

BONDINGS

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Spring 2011

Md.'s top leaders cross Catholic hierarchy on gay marriage

By John Wagner
The Washington Post
February 25, 2011

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley regularly attends a weekday Mass and has sent his four children to Catholic schools.

House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D-Anne Arundel) used to teach and coach at his old Catholic high school in Annapolis.

Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Calvert) grew up serving as an altar boy in the idyllic wood-frame Catholic church his family helped build in Clinton.

But the presence of three Catholics at the helm in Annapolis hasn't stopped a same-sex marriage bill from wending its way through the legislature, triggering deep disappointment among church leaders as it suggests a waning of Catholic influence in this heavily Catholic state.

The legislation won final passage Thursday night in the Senate on a 25 to 21 vote, setting the stage for debate

starting Friday in the House of Delegates, traditionally the more liberal chamber on social policy. Supporters there say they remain a couple of votes shy of a majority but were optimistic that they would pick up the backing.

O'Malley (D) has pledged to sign the bill if it reaches his desk. Busch has said he will vote for it in the House. And although Miller voted against the bill in the Senate on Thursday, he had moved to head off a filibuster attempt by opponents so that it could move forward.

Maryland, which emerged as a beacon for Catholics during its Colonial days, would join five other states and the District in allowing same-sex couples to marry.

In a recent interview, O'Malley said his Catholic beliefs serve as the underpinning for much of what he does in public life.

But, he said, "the vocation I've chosen for these last several years has been a vocation that requires one to be of service to others in an arena of compromise. It is a different vocation than the vocation that a bishop or a cardinal



Governor Martin O'Malley

chooses to fulfill, and rightfully so."

Mary Ellen Russell, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, a leading opponent of same-sex marriage, said she has been distressed by the debate and the governor's decision.

"It's always troubling when someone in such a public position openly disagrees with the church," she said, calling defeat of the legislation "a critically important issue for the church."

A few hundred Catholic priests and laity lobbied lawmakers Monday night on same-sex marriage and other issues as part of an annual event organized by the Maryland Catholic Conference.

Maryland arguably wouldn't be the most Catholic state to allow gay nuptials.

Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire all have a higher per-

centage of Catholics than Maryland, which has 27 percent, according to a 2008 national survey. A similar percentage of Maryland legislators are Catholics.

During the debate Thursday, Sen. Robert J. Garagiola (D-Montgomery) said the bill would provide gay couples the same rights he and his wife have enjoyed since their marriage in a Catholic church 14 years ago.

"It's an historic day for equal justice under the law," he said.

Several of his colleagues countered that marriage should be reserved for couples who can fit their definition of "procreation" and urged the Senate not to broaden the bounds of traditional marriage.

Sen. Edward R. Reilly (R-Anne Arundel) read from a bulletin distributed in churches by the Maryland Catholic Conference recently that referred to "the unique union of one man and one woman."

Beyond the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Maryland, there is another potent religious force in the state opposed to same-sex marriage: African American churches.

Some of the most vocal opponents in Thursday's Senate debate were raised in Maryland's black churches.

"Here's my question: Where does it stop?" asked Sen. C. Anthony Muse (D-Prince George's), who is senior pastor of

(Continued on page 10)



Delegate Heather Mizeur explains a point to a participant at New Ways Ministry's conference in Baltimore.

New Ways Ministry discusses gay marriage during conference

By Frederick N. Rasmussen
The Baltimore Sun
February 20, 2011

Several speakers voiced support for marriage equality for Roman Catholic gay and lesbian couples during New Ways Ministry's all-day conference in Pikesville on Saturday — a view not shared by the Vatican.

But the 70 attendees were buoyed by the hope that the amended version of the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act, approved by a Senate committee Thursday and headed to the full Senate for debate, would soon make Maryland the sixth state to recognize same-sex marriages.

New Ways Ministry, a Maryland-based national Roman Catholic organization, proclaims that it works for justice and equality for lesbian and gay people. Keynote speaker Del. Heather Mizeur, a Montgomery County Democrat, said, "Marylanders are fair-minded people, and they will stand up with us, and truly make Maryland the Maryland Free

State."

Mizeur, a Roman Catholic lesbian who married her spouse, Deborah, five years ago in California, said, "We will counter our opponents' extremism with love, and that's why we're going to win." The Maryland Catholic Conference, based in Annapolis, is against the legislation.

"We're opposed to Senate Bill 116," said Kathy Dempsey, the organization's communications director, in an interview. "We favor marriage between one man and one woman."

The Catholic Church's official stance is that sexual activity between people of the same gender is not permitted and it therefore opposes same-sex marriage. During the conference at the Pikesville Hilton, Mizeur related the anxiety and pain she felt when she was in college and was fearful of telling a priest who was both a religious counselor and a close friend that she was a lesbian.

"I knew he'd go into a meltdown, and when I told him, he withdrew from

(Continued on page 10)

Book Makes Positive Catholic Case for Marriage Equality

MOUNT RAINIER, Maryland—Catholics' strong support for marriage equality for lesbian and gay couples is the thesis of a new book which examines this controversial topic from theological and political perspectives.

Marriage Equality: A Positive Catholic Approach by Francis DeBernardo is published by New Ways Ministry, a national Catholic organization which works for justice and equality for lesbian and gay people. DeBernardo serves as New Ways Ministry's Executive Director.

Written in question and answer format, the book dispels the myth that Catholic lay people follow the bishops' public opposition to same-gender marriage. Quite the opposite is true, with Catholic people leading all Christian denominations in their support for lesbian/gay rights.

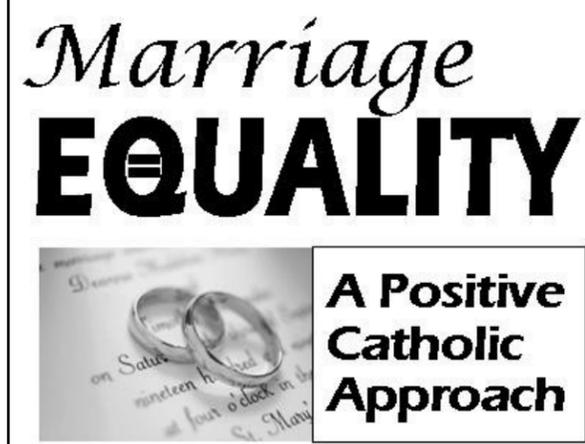
The book examines the particular case in Maryland, where marriage equality legislation is currently being considered by state lawmakers. With a population that is 23% Catholic (the largest denomination in the state), Maryland is a good barometer for the Catholic electorate nationally. As the author points out,

a 2009 poll indicates that the strong support for same-gender marriage among Maryland's Catholic population mirrors national statistics for Catholics as well. (A plurality of 49% of Maryland Catholics favor legislative action that would allow gay and lesbian couples to marry.)

In addition to statistical information, the book makes the case, based on theological evidence and church documents, that the views of lay people are authentically Catholic positions. It describes some of the ways that Catholic attitudes about sexuality have been changing over

the past several decades, with an emerging consensus that same-gender relationships are holy and should be legalized. The main text of the book is interspersed

with statements from Catholics, explaining why they have taken a positive stand towards marriage equality. Some prominent names include: Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former lieutenant governor of Maryland, and Sister Jeannette Gramick, a pioneer in pastoral ministry to lesbian and gay Catholics. Lesbian/gay couples and single people, and their parents, also are represented. †



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Bondings is a seasonal publication designed to keep our subscribers informed of issues that pertain to lesbian and gay people and the Catholic Church.

Founded in 1977, New Ways Ministry is an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic gay and lesbian community and the institutional structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

New Ways Ministry seeks to eradicate prevalent myths and stereotypes about homosexuality and supports civil rights for lesbian and gay persons in society.

New Ways Ministry
4012 29th Street
Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712



STATEMENT ON LGBT TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT SUICIDES

Staff of the 8th Day Center for Justice
8thdaycenter.org
January 2011

The 8th Day Center for Justice mourns the number of Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered, and Bisexual teen and young adult suicides that have been occurring over the past months. These suicides have been the result of bullying from their peers in school and a society that prioritizes heterosexuality. We believe the teachings of the Church and the behavior of some members of the Church hierarchy have added to this atmosphere of bullying and intimidation.

Here are a few examples:

1) The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex... 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... Under no circumstances can they be approved" (#2357).

2) The bishops of Minnesota mailed nearly 400,000 DVDs to Catholics throughout the state in order to prevent the redefinition of civil marriage to include same-sex partnerships. In this DVD, emphasis was placed on the nature of marriage as a life-long and potentially procreative union between a man and woman. One of the bishops stated that laws which allow for same-sex unions potentially weaken society's already damaged foundation.

3) Washington, DC now legally recognizes same-sex marriage. Because of this, the Archdiocese of Washington decided to discontinue its foster care program and no longer offer benefits to the spouses of any new employees, thus avoiding benefits for same-sex couples.

4) The Archdiocese of Denver, Colorado, decided not to re-enroll two children in one of its elementary schools. The reason why this decision was made was because the parents of these two children are lesbian.

Despite claims to the contrary, these examples of discrimination clearly show that people of differing sexual orientations are not welcome in the Church. Moreover, such discrimination contributes to an atmosphere in society which promotes bigotry and violence toward the LGBT community.

One of 8th Day Center's primary goals is "to promote justice, equality and human dignity among all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, abilities, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic class." Rather than rejecting or criticizing our youth because of their sexual orientation, we need to embrace and affirm them for who they are. In effect, we need to take note of a lesser-known teaching in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#2358), which states: [People with a homosexual orientation] "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." †

The 8th Day Center for Justice is a multi-issue, social justice center supported and staffed by 30 congregations of nuns, priests and brothers which promotes analysis and action.

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Dignity/Washington Honors City Council Members

Dignity/Washington presented their Veronica & Gerald Colfer award to D.C. City Council members David Catania (left) and Phil Mendelson in recognition of their roles in securing passage of the city's same-sex marriage law. Catania wrote and introduced the marriage measure and Mendelson, as chair of the committee with jurisdiction over the bill, managed its progress through the Council's legislative process. Catania said he was pleased that polling data showed that D.C.-area Roman Catholics supported marriage equality in greater percentages than members of all other Christian denominations, despite the strong opposition to same-sex marriage by the Catholic hierarchy. †
(*Washblade.com*, February 10, 2011)

Majority of US Catholics back gay/lesbian rights in survey

Landmark Poll shows laity differ from the hierarchy on marriage and other issues

Blogs.reuters.com
March 22, 2011

In spite of, or perhaps because of, Roman Catholic church teachings condemning homosexuality, many lay Catholics in the United States are more accepting toward same-sex relationships than the general public, a new survey found.

"The big finding here is that American Catholics are at least 5 points more supportive than the general population across a range of gay and lesbian issues," said Robert Jones, chief executive of the Public Religion Research Institute, which conducted telephone surveys of 3,000 Americans.

The survey's conclusions go against the popular conception that Roman Catholics — the largest U.S. religious denomination at some one in four Americans — are conservative on social issues, said Stephen Schneck of The Catholic University of America, who was asked to comment on the survey by the researchers.

"Catholics appear to like civil unions as an alternative to same-sex marriage," Schneck said, suggesting that while Catholics accept the rights of same-sex couples to be together there may be resistance to couples joined in what many see as a sacred rite.

Overall, the survey found 53 percent of Catholics supported the idea of same-sex marriage, while the general public is evenly divided on the issue. Fifty-six

percent of Catholics did not believe sexual relations between two adults of the same gender constituted a sin, compared to 46 percent of the general population.

Sixty percent of Catholics favored adoption rights for same-sex couples, 49 percent think gays should be allowed to be ordained as clergy, and 73 percent believe they should have legal protections in the workplace — all higher percentages than found in the general population, PRRI said.

There was a powerful generation gap found in the survey, with Catholics under 35 much more liberal than those 65 and older. The influx of Hispanic Catholics into the U.S. church in recent years did not skew the results, as the young newcomers were divided between liberal and conservative views of homosexuality.

American Catholics also tended to be more liberal than evangelical and mainline Protestants, the researchers said.

The conclusions fit with a strong pattern of liberalism among Catholics that stands in opposition to the church hierarchy, said Michele Dillon, a sociologist at the University of New Hampshire asked by researchers to comment. There has been a gulf on social issues between church teachings and the American laity since the mid-1970s on subjects such as abortion, divorce without an annulment, premarital sex and artificial contraception.

"Catholics make up their own minds about these moral issues irrespective — or

almost in spite of — what the bishops and official church teachings say," Dillon said.

Catholics tend not to like or even may resent having politics in church, Dillon said. The survey found about one-quarter of church-going Catholics reported hearing about homosexuality in church — a much lower proportion than in Protestant churches. Two-thirds of the messages about homosexuality in church were negative.

Dillon said the poll is unlikely to sway the church hierarchy.

"I don't think we should expect the Catholic bishops to stand back" on social issues, she said. "They're not going to be distracted by any sort of polls. For the next few years, there will be a lot of activism ... to keep at bay the movement of laws in favor of same-sex marriage." ✦

(See page 12 for a related story.)



On April 28, 2011, members of Equally Blessed visited Congressional offices to deliver copies of the Public Religion Research report which showed that Catholic attitudes on Gay and Lesbian issues are highly positive. Left to right: Mark Clark, Francis DeBernardo, Jeannine Gramick, Bob Mialovich, Kelly Stewart, Jerry O'Leary, Tom McMahon, Larry Ranly, Claire Pluecker.

For Catholics, Open Attitudes on Gay/Lesbian Issues

By Austin Considine
The New York Times
April 22, 2011

As the tranquil tones of church bells and choirs usher in another Easter Sunday, you may hear stirrings of controversy beneath those sounds — set to the pounding of a Lady Gaga tune.

It's no accident that Lady Gaga decided to release the video for her provocative single, "Judas," this Easter. From wearing see-through nun habits to suggestively swallowing a rosary, the pop star, who was raised a Catholic, has consistently prodded her faith's strict sexual conventions.

But if Lady Gaga has managed to offend some Catholics, her progressiveness, specifically her support for gay equality, reflects a genuine cultural moment. A recent study indicates that today's Catholics are the most progressive Christians in the country regarding gay equality — and more open than Americans in general.

Last month, the Public Religion Research Institute, a nonprofit group, reported that 74 percent of American Catholics surveyed supported the rights of same-sex couples to marry or form civil unions (43 percent and 31 percent, respectively). The telephone survey asked more than 3,000 adults to choose among three options: whether gay couples should be allowed to marry, should be allowed to form civil unions or should receive no legal recognition. By comparison, 16 percent of white evangelical Christians approved of same-sex marriages; 24 percent approved of civil unions. Among the general public, those rates climb to 37 and 27 percent, respectively — still lower than among Catholics.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, an independent group that has worked on gay

Catholic issues since 1977, said he had seen Catholics open up in recent years. His group maintains a list of "gay-friendly parishes and faith communities" around the country, which has grown to more than 200 from about 20 since 1997.

Church traditions in social-justice advocacy play a strong role, he said. "These people aren't picking and choosing their Catholicism; their Catholicism has motivated them."

Official church policy is tough on gay issues: homosexual acts are deemed sinful (though being homosexual is not); same-sex marriage is forbidden. Embracing diversity while toeing the Vatican line requires a delicate balance.

Some seek nontraditional ministry. Dignity New York, a chapter of Dignity USA, an independent gay ministry group, has liturgical services especially for gay Catholics, given mostly by nonactive priests, at St. John's in the Village, an Episcopal church.

Yet Catholic churches from Texas to Wisconsin find ways to be welcoming. St. Francis Xavier in Chelsea, the Oratory Church of St. Boniface in Brooklyn and many others are known for programs offering spiritual and intellectual fulfillment for gay Catholics in a context once perceived as hostile.

The Rev. Gilbert Martinez, pastor at St. Paul the Apostle, a gay-friendly parish near Lincoln Center, said the study did not surprise him: Catholics have always struggled with moral issues on which the diocese and parishioners do not always agree.

Catholics believe God incarnates in diverse forms, Father Martinez said — like human beings.

"Once you say that God is a human person — I mean we're just so varied and diverse that way — I think the real Catholicity of that is to acknowledge that and accept that," he said. ✦

Equally Blessed celebrates Catholic majority in poll

The Windy City Times
Chicago
March 19, 2011

Earlier this week, two Catholic bishops dismissed a booklet on marriage equality by a member of the Equally Blessed coalition, saying that its author was not authorized to "speak on behalf of the Catholic Church."

Today, faithful U.S. Catholics spoke for themselves, supporting the legalization of same-gender marriage by a 60-38 margin in a new poll commissioned by ABC News and The Washington Post.

The survey, conducted last week by Langer Research Associates, found that for the first time, a majority of Americans (53 percent) now support marriage equality, and that this change in public opinion has happened with remarkable rapidity. Fewer than one third of respondents favored same-gender marriage when the same survey was conducted in 2004.

"The poll makes clear what we have long known," said Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, a member of the Equally Blessed coalition. "Catholics driven by a desire for justice are at the forefront of efforts to make our country's marriage laws more equitable, and to extend the legal benefits of civil marriage to same-gender couples and their children."

DeBernardo is the author of the booklet *Marriage Equality: A Positive Catholic Approach*, which raised the ire of Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington D. C., and Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of Oakland, earlier this week. New Ways Ministry, they wrote, was not authorized to "identify itself as a Catholic organization."

"The bishops' approach to this issue

is alienating the faithful," said Mary Ellen Lopata, co-founder of Fortunate Families, another member of the Equally Blessed coalition. "We continue to hope that they will realize they have something to learn from the lived experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Christians, their families and their friends, and come to understand that one can be true to one's God-given identity, even as one is true to the teachings of Christ."

Forty percent of Catholics in the survey said they "strongly supported" the legalization of same-gender marriage, while 27 percent said they strongly opposed it.

"I am especially proud of my Church today," said Nicole Sotelo, communications director for Call To Action, another member of the Equally Blessed coalition. "Catholics who take the social justice teachings of the church seriously know that the issue of same-gender civil marriage is simply one of honoring the dignity of all of God's children, and treating them fairly as we treat all people."

The survey, which included data on various bellwether demographic groups, revealed that support for marriage equality among white Catholics stood at 64 percent, an increase of a whopping 23 percentage points in five years.

Equally Blessed is a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people both in the church and in civil society. Equally Blessed includes four organizations that have spent a combined 112 years working on behalf of LGBT people and their families: Call to Action, DignityUSA, Fortunate Families, and New Ways Ministry. ✦

On the eve of Valentine's Day, protesters converge on Holy Name Same-sex marriage debate draws gay rights activists, opposition

By Tara Malone
The Chicago Tribune
February 13, 2011

On the eve of Valentine's Day, Helen Moshak pinned rainbow ribbons to her white knit cap and returned to the Roman Catholic Church she left five years ago, dismayed by its opposition to gay marriage when two of her three children are gay.

The 76-year-old Skokie woman did not step foot inside Holy Name Cathedral, the storied seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.

Nor did she join in the picket line of about 60 men and women — her son Damian Moshak and his partner among them — protesting the Catholic Church's stance on gay marriage and other stances they see as unjust to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

Rather, Moshak stood across the street from the downtown cathedral and held a sign that read: "Catholic parents of gay kids know that all are equal before God."

"I feel a bit shy. But then again, it's the right thing to do," Moshak said.

The protest, called Freedom to Marry Day, marked the second year that gay rights activists gathered outside the cathedral around Valentine's Day to champion gay rights and target the Catholic Church.

"If we're going to win marriage equality within this state, we'll have to be out in the streets like we are today," said Andy Thayer, co-founder of the Gay Liberation Network, which helped organize the protest.

Theirs were not the only signs on display as parishioners skirted picket lines on their way to worship.

About a half-dozen people held placards that signaled opposition to same-sex marriage on the steps of the cathedral. Others with a ministry group sported T-shirts that read: "Love is the answer."

"This was an opportunity to stand up for the faith," Pat Peterson said. "I came because I support Cardinal (Francis) George."

The cardinal, along with the Catholic Conference of Illinois, opposed recent state legislation that legalized civil unions between gay and lesbian people. The measure takes effect June 1.



Protestors outside Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, on February 13, 2011.

While he was not in town to attend Sunday Mass, George acknowledged in a statement that these are deeply felt, personal issues on all sides.

But he also said: "No matter the issue, Catholics should be able to worship in peace, without fear of harassment."

In a recent interview, George said the archdiocese asked its lawyers and insurance experts to study the conse-

quences of the new law.

"There is a real difference between the sexual relationships of two men or two women and the sexual relationships based on the complementarity of man and woman who assure the future of ... family," George said. "Quite apart from the morality of it, it's apples and oranges. It's not the same. Somehow the law should respect that difference." †

Gay marriage lobbyists welcome Fr. Bob Maguire's pledge

By Paul Tatnell and Anne Wright
Heraldsun.com.au
February 15, 2011

Gay marriage lobbyists have welcomed Father Bob Maguire's public pledge to conduct gay union ceremonies, but claim he's not the first priest to speak out in favour of the cause.

Australia Marriage Equality national secretary Peter Furness said this morning it was encouraging to see a Catholic priest speak publicly about the issue.

"There are many priests who support and want the right to marry same sex couples," Mr Furness said.

"(But) people are scared of their bosses to do it publicly."

Mr Furness said a number of religious leaders had made submissions to a 2009 senate inquiry in favour of gay marriage, but some were not willing to go public with their views.

"The Australian Christian Lobby would have us think that there is one viewpoint from the church, but there's not," he said.

"There are lots of different viewpoints. We have been contacted by many religious leaders who have said they want to do gay ceremonies."



Fr Bob Maguire is open to performing civil union ceremonies for gays.

Fr Maguire said he would perform a civil ceremony for a homosexual couple - but not in a church.

It follows moves in the UK to change laws so gay civil ceremonies can be carried out in churches.

Other Melbourne churches rejected the idea yesterday, despite opinion polls showing a majority of Australians support gay marriage.

Pope Benedict last year labelled gay marriage as "among some of the most insidious and dangerous challenges facing the common good today".

Fr Maguire said he does not have a

personal view on gay civil unions.

The 75-year-old said he understood Catholic leaders would not want a gay ceremony in a Catholic church so he would arrange a private event.

"I'd probably consult the bosses and then I'd go back to the clients and tell them we can't do it in here - it's not personal, it's institutional," he said.

Fr Maguire said it was "his duty" to help people in need, including gay couples.

"Not only do I have an administrative responsibility but I have also pastoral responsibility and pastoral care

would be taking care of the two people involved and their friends and their associates," he said.

In Victoria, gay couples can register their relationships with the State Government.

The Catholic church yesterday reiterated its opposition to gay civil unions.

The Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Bishop Les Tomlinson, said civil union ceremonies involving homosexual couples were not allowed in any of its Melbourne's churches.

The church believed "marriage is a union between a man and a woman".

"Priests are authorised to officiate at weddings according to the Catholic rite and therefore any marriage performed by a Catholic priest must be conducted in accordance with Catholic teaching," he said.

An Anglican Church spokesman said none of its priests are allowed to perform gay civil ceremonies.

Uniting Church general secretary Reverend Rob Brown said it had no policy on gay civil unions being performed in its churches. †

Los Angeles Archdiocesan Gay Ministry Celebrates 25th Year

By R. W. Dellinger
The Tidings
Los Angeles
March 11, 2011

At the same time Archbishop Roger Mahony founded the Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry on February 4, 1986, at Blessed Sacrament Church in Hollywood, he also established the Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics.

He proclaimed MLGC's primary goal was "to foster a spirit of community and fellowship among gay and lesbian Catholics so that they can offer and receive mutual support in living out their lives of faith with the church."

The ministry, in short, stresses that all individuals with a homosexual orientation are able to live a full Catholic life in union with all other members of the church. According to its mission statement, "MLGC takes its inspiration from

the Gospel; is shaped by church teachings and pastoral practice; borrows appropriately from the insights of the social and biological sciences; and listens, ponders and prays over the lived experience of those it ministers to."

In turn, the ministry calls on Catholics to know and share in the challenges, burdens and blessings of gay and lesbian persons living a Christian life within the Catholic tradition. And it condemns any actions where gays and lesbians are discriminated against in speech, behavior or by law.

"What's happened over the years, both within the church and in the secular world in the United States, is that the gay and lesbian community has been more welcomed --- especially as parent groups have really taken on advocating on behalf of their parents," says Father Chris Ponnet, MLGC's chaplain.

"And I think the prophetic role is

what the cardinal wanted: integration. The more we can integrate gay and lesbian people within a parish structure, the better. More and more self-identified gays and lesbians I talk with, once they know that they can believe that God loves them, they feel much more comfortable going into their church. So I think integration is key."

Arthur Fitzmaurice, co-leader of MLGC, learned that at St. Monica Church in Santa Monica. In fact, the graduate student studying neuroscience at Cal Tech moved to the Westside because he had heard how welcoming the parish was to gays. Like St. Matthew's in Long Beach, Blessed Sacrament in Hollywood and Mary Immaculate in Pacoima, St. Monica's even sponsored an outreach ministry to gay and lesbian parishioners.

But he points out that the ministry's mission is not really about starting sepa-

rate groups. The goal is simply to get more people involved in their parishes. And a new emphasis is working with catechists, confirmation teachers and Catholic high school teachers to educate them on what church teachings really are concerning homosexual Catholics.

"We're all called to full active participation in our church," Fitzmaurice notes. "But there's been a lot of pain, a lot of hurt and a lot of bitterness recently over Proposition 8 and the anti-gay marriage effort here in California. So we try to dialogue and explain how we have reconciled and share our own faith story."

"But it's very much an uphill battle," he acknowledges. "So we definitely focus on the pastoral side that says 'God made you this way. You're welcome to participate in the Eucharist.'" †

The twelve steps of Courage: a stairway to denial

By **Jamie L. Manson**
ncronline.org
January 25, 2011

At a time when the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is alienating more people than welcoming them, they seem to have found a new friend in Bill W.

The Colorado Springs diocese has decided to launch "The Twelve Steps of Courage," one of the programs of Courage International, which was founded by Fr. John Harvey in 1980.

Courage boasts 110 chapters worldwide dedicated to helping gay Catholics lead celibate lives. As the new program's name indicates, it is modeled after the Twelve Step recovery process practiced by groups like Alcoholics Anonymous.

Given that Colorado Springs is the home base of Focus on the Family (for whom Christian-based, anti-gay propaganda is a cottage industry), and given that its bishop, Michael Sheridan, is the prophet of denying Eucharist to certain Catholic voters and politicians, it's a wonder they didn't promote the Twelve Steps of Courage decades ago.

Unlike their Evangelical neighbors, the priests facilitating this chapter of Courage insist that homosexuality cannot be cured through "reparative therapy" programs. They claim to support the Catholic doctrine that homosexuality is not a choice and is not a sin in itself.

"It's not about therapy and not about activism," said Fr. Larry Brennan, director of priest formation for the diocese of Colorado Springs. "It's about support."

And yet, if you put the Twelve Steps of Courage and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous side by side, there is only one difference between the two lists. Courage places the word "homosexuality" where AA has the word "addiction."

The first step of the new program reads like this:

"We admitted that we were powerless over homosexuality and our lives had become unmanageable."

Since both programs use identical language, how could one not conclude that Courage encourages gay people to view their sexual orientations the same way addicts view their addictions? What other goal could there be than some form of recovery?

In his masterpiece, *Addiction and Grace*, psychiatrist and spiritual director Gerald May defines addiction as "a state of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a person's will and desire."

He continues: "Addiction sidetracks and eclipses the energy of our deepest, truest desire for love and goodness. . . . it erodes an individual's freedom, will, and capacity for love."

Programs such as AA help addicts find a way to admit their powerlessness against their addiction. An addict surrenders her will and her life to her Higher Power in the hope of driving herself toward greater personal and spiritual growth.

On the contrary, the Twelve Steps of Courage asks not for surrender to God, but for submission to a doctrine that demands that a gay person repress her God-given sexual orientation. Rather than helping a gay person find ways to integrate her sexuality into the whole of her being, it fractures any development toward a healthy relationship with her sexuality.

Programs like AA help addicts shatter the delusion that they can control their compulsive, habitual behaviors. It helps them break free of their fixation on self-destructive needs, and helps them regain their presence to themselves and their relationships. By moving away from the enslavements of addiction, they enter into a new freedom that allows them to begin to rebuild their lives.

The Twelve Steps of Courage, on the other hand, forces a gay person to treat his innate sexual orientation as negative, compulsive behavior that needs to be controlled.

Rather than freeing a gay person from the "burden" of his sexuality, the program enables him to fixate on his sexuality as something shameful and in need of suppression. By promoting such a painful, internal struggle, the Twelve Steps of Courage can limit a person's capacity to create healthy, loving relationships.

Rather than liberating him, this program ultimately stunts a gay person's freedom to develop into the beloved creation that God intended.

If there were a connection between addiction and homosexuality, it would be that some gay and lesbian people *become* addicts when they are made to feel ashamed of their God-given desires.

The emotional turmoil of being told that their acts of intimacy are intrinsically disordered has caused some to seek out drugs or alcohol to numb them from the pain. Others have become addicted to self-destructive behaviors as a way to cope with or avoid the spiritual agony of repressing an authentic desire to love.

Brennan, of course, would deny that

Courage makes this connection between homosexuality and addiction. He insists that those coming to the program are seeking "self-acceptance and self-restraint." They need to practice such restraint, he says, because, "The exercise of sexuality is reserved for marriage and that can only happen between a man and a woman."

But like so many Catholic defenders of marriage, Brennan fails to mention that this same doctrine applies to heterosexuals who have sex outside of the bonds of marriage. As psychologist and systematic theologian Daniel Helminiak writes, "Just as it is objectively wrong for unmarried heterosexuals to engage in sex, so too are homosexual acts considered to be wrong."

Once again, the hierarchy conveniently forgets that all non-married individuals should practice chastity, not just gay and lesbian people.

We all know that many single heterosexual Catholics have active sex lives. Shouldn't the church also offer them support in their attempt to retrain their sexual needs? Surely some of them must feel that their lives are unmanageable because they, too, are powerless over their desires for sex.

If we follow Brennan's line of think-

ing, wouldn't it be equally pastoral to create Twelve Steps of Restraint for Straight, Single Catholics?

Of all of the problems and inconsistencies of the Twelve Steps of Courage, perhaps its most harmful aspect is the way it perpetuates denial — ironically, the very behavior that addicts strive to overcome.

The Courage program aids the hierarchy in denying that same-sex relationships have as much potential for personal growth and spiritual depth as heterosexual relationships. The sad thing is, many Catholic clerics in the United States are already well aware of this truth. Some have seen it in their families and in their parishioners, and some have even experienced it themselves.

But denial is what the hierarchy seems to model best these days: whether it's denying communion to women religious who use their consciences, denying justice for sexual abuse survivors, or denying the dignity of women called to ordained ministry.

It is, of course, the prerogative of the hierarchy to continue to tow the denial line. I only wish that they would refrain from co-opting the value and the power of the Twelve Step tradition in the process. †

Fr. John Harvey, OSFS, founder of 'Courage,' has died

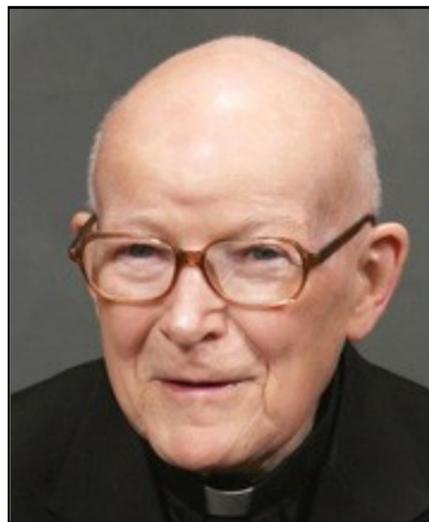
web.me.com/kmnadolski/In_Memoriām
December 27, 2010

Reverend John F. Harvey, OSFS, 92, an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales for 73 years, died on Monday, December 27, 2010, at Union Hospital in Elkton, Maryland.

Fr. Harvey, son the late Patrick J. and Margaret (Harkins) Harvey was born in Philadelphia in 1918. He attended St. Columba Parish School, and after graduating from Northeast Catholic High School for Boys in 1936, he entered the Oblate Novitiate, making his first profession of vows on September 8, 1937. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 3, 1944 at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia by the Most. Rev. Hugh Lamb, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia.

After earning his bachelor of arts degree in philosophy in 1941 from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Fr. Harvey continued his studies, earning graduate degrees in psychology and theology, and completed a doctorate in moral theology there 10 years later.

"Fr. Harvey's commitment to pastoral care in the Church was tireless. Even in his later years, his travel



Fr. John Harvey, OSFS

would take him all over the country and world to offer a voice of compassion," Rev. James J. Greenfield, OSFS, Oblate provincial said. "His work in helping to found both the DeSales School of Theology and Courage were examples of his commitment to the Church that he loved so much."

Fr. Harvey's ministerial assignments following ordination included serving as a teacher at his alma mater, Northeast Catholic High School ; graduate student

at Catholic University; professor of moral theology at Dunbarton College, Washington, DC; professor of moral theology at the DeSales Hall School of Theology; president of DeSales Hall School of Theology; and professor of sexual and medical ethics at DeSales University, Center Valley, PA. Fr. Harvey retired in January, 2010.

Fr. Harvey was the founder and national director of Courage, which is a spiritual support group for homosexual women and men. He had been director of Courage since its foundation in 1980 at the request of the late archbishop of New York, Terrence Cardinal Cooke. Courage continues to reach out in the United States, in Canada, England, the Republic of Ireland, Poland, Mexico, Slovakia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, the Philippines, and New Zealand. Today, there are more than 100 Chapters of Courage worldwide.

Since he began teaching in higher education in 1948, Fr. Harvey has written more than 45 articles in professional theological and psychological journals on questions of human sexuality and counseling. He has addressed the full convention of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on ethics and psychology. †

Puerto Rico's Cardinal Vs. Ricky Martin

Ontopmag.com
April 13, 2011

Cardinal Luis Aponte Martinez of San Juan, Puerto Rico has asked singer Ricky Martin to set a good example for young people and stop promoting being gay.

In an interview with *Primera Hora* published late last week, Martinez railed against the Puerto Rican father of twin boys Matteo and Valentino. Martin announced he's gay last March.

"Personally, I admire Ricky for the great artistic gifts the Lord has endowed him, but please, for the love of his children, for whom I imagine he wants the best, try to set an example to our youth of the great values we all share, besides sex."

He added that the Roman Catholic church "does not reject the homosexual [but] their immoral actions and behav-

iors, and trying to promote homosexuality or sexual promiscuity among our youth, indeed, is immoral regardless of where it comes from."

Gay rights activist Pedro Julio Serrano criticized the cardinal in the same publication.

"Homophobia disguised as religion and under the pretext of freedom of speech is still homophobia and it kills," Serrano said. "Enough of wanting to impose a moral vision of human sexuality. Sexual orientation is an innate characteristic of the human condition that cannot be changed, it is not a behavior, it is not a disease, and it is not synonymous with promiscuity as argued by Cardinal Aponte Martinez."

Last month, Pastor Wanda Rolon, an influential social conservative in Puerto Rico, said Martin was leading people to "hell." †



Ricky Martin

Parents of gay children should push their churches

By Mark Hare

www.democratandchronicle.com

January 6, 2011

When Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata's son Jim told them in 1983 that he is gay, the coming-out turned their world upside down. They never wavered in their love for Jim, 19 at the time, or in their love for and devotion to the Catholic Church.

For Casey, the question was, "Can Jim be Catholic and gay?" For Mary Ellen, the challenge of Jim's revelation was about love. "There was no doubt in my mind that he was a good person and that God loved him," she says.

In the early '80s, the Lopatas say, no one talked about homosexuality. They felt isolated. And as opposition to gay rights became more hostile, especially in churches, Mary Ellen says, "it became clear that the people making the rules didn't know any gay or lesbian people."

For several years, the Lopatas worked with Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry of the Diocese of Rochester, which gradually built a network of families willing to share their stories and



Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata

be a voice for compassion within the church. Casey, who has a master's of divinity degree, speaks and writes about the theological perspective.

The church, he says, teaches that homosexuality, which is not a choice but an orientation, is not sinful. Only homosexual relations, which, like any sexual activity outside marriage, is sinful. But

Casey says it's not that simple.

The church also teaches that celibacy is a gift. Not everyone has it; must all gays live celibate lives if they do not have the gift? The church, he says, also teaches that no one is obliged to do what is impossible for them.

Jim went to college at Miami University of Ohio and they would have long talks on some of those trips back and forth, Mary Ellen recalls. On one trip, she asked him — inartfully — if he would change if he could. Jim said he would not, that God had made him who he is. "I was glad to hear that he was comfortable with who he was," she says, but even more important, "I realize that being gay was integral to who he was, that he would not be that person if he were not gay. And I loved that person."

In 2004, the Lopatas formed *Fortunate Families* (www.fortunatefamilies.com), a resource and networking ministry for Catholic parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children. The group works primarily with Catholic families, but welcomes others. The website collects and shares personal stories and includes

a "listening network" of parent volunteers who lend an ear to other parents who are struggling with questions about their children's sexual orientation.

"In the '90s, when we talked to other parents, there were tears and fear," Casey says. "Today, there's fire and ire." There is a growing sense that many churches have not gone far enough, and parents are angry.

"There will never be change if people don't talk," Mary Ellen says. They started *Fortunate Families* because they wanted to "go national," Casey says. "We thought that parents — who are often pillars of the community and active in their churches — have the greatest opportunity to make a difference."

But many parents are themselves "on the edge" of leaving churches where their children do not feel welcome. Parents, Mary Ellen says, "need to find their voices and be not afraid."

Churches need to be pushed and prodded, and yes, loved, into acceptance. Change will come, Casey says. It always does. †

Archdiocese issues no-discrimination admissions policy

By Lisa Wangness

The Boston Globe

January 13, 2011

The Archdiocese of Boston, under fire from all sides after a parochial school withdrew an admissions offer to the child of a lesbian couple, yesterday released a new Catholic schools admissions policy that said parochial schools will not "discriminate against or exclude any categories of students."

However, the policy, which was distributed to pastors, parishes, and school administrators by e-mail, said school parents "must accept and understand that the teachings of the Catholic Church are an essential and required part of the curriculum."

The new guidelines were developed by a panel of clergy and lay school administrators at the direction of Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley in response to a widely publicized incident last year in which St. Paul School in Hingham rescinded the admissions offer to the 8-year-old boy. The archdiocese helped place the boy in a different Catholic school.

The Hingham episode drew sharp criticism from prominent funders of Catholic education in Boston. The Catho-

lic Schools Foundation, which gives millions in scholarships to low-income students, said it would not subsidize tuition at any school with a discriminatory admissions policy. Michael B. Reardon, executive director of the foundation, said yesterday his organization is pleased with the new policy's "clear message of inclusiveness."

"From the perspective of the foundation, the key part of this is that it does not exclude any group of students, and it promotes what is essential to Catholic education, which is inclusivity," he said.

Because the new policy said admissions decisions should be based in part on "the best interest of the child," it remains uncertain whether the Hingham episode would have occurred had the new policy been in place. The specifics of that case remain unclear because the pastor involved, the Rev. James F. Rafferty, has declined interviews.

"The situation at St. Paul's in Hingham may have taken a different route, but it might have come to the same conclusion," said the Rev. Richard M. Erikson, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Boston. "Father Rafferty still today has the authority to make these decisions as the pastor. But the expectations of the

diocese and the guidance the diocese gives in those judgment calls is clearer today than it was then."

He added that the archdiocese stands ready to "work hand-in-hand with the pastors and principals when there are judgment calls."

Rafferty was among those who participated in the drafting of the new policy. In a statement through the archdiocese yesterday, he said: "I welcome the fact that we now have a clear policy to guide us in the important work of Catholic education."

Catholic doctrine defines marriage as a heterosexual union and considers homosexual acts "intrinsically disordered." Some have argued that inherent conflicts between church teachings and a child's family situation may be harmful to a child in Catholic school, although the Catholic schools are open to children of couples who are divorced, which the Catholic catechism calls "a grave offense against the natural law," and to non-Catholics.

Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of the gay Catholic organization DignityUSA, praised the archdiocese for banning discrimination but wondered whether pastors and principals would interpret what is in "the best interest of the child" evenhandedly for all families.

"As long as the doctrine stands, it makes it really hard for the pastoral and the doctrinal aspects of our faith not to come into a clash," Duddy-Burke said. "The people of the church are changing,

and by and large very affirming of gay people, and the hierarchy and the doctrine are lagging decades behind."

But Charles G. Martel, cofounder of Catholics for Marriage Equality, said he hopes dioceses around the country will adopt Boston's guidelines. "It very much conveys the message that children of same-sex couples are welcome to receive a Catholic education," he said.

Under the new policy, individual Catholic schools may draft their own admissions guidelines, but they must be "written, included in the school handbook, consider the welfare and best interests of the child and be disseminated to prospective students and their parents prior to registration."

Some schools already have such policies in place. St. John's Preparatory School in Danvers, which has 1,250 boys in grades 9 to 12, selects students based on entrance exams, grades, and teacher recommendations. The school has a policy that prohibits discrimination "based on race, color, national/ethnic origin, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, social class, or economic status."

About 20 percent of students at St. John's are not Catholic, about the same proportion as in archdiocesan schools generally. Principal Edward P. Hardiman said the question of whether to admit the children of gay parents "hasn't been an issue for us at all," but he praised the new policy yesterday. †

Theologian: many priests are gay

By Molly Muldoon

IrishCentral.com

November 23, 2010,

Homophobia within the Catholic Church stems from the significant numbers of closeted gay priests according to a German theologian.

David Berger, a former publisher of a Catholic magazine, has called for Rome to own up to its homosexual priests and reform its attitudes and teaching practices on the subject.

"It must be acknowledged that a large number of Catholic clerics and trainee priests in Europe and the United States are homosexually-inclined," Mr. Berger told *Der Spiegel* magazine.

"The worst homophobia in the Catholic Church comes from homophobic priests, who are desperately fighting their own sexuality," he said.

"Obviously, those who follow their urges are repudiated more fiercely when one is so painfully repressing that disposition oneself."

Berger admits he spent his life attempting to reconcile his homosexuality

with his religious beliefs. During his teenage years, he became associated with conservative Catholics and German aristocrats and industrialists.

"I had to listen to despicable remarks, praising Hitler for having homosexuals imprisoned and murdered in concentration camps," he said.

He claims that while he worked as a correspondent for the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Vatican, his writings on homosexual themes were censored.

Mr. Berger announced that he was gay in April after the Bishop of Essen, Franz-Josef Overbeck, described homosexuality as perverse when he appeared on a television chat show.

According to the theologian, as a gay man in a long term relationship, he has been a victim of the homophobic atmosphere maintained by the church for years.

He now works as a secondary school teacher near Cologne.

Mr. Berger has written a book entitled *Der heilig Schein (The Holy Illusion)*, about his time in the church. †

You can stay in touch with
the latest news and opinions
concerning the

Catholic Church and the LGBT community
by visiting New Ways Ministry's website

www.newwaysministry.org

You can also find information on the website
about programs, events, and resources
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My gay son: the face of the church's lack of respect

By **Brian Cahill**
The San Francisco Chronicle
 March 13, 2011

I am a Catholic who voted against Proposition 8 in 2008 and contributed \$1,000 to the No on 8 Campaign, a Catholic who is sustained by regular Mass, scripture and prayer. I am also the father of a gay son, from whom I was slow to learn how painful, debilitating and denigrating are the constant legal and social reminders that he and those like him are not fully accepted members of the human community.

In their statement supporting Prop. 8, the California Catholic Bishops declared that marriage is "intrinsic to stable, flourishing and hospitable societies." Ironically, this is one of the compelling reasons gay and lesbian couples wish to be joined in civil marriages. They are seeking a structure and context for their love, commitment, fidelity and mutual support.

Many believe that the ideal for children is to be raised by a mother and a father, yet we know what the divorce rate is among heterosexual couples. We know there are 75,000 children in the California foster care system, a quarter of them

waiting to be adopted. We know that these children have been victimized by the inability, neglect or abuse of their heterosexual parents. These mothers and fathers are living proof that sexual orientation is not a reliable indicator of good parenting.

Our bishops are clear that gays and lesbians must be respected and not disparaged, and I know they mean it. The archbishop of San Francisco, regardless of his position on Prop. 8, means it. His first response to specific issues regarding gays and lesbians is always pastoral.

But when gays and lesbians are referred to in a 2003 Vatican teaching as "objectively disordered," it is difficult for them to feel respected. When gay and lesbian couples are willing to assume full, loving parental responsibility for abused and neglected children who would otherwise languish in the foster care system, and church teaching characterizes them as "doing great violence to children" by raising them in same-sex households, it is difficult for those parents to feel respected. And if gays and lesbians were to read some of the bloggers on conservative Catholic websites, they might have difficulty distinguishing the comments of thoughtful conservative

Catholics from those of irrational, homophobic extremists, and they would definitely not feel respected.

Prior to the passage of Prop. 8, the California Supreme Court ruled that as a matter of constitutional law, gays and

**I know that my
 son and his partner
 are made
 in the image and
 likeness of God.**

lesbians have a right to form a family relationship. From the court's perspective, a family relationship is much more than a domestic partnership. It is about marriage.

In August 2010, the federal District Court ruled that laws defining marriage as heterosexual are unconstitutional and unjust. Even if the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allows the resumption of same sex-marriages, this issue will

continue through the courts.

The issue of same-sex marriage will also be on the ballot again. The proponents of Prop. 8 have said that the voters' wishes should be respected. They should be careful what they wish for. In 2000, they won with 61 percent of the vote. In 2008, they won with 53 percent of the vote. In 2012, we will see how well they respect the voters' wishes.

I know that my son and his partner are made in the image and likeness of God. They are not perfect, but they are brilliant, creative, personable and moral. They are certainly not objectively disordered. I know, as do many fathers, mothers, grandparents, sisters, brothers, friends, neighbors, co-workers and fellow parishioners of gay and lesbian individuals and couples, that the relationship, the love, the friendship, the personal association, the proximity, put a human face on this issue and let us see that in the context of the human spirit, none of us are different and none of us should be anything less than fully accepted members of our human community. ✦

Brian Cahill is the former executive director of Catholic Charities in San Francisco.

Gramick tells Columbia students, 'We are the church'

By **Gary Barlow**
www.nowingaychicago.com
 April 8, 2011

CHICAGO – For about 15 years, Sister Jeannine Gramick quietly built up Catholic ministries that reached out to gay and lesbian people, told them they deserved full acceptance in the church and worked to reconcile the church and the gay and lesbian community.

Then there's been the past 25 years, since the Vatican began, first, to investigate her activities, then ordered her to cease all pastoral work with lesbians and gays, a directive that came from the personal hand of no less than Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XVI a short time later.

And Gramick's response? "I think the best way we convey how we believe is not words; it's the way we act," Gramick told students at Columbia College Chicago April 1.

If anything, the Vatican pressure has only made Gramick more resolute in her efforts to get the Catholic Church to treat lesbians and gays as full and equal members of its flock.

Gramick talked with the Columbia students after a screening of *In Good Conscience: Sister Jeannine Gramick's Journey of Faith*, the award-winning 2004 documentary film by filmmaker Barbara Rick, who accompanied Gramick for the screening and discussion at Columbia. The screening and discussion was sponsored by the LGBTQ Office of Culture & Community at Colum-

bia and Common Ground, a student group.

Gramick, who became a nun in 1960, began her gay and lesbian ministry in 1971 after meeting and becoming



Sister Jeannine Gramick

friends with a gay man. She would go on to help found three organizations for gay and lesbian Catholics but by the 1980s the culture wars had heated up even in the Catholic Church, leading to the pushback against Gramick from Ratzinger and the Vatican.

In 1999, after periodic attempts by church leaders to get her to stop her gay and lesbian ministry, Gramick got an order from Ratzinger, then head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. In it, Ratzinger prohibited her

from working with gays and lesbians, expressing his annoyance that Gramick "simply refused to express any assent whatsoever to the teaching of the Church on homosexuality."

Gramick's order subsequently upped the pressure on her but in 2001 she transferred to another order, the Sisters of Loretto, which supports her ministry.

The film by Rick, who's won a Peabody and multiple Emmy

awards for other works, tells the story of how Gramick resisted the Vatican pressure. Rick and legendary filmmaker Albert Maysles (*Gimme Shelter* and *Grey Gardens*) followed Gramick to the Vatican in 2003, chronicling her attempts to get a meeting with Ratzinger.

"So one Sunday I heard this story of how this one woman was standing up to the church," Rick told the students. "That they were ordering her to be silent was just an outrage. I said this is going to be my next movie."

The film, which has won numerous awards, also followed Gramick back to the Vatican to drop off a copy of the Italian translation of her book, *Building Bridges*, at Ratzinger's office. "He didn't even send a thank-you note," Gramick joked.

Gramick said lay Catholics are far ahead of Catholic leaders on gay issues. "This happens in a lot of religious traditions, where the people lead their religious leaders," Gramick said. "The real people who matter are the people in these religious institutions who may not be the leaders, the people in the pews." The Catholic Church would better fulfill its mission, Gramick said, by listening to those people and meeting them without judgment.

"When we say 'church,' most of us most of the time really mean 'church leaders.' I'd like to get back to the people. It's really the people in the church," Gramick said. "The church needs to have a little conversion, and we have to realize that we are the church." ✦

For more information about Gramick and In Good Conscience, go to ingoodconscience.com.

In Great Britain

Tribunal Rejects Catholic Care's Gay Adoption Appeal

Bbc.co.uk
 April 27, 2011

A Roman Catholic charity has lost its latest appeal against equality laws which allow gay couples to use adoption services.

Catholic Care, run by the Diocese of Leeds, argued it would have to give up its adoption service if it was not made exempt from the law.

The case has already been rejected by the High Court last year and the Charity Commission.

Now the Charity Tribunal has dis-

missed the charity's appeal.

The tribunal said it would be "a loss to society" if the charity stopped its adoption service but said it was "by no means certain" this would happen. "Balance the risk"

It said it had to balance the risk of the service closing against the "detriment to same-sex couples and the detriment to society generally of permitting the discrimination proposed".

The charity argued that its stance attracted potential adopters who did not approach other agencies.

It told the tribunal that same-sex

couples could get adoption services from local authorities and other voluntary agencies and said failure to secure the exemption would hit the voluntary donations which keep it afloat.

The Bishop of Leeds, the Right Reverend Arthur Roche, told the tribunal that he believed the law should respect the Roman Catholic church's views on the issue in the same way that it allowed churches not to have to bless civil partnerships.

The tribunal also said there was no evidence, except for the bishop's opinion, that donated income would be hit.

It said it had heard expert evidence which contradicted the charity's case that, if it were to close, children would be left unadopted.

It said other Roman Catholic charities had found alternative means of operating since the law changed.

Rt Rev Roche said: "Catholic Care is very disappointed with this ruling."

Laura Doughty, the deputy chief executive of the gay equality charity Stonewall, said it applauded the decision. ✦

St. John's University students protest gay-straight alliance ban

By Clare Trapasso
The Daily News
New York
April 18, 2011

About 20 students staged a sit-in at St. John's University to protest the Catholic school's refusal to allow a gay-straight alliance on its Jamaica campus.

The students, who sat on St. John's Great Lawn making rainbow-colored gay rights posters on Friday, said they have been petitioning to create the alliance on campus for years.

Each time, the school's administration has rejected it - citing the Catholic values upon which the university was founded.

"We need a gay-straight alliance at St. John's for the same reason that there are organizations for other minorities," said senior Tim Spriggs, 20, of Columbia, Md.

The school is "ignoring a significant

part of the student population," said Spriggs, who is not gay.

The school should have an alliance, he said, to give lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students a voice on campus. A sanctioned club would also make the group eligible for campus funding.

Students were also quick to point out that the school allows a slew of ethnic and religious organizations, including Jewish and Muslim groups.

"The school prides itself a lot on being diverse," said senior Sergio Cueto, 23, of El Paso, Tex. "But this is one of the areas it's lagging behind on."

Cueto said he has always felt safe as a gay male on campus, a sentiment echoed by other students. University spokesman Dominic Scianna said St. John's created a program in 2009 to provide support for LGBT students. Safe Zone was a result of discussions with students pushing for a gay-straight club on campus.

"Whether or not the Catholic Church wants to admit it, there are gay people who are part of their churches and society at large."

—Shane Windmeyer

"At this current time, we would not approve a gay-straight alliance because of who we are," Scianna said. "But we're

open to ideas and discussions. We're not closing the door to anything."

He added that St. John's doesn't discriminate or attempt to change the views of LGBT students. "The university does not expect its students to compromise their identities and values," he said. "And St. John's students should not expect that the university compromise its own institutional identities and values."

Shane Windmeyer, executive director of Campus Pride, a Charlotte, N.C.-based group that strives to create LGBT-friendly colleges and universities, said St. John's stance isn't realistic.

"Gay-straight alliances provide visibility, education and support for LGBT and straight ally students," he said. "Whether or not the Catholic Church wants to admit it, there are gay people who are part of their churches and society at large." †

At a Catholic cemetery: All welcome, with just one catch

By Dianne Williamson
The Worcester Telegram and Gazette
Worcester, Massachusetts
March 20, 2011

When Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to legalize gay marriage, Dennis Troy wrote an impassioned letter to Margaret Marshall, the Supreme Court justice who penned the landmark ruling.

He wrote about growing up gay in Worcester, about the bullying and the taunts, about the abuse that led to alcohol and the belief that he wasn't "normal." After struggling for years, he eventually got sober and met the man he would spend his life with. The only thing missing was validation, which came when he opened the newspaper in May 2004.

"I honestly don't recall how long I sat there with tears streaming down my face," he wrote. "All the hurt, all the broken windows, all the beatings disappeared in that one headline. I was afraid to rejoice lest it was some kind of joke or I had misinterpreted it. But sure enough, it was true. The Supreme Court of Massachusetts had declared me 'normal.'"

But despite Troy's status as a legally married adult, there are still some holdovers who seek to remind him that he's not "normal." The Catholic Church and Bishop Robert J. McManus, for example, still insist on stigmatizing the loving and legal bond that they encourage for everyone except homosexuals.

Troy is 62 and retired from a longtime career as recreation therapist at the former Worcester State Hospital. He's married to his partner of 15 years, Richard J. Darisse. He's a happy guy.

In January, though, Troy's 75-year-old sister died. She was buried in the family plot at St. John's Cemetery, the one Troy's mother bought more than three decades ago. His sister's death prompted Troy to start thinking about his own mortality, and a week later he returned to St. John's to ensure that his resting place was in order.

He spoke with Robert Ackerman, director of diocesan cemeteries. He said Ackerman was kind and assured him that both he and his husband could be buried in the family plot. As Troy noted, though, "There's always a 'but' when the Catholic Church is involved."

Ackerman explained that the bishop "doesn't mind" that gay couples are buried in the cemetery, Troy recalled. But the bishop won't allow gay people who are married to reflect that status in any form on their final resting place. In other words, no marker or tombstone can be inscribed with the word "spouse," "husband" or "wife."

Rather, Troy and Darisse would only

be allowed to call each other something like "faithful companion" or "loyal friend." Which prompted a bemused Darisse to wonder if he should change his name to Lassie or Rin Tin Tin.

"I couldn't believe it," said Troy, who was raised Catholic and goes to church every Sunday. "After fighting for so long, even now, when I die, I'll be discriminated against."

Raymond L. Delisle, the diocesan vice chancellor for operations, confirmed that Bishop McManus prohibits any language on a marker or tombstone that doesn't conform to Catholic teachings. By way of explanation, he sent me a bishop's memorandum dated July 16 of 2004, two months after gay marriage became legal here.

"It's just a clarification," Delisle said.

"Questions come up from time to time, so he made the norms more clear."

The memo states that nothing in St. John's Cemetery or in any other local Catholic cemetery can contain anything that would contravene church doctrine, "as determined by and at the sole discretion of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Worcester."

In other words, tough luck to gay married Catholics. They can live as spouses, but they can't die that way in any of the more than 20 Catholic cemeteries in Worcester County.

Troy said that his parents, grandparents and other relatives are buried at St. John's, so he won't go elsewhere. Besides, his mother paid for the plot.

"Richard is my legal spouse," he noted. "I'm angry and hurt by my church.

I've chosen to remain Catholic but I'm almost ready to leave. I'm devastated that as a good Catholic kid who hung in there, the church would insist on doing this."

If you're on the team you must play by the rules, I guess. Still, the bishop's policy seems needlessly petty and small minded, especially now, when lifelong and loyal Catholics are harder to come by.

"Maybe I'll outlive the bishop and we'll see what happens," Troy said. "I know it's just one word, but it means so much. This is my last resting place. Give me some peace. He's saying I can't even be normal in death. But this is 2011 and things have changed."

But not everything. †

Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal

A Victory for Honesty and Anti-Discrimination

By Maureen Fiedler, SL
Ncronline.org
January 7, 2011

I wonder if any Catholic bishops were popping champagne corks on Saturday when the U.S. Senate overcame the final legislative hurdles and repealed the policy known as "don't ask, don't tell." I'd like to think at least some of them joined the vast majority of lay Catholics who welcome the end of this onerous policy.

For whatever the Bishops think about the theology of homosexuality, they are - on paper, at least - opposed to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. As they said in their pastoral letter, *Always Our Children*: "The



Maureen Fiedler, SL

teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against them..."

The Bishops were not, however, in the forefront of efforts to repeal this legislation.

Still, they should cheer it. This historic vote ends discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the military, and it restores a sense of personal integrity and honesty for service members who are gay or lesbian. Now, soldiers can admit who they are without fear of recrimination. They can own their identity with friends and colleagues without fear of being drummed out of the service.

This is an historic vote for civil rights that Catholics and others should cheer. †

Priest champions non-discrimination ordinance

By Timothy Kincaid
Boxturtlebulletin.com
March 15, 2011

It isn't that often that I have anything complimentary to say about the current state of the Catholic Church and its practices, so I'm not letting this opportunity pass by.

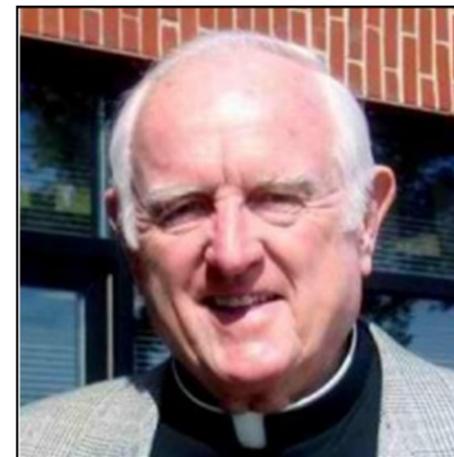
Rev. Joseph Breen of the St. Edward Church in Nashville, Tennessee is standing up for the LGBT community.

Breen penned a letter to the Metro Council that also ran in the Tennessean this week encouraging the elected officials to get behind a bill meant to eliminate anti-gay bias when it comes to con-

tracts with the city.

"I ask you to approve this bill banning discrimination by city contractors against gay, lesbian and transgender people," Breen wrote in a letter sent to each member of Nashville's Metro Council (and also published in the *Tennessean*). "I fully support the spirit of inclusion rather than exclusion in our great city and ask you to do the same with your vote of approval," he added.

Clearly Father Breen has given up on any hope of ever becoming bishop and is now just seeking to better the lives of those in his parish, his city, and his community. I wonder if the Diocese will retaliate. †



Rev. Joseph Breen

A Catholic School Meets a Challenge: To Xavier High School, 'Laramie Project' Is No Big Deal

By Samuel G. Freedman
Nytimes.com
December 17, 2010

When Eric Ostrow was hired last year to teach drama at Xavier High School in Manhattan, as a newcomer he chose two impeccably innocuous shows for student productions. The first was a comedy, "Epic Proportions," and then came the musical "Grease," with its script scrubbed of profanity and one character's unwed pregnancy papered over in euphemisms.

Then, late last spring, Mr. Ostrow presented school administrators with his wish list for year two. It was to stage "The Laramie Project," Moises Kaufman's play about the murder of a gay college student, Matthew Shepard. And if Mr. Ostrow thought he might be shocking his bosses with the proposal, then he was soon shocked in return.

Not only did Xavier's president and headmaster approve the plan for "Laramie," they informed Mr. Ostrow that he was not exactly breaking new ground. Xavier had performed "Laramie" in the 2002-3 school year, standing by the production even amid some eye-rolling and grumbling among faculty members and parents and a smattering of picketing from fundamentalist Christians.

Last weekend, Mr. Ostrow's cast performed the play three times to a total of 470 theatergoers. English and religion teachers gave their students extra credit to see "Laramie" and write responses. Parents who had initially quailed about their children being in the show gave standing ovations. Spectators bought hundreds of "Erase Hate" wristbands to benefit the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Nothing happened, which is a way of saying that everything happened. To use a Sherlock Holmes aphorism, this was the case of the dog that did not bark. The deep significance of Xavier's production of "Laramie" — of a Catholic school doing a play with an H.I.V.-positive, bar-going gay man as the object of the audience's empathy — is that it stirred about as much controversy as, say, "Our Town."

"I'm thrilled we did it," Jack Ralsowsky, Xavier's president, said in an interview this week. "It's one of those plays that has the potential to be a springboard to discussion. If you do 'The Mousetrap' or 'Brigadoon,' you're not going to be discussing issues of good and evil."

Such a discussion, said Mr. Ralsowsky and Michael LiVigni, the headmaster, fits firmly in the Catholic theological tradition, with its emphases on social justice and human dignity.

"When I saw the play," Mr. LiVigni said, "what struck me most was the scene of Matthew's funeral when you have picketers with the sign 'God Hates You.' But why would God hate what he created? That's what I want our boys to understand."

The Xavier production serves as a kind of marker for all that has and has not changed in the dozen years since Mr. Shepard's murder. With Congressional efforts to repeal the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy and a federal court case in California framing same-sex marriage as a civil right, society is moving toward fuller acceptance, if not yet complete equality, for gay citizens.

Yet in the months after Xavier began work on "Laramie," a series of young gay teenagers across the country committed suicide to escape harassment, and a gay man and two teenagers in the Bronx were held, beaten and tortured in an incident widely likened to the Shepard killing.

The Roman Catholic Church, especially in the United States, has dealt with its own complicated duality on gay issues.

On the inclusive side, a 1997 letter by American bishops entitled "Always Our Children" said that homosexuality could not be "considered sinful" and that homosexuals should not be pushed into therapy to try to change them. While calling on homosexuals to remain chaste, the letter maintained, "God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual."

On the other flank, however, a 1986 letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, prepared when Pope Benedict was its leader, described homosexuality as a "more or less strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil." And over the years, America's bishops have formally campaigned against both same-sex marriage and civil unions.

"The debate within the church is whether to view innate attraction to the same sex as a deformity of human nature or as an alternative form of human sexual nature," said Prof. Lisa Sowle Cahill, a professor of Christian ethics at Boston College. "Statistics show that younger religious people, including Catholics, are more accepting of gay people who are their peers. Nonetheless, in the culture you still see a lot of homophobia and hostility."

What that means for students like Xavier's can be distilled to a single, fashionable phrase of derision: "That's so gay." Adam Salazar, a 17-year-old senior from Brooklyn, knew it well; he used it often. "If someone was a loser, if

The Xavier production serves as a kind of marker for all that has and has not changed in the dozen years since Mr. Shepard's murder.

someone was weird," he recalled, "that was the word you used."

Until reading the script of "Laramie" for his audition, though, Adam had never even heard of Matthew Shepard. He was in kindergarten, after

all, the year of the murder. As he was cast last spring and rehearsed all this fall, he kept learning why the Shepard story still mattered.

"I was talking about what the new school play is," he recalled of a conversation with classmates. "And I said, it's about this homosexual kid who gets killed. And as soon as I said, 'homosexual,' their faces go pale." He paused. "Just today, I heard a kid call another kid the f-word" — faggot — "because he didn't give him a high-five."

Marc Rugani, a religion teacher at Xavier, began discussing the play in his classes weeks before the performances. Initially, he felt the students were reticent "to breach this taboo topic." After the show, that reluctance has given way to a "better understanding of the magnitude of hate."

Angel Vicisio, a cast member, put it this way: "I've learned we are the generation that has a chance to change this."

One production, of course, remains one production. Of the 100 licensed student productions of "Laramie" last year, only six or seven took place at religious schools of any faith. As for the tally of student productions of "Grease," how high can you count? †

Gay-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

Below is a list of known gay-friendly Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic institutions that have some type of gay/lesbian student group, support group, ally group, etc. If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to gay/lesbian people, please let us know!



Alabama

Mobile: Spring Hill College

California

Belmont: Notre Dame de Namur University
Goleta: St. Mark's University
Los Angeles: Loyola Marymount University, Mount Saint Mary's College
Moraga: St. Mary's College
Ranchos Palos Verde: Marymount College
San Diego: University of San Diego
San Francisco: University of San Francisco
Santa Clara: Santa Clara University

Colorado

Denver: Regis University

Connecticut

Fairfield: Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University
New Haven: Albertus Magnus College
West Hartford: Saint Joseph College

District of Columbia

Georgetown University, Trinity University

Florida

Miami Gardens: St. Thomas University
Miami Shores: Barry University

Hawaii

Honolulu: Chaminade University

Illinois

Chicago: DePaul University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University
Joliet: University of St. Francis
River Forest: Dominican University in Illinois
Romeoville: Lewis University

Indiana

Notre Dame: Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, University of Notre Dame

Iowa

Dubuque: Loras College

Kentucky

Louisville: Spalding University, Bellarmine University

Louisiana

New Orleans: Loyola University

Maryland

Baltimore: College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Loyola College of Maryland

Massachusetts

Boston: Emmanuel College, Boston College

Chestnut Hill: Boston College

Chicopee: Elms College
Easton: Stonehill College
North Andover: Merrimack College
Weston: Regis College
Worcester: Assumption College, College of the Holy Cross

Michigan

Detroit: University of Detroit Mercy
Grand Rapids: Aquinas College

Minnesota

Collegeville: St. John's University
Duluth: College of St. Scholastica
Minneapolis: College of St. Catherine
St. Joseph: College of Saint Benedict
St. Paul: St. Thomas University
Winona: St. Mary's University of Minnesota

Missouri

Kansas City: Avila University, Rockhurst University
St. Louis: Fontbonne University, St. Louis University

Montana

Helena: Carroll College

Nebraska

Omaha: Creighton University

New Hampshire

Manchester: St. Anselm College
Nashua: Rivier College

New Jersey

Caldwell: Caldwell College
Jersey City: St. Peter's College
South Orange: Seton Hall

New York

Albany: College of Saint Rose
Brooklyn and Patchogue: St. Joseph College
Bronx: Fordham University, Manhattan College
Buffalo: Canisius College
Loudonville: Sienna College
New Rochelle: College of New Rochelle, Iona College
Poughkeepsie: Marist College
Riverdale: College of Mount St. Vincent
Rochester: Nazareth College of Rochester, St. John Fisher College
St. Bonaventure: St. Bonaventure University
Sparkill: St. Thomas Aquinas College
Syracuse: LeMoyne College
Queens: St. John's University

Ohio

Cincinnati: Xavier University
Cleveland Heights: John Carroll University
Dayton: University of Dayton
Pepper Pike: Ursuline College
South Euclid: Notre Dame College
Sylvania: Lourdes College

Oregon

Marylhurst: Marylhurst University
Portland: University of Portland

Pennsylvania

Cresson: Mount Aloysius College
Dallas: Misericordia University
Erie: Mercyhurst College
Greensburg: Seton Hill University
Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's University
Pittsburgh: Carlow University, Duquesne University
Radnor: Cabrini College
Reading: Alvernia University
Scranton: Marywood University
Villanova: Villanova University

Rhode Island

Newport: Salve Regina University
Providence: Providence College

Texas

Austin: Saint Edward's University
San Antonio: University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University

Vermont

Colchester: Saint Michael's College

Washington

Lacey: St. Martin's College
Seattle: Seattle University
Spokane: Gonzaga University

West Virginia

Wheeling: Wheeling Jesuit University

Wisconsin

De Pere: St. Norbert College
Madison: Edgewood College
Milwaukee: Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University

Canada

Toronto: Regis College

Marquette University to offer domestic partner benefits

By Sharif Durhams and Don Walker
The Journal-Sentinel
Milwaukee
March 24, 2011

Marquette University plans to start offering domestic partner benefits to its employees in 2012, a move that comes about a year after the university's decision to rescind a job offer to a lesbian candidate caused the campus to erupt in debate.

In a statement sent to the campus Thursday afternoon, Marquette President Robert A. Wild said he's been wrestling with an idea of offering the benefits that would provide services for gay and lesbian employees for years.

University officials said the timing of the announcement was influenced by votes in recent weeks by the University Academic Senate and the Marquette University Student Government that have urged the university to offer benefits for domestic partners.

"If we are truly pastoral in our application of the Jesuit principle of *cura personalis*, I asked myself if I could recon-

cile that with denying health benefits to a couple who have legally registered their commitment to each other," Wild said. In Latin, *cura personalis* means "care for the entire person."

Wild noted that the State of Wisconsin gives legal recognition both to marriage for heterosexual couples and to a registered domestic partnership for same-sex couples.

Officials said they're still working out details, but medical and vision benefits currently offered to married couples and their dependents will be extended to registered domestic partners. The couples receiving the benefits must share a resi-

dence, and must be of the same sex. The declaration of domestic partnership may be initiated by an application filed with the clerk of the county in which an individual resides.

The decision by Marquette comes nearly after a year after the school an-



nounced that it was rescinding a job offer to Jodi O'Brien, a lesbian and scholar at Seattle University, involving concerns relating to Marquette's "Catholic mission

and identity" and their incompatibility with some of O'Brien's scholarly writings.

The university said at the time that

the decision to rescind the job offer did not have anything to do with O'Brien's sexual orientation.

The university has a Statement on Human Dignity and Diversity. It reads, in part, that Marquette "recognizes and cherishes the dignity of each individual regardless of age, culture, faith, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability or social class." The statement adds that the Jesuit-run school seeks to become a more diverse and inclusive academic community dedicated to the promotion of justice.

After Marquette and Wild announced the decision, dozens of faculty members at both Marquette and Seattle condemned Marquette for rescinding the offer to O'Brien to take over as dean of the school's College of Arts and Sciences.

School officials said at the time that the university would consider research projects, conferences, courses and service learning projects exploring the topics of Catholic identity and gender and sexuality issues. †

Md.'s top leaders cross Catholic hierarchy on gay marriage

(Continued from page 1)

the Ark of Safety Christian Church of Upper Marlboro. He questioned whether polygamy would one day be acceptable.

Sen. Joanne C. Benson (D-Prince George's) said she grew up watching her father officiate over weddings and came to believe that such unions should be reserved for people who can have children.

"Two people of the same sex cannot produce children," she said.

With attention turning to the House, supporters there acknowledged Thursday that same-sex marriage has been a hard sell with African American lawmakers from Prince George's County, as well as conservative Democrats from Southern Maryland and the Baltimore suburbs.

In an interview this week, Busch said he will support the bill as a matter of civil rights, even though he prefers civil unions for gay couples.

Busch, 64, said he has reservations about the term "marriage" but has not been swayed by Catholic officials' arguments that it should be reserved for people with the potential for procreation. He said he does not fear any retribution from the church.

"I believe God wants me to make just and right decisions," Busch said.

After his family bounced between Maryland and Virginia, Busch spent his final years of high school at St. Mary's, a Catholic school in Annapolis serving mostly blue-collar families at the time.

Busch credits the nuns there with putting him on the right path and instilling "a value system of honesty, integrity, hard work and discipline." He returned to St. Mary's for much of the 1970s as a history teacher and football coach.

Busch said he considers himself Catholic, adding that "one day I hope

they're going to bury me a Catholic." He would not say how often he attends church, offering only that "I'm not a guy who makes every Sunday."

Busch said he largely agrees with the church on issues such as supporting the poor and expanding access to health care. He has parted ways on others, including abortion and embryonic stem-cell research funding, which Maryland lawmakers approved in 2006.

"I don't think I'm unlike a lot of other members of the Catholic religion," Busch said.

In wrestling with the same-sex marriage issue, he said he has asked himself how he would respond if one of his daughters told him she was a lesbian. "Do you love them any less? You love them the same. You want the best for them."

Masses were said in Latin when

ous lawyer, presided over two grueling years of debate over abortion, siding with those who wanted to put protections for women into Maryland law in the event Roe v. Wade was repealed.

Miller said his mother told him that "it was a women's issue and that I needed to support the women."

Miller has since been a strong advocate on some issues affecting the Catholic Church, including a proposed tax credit to help bolster its schools. But he said he's "not a very good Catholic" despite regular attendance at churches in his district.

"I think we should have women for priests," he said. "I think there should be contraception to stop the spread of AIDs in Africa. I support capital punishment, and I'm pro-choice in the early stages of pregnancy."

In discussing his opposition to same-

Maryland tables marriage bill until 2012

ANNAPOLIS, Md. -- After two weeks of tension and occasional high drama, the Maryland House of Delegates delayed a showdown on same-sex marriage until next year.

The House decided March 11 to return a controversial bill to legalize same-sex marriage to its Judiciary Committee -- a move that effectively tables it for the remainder of this year's legislative session but keeps it alive for when the Legislature reconvenes next January. —ncronline.org, March 15, 2011

Miller, the oldest of 10 children, was an altar boy at St. John's Church in Clinton. He said that his father was "a very conservative Catholic" and that his mother converted to Catholicism from the Methodist Church.

Despite their Catholicism, Miller points to his parents to explain one of his first high-profile breaks with the church during his 25-year tenure as Senate president.

In the early 1990s, Miller, a gregari-

sex marriage, Miller, 68, pointed to the strong values of his family, which hadn't had a single divorce until his generation.

"It's not really a Catholic thing," he said. "I have a hard time associating family values with people of the same sex being married. What is the next definition of marriage going to be? At some point, you have to draw the line."

Miller said he thinks same-sex marriage could be rejected by Maryland voters.

New Ways Ministry discusses gay marriage during conference

(Continued from page 1)

me," she recalled. "Over time and many conversations, he came back to me and apologized.

Mizeur said her priest friend said, "You have come into my life and you have made me a better priest." She spoke of people's fear of change and the importance of keeping or bringing back to the church "our gay brothers and sisters."

She pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church has been slow to move on this issue.

"Much pain and suffering has been

handed out by the church and there is a crisis in the church. We must stay and fight," she said. "This is a civil rights issue. There is a choice between love and fear. Fear goes away when you pound it with love."

"It's so rare for a politician to speak so deeply of their personal faith," said Francis DeBernardo executive director at Mount Rainier, Prince George's County, New Ways Ministry, which was co-founded in 1977 by the Rev. Robert Nugent, a Roman Catholic priest, and Sister Jeannine Gramick.

A question-and-answer session was

followed by roundtable discussions at the conclusion of the delegate's remarks. Virginia Rugemer asked, "If gays and lesbians are accepted by my family, why not society?" while Carol Rice said, "I'm a Catholic, and no one is going to steal my church."

Many attending the event blamed the church's hierarchy for its stance on same-sex marriage.

Gramick, who has been assigned to a pastoral ministry for gay and lesbian Catholics for the past 20 years, is hopeful that same-sex marriage will become law in Maryland.

"There have been a lot of bumps on the way, but in the long run, truth will come out and justice will prevail," said Gramick, who is a member of the Sisters of Loretto. "And it's because of church governance that it's been so long in coming.... Let the people's voice come through."

Gramick's work has not always endeared her to church authorities. "I was warned back in the 1990s by the Vatican that I should not be involved in this ministry," she said. †

Gay-friendly Catholic Parishes

Below is a partial list of known "gay-friendly" Catholic parishes. Thank you for helping us add to this growing list! If you are aware of such a parish that is known as welcoming to lesbian/gay Catholics as members and active parishioners, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in gay community events, or involvement with parents.



Alabama

Montgomery: St. Bede

Arizona

Mesa: Christ the King
Scottsdale: Franciscan Renewal Center
Tucson: St. Cyril of Alexandria, SS. Peter and Paul, St. Pius X, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Odilia

California

Berkeley: Holy Spirit Parish
Burney: St. Francis of Assisi
Carlsbad: St. Patrick
Claremont: Our Lady of the Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Encino: Our Lady of Grace
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph - Mission San Jose
Goleta: St. Mark Univ. Parish
Hawthorne: St. Joseph (Spanish)
Hayward: All Saints
LaPuente: St. Martha
Lemon Grove: St. John of the Cross
Long Beach: St. Matthew
Los Angeles: Blessed Sacrament, Christ the King, Mother of Good Counsel, St. Camillus Center-LA USC Medical Center (Spanish), St. Agatha, St. Paul the Apostle
North Hollywood: Blessed Sacrament, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Patrick
Oakland: Our Lady of Lourdes
Oceanside: St. Thomas More
Orange: Holy Family Cathedral, Koinoia
Pleasanton: Catholic Community of Pleasanton
Ross: St. Anselm
Sacramento: St. Francis of Assisi
San Carlos: St. Charles
San Diego: Ascension, San Rafael, St. Jude Shrine
San Francisco: Most Holy Redeemer, Old St. Mary Cathedral, St. Agnes, St. Dominic
San Jose: St. Julie Billiart, St. Martin of Tours (Emmaus Community)
San Luis Obispo: Old Mission of San Luis Obispo
San Rafael: Church of San Rafael & Mission San Rafael Archangel
Santa Barbara: OL of Guadalupe
Santa Clara: GALA
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
Simi Valley: St. Rose of Lima
Spring Valley: Santa Sophia
Stanford: Catholic Community at Stanford University
Valinda: St. Martha
Vernon: Holy Angels Church of the Deaf
Walnut Creek: St. John Vianney
West Hollywood: St. Ambrose, St. Victor
Whittier: St. Mary of the Assumption

Colorado

Arvada: Spirit of Christ
Avon: St. Edward
Colorado Springs: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacred Heart
Denver: St. Dominic, Christ the King, Mount Carmel

Fort Collins: Blessed John XXIII
Genessee: St. Frances Cabrini Shrine
Highlands Ranch: Pax Christi
Littleton: Light of the World, St. Frances Cabrini

Connecticut

Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony

Delaware

North Wilmington: Holy Child
Wilmington: St. Joseph

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Aloysius, St. Matthew Cathedral

Florida

Cocoa Beach: Our Savior
Daytona Beach: Our Lady of Lourdes
Ft. Lauderdale: St. Anthony, St. Maurice
Naples: St. John the Evangelist
St. Petersburg: Holy Cross
Tampa: Franciscan Center, Sacred Heart, Christ the King

Georgia

Atlanta: Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Illinois

Berwyn: St. Mary of the Celle
Chicago: Immaculate Conception, St. Clement, St. Gertrude, St. Gregory, St. Peter, St. Sylvester, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thomas the Apostle, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Old St. Patrick
Clarendon Hills: Notre Dame
Country Club Hills: St. Emeric
Evanston: St. Nicholas
Johnston City: St. Paul
Morton Grove: St. Martha
Oak Park: Ascension, St. Catherine of Sienna-St. Lucy
Schaumburg: St. Marcelline

Indiana

Evansville: St. Mary
Indianapolis: St. Thomas Aquinas

Iowa

Iowa City: St. Thomas More

Kentucky

Louisville: Epiphany, Cathedral of the Assumption, St. William

Louisiana

New Orleans: St. Augustine

Maine

Portland: Sacred Heart-St. Dominic
Saco: Most Holy Trinity

Maryland

Baltimore: Corpus Christi, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Matthew, St. Vincent dePaul
Columbia: St. John the Evangelist
Gaithersburg: St. Rose of Lima
Hagerstown: St. Ann
Severn: St. Bernadette

Massachusetts

Boston: Paulist Center, St. Anthony Shrine, St. Cecilia
East Longmeadow: St. Michael
Newton: St. Ignatius
Sharon: Our Lady of Sorrows
Springfield: Sacred Heart
Worcester: Holy Cross College

Michigan

Ann Arbor: St. Mary Student Parish
Detroit: St. Leo, Christ the King

Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholics
St. Ignace: St. Ignatius Loyola
Westland: Ss. Simon and Jude

Minnesota

Minneapolis: St. Frances Cabrini, St. Joan of Arc

Missouri

Kansas City: Guardian Angels, St. Francis Xavier, St. James
St. Joseph: St. Francis Xavier
St. Louis: St. Cronan, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Pius V

Montana

Billings: Holy Rosary, St. Pius X

Nebraska

Omaha: Holy Family, Sacred Heart

Nevada

Las Vegas: Christ the King, Guardian Angel Cathedral

New Hampshire

Merrimack: St. John Neumann
Pelham: St. Patrick

New Jersey

Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of Assisi
Maplewood: St. Joseph
Trenton Falls: St. Anselm

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family, Shrine of St. Bernadette
Espanola: Sacred Heart of Jesus

New York

Albany: St. Vincent DePaul
Baldwinsville: St. Augustine
Bellmore: St. Barnabas the Apostle
Bellport: Mary Immaculate
Brooklyn: St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Boniface, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, Immaculate Heart of Mary
Deer Park: Ss. Cyril and Methodius
East Islip: St. Mary
Elmira: St. Mary
Fairport: Church of the Assumption
Henrietta: Good Shepherd
Manhattan: Holy Name of Jesus, St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul the Apostle, Church of the Ascension, St. Francis of Assisi
Melville: St. Elizabeth
Pittsford: Church of the Transfiguration
Rochester: Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica
Syracuse: St. Lucy, All Saints
Utica: St. Francis DeSales
Wading River: St. John the Baptist
Wantagh: St. Frances de Chantal
Westbury: St. Brigid

North Carolina

Charlotte: St. Peter
Durham: Immaculate Conception
Fayetteville: St. Patrick
Raleigh: St. Francis of Assisi

Ohio

Akron: St. Bernard
Cincinnati: St. George-St. Monica, St. Robert Bellarmine
Cleveland: Ascension of Our Lord, St. Malachi, St. Martha
Columbus: St. Thomas More Newman Center
Mentor: St. John Vianney

University Heights: Church of the Gesu
Westlake: St. Ladislav
Wooster: St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Oregon

Beaverton: Mission of the Atonement
Portland: Journey and Koionia Catholic Community, St. Andrew, St. Phillip Neri, Downtown Chapel (St. Vincent de Paul)

Pennsylvania

Huntingdon: Most Holy Trinity
Philadelphia: Old St. Joseph, Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Vincent DePaul

Rhode Island

Providence: St. Francis Chapel, St. Mary's
Wickford: St. Bernard

Tennessee

Memphis: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Texas

Colleyville: Good Shepherd
Dallas: Holy Trinity
El Paso: All Saints
Houston: St. Anne
Plano: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Virginia

Arlington: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Richmond: Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Sacred Heart Parish
Roanoke: St. Gerard
Triangle: St. Francis
Virginia Beach: St. Nicholas

Washington

Pullman: Sacred Heart
Seattle: St. Benedict, Prince of Peace Newman Center
Tacoma: St. Leo

Wisconsin

Madison: Our Lady Queen of Peace,
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: Good Shepherd, Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe

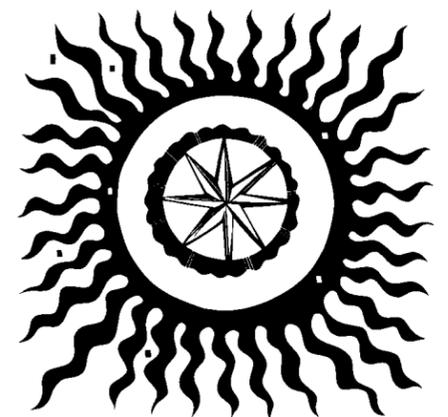
Canada

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Bishop Tobin: Church OK with Some Benefits for Gay Couples

By Stephen Beale
GoLocalProv.com
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In an exclusive interview, Roman Catholic Bishop Thomas Tobin said the Church is not opposed to granting some benefits and rights to gay couples—as long as the term marriage is not used.

His statement—which was couched in caveats—nonetheless indicates a flexibility in the Church's position that has previously been overlooked in the polarizing debate over gay marriage in Rhode Island.

"The legislation we would support is what is often called 'reciprocal benefits,'" Tobin told GoLocalProv. "It does not use marriage as a reference point. It would grant some legal benefits [and] some legal rights to two people who have some kind of established relationship without any particular reference to marriage. So it could be someone and their grandfather. Could be two cousins. Could be two elderly sisters."

Such a bill was filed in the House in early March. The bill, sponsored by Rep Peter Petrarca, D- Lincoln, would grant about half a dozen rights and benefits to any two unmarried people, regardless of sexual orientation. If passed, it would allow one partner to make medical decisions for another, have a say over the burial and disposition of their remains, and the right to inherit property if the other partner dies.

Tobin declined to elaborate on exactly which legal benefits and rights he thought unmarried couples should have—saying that's a question for legal experts. "People deserve human rights whether or not they're gay," Tobin said. "Now the reciprocal benefits [bill] recognizes some rights and some privileges irrespective of their orientation and that's the key I think."

Tobin said he would not go as far as supporting civil unions, saying the

church is as steadfastly opposed to civil unions as it is to gay marriage.

"We would oppose what is commonly called civil unions because it's really just another name for what would be same-sex marriage," Tobin said. "We've found invariably whenever civil unions are introduced in a state that is quickly followed by full-fledged gay marriage."

Four months into the legislative session, the Catholic Church in Rhode Island has been hard at work making its case for the one man-one woman definition of marriage. Tobin said he personally had reached out to about 10 or 12 lawmakers through personal letters and telephone conversations.

When it comes to another hot-button social issue, such as abortion, the consequences of voting against the Church's views can be serious. In 2004, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger—the future Pope Benedict XVI—said American politicians who support abortion should be denied communion. Five years later, Tobin himself became caught up in a high-profile controversy when he told then-Congressman Patrick Kennedy that he should not be receiving communion because of his position on abortion.

When it comes to gay marriage, Tobin said Catholic legislators who votes in favor of it could be committing a sin—unless they are truly voting their conscience.

"Is it a sin for someone to vote for gay marriage? It could be but it is not necessarily so," Tobin said. "Because if they really believe in their conscience that they're doing the right thing, then that removes them from any subjective guilt of sin. But if the lawmaker knows that it's wrong and he or she votes for it anyhow, then that's a problem for their conscience—Why would they go against their conscience?"

Tobin went into detail about the objections the Catholic Church has over

gay marriage.

"We think it is an ill-advised attempt to redefine the very basic parameters of marriage as they've existed from the very beginning of mankind—as the union of one man and one woman designed to create new life and to encourage the love of the spouses," Tobin said.

He also said the state should not be sanctioning behavior the Church regards



Bishop Thomas Tobin

as immoral and expressed concern that that a gay-marriage law could limit religious freedom. Even though the bill does not mandate that any church or other religious community perform gay marriages, Tobin said it could still force religious groups to grant benefits to gay couples.

Tobin conceded that allowing gay marriage would not necessarily have a direct impact on marriages between straight couples.

"There may not be a direct harm," Tobin said. "What your neighbor [is] doing next door might not affect you directly but, again, if a husband and wife—male and female—were married, their marriage means something in particular. If two other people come along who don't meet that definition and claim

they're married then, in a way, that diminishes that special relationship the married couple does have."

"I call it the 'champagne principle,'" he added. "Champagne has a very special definition before it can be bottled, labeled, and sold as such. If somebody comes along with sparkling water and labels it 'champagne,' they'll say, 'What harm is it?' ... 'We call it champagne, you call it champagne, what's the difference?' Well, there is a difference and you are advocating a name that belongs to somebody else."

Tobin steered clear of the debate over whether homosexuality is genetic or acquired—saying it's an open question that has yet to be decided by scientists and philosophers. But even if someone's homosexuality is genetically predisposed, he said that wouldn't affect the Church's position.

"The question whether or not some people are made that way—I think that's still an open question. I'm not quite ready to cede that. But even if that is the case, that someone has that disposition, they still have the ability as human beings to control their behavior—otherwise there's anarchy and chaos," Tobin said.

He said resisting impulses is part of the dignity of being a human being.

And, he pointed out that the Catholic Church teaches that heterosexual couples also have to control their behavior. Adultery and pre-marital sex, for example, are activities that are considered immoral regardless of sexual orientation.

"The fact that a person is made a certain way is not immoral—again that's the difference between orientation and activity," Tobin said. "Having a homosexual orientation is no more or less immoral than having a heterosexual orientation. But, in both cases, whether it's heterosexual or homosexual, we have to be able to control our behavior." †

Catholic Groups Convene Capitol Hill Briefing on LGBT Rights

WASHINGTON, DC— In an historic convening on Capitol Hill today, prominent Catholics and a leading researcher discussed the strong support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals among Catholic laity. The event was organized to raise awareness among policymakers as they consider legislation that impacts the LGBT community by Equally Blessed, a coalition of Roman Catholic organizations that supports LGBT equality, and supported by the Arcus Foundation.

The event was hosted by Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY). Invited panelist Robert P. Jones, Ph.D., CEO of Public Religion Research Institute, described results from recently released research showing strong support for gay and lesbian rights among Catholics across a range of issues. Catholic panelists included Reverend Bryan Massingale S.T.D., Professor of Theology, Marquette University; Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director, NETWORK; and David Saavedra, Board Co-President, Call To Action. The briefing was moderated by Sister Maureen Fiedler, SL, host of the radio program, Interfaith Voices.

"The distinguished voices we heard today confirm that there is a growing base of faithful Catholics who are willing to stand for justice for LGBT people," stated Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry, an Equally Blessed partner. "Catholic teachings insist on the unconditional love for our brothers and sisters. How can we expect the attitude toward LGBT people to be exempt from these principles, especially when many count members of the

LGBT community within our own families and parishes?"

The Public Religion Research Institute's recently released report, *Catholic Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Issues: A Comprehensive Portrait from Recent Research*, found that the majority of the sixty-four million Catholics in the United States support a number of public policies that extend rights to gay men, lesbians, and their families. The report also shows that 73 percent favor laws that protect gay and lesbian people from workplace discrimination, and 74 percent of Catholics believe that gay and lesbian relationships should be accepted by society. On the legal recognition of same sex relationships, Catholics are more supportive than any other Christian tradition and Americans overall—nearly three-quarters of Catholics favor either marriage or civil unions.

"While there are significant differences between the 38% of Catholics who attend church at least once a week and the majority of Catholics who attend less frequently, rank and file Catholics as a whole are generally more supportive of rights for gays and lesbians than other



Christians and the public," said Dr. Robert P. Jones, CEO of Public Religion Research Institute. "This support may come as a surprise to many."

Catholics account for approximately one-quarter of the U.S. population, and their attitudes have basically tracked the general population shift toward a more LGBT-friendly mainstream America, as demonstrated by the recent statutory repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and other changes in public policies. Millions of Catholic voices may be inspired by Catholic teachings which have compelled and informed countless social justice movements. According to Reverend Bryan Massingale, promoting social justice is an intrinsically Catholic principle.

"Every Catholic document on social justice declares the equal human dignity of every human being," said Rev. Bryan Massingale. "Many Catholics—including some who agree with their Church's moral judgments about same-sex conduct—support legislation that would ensure that gay and lesbian persons have the right to visit sick loved ones and make decisions concerning their care; that would ensure that such students can attend school without the burden of harassment and violence; that would enable

them to work and contribute to society without prejudice and discrimination."

"We as Catholics know that justice is grounded in truth and love. It is this combination that leads us to struggle against injustice and discrimination wherever it occurs. We have been shaped by the pastoral statements of our church including the Bishops statement in 1997 that encouraged us to reach out to lesbian and gay persons and welcome them into our Christian Community. This experience of sharing in communities of faith leads us to know their very real struggles against discrimination. We cannot stand by and watch. Our faith calls us to defend their rights and, as stated in *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986, no. 10, 'strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against them,'" said Sister Simone Campbell, SSS.

"Because we are all God's children, I believe we are entitled to love and to be loved; to equality and respect regardless of our gender or sexual orientation," said David Saavedra, Board Co-President, Call To Action, an Equally Blessed partner.

"Equally Blessed endeavors to remind the public about the reality of Catholic public opinion, and to contribute supportive Catholic voices to the discourse on this critical topic of equality," said Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA, another Equally Blessed partner. "This briefing helps set the framework for more visible Catholic involvement in LGBT advocacy." †

(See page 3 for related stories.)