

BONDINGS

Volume 28, No. 1

A Publication of New Ways Ministry

Fall/Winter 2007

'Closets' book on healing has opened some wounds

By Jeff Strickler

Star Tribune, Minneapolis-St. Paul
November 2, 2007

Carol Curoe and her father, Robert, hope that their book about their personal struggle to reconcile her being a lesbian with his staunch Roman Catholic faith will be a conduit for healing. But while they have a mountain of mail attesting to the fact that that is happening on a personal level, the book has also inspired divisiveness and rejection.

"This was intended as a healing book, not one that would open new wounds," Carol Curoe said.

The controversy rose to the forefront two weeks ago when the Curoes were "uninvited" to appear at St. Francis Cabrini Church to share the story behind "Are There Closets in Heaven?". The event was moved to another location after conservative Catholic bloggers encouraged their readers to flood the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis with complaints.

Ironically, Carol noted, there are few Catholics as Catholic as her father, an 82-

year-old retired farmer from Bernard, Iowa, south of Dubuque. Then again, as he tells it, he didn't have any other option.

"There were two kinds of people in Bernard," he said: "Irish Catholics and German Catholics. When two of them got together, we considered that a mixed marriage."

The controversy over the book would not have surprised Carol's mother, Joyce, who died in May. She saw it coming all along.

"This was my mother's worst nightmare," Carol said. "This is what she feared the most."

His wife's initial reluctance eventually gave way to full support, said the elder Curoe, who insists on being called Bob. In his dedication to the book, he writes of "her acceptance that this story needs to be told to help other families overcome prejudice and accept their gay children."

He tried to minimize the church's decision to ban their appearance.

"I don't think it was anything personal against us," he said. "I think it was just the situation that they felt they couldn't endorse."

Dennis McGrath, spokesman for the

archdiocese, said, "He's absolutely right. We welcome gay and lesbian members into the church, but they have the same rules as heterosexuals" in terms of sexual activity outside of marriage.

But Carol, who lives in the Twin Cities, admitted that she was stung by the decision.

"How threatening can we be?" she asked. "We were very careful not to attack the Catholic church. That's not the story."

The story begins with Bob's painful memories of the day he learned that Carol was gay:

"For days I fought back tears. I could hardly risk seeing friends or neighbors, there was such a block in my throat. I was afraid that



Carol and Robert Curoe

someone would mention Carol's name and I would be unable to control my emotions."

They did not set out to write the book as cathartic therapy, however.

"That was 17 years ago," Carol, 45, said. "We're so over it now."

She sees the book as more of a tribute to her parents, especially her father. She knows how difficult it was for him to support her while adhering to the teachings of his church. His ap-

proach: Whenever an issue arose, he would step back and try to see it from his daughter's perspective.

"What incredible role models for parents," she said. "We all face adversity, but to deal with it the way my mom and dad did is amazing. They focused on keeping the lines of communication open. In the end, it was all about keeping the relationships strong."

Carol and her partner have two sons who are being raised Catholic because "it feels right." When she was growing up, "being Catholic was the reference point for our lives," she said. She's not glossing over the fact that she has some major philosophical differences with church policies.

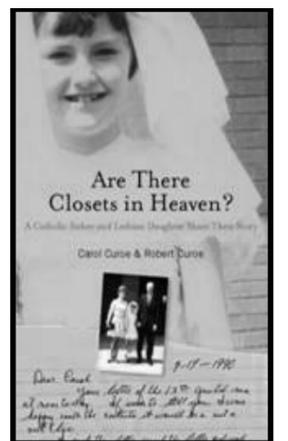
"I like our parish. I rationalize that we belong to St. Joan of Arc parish, not the larger Catholic church," she said. "I have to acknowledge that the leaders at the top of the church don't think that it's OK for our sons to have two moms. And I want my sons to know that so they're not surprised when they run into people who feel that way."

The controversy over the book has generated headlines that, in turn, have resulted in sales.

"But that's not the way we want to go about getting attention," Carol said. "In the process, a lot of other people are being hurt. That's not what we want."

They'd rather talk about the letters they get from people who say they have found strength and hope in the book.

"There are a lot of people who resonate with it," Carol added. "Not just gays. And not just Catholics. We've heard from Jews who married outside their religion and women who got pregnant before they were married. This is just my story, but it resonates with anyone who has experienced a split between child and parent." ♦



Cardinal Asks Forgiveness For Church's Sins Against Gays, Others

The Canadian Press
November 21, 2007

The archbishop of Quebec City has issued a wide-ranging mea culpa that seeks forgiveness for the Catholic Church's handling of sex scandals and its treatment of minorities.

In an open letter published in Quebec newspapers Wednesday, Marc Cardinal Ouellet says "errors were committed" in the past by certain Catholics and other church officials.

Among the errors he cites are attitudes, prior to 1960, which favored "anti-Semitism, racism, indifference to First



Cardinal Marc Ouellet

Nations and discrimination against women and homosexuals."

Ouellet acknowledges that abuses of power hurt the church's image in the Quebec and hindered its moral authority.

"Mothers of families were snubbed by parish priests without regard for the family obligations that they are already assumed; youngsters were subject to sexual aggression by

priests," the letter reads.

"These scandals shook the confidence of

the people towards religious authorities, and we understand them. Forgive us for all this pain!"

The letter also says that the church will make a public display of repentance next spring during Lent.

Ouellet is considered among the highest ranking Roman Catholic officials in the country, and has often spoken publicly against same-sex marriage.

But the appeal meant little for some of the groups.

Gay activist Michael Hendricks says the wrongs continue while Bruno Roy of the Duplessis Orphans Committee says it's a blatant attempt to bolster the church's flagging influence. ♦

Baltimore archbishop's homily offends gays

By Joshua Lynsen

Washington Blade
November 16, 2007

Some gay Catholics said they were frustrated by a local archbishop's homily last month that railed against gay marriage.

The homily, delivered Oct. 25 by Baltimore Archbishop Edwin O'Brien during a special Mass for judges and attorneys, asserted that straight marriage is "radically threatened" by courts and lawmakers intent on legalizing gay marriage.

According to the Catholic Review, O'Brien called on congregants to make the defense of heterosexual marriage "an urgent necessity to ensure the flourishing of persons, the well-being of children and the common good of society."

The homily did not sit well with gay Catholics like Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, a Maryland organization that advocates for the inclusion of gays in the Catholic Church.

"It's frustrating that someone like him, in a position of power and authority in the church, has such a misinformed view about sexuality, relationships and marriage," he said. "The church really would do better if he would enter into a dialogue with gay and lesbian people and their families and those who are ministering with them."

DeBernardo also said the homily illustrated how the church lacks an "equal standard" in matters of marital law.

"The Catholic Church doesn't support

same-sex marriage, but it doesn't support divorce and it doesn't oppose divorce laws," he said. "The church may not want same-sex marriage as an equal sacrament, but there's no need to oppose it in the civil realm."

The homily followed a September ruling by Maryland's highest court upholding a state law that defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Judges ruled the law does not discriminate on the basis of gender and does not deny any fundamental rights, but left open the possibility that legislators could take action on the issue.

Measures seeking marriage equality, civil unions and a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage are expected to surface when lawmakers reconvene Jan. 9 in Annapolis. ♦

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Fall/Winter 2007 Vol. 28, No. 1

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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 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.

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Serving Those Who Serve: As part of a Dignity/Philadelphia event, Dignity president Norman Simmons (from left), celebrant Robert Calabrese, state Sen. Michael Stack (D-Fifth Dist.) and Phil Ferrara Sr. collect rosaries Dec. 2 for servicemembers in Iraq at their weekly celebration of Mass held at St. Luke and the Epiphany Church. The welcoming GLBT Catholic group sent 113 rosaries, 400 prayer pamphlets and various religious medals and scapulars to a Catholic chaplain serving in Iraq who will distribute them to American military. ♦

Photo by Dick O'Malley

Nun Joins Rainbow World Fund Board

On September 9th, the Rainbow World Fund (RWF) office was crammed a la Holly Golightly to welcome Karen Kai and Sister Jeannine Gramick to the Board of Directors. About 50 people attended the party welcoming them. Many attendees were new to RWF. "Thanks to Karen and Jeannine, we raised much needed funds today," remarked Executive Director Jeff Cotter - "but almost as importantly we raised friends and that's priceless! I am so grateful to them both."

Sister Jeannine Gramick, SL, PhD, is a Roman Catholic religious sister, activist and co-founder of New Ways Ministry - helping LGBT Roman Catholics in the United States. She has a doctorate in Mathematics Education from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1971, Gramick began working with gays and lesbians. In 2000, Gramick and New Ways co-founder Fr. Robert Nugent were ordered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (under Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI) to cease ministering to gays and lesbians due to the assumption that same-sex relationships are sinful. While Nugent formally acquiesced to the decision, Gramick respectfully set aside the order altogether. Gramick is the author of several books on LGBT Catholic issues. The documentary *In Good Conscience* details her journey of activism, the silencing, and her decision to disregard it. ♦



Sister Jeannine Gramick

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Service Remembers Those Who Have Died Violently

Outword Magazine, Sacramento, CA
November 8, 2007

Since 1999, the memories of those who have died violently, simply because they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex, have been honored at an annual interfaith Service of Remembrance in Sacramento.

The tradition of the service was continued on Sunday, October 21 as Sacramento's PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) again hosted the event, drawing one of the largest gatherings in many years. The service is loosely timed to coincide with the tragic death of Matthew Shepherd and National Coming Out Day.

The service is always interfaith and is held at a different welcoming church each year. This year St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church was the host for the second time. Over 30 clergy and faith leaders joined the service as readers and supporters with the homily being given by the Very Rev. Dr. Brian Baker of Trinity Cathedral.

Paul Curtis was the honorary chairperson and the Sacramento Gay Men's Chorus sang, joined this year by the women's choruses True Colors and Small Difference.

"We were amazed and filled with awe when the church filled up almost to capacity," said Pamela Whiteley, president of Sacramento's PFLAG. "Many of our government and

community leaders were also in attendance including former May Ann Rudin, Senator Darryl Steinberg, West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, Supervisor Roger Dickinson, Councilman Steve Cohn, Jerry Sloan and Marghe Covino. The members of St. Francis made everyone feel very welcome after the service with refreshments and a friendly place to mingle and make new friends."

This year the service almost didn't happen. As with many non-profit organizations, burn out occurs and members who have been around a long time get tired. The Board of Directors of Sacramento PFLAG had decided not to hold the service and take a year off for much needed re-energizing. However, the shocking death of Satendar Singh made that decision a moot point.

"We had to go ahead with the service for Mr. Singh's sake and all the others on our list," said Whiteley. "This year the list of lost lives has grown to over 750 names. We realized the importance of keeping these names and the circumstances of their deaths- the hatred, violence and injustice- in our minds and hearts. We realized that we must not let the community at large forget the risks that every lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender faces when they come out of the closet. We realized that we owed it to all of the lost lives and their families and friends to keep this service going for their sakes and for ours - lest we forget." ♦



*Your submissions requested! If your organization, parish or religious community is doing something to promote dialogue about lesbian/gay issues, send us a photo and short article to include in the next issue of *Bondings*.*

Archbishop Apologizes for Giving Communion to Gays Dressed as Nuns

By Julian Guthrie
San Francisco Chronicle
October 17, 2007

It was a typical Sunday Mass until two men in heavy makeup and nuns' habits received Holy Communion from San Francisco's top Catholic official.

On Oct. 7, Archbishop George Niederauer delivered the Eucharist to members of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence - an activist group whose motto is "go forth and sin some more" - prompting cries of outrage from conservatives across the country and Catholics in San Francisco.

In response to a request for comment, Niederauer released a letter of apology addressed to "Catholics of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and to Catholics at large" in which he said he did not realize his mistake until after the Mass at Most Holy Redeemer Church in the Castro district.

"At Communion time, toward the end of the line, two strangely dressed persons came to receive Communion," Niederauer wrote. "As I recall, one of them wore a large flowered hat or garland."

Niederauer said that although he was familiar with the group because its actions had been condemned by his predecessors, he had never encountered any of the group's members until that Sunday.

"These two people have long made a practice of mocking the Catholic Church in general and religious women in particular. Someone who dresses in a mock religious habit to attend Mass does so to make a point (that) was intended as a provocative gesture," he said in the letter, which will be published in this Friday's issue of Catholic San Francisco, a diocesan newspaper.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, founded in San Francisco in 1979, are known for their white face paint, outrageous costumes, theatrics and support of the gay community. They adopt names such as Sister Chastity Boner and Sister Constance Craving of the Holy Desire and have mottos such as, "It is not wise to say no to free drinks, cheap jewelry, discount cosmetics or pretty boys."

Sister Barbi Mitzvah, who serves as "Board Chairnun" and "Sexytary," said Tuesday that the group is "not offering a comment."

"These people are always after us," Sister Mitzvah said, referring to conservative pundits and Catholic leaders.

The group did not identify the two members who took the wafers. One of the men, however, sent an e-mail to the church after the Mass and gave the name "Sister Delta Goodhand."

Conservative Fox news commentator Bill O'Reilly, who has disparaged "San Francisco values," called the latest flap another example of how the city is run by "far-left



Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

secular progressives who despise the military, traditional values and religion."

On his Friday news show, O'Reilly called San Francisco "a disgrace on every level."

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom dismissed O'Reilly's comments.

"This debate really is about San Francisco values. The Bill O'Reillys of the world are threatened by San Francisco because we value diversity, universal health care and civil rights for all. They will exploit any controversy to attack our values."

Some local Catholics, however, said they were hurt by what they said was a mockery of their most holy ritual.

"It's been all the news in Catholic circles," said Bill May, chairman of the San Francisco-based Catholics for the Common

Good. "Catholics are hurt, frustrated and a bit angry because nobody is standing up and saying this is not right. This is a desecration of the Eucharist. They were there to make a statement and embarrass the archbishop and, in doing so, they desecrated what is most sacred and dear to every Catholic in the world."

Holy Communion is a centuries-old tradition in which the celebrant receives from a priest the consecrated bread and wine representing the "Body of Christ" and the "Blood of Christ."

It is to be taken reverentially, as it is considered the source of Christian life.

"The general sacramental principle is that you don't deny the sacrament to someone who requests it," said the Rev. Jim Bretzke, professor of moral theology at University of San Francisco, a Jesuit Catholic university. "The second principle is that you cannot give communion to someone who has been excommunicated."

He said such people are designated "manifest public sinners" in canon law.

"This is someone who violates in a serious way one of the Ten Commandments or one of the important laws of the Church," he said. "While I can see Bill O'Reilly and others might be offended, the sisters do not meet the criteria the church has for denying Communion. Over-accessorizing and poor taste in makeup is not an excommunicable offense." ♦

Keeping the Faith

Damien Ministries celebrates 20 years of HIV/AIDS-related service to the D.C. community

By Yusef Najafi
Metro Weekly, Washington, DC
November 8, 2007

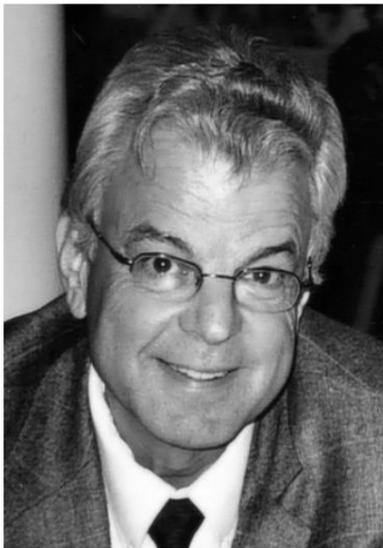
You don't go to Damien Ministries to die. Unlike its early days in the late '80s, when it was known as Damien House, the HIV/AIDS organization inspired by the Catholic Church and located in Northeast is no longer solely a hospice.

"We used to be a palliative organization, but now we are providing people with assistance to continue their lives," says Otis "Buddy" Sutson, of the various services Damien Ministries has adapted throughout its 20-year history.

Those services include the not-for-profit organization's monthly Food Bank, managed by Sutson. Last year, the Food Bank fed nearly 580 people living with HIV/AIDS in Washington.

Damien Ministries celebrates its growth over the past 20 years at its first-ever gala event on Saturday, Nov. 10, at St. Francis Hall in Northeast. The evening will feature entertainment by the Oberon String Quartet.

Rashid Darden, Program and Development Coordinator at Damien Ministries says, "We are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the founding of Damien Ministries as well as taking the time to recognize some of our longtime contributors."



Rev. James Nickel

Those longtime contributors include Sutson, who came on board full-time with the organization several years ago after retiring from his job at the federal government as a personnel specialist.

"Naturally I was drawn to HIV and AIDS," he says. "I specifically lost a lot of friends to HIV and AIDS. About 35."

Surviving the HIV epidemic hasn't been particularly easy for Sutson, who adds that he has dealt with guilt issues, and wondered why he survived when so many of his close friends passed away.

"You go through the guilt period of 'Why me?'" he says. "I've dealt with that and contributing to Damien Ministries," has helped. Eventually we'll get a hold of this disease. We're making progress."

Damien Ministries Executive Director James R. Nickel says the organization operates today similarly like other HIV/AIDS agencies, but on "smaller scales."

"We have housing programs, a food bank, support groups and case managers," he says. "So we do provide those kinds of needed services for the community, but we also have a spiritual component."

Nickel says members are offered to attend Damien Ministries' four-day-retreats,

held in November, February and August of each year, usually conducted in an "outdoorsy country environment" with an emphasis on spirituality.

"It offers comfort, encouragement, and companionship on the journey," Nickel says, adding that members are also given the chance to interact with professional religious leaders, who have been in AIDS ministry for most of their lives.

The "ministry" aspect of Damien Ministries can be traced back to founder Louis J. Tesconi, who in 1986 decided to abandon the six-figure salary he was making as a real-estate agent and move to D.C. to join the priesthood.

Six weeks after joining the seminary, Tesconi was diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma, AIDS-related cancer, and was immediately asked to leave the church.

He didn't leave discouraged. Instead he was reminded of the work of Joseph de Veuster, a Roman Catholic missionary known as "Blessed Damien of Molokai" and "Father Damien," who in the 1800s helped lepers on Molokai, a Hawaiian island, before succumbing to leprosy at the age of 49.

According to Darden, Tesconi "viewed AIDS as a modern day form of leprosy, in that a lot of people living with AIDS [in the late '80s] were poor and cast off members of society."

Nickel agrees. "Lou chose Damien as a model for working with what he considered modern day leprosy, AIDS, especially the way people were ostracized, given a death sentence and then left alone by others. [He] felt very strongly that somebody had to walk the journey with them in their final days. Twenty

years ago, [it was] a journey we were taking very often," he says.

Upon opening a housing unit for women infected with HIV in Washington in August 1987, Tesconi told *The Washington Post*, "We want to reach out to people whose needs are not being met by other groups."

In December of that year, Tesconi opened a housing unit for men living with HIV, followed by a house for Hispanic men in September of 1991.

He died from AIDS-related complications in November 1991.

Darden says that while the organization is inspired by the Catholic Church, "we obviously serve anybody who wants assistance."

Sutson describes the group's client base as "people who have lived on the edge for all their lives. It's a struggle for them to stay above the water."

"Most of our clients are challenged educationally and financially," he continues. "Some of them have a dependency with drugs and a lot of them are recovering from drug use."

And while there are no services specifically dealing with GLBT people, Darden says Damien Ministries is geared toward anybody living with HIV/AIDS in Washington D.C.

"Many of those people identify as GLBT," he says, adding that while the organization has come a long way since its inception, there is still room for improvement. "Though we have clearly demonstrated the staying power of a non-profit, we definitely want more people to know what we do. Because just like any non-profit, we could always use any help that anybody is able to provide." ♦

Book Review

'Gays and grays' — so happy together

Vital San Francisco parish bridges the gaps of age and lifestyle

By **Chuck Colbert**
National Catholic Reporter
January 25, 2008

At a time when gay and lesbian Catholics are finding an increasingly chilly reception in some churches, a parish in San Francisco is defying all the trends and conventional wisdom by revitalizing its congregation with the unlikely combination of elderly Catholics, including many widows, and homosexual men who have settled into a common place of worship.

Jesuit Fr. Donal Godfrey, a gay author, tells the story of Most Holy Redeemer through research and a dissertation he wrote for a doctoral degree. The dissertation has been published as a book, *Gays and Grays* (Lexington Books).

Most Holy Redeemer is located in the

city's Castro district, arguably America's most visible and iconic gay enclave.

These days, gays and grays are a comfortable fit. But it was not always so. When the 1967 summer of love blossomed in Haight-Asbury and gay liberation began to find expression in Eureka Valley, Most Holy Redeemer, then a predominately Irish Catholic parish, stood initially as bulwark against the burgeoning movement.

"As the gay community moved in, the parish was the center of hostility," Godfrey explained over lunch, during a recent visit to Boston.

"It was an old Irish neighborhood and the pastors didn't have a clue. The parish started to die. Nobody came to Mass. Nobody rang the doorbell," he said.

Godfrey, an English-born Irish Jesuit,

was on the East Coast recently to speak at Boston College. Sponsoring organizations at the Chestnut Hill campus included the school's theology department, Jesuit Institute, St. Ignatius Parish, and the Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Staff and Administrators Association (www.bc.edu/offices/lgfsaa).

Godfrey addressed a student forum that was open to the public. Currently, Godfrey is the executive director of university ministry at the University of San Francisco.

In his book, Godfrey devotes a chapter to each of two priests, Frs. Anthony McGuire and Zachary Shore, who played important roles in Most Holy Redeemer's transformation.

"McGuire was the right person, at the right place at the right time, the catalyst in creating a new kind of community" where "unusual friendships developed," Godfrey explained.

Over the years, old-timers befriended the newcomers, encouraged by a pastoral sensitivity that bridged cultural and generational gaps. Together, parishioners discovered a need for each other, especially during the 1980s, peak years of the AIDS epidemic, which shook San Francisco like an earthquake.

Paradoxically, their mutual dependence was good for the parish. "Suddenly, Most Holy Redeemer had the most fabulous crèche you could imagine," said Godfrey. "The old people loved it."

McGuire became pastor in 1982, the same year the deadly disease, caused by the HIV virus, was given the name acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

By 1990, when Shore began his pastorate, Most Holy Redeemer was "most definitely the Roman Catholic Church with the largest percentage of 'out' gay parishioners in the world," Godfrey explained.

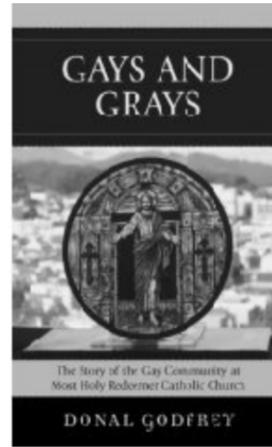
Accordingly, Shore continued McGuire's integration of the gay community into church life. A parish contingent marched openly in the city's Gay Pride parade. Anniversaries of same-sex couples were acknowledged from the pulpit during Mass.

Members of Most Holy Redeemer, writes Godfrey, who spent time at the parish during his research, "see ourselves reflected again and again in the life of Jesus, but rather more rarely in the life of the institutional church. The paradox remains that it

is the institutional church that introduced us to the liberating person of Jesus. The irony is that it is only when gay Catholics are given the chance to be part of the community that we can truly be the moral agents Jesus so wants us to be."

Tensions surfaced and tempers flared over a statewide anti-gay marriage ballot initiative that voters passed in 2000. California's bishops approved financial and political support for it, a decision "deeply resented" at Most Holy Redeemer. It was revealed that the San Francisco archdiocese contributed \$31,724 to the cause. Altogether, through the California Catholic Conference, the church's lobbying arm, the state's 12 dioceses threw more than \$310,000 behind the ballot initiative.

"Gays and Grays" continued on page 5...



Cardinal wary of speakers at conference on gays

By **Susan Hogan**
Chicago Sun-Times
October 18, 2007

Cardinal Francis George says he thinks some speakers at DePaul University's upcoming "Out There" conference on homosexuality may be too out there.

Some presenters may encourage people to ignore Catholic teaching and may justify same-sex behavior that "brings people's salvation into jeopardy," the cardinal wrote in a column for the latest Archdiocese of Chicago newspaper.

"To the extent that this is true, the purpose of the conference moves from reflection to advocacy in the name of being 'pasto-

ral,' " the cardinal wrote.

The Rev. Dennis Holtschneider, DePaul's president, acknowledged that some speakers may promote ideas that conflict with church teaching. But he supports their "freedom of inquiry."

The "Out There" conference, being held Friday and Saturday, is for scholars, students and university staff involved in gay issues on Catholic campuses.

"Too often when bishops hear 'homosexuality,' they immediately think about sexual behavior," said Francis DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry, a conference speaker. "To single that out is a narrow understanding of what the conference is about and what gay and lesbian people are about." ♦

Gay-Friendly Catholic Colleges

Below is a partial list of known "gay-friendly" Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic colleges that have some type of gay and lesbian student group, support group, ally group, etc. Thank you for helping us add to this growing list! If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to gay and lesbian people, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a club, support services, participation in gay community events, or simply the friendliness of faculty and staff.

Arizona

Tempe: All Saints Catholic Newman Center

California

Belmont: Notre Dame de Namur University

Goleta: St. Mark's University

Los Angeles: Loyola Marymount University

Moraga: Saint 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

Florida

Miami Gardens: Saint Thomas University

Miami Shores: Barry University

Illinois

Chicago: DePaul University, Loyola University, Saint Xavier College

Indiana

Notre Dame: Holy Cross College, Saint

Mary's College, University of Notre Dame

Iowa

Dubuque: Loras College

Kentucky

Louisville: Spalding 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

Easton: Stonehill College

North Andover: Merrimack College

Weston: Regis College

Worcester: Assumption College, Holy Cross College

Michigan

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Winona: Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

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Helena: Carroll College

Nebraska

Omaha: Creighton University

New Hampshire

Nashua: Rivier College

New Jersey

South Orange: Seton Hall

New York

Albany: College of Saint Rose

Bronx: Fordham University, Manhattan College

Buffalo: Canisius College

New Rochelle: College of New Rochelle,

Iona College

Poughkeepsie: Marist College

Riverdale: College of Mount Saint Vincent

Rochester: Nazareth College of Rochester

Syracuse: LeMoyne College

Tarrytown: Marymount College

Ohio

Cincinnati: Xavier University, University of Cincinnati

Columbus: Ohio State University

Dayton: University of Dayton

Pennsylvania

Cresson: Mount Aloysius

Erie: Mercyhurst College

Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle

University, Saint Joseph's University

Villanova: Villanova University

Rhode Island

Newport: Salve Regina University

Texas

Austin: Saint Edward's University,

University of Texas

San Antonio: University of the Incarnate

Word

Vermont

Colchester: Saint Michael's College

Washington

Lacey: Saint Martin's College

Seattle: Seattle University

Spokane: Gonzaga University

Wisconsin

De Pere: Saint Norbert College

Madison: Edgewood College

Milwaukee: Alverno College, Cardinal

Stritch University, Marquette University

Gay Catholic Youth Group Ministers in Mexico

By David Agren
National Catholic Reporter
September 7, 2007

Noe Ruiz, 27, teaches elementary school in Saltillo, Coahuila's state capital, about 200 miles south of the Texas border at Laredo. Like many in northern Mexico, Ruiz is Catholic and actively practices his faith.

Unlike many in his hometown, he is openly gay and coordinates a gay Catholic youth group, which operates with the blessing of the local diocese and serves 40 young people. But it has not always been easy, he said.

"The environment here in Saltillo is very traditional," Ruiz said, although he added that attitudes are softening.

Ruiz said Comunidad San Elredo is the only gay Catholic youth group in Mexico. While accepted within the diocese, Ruiz acknowledged some unease among Catholics in other parts of the country.

"The church in Mexico is very conservative," he said. "At the moment we're being supported [locally], but there are many people

that disagree with us."

Last January, Ruiz's home state of Coahuila passed Mexico's first civil union law, extending legal benefits to same-sex couples. The issue divided Catholic leaders across Mexico and in Coahuila, which is served by three dioceses.

Saltillo Bishop Raul Vera López supported the measure, while his counterparts in the Coahuila cities of Torreón and Piedras Negras expressed discomfort with the proposed civil unions.

Vera told Catholic News Service that gays "need legal protection," adding that he does not endorse the idea of marriage between two individuals of the same sex, but that he wanted to see rights extended.

"They need to be defended because they have been victims of discrimination. ... They're among the most marginalized groups," he explained.

To better serve the gay community in Saltillo, Comunidad San Elredo — named for St. Aelred, a 12th-century English abbot — was founded five years ago by two gay, 18-year-old Catholic-youth-group leaders work-

ing with Fr. Robert Coogan, an American originally from New York who normally serves the prison populations in the diocese.

Coogan said he sensed a need for a gay outreach program after a growing number of young gay men started coming to him for confession. "They had the assumption that someone from the U.S. would be more open," he said.

San Elredo now serves about 40 young people who meet on a weekly basis and celebrate Mass once a month. During individual discussions with Coogan, many gays often speak about feeling confused along with the pain of being rejected by family members and ridiculed by classmates. Coogan said the low-key approach works well when dealing with con-



Noe Ruiz, 27, Luis Fernando Hernandez, 19, and Hector Eduardo Gonzalez, 19, stand outside of the Cathedral of Santiago, in Saltillo, Mexico. They are members of Comunidad San Elredo, a group of young Catholic homosexuals in Saltillo.

Photo by David Agren

tentious issues such as homosexuality.

The Catholic church teaches that homosexual acts are sinful, but calls for respect, compassion and sensitivity toward those with homosexual inclinations.

"In issues that are complicated, there's nothing like one-on-one direction," Coogan said. "We shouldn't be making blanket

statements on issues that are so personal."

Coogan said San Elredo's objectives — the most important of which is "fomenting a deep love of God" — fit with the inclusive pastoral approach of Vera. The priest said the bishop "has said from the very beginning of when he arrived that the church was for everybody."♦

Support grows for those who are gay and Catholic

By Deb Price
Detroit News Online
October 29, 2007

On Thanksgiving weekend of 1983, Casey Lopata and his wife, Mary Ellen, began a spiritual journey that ultimately strengthened their family and lifelong commitment to Catholicism.

They discovered they had to navigate an emotional minefield: Their eldest son, Jim, a college sophomore home for the holiday, told Mary Ellen, "Mom, I'm lonely. I'm lonely for another man."

The next 10 minutes were an agonizing blur of fear and grief for Mary Ellen, who cried as she told Jim she loved him and assured him being gay didn't change that.



Mary Ellen & Casey Lopata

"Then why are you crying?" he asked. "I don't know," Mary Ellen confessed. The next morning, Jim told his father, a self-described "thinker" who uncharacteristically ran out of questions after "Are you sure?" and "Can you change?"

"For me, as a thinker," Casey recalls, "the key question was, 'Can Jim be gay and be Catholic?'"

It took the Rochester, N.Y., couple nine years to become comfortable being open about having a gay son. They never abandoned their son or their church.

Eventually, Mary Ellen wrote a book, "Fortunate Families," to share the stories of Catholics coming to terms with their gay children. She and Casey founded a group, also named Fortunate Families, to help such parents feel less alone and to transform their church.

"We believe we are the church. And if we didn't work to have our children recognized as whole and holy members of the church, then we are complicit with the injustice," Mary Ellen says of the Catholic Church's official anti-gay position. "So if we stay, we must speak."

A groundbreaking report by Fortunate Families, based on its survey of 229 Catholic

parents with gay children, concludes: "Parents love their (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) children, and they love their church. But they do not see their love, or God's unconditional love, reflected in how the institutional church relates to their LGBT sons and daughters." (see www.fortunatefamilies.com).

Catholic parents now learning their child is gay report higher initial levels of comfort than parents who learned five or more years ago. And Catholic parents who know another parent with a gay son or daughter are "significantly more comfortable" with their child's orientation than are isolated parents.

The parents are far more likely to call gay-friendly P-FLAG, New Ways Ministry and Fortunate Families "very helpful" than to say that about their parishes.

One mom with a gay son lamented, "I do not feel the Catholic Church offers any

support with our children. I remain a Catholic only because of the Mass and the Eucharist."

The survey found that "through their journeys to understanding, parents' initial fears and tears have been transformed into ire and fire." That change is reflected in one mother's vow that she and her husband "will spend our last breath carrying the message that God loves each of his precious children—and we do, too."

Casey Lopata encourages Catholic parents of gay children to "never to stop telling your story. That is the greatest witness you can make."

Having a gay son is a gift, he believes, one that made him a more loving dad and vibrant Catholic.

As countless Catholic parents embrace their children's homosexuality, they are learning to see their families as fortunate indeed.♦

"Gays and Grays"

...continued from page 4

Vatican's top doctrinal enforcement arm, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The letter reads in part: "Is there a right that bishops have to use money that has been given to a diocese for the purpose of programs for the people of God, to be used for state politics? I cannot remember whenever it was done before or whether parishioners were aware of it, if it was."

Shore continued: "Frustrated parishioners are leaving the church or are no longer going to support church or archdiocesan ministries. What they thought was a home, a place of acceptance and love and not bigotry, is nothing more than a place of tolerance and lip service."

When Shore read the letter at Mass on a Sunday, members of the parish, many with tears in their eyes, rose to their feet.

Godfrey said he believes that on-the-ground practice will eventually change the church's outlook, and he takes hope from the fact that a 2006 document from the U.S. bishops on homosexuality did not use the phrase "intrinsic evil" that had been used in previous Vatican documents describing homosexuality.

"Gay Catholics are becoming an open and accepted part of parish life in a greater number of parishes," he writes. "I believe that this movement will grow as gays are more accepted in society. I don't see how it can be stopped."

The example set at Most Holy Redeemer gives voice to hope for a new church "revolution through evolution," as Godfrey called it, in a worshipping community where, he said, murmurs and whispers no longer cloak gay people in darkness and shame.♦

Gay Catholics pledge to defy church mass 'hate' campaign

'Sometimes I wonder if we practise the same religion,' says worshipper

By Tom Foot
West End Extra, United Kingdom
December 21, 2007

Gay Roman Catholics have vowed to continue attending mass at a Soho church despite claims that they are subject to a vicious hate campaign.

Since March, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Catholics have been attending mass at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, in Warwick Street, after the Diocese of Westminster officially acknowledged the group formed after the Admiral pub nail bomb attacks in 1999.

But the fortnightly masses — the country's only endorsed mass for LGBT Roman Catholics — have been disrupted by a vigilante group who stage protests outside the church and have been accused of intimidating the congregation.

The LGBT group's secretary, Martin Pendergast, said: "We have received hate mail and the group, which is sometimes as many as 30, intimidate us at the church.

"They sing so loudly during mass to

try to drown us out and some of our congregation have been doorstepped.

They have even sent their accusations to the Vatican."

He added: "These are supposed to be fellow Catholics, but sometimes I wonder if we are practising the same religion."

Soho police now attend the masses organised by the Soho Masses Pastoral Council.

This week the diocese reiterated its commitment to the masses. A spokesman said: "Recently, there has been a review of the provision that has been provided and, as a result, Mgr Seamus O'Boyle has been appointed parish priest. He will be responsible for ensuring all pastoral provision is given with due catechesis and formation according to the mind of the church.

"The parish will continue to be sensitive to the pastoral needs of homosexual Catholics.

"Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory parish provides a welcome to all, and every mass celebrated at the church has always, and will continue to be, open to all."

Future archbishop's compassion stops short when it comes to gays

By Nick Coleman
Star Tribune, Minneapolis-St. Paul
November 27, 2007

John Nienstedt, Coadjutor Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, has been quoted as saying he believes homosexuality is the result of some kind of childhood trauma. Today, he is inflicting trauma of his own.

That's the opinion of many Catholic friends and relatives of gay and lesbian people in the Twin Cities. They say they have been wounded and angered by comments Nienstedt made about homosexuals in the Nov. 15 edition of *The Catholic Spirit*, the official newspaper of the archdiocese.

"Those who actively encourage or promote homosexual acts or such activity within a homosexual lifestyle formally cooperate in a grave evil," wrote Nienstedt, who is sched-

uled to succeed retiring Archbishop Harry Flynn in May. "If they do so knowingly and willingly, [they] are guilty of mortal sin."

Nienstedt went on to set three conditions for such church members to receive communion: They must experience a "conversion of heart," express "sorrow for their action" and receive absolution from a priest.

His views, a church spokesman said, merely reflect Catholic teachings as delineated in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* which also requires individual homosexuals to be accepted with "respect, compassion and sensitivity."

The catechism, in my reading, says homosexual acts cannot be approved but does not label them a "grave evil." Homosexuals, like all baptized persons, are "called to chastity." But somehow, the sins of homosexuals always get denounced before the sins of straight people. And if gays must be accepted

with compassion and respect, those qualities seem notably missing from Nienstedt's statement.

"He's the only archbishop in the country to put this aggressive of a spin on Catholic teaching," says Mary Lynn Murphy of Catholic Rainbow Parents. "We knew he was very conservative, but people had hoped that he wanted to bring people together. Then, right out of the chute, he fired this cannon. It's extreme talk, and it gives license not just to homophobia but even to violence. This bishop says gays are 'evil.'"

Dennis McGrath, a spokesman for the archdiocese, said Nienstedt's comments were not aimed at families of gays, or at individual homosexuals.

"It was about the sin, the activity — not the person," McGrath said. "He didn't mean you must stop loving your child. But if you say, 'Why don't you go hit the gay bars tonight? ...' He was talking about those who encourage or promote homosexual activities, like a pornographer might."

But as Nienstedt prepares to succeed Flynn, who tried to steer a less confrontational course, gay Catholics and their families are feeling more and more isolated.

"It's getting worse and worse," says Brian McNeill of Dignity Twin Cities, a group of gay Catholics who have been pushing for

acceptance in the church. "They want us to go away, to make the church so hostile for the gay and lesbian community that we won't want to be there anymore."

"And it is working."

Maybe so, but McNeill and other members of the extended GLBT family in the church aren't giving up yet.

This Sunday, they plan to hold a 2 p.m. vigil on the steps of the Cathedral of St. Paul to demonstrate against Nienstedt's comments, and to deliver an open letter to the Chancery, across Summit Avenue from the Cathedral.

For Mary Lynn Murphy, who has been cursed, spat at and manhandled by good churchgoers in the past as she demonstrated on behalf of her grown gay son, it is important to speak up and show up.

"It is a human right to express your sexuality," says Murphy, who met last week with Catholic parents of gays who were in tears over Nienstedt's statements on homosexuality.

"They are being tormented by a church that is driving a wedge between parent and child," Murphy said. "They believe they are being asked to choose between loving their church and loving their child. And they are furious. For the most prominent religious leader in the state to use that kind of language, well, it brings shame on him." ♦



Vigil participants outside St. Paul Cathedral in St. Paul, MN on December 2, 2007. See article below. Photo by Michael Bayly.

Hundreds Support Gay, Lesbian Catholics at Vigil

By Kris Berggren
National Catholic Reporter
December 14, 2007

At least 300 Catholics and supporters braved cold temperatures and gusty winds to gather outside the Cathedral of St. Paul Dec. 2 in a vigil of solidarity with gay and lesbian Catholics and their families.

The event included a "die-in" on cathedral steps and brief remarks by speakers including Mary Lynn Murphy, president of *Catholic Rainbow Parents*, and Mel White of *Soulforce*, a nonprofit activist organization that confronts homophobia by addressing religious bigotry.

White told the group they were the latest in a long line of dissenters such as Galileo and Franz Jägerstätter, "who loved the church enough to stand up and say, 'You're wrong.'"

The group also delivered an open letter to Coadjutor Archbishop John Nienstedt, who is to succeed Archbishop Harry Flynn as head of the archdiocese in the spring. The letter responded to Nienstedt's Nov. 15 column in the archdiocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Spirit*. Nienstedt had written that people who support homosexual activity, such as parents who support their adult children's gay or les-

bian partnerships or family relationships, may be considered to "formally cooperate in a grave evil" or be "guilty of mortal sin." He also distanced himself from the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter to parents of gay children, "Always Our Children." Nienstedt said that document "is not a normative teaching statement of the bishops' conference."

The open letter characterizes Nienstedt's column as hurtful and unacceptable and derived from flawed research on human sexuality.

Michael Bayly of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*, a grass-roots group that organized the event, said they hoped to "show there are Catholics who disagree not only with what Nienstedt has said but how [the church] arrives at [its] teachings. We want a voice in the formulation of church teachings especially with regard to human sexuality. In Catholic tradition, the laity should have a role in developing teachings."

Mary Turbak, a parishioner at St. Pascal Baylon, said she doesn't have a gay or lesbian child but she was there to support friends. "We're here because we're against what Nienstedt said, that you're living in sin if you're supporting your children. Isn't it the people in the church that matter, or is it a bunch of rules?" ♦

Vatican Nixes Groundbreaking Meeting Between Italian Bishop, Gay Activists

By Newscenter Staff
365gay.com
October 19, 2007

The Vatican pressured an Italian bishop to cancel a meeting he had set up with the country's largest LGBT civil rights group a Rome newspaper reported Friday.

Bishop Franco Agostinelli of Grosseto was to have met with members of the group Arcigay on October 17. It would have been the first ever meeting between a high ranking official of the Church and gay activists in Italy.

The newspaper *Il Giornale* says that when it learned of the meeting through the media the Vatican told Agostinelli to cancel.

The bishop says only that once the meeting became public knowledge he was concerned that what was intended to be a "quiet conversation" to open a dialogue with Arcigay would be interpreted as "recognition" by the Church of the group.

News of the intended meeting leaked out

days after the Vatican suspended an official of the Holy See after he was shown on television making sexual advances to a young man.

Following his suspension Monsignor Tommaso Stenico told *La Repubblica* newspaper that he is not gay.

Stenico was a top official in the Vatican's Congregation of the Clergy.

He told the paper that he frequented online gay chat rooms and met with gay men as part of his work as a psychoanalyst. He said that he pretended to be gay in order to gather information about "those who damage the image of the Church with homosexual activity."

Friday another Italian paper, *Panorama Weekly*, said it had information showing that Stenico was maintaining a list of gay priests.

The conservative paper said that the list contained "names and circumstances implicating a certain number of priests and even bishops working at the Curia." ♦



"A Few Minutes with the Pope"

Submissions Requested

We invite you to imagine what it would be like to have "A Few Minutes with the Pope"-- and to write what you would say to him if you had the chance.

We will collect these accounts and personally **deliver them to the Vatican Embassy** in Washington, DC, just a few days before Pope Benedict arrives here in April.

Please keep the length of your account less than 1000 words. Send your contribution via email to NewWaysM@verizon.net or to NWM, 4012 29th Street, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712, by March 15, 2008.

Gay-Friendly Parishes

Below is a partial list of known "gay-friendly" Catholic parishes and faith communities. 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 and 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, involvement with parents, or simply the friendliness of pastoral staff.



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
Carlesbad: St. Patrick
Claremont: Our Lady of the Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph-Mission San Jose
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. 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, Koinonia
Pleasanton: Catholic Community of Pleasanton
Sacramento: St. Francis of Assisi
San Carlos: St. Charles
San Diego: Ascension, Christ the King, San Rafael, St. Jude Shrine
San Francisco: Most Holy Redeemer, Old St. Mary's Cathedral, St. Agnes, St. Dominic
San Jose: St. Julie Billiard, 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 Clara: GALA
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
Spring Valley: Santa Sophia
Walnut Creek: St. John Vianney
West Hollywood: St. Ambrose, St. Victor
Whittier: St. Mary of the Assumption

Colorado

Arvada: Spirit of Christ
Boulder: St. Thomas Aquinas
Colorado Springs: Our Lady of Guadalupe
Denver: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, St. Dominic
Fort Collins: Blessed John XXIII
Highlands Ranch: Pax Christi
Littleton: St. Francis Cabrini

Connecticut

Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Aloysius, St. Matthew Cathedral

Florida

Ft. Lauderdale: St. Anthony, St. Maurice
Melbourne: Ascension Parish
Naples: St. John the Evangelist
St. Petersburg: Holy Cross
Winter Haven: St. Matthew

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
Country Club Hills: St. Emeric
Evanston: St. Nicholas
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

Maine

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

Maryland

Baltimore: Corpus Christi, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Matthew, St. Philip and James, 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's Shrine
Newton: Our Lady Help of Christians
Sharon: Our Lady of Sorrows
Worcester: Holy Cross College

Michigan

Detroit: St. Leo
Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholics
St. Ignace: St. Ignatius Loyola

Minnesota

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

Missouri

Kansas City: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Guardian Angels, St. Francis Xavier, St. James
St. Louis: St. Cronan, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Pius V

Nebraska

Omaha: Holy Family, Sacred Heart

Nevada

Las Vegas: Christ the King, Guardian Angel Cathedral

New Hampshire

Manchester: Parish of the Transfiguration
Merrimack: St. John Neumann

New Jersey

Clifton: St. Brendan
Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Trenton Falls: St. Anselm

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family
Espanola: Sacred Heart of Jesus

New York

Baldwinsville: St. Augustine
Bellmore: St. Barnabas the Apostle
Brooklyn: St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Boniface
Deer Park: Ss. Cyril and Methodius
East Islip: St. Mary
Elmira: St. Mary
Fairport: Church of the Assumption
Henrietta: Good Shepherd
Long Island: Sacred Heart
Manhattan: Holy Name of Jesus, St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul the Apostle

Melville: St. Elizabeth
Rochester: Blessed Sacrament, St. John the Evangelist (Humboldt St.), St. Mary, St. Monica
Syracuse: St. Andrew the Apostle
Utica: St. Francis DeSales
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
Cleveland: Ascension of Our Lord, St. Malachi, St. Martha
Mentor: St. John Vianney
University Heights: Church of the Gesu
Westlake: St. Ladislav
Wooster: St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Oregon

Central Point: Shepherd of the Valley
Portland: Journey and Koinonia Catholic Community, St. Andrew, St. Phillip Neri, St. Vincent dePaul

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia: Old St. Joseph, Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Vincent dePaul
York: St. Joseph

Rhode Island

Providence: St. Francis Chapel
Wickford: St. Bernard

Tennessee

Memphis: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Texas

Colleyville: Good Shepherd
Dallas: Holy Trinity
Plano: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Virginia

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

Washington

Seattle: St. Benedict
Tacoma: St. Leo

West Virginia

Shepherdstown: St. Agnes

Wisconsin

Madison: St. Benedict Center Sunday Assembly
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe

Canada

Toronto: Our Lady of Lourdes

To add your faith community to our list, please contact the New Ways Ministry office via NewWaysM@verizon.net or at 301-277-5674. Thanks!

Next Steps: Developing Catholic Lesbian/Gay Ministry



Weekend Workshop for Pastoral Ministers,
Leaders of Catholic Institutions,
and all interested in lesbian/gay ministry

May 30 - June 1, 2008

**Mariandale Spirituality Center
299 N. Highland Avenue
Ossining, NY 10562**

Description

- + How can Catholic communities respond compassionately and faithfully to the gifts, needs, and life experiences of lesbian and gay people and their families?
- + What skills, knowledge, and talents are needed to address lesbian/gay issues in Catholic environments?
- + What role can pastoral leaders play in building bridges between faith communities and those who feel alienated and ostracized because of sexual orientation issues?

This weekend of prayer, presentations, dialogue, and planning is designed to assist those seeking ways to include lesbian/gay people and issues in their home parishes, schools, or other ministerial settings.

All interested in learning to develop lesbian/gay ministry programs are invited to participate.

Sponsored by New Ways Ministry.

For more info, call 301-277-5674 or email at NewWaysM@verizon.net.

Opinion

Taking Marriage Private

By Stephanie Coontz
New York Times
November 26, 2007

Why do people—gay or straight—need the state's permission to marry? For most of Western history, they didn't, because marriage was a private contract between two families. The parents' agreement to the match, not the approval of church or state, was what confirmed its validity.

For 16 centuries, Christianity also defined the validity of a marriage on the basis of a couple's wishes. If two people claimed they had exchanged marital vows—even out alone by the haystack—the Catholic Church accepted that they were validly married.

In 1215, the church decreed that a "licit" marriage must take place in church. But people who married illicitly had the same rights and obligations as a couple married in church: their children were legitimate; the wife had the same inheritance rights; the couple was subject to the same prohibitions against divorce.

Not until the 16th century did European states begin to require that marriages be performed under legal auspices. In part, this was an attempt to prevent unions between young



adults whose parents opposed their match.

The American colonies officially required marriages to be registered, but until the mid-19th century, state supreme courts routinely ruled that public cohabitation was sufficient evidence of a valid marriage. By the later part of that century, however, the United States began to nullify common-law marriages and

exert more control over who was allowed to marry.

By the 1920s, 38 states prohibited whites from marrying blacks, "mulattos," Japanese, Chinese, Indians, "Mongolians," "Malays" or Filipinos. Twelve states would not issue a marriage license if one partner was a drunk, an addict or a "mental defect." Eighteen states set barriers to remarriage after divorce.

In the mid-20th century, governments began to get out of the business of deciding which couples were "fit" to marry. Courts invalidated laws against interracial marriage, struck down other barriers and even extended marriage rights to prisoners.

But governments began relying on marriage licenses for a new purpose: as a way of

distributing resources to dependents. The Social Security Act provided survivors' benefits with proof of marriage. Employers used marital status to determine whether they would provide health insurance or pension benefits to employees' dependents. Courts and hospitals required a marriage license before granting couples the privilege of inheriting from each other or receiving medical information.

In the 1950s, using the marriage license as a shorthand way to distribute benefits and legal privileges made some sense because almost all adults were married. Cohabitation and single parenthood by choice were very rare.

Today, however, possession of a marriage license tells us little about people's interpersonal responsibilities. Half of all Americans aged 25 to 29 are unmarried, and many of them already have incurred obligations as partners, parents or both. Almost 40 percent of America's children are born to unmarried parents. Meanwhile, many legally married people are in remarriages where their obligations are spread among several households.

Using the existence of a marriage license to determine when the state should protect interpersonal relationships is increasingly impractical. Society has already recognized this when it comes to children, who can no longer be denied inheritance rights, parental support or legal standing because their parents are not married.

As Nancy Polikoff, an American Univer-

sity law professor, argues, the marriage license no longer draws reasonable dividing lines regarding which adult obligations and rights merit state protection. A woman married to a man for just nine months gets Social Security survivor's benefits when he dies. But a woman living for 19 years with a man to whom she isn't married is left without government support, even if her presence helped him hold down a full-time job and pay Social Security taxes. A newly married wife or husband can take leave from work to care for a spouse, or sue for a partner's wrongful death. But unmarried couples typically cannot, no matter how long they have pooled their resources and how faithfully they have kept their commitments.

Possession of a marriage license is no longer the chief determinant of which obligations a couple must keep, either to their children or to each other. But it still determines which obligations a couple can keep—who gets hospital visitation rights, family leave, health care and survivor's benefits. This may serve the purpose of some moralists. But it doesn't serve the public interest of helping individuals meet their care-giving commitments.

Perhaps it's time to revert to a much older marital tradition. Let churches decide which marriages they deem "licit." But let couples—gay or straight—decide if they want the legal protections and obligations of a committed relationship. ♦

At a Jesuit University

Former HRC head Elizabeth Birch honored at diversity event

By Seth Hemmelgarn
Bay Area Reporter, San Francisco
November 11, 2007

The former head of the Human Rights Campaign, who is credited with growing the organization into a powerful national voice for gay rights, was honored last week for her social justice work.

Elizabeth Birch, the HRC's president and executive director from 1995 until January 2004, accepted the Santa Clara University School of Law's inaugural Social Justice and Human Rights Award at its annual diversity gala at San Jose's City Hall Thursday, October 25.

Accepting the award, Birch, 51, who graduated from the law school in 1985, noted the university is located in one of the most innovative and diverse regions of the country. She told the audience of about 200 students, lawyers, and judges that there are many areas where their help is needed.

She said society is currently in the "modern middle ages." For example, she said, the

United States "has never been closer to theocracy." She also mentioned human rights abuses in other countries, such as women who are stoned to death in Iran for adultery.

"Something's the matter with this picture," Birch told the audience. "We have to do better. You are among the best ambassadors to help bring about this change."

Prior to leading HRC, Birch served as worldwide director of litigation for Apple Computer Inc. She has helped various companies develop non-discrimination policies and offer domestic partner benefits. She addressed the Democratic National Convention in 2000, becoming the first head of an LGBT group to address a national political convention, according to the university.

After Birch joined HRC, the organization grew from 100,000 to 600,000 members, with another 500,000 online supporters, according to the university. She left the organization in 2004. Since then, she's started a consulting firm, runs Rosie O'Donnell's production company, and hosts a talk show on here!, an LGBT TV network.

In awarding Birch, the school recognized her for boosting HRC's lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill and her "groundbreaking" use of the media. While she was with HRC, she appeared on television shows ranging from *Good Morning America* to *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer* at a time when gays were becoming more visible in the national media.

Former Ambassador James Hormel, the first openly gay person to hold the diplomatic post when he served in Luxembourg, presented the award to Birch.

Hormel recalled a debate on the *News Hour* in which Birch appeared with ex-U.S. Representative Bob Barr, who in 1996 authored the Defense of Marriage Act. The act prohibits same-sex marriages from being recognized by the federal government. It was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. Birch asked Barr, who at the time had had two divorces, whether he was defending his first, second, or third marriage.

Hormel also recalled Birch started growing HRC at a time when "some Congress people didn't think they had any gay people in their districts."

Diversity appears to be a top goal of Santa Clara University, a Jesuit school that aims to help the legal profession reflect society. The school promotes itself as one of the 10 most ethnically diverse law schools in the country. The school has approximately 1,000 students, and about 45 percent of those come from ethnic or racial minority groups, according to Vicki Hubner, the school's assistant

dean for law career services.

This is the fourth year the school has held the diversity gala, which also serves as a

fundraiser for the Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Scholarship, which helps minority students attend the school. This year's gala raised at least \$20,000 for the scholarship, according to Julia Yaffee, the law school's senior assistant dean.

Bradley Jacklin came to the school after working with

Birch at HRC and

she recommended it to him. Now, he's president of BGLAD—Bi, Gay and Lesbian Advocacy—which he said has 50 to 60 members. Many are alumni and straight allies, he added.

"The administration has been very dedicated to making sure gay and lesbian students feel like they have a safe place to be," Jacklin said. He said the school has sponsored students to go to national lesbian and gay association conferences.

Many of those at the gala said they were unfamiliar with Birch and her work before attending the event, but they liked what they heard there, and they were glad for the opportunity to network.

Arisha Hatch, a recent graduate of the school, is now practicing environmental law in San Francisco. Hatch said she doesn't think she would've made it without the school's help, and now she's come back to support current students.

"It's a fabulous event," she said. ♦



Elizabeth Birch

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