oh! Really!...well good for you. Now get back to work!" I am grateful for Bishop Choby's ongoing care and support in my desire to remain active as a parish priest, and am feeling great compassion for both the faithful LGBT Catholic seeker of God who is at times feeling disrespected and the faithful defender of traditions who is at times feeling threatened. Common ground can always be found around Jesus, and perhaps in something like paragraph 1782 of our Catechism, on religious freedom. I have hope; may we be not afraid.

I am feeling happily welcome at Immaculate Conception, am doing well in the move, and would be happy to discuss any of this with you in private.

All God's blessings,

