

Communion

The Monthly Newsletter of
Catholics for Marriage Equality
In California

Final Issue!!



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Court Decisions

In February 1998 Brendan Fay and Jesus Lebron organized a rally for marriage equality at the City Hall in Manhattan. The Defense of Marriage Act had been signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996. Fay and Lebron co-founded the Civil Marriage Trail in 2003, after Fay and his partner Tom Moulton were married in Canada. The Marriage Trail helped many couples do the same, including Edie Windsor and Thea Spyer who were married in Canada on 22 May 2007. When Spyer died in 2009 and Windsor was slapped with the infamous bill from the Internal Revenue Service, she complained to Fay, who immediately contacted an attorney friend who was also a fellow member of Dignity/New York. He suggested another attorney (Roberta Kaplan), and the rest is history...

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-l-manson/catholics-doma-dignity-usa_b_3504077.html

As readers must know, we have won both the DOMA and Prop 8 cases that were before the U.S. Supreme Court. The federal government now recognizes same-gender marriages performed by States and other jurisdictions (Canada, for example), and marriages have resumed in California (the Walker decision stands). The fight continues in the States where same-gender marriage is not yet legal. Catholic Gov. Patrick Quinn urged immediate action in Illinois: “The opportunity to guarantee equal rights and benefits to all citizens — under both state and federal law — is one we must seize here in the Land of Lincoln without delay. Now is the time for all to put differences aside, band together and redouble our efforts to make it happen.”

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/closethread/2013/06/the-supreme-courts-defense-of-marriage.html>

Equally Blessed issued the following statement:

As members of the Catholic Church and citizens of the United States, we are elated that the U. S. Supreme Court has both struck down the Defense of Marriage Act and cleared the way for marriage equality in the state of California. We are especially pleased to see that Justice Anthony Kennedy, a Catholic, wrote the opinion striking down DOMA, and that Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who is also a Catholic, concurred in this historic decision.

While we would have preferred the Court to find the California law prohibiting same-sex marriage to be clearly unconstitutional, in dismissing the case, the Court has cleared the way for same-sex couples to be legally married in that state.

Catholics around the country have worked hard to pass legislation that permits same-sex couples to marry, and protects lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination. They have done so not in spite of their faith, but because of it, knowing that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and that all of God’s children must be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.

The court today has removed two obstacles blocking the path to justice for same-sex couples, but that path must still be walked. So today we celebrate and offer prayers of thanksgiving, and tomorrow we invite our fellow Catholics to join us in working to bring marriage equality to the states in which it has not yet been written into law.

<http://equally-blessed.org/release/catholic-coalition-celebrates>

Other LGBT civil rights advocates were elated as well. In a video interview, Bp. Yvette Flunder said she was “choosing to dance,” despite the awful Court decision on voting rights. Molly McKay posted: “Oh happy day!! Sitting here with McKenzie and tears of joy! DOMA and Prop 8 declared unconstitutional—the future is so BRIGHT for ALL—thank goodness... finally... and so excited for all the happiness that is pouring down across the country. Love you my brothers and sisters!” McKenzie is her newborn infant. Fortunate Families shared: “We have a solution. DOMA fails, Prop 8 fails. Our children deserve equality, the Supreme Court recognized that today!” Paul Riofski of Dignity/San Francisco wrote: “We applaud the Supreme Court’s historic decision to overturn DOMA and legally confirm that the federal government has no right to invalidate any marriage granted by a state or other jurisdiction. Together with the final ending of Prop 8 and the restoration of just and equal marriage rights in California, these rulings signal an end to unjust treatment and greater protection under the law for LGBT citizens and their families. Praise and thanksgiving to the Living God of Love: Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit!”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYwDWybNi4c&>
<http://vimeo.com/69103461>

CME Statement on the Restoration of Marriage in CA

The majority of Catholics in California are compassionate, open-minded and deeply committed to the law of love that is the basis of church teaching. Indeed, love of God and neighbor compels us to recognize the dignity of every person and to labor together for a more just society based on human rights and a shared concern for the integrity of creation. Gay and lesbian relationships are integral to the human family and to the whole of creation. Marriage has meant many things to people in different times and places. Marriage equality provides a framework for our times in which God’s gift of sexuality can be understood, celebrated and accepted as intrinsic to our common good. As we understand it, marriage is a communion of just love between two people who in many cases will also become parents.

We congratulate the Court on its decision to restore marriage equality in California by upholding the lower court decision that overturned Proposition 8. Though intended by anti-gay activists as an instrument of exclusion, God has used Proposition 8 to sear the consciences of Californians and people across the country and around the world. Lay Catholics and many priests, nuns and brothers were especially offended by the campaigning for Proposition 8 by Catholic officials such as Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone. We have resisted, and will continue to resist hate, even and especially when it comes from spokespersons of our own tradition. Over the last ten years, numerous denominations have become more welcoming to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. During the same period the Catholic institution has hardened its attitudes and has led numerous campaigns in opposition to LGBT civil rights in diverse parts of the world. We are hopeful that the new Pope will chart a new direction.

Catholics for Marriage Equality in California was established at a time when it was not clear whether we would need a ballot initiative to overturn Proposition 8. We knew only one thing—Proposition 8 had to go. Our organizing focused on fostering support for marriage equality through prayer, presence and education. We have carried out this mission in the streets, in the square of St. Mary’s, online and person-to-person in a network of Catholic parishes and allied groups in California and beyond.

Finally we can close this chapter of the struggle that began 12 February 2004 when then-Mayor Gavin Newsom acted in accord with his Catholic conscience and married two amazing LGBT civil rights pioneers: the late Del Martin and her longtime partner Phyllis Lyon. It has been a long journey, and our hearts are full. We resonate with the words of the prophet Simeon, who upon seeing the infant Jesus was inspired to say: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace:/Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum/Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum*. [Now dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word in peace/Because my eyes have seen your salvation/Which you have prepared before the face of all peoples] Luke 2:29-31.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf-6vEZLcQw&list>

CME Statement on the Voting Rights Decision

We are appalled and heartbroken at the decision of the SCOTUS to dismantle the Voting Rights Act, a hard-won and monumental political achievement of the Black Civil Rights struggle in the United States. Because of the Voting Rights Act, many citizens have been able to participate in political processes from which they had previously been excluded. When Congress reapproved the Voting Rights Act in 2006, it compiled thousands of pages of evidence of continuing discrimination, especially in Southern States. Structural racism endures, and must be vigorously opposed. We find it incomprehensible that a majority of the Court should take it upon itself to undermine this good and useful legislation. In the midst of our joy over judicial gains for LGBT equality, it is critical that we *not* remain silent and thus give our tacit assent to this intolerable setback for racial equality. We call specifically upon LGBT and allied Catholics to get involved and advocate as strongly for voting rights as we have done for marriage equality. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Letter to Marriage Equality Advocates

By Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou

<http://forusa.org/blogs/osagyefo-uhuru-sekou/dear-marriage-equality-advocates>

There is an irony in the SCOTUS rulings of the last two days. The irony is grounded in the fact that gay marriage is grounded in the spirit of the black freedom struggle, yet that promise was eroded yesterday. The SCOTUS has ruled that a key provision of the bloodstained Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional, then ruled that DOMA was unconstitutional.

As a queer ally, I am wondering if I “took my hand off the plow” or “my eyes off the prize.” I have taken a critical position of my church, at times my own community, and nation for its discrimination against queer folks, all the while the hard fought struggles that expanded democratic opportunity have been under constant attack.

Admittedly, I am part of a generation that has often been disappointed if not held disdain for the civil rights generation. We sit in our contextual comfort and lambast them for not being revolutionary enough. The “meager” reforms of voting rights and affirmative action have been eroded in the last two days. And I am troubled in my soul by both the hubris of the SCOTUS and my own generational arrogances. So to those elders who risked life and limb for access to the demo-

cratic project, had cigarettes put on their face so I could vote, and risked their careers in supporting these reforms, I want to apologize.

Equally, I have supported the rites and rights of queer folks for over a decade. There is a strong possibility that I will lose my credentials in the Church of God in Christ for supporting the issue, which would be a great personal cost because my grandfather and great grandfather were ordained in this tradition that I love. However, having risked my ordination credentials and lost churches for lobbying with the Human Rights Campaign for gay marriage, I appreciate the fact the Human Rights Campaign issued a statement against the SCOTUS ruling on the Voting Rights Act.

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/entry/hrc-disappointed-at-supreme-courts-ruling-on-voting-rights>

But it is not enough. I do not feel like we all won today. In fact, I must confess that I have shown up far more for gay marriage advocates than they have shown up for us. The complicit silence of gay marriage advocates on issues of race and class oppression is deafening. There must be reciprocity in solidarity.

As a straight black man, I feel less safe in the United States than I have ever felt. I am fighting a deep sense of regret for risking all on behalf of gay marriage and God knows I do not want to feel that way. It is morally wrong but very real in my soul. I know it was the right thing to do because I felt called by the tradition of the black freedom struggle and my God to do so. Perhaps, if there is such a thing, I have “believer’s remorse.”

I am haunted by a sense of emptiness. For all of the gay folks in my family, those radical queer folks that I have struggled alongside and gone to jail with, I celebrate your victory today but something in me won’t let me celebrate with you. It is not envy, I pray but rather a concrete fear for my being as a black man in the American empire. An erosion of the very rights that created the context for the LGBTQI movement should make us all have knots in our stomachs. Nevertheless, I will continue to perform gay weddings and struggle alongside and party with radical queer activists all the while we struggle for the basic right to vote. These last two days in a word have been “tragicomic.”

Response to Rev. Sekou

By Kara Speltz

Your message resonates so deeply with me. Far too often our LGTB community has been focused too much on our own vested interests and not nearly enough on the intersecting issues of justice. On Wednesday, when we held our press conference at Grace Cathedral celebrating the defeat of DOMA and Prop 8, every single speaker spoke about the great loss we experienced the day before. My own statement for Catholics for Marriage Equality in California ended with this call to action:

We want to thank all of those who have worked so tirelessly for justice and equality, but at the same time, remind them and ourselves that only when we move past our own narrow and vested interests and work together with other populations to insure voting rights are upheld for everyone, only then can we begin to build what Dr. King called the “Beloved Community.”

Rev. Amos Brown closed out the conference calling all of us to show up for the Washington DC celebration of the 50th anniversary of the “I Have a Dream” speech August 28 to demand the reinstatement of these necessary protections. I pray that we will continue to organize and be a part of this most important struggle.

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2013/6/prweb10872362.htm>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-demilio/bayard-rustin_b_1354552.html

<http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/why-voting-rights-no-gay-marriage-yes-from-the-supreme-court>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/opinion/sunday/the-future-of-voting-rights.html?src=recg>

Letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle*

By Roberta McLaughlin

I am a Catholic and am active in my parish. My husband and I have been married for over 50 years. We have been Maryknoll Lay Missioners for over five years and are still involved in social justice issues. Our beliefs are based on well-established Gospel values of love, inclusiveness and equal treatment of all. I am writing in reference to the front page article on Archbishop Cordileone. Church leadership has the right to decide who can be married in a sacramental ceremony within the Catholic Church. The state should have the right to grant a civil marriage in the eyes of the law to all committed couples whether gay or straight who make a lifetime commitment to each other. I do not believe that Catholic Bishops have the right to deny same sex couples the right to marry under civil law.

Our traditional faith values and one hundred years of Catholic Social Teaching uphold the common good of making our world better for future generations. Opposition to marriage equality threatens the very fabric of the Gospel by excluding some of our brothers and sisters. It does not promote the common good.

There is no evidence that marriage equality harms children. Quite the contrary, married couples, gay or straight, who love one another and want to be responsible for themselves and their children, strengthen families.

I raise my Catholic voice on behalf of inclusion and fairness.

Open Doors

By Deacon Brian

With all the hoopla surrounding the coming out of NBA star Jason Collins, the fanfare was decidedly more muted when Fr. Gary Meier, a priest in the archdiocese of St. Louis, came out on his website on May 15. Although the reaction has been largely positive (especially after he wrote an article for *Huffington Post* that went viral, initially receiving only two negative responses out of 100 communications), there were no congratulatory phone calls from President Obama (who called Collins) or Pope Francis. Meier’s announcement coincided with a new edition of his 2011 book, *Hidden Voices: Reflections of a Gay Catholic Priest*, published anonymously the first time around. The second edition listed him as the author. On his website, he expressed his uncertainty as to the consequences of his admission: “I am not sure where exactly any of this will lead. It is a huge leap of faith and to be perfectly honest with you, very frightening. I know that while many

will celebrate and be grateful for this publication, others will be angry and upset and feel as if I am betraying the church. I have no such intention. I am just a man trying to live a life of integrity and speak the truth that God has given me to speak.”

www.fathergary.com/id27.html

Meier told his archbishop Robert Carlson (whom he did *not* consult before his announcement) that his struggle is not with being gay, but that he could no longer teach the Catholic Church’s position on homosexuality. He was unable to reconcile his own personal silence as a gay priest with his pretended support of the Catholic Church’s increasingly anti-gay stance. He feels the church’s current position harms LGBT people, especially youth, and even contributes to their growing suicide rate. Noting that Meier is now on a leave of absence to discern what ministry God is calling him to, Carlson released a rather ambiguous statement in response to Fr. Meier’s announcement. He characterized Meier “as a man who experiences same-sex attraction, and now has an opportunity to be an example and mentor to Catholics in the archdiocese who struggle with the same feelings. Whether he will seize this opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Life, which offers the truth about the beauty and sanctity of human sexuality, is entirely within his control.”

<http://archstl.org/commoffice/press-release/2013/statement-regarding-fr-gary-meier>

Meier, who is currently studying for a master’s degree in counseling at the University of Missouri at St. Louis, would like to remain a priest, but is not optimistic that will occur, since priests in active ministry can’t contradict church teaching that homosexual acts are gravely immoral. Since taking his leave of absence a year ago, Meier has not administered the sacraments even for his aunt’s funeral Mass, though he says whatever he does in the future, he will always be an advocate for the LGBT community. In an interview with New Ways Ministry, Meier explained how he came to his critical moment: “The decision to come out was made through years of prayer, spiritual direction and reflection. It was not an easy or short process. Why now? As I told a reporter recently, “Why not now?” Saint Catherine of Siena once said, ‘Speak the truth as if you had a thousand voices. It is silence that kills the world.’ So, why not now?... I want to speak the truth God has given me and to be whom God has called me to be.” Even though there are thousands of gay Roman Catholic priests in the U.S. (some of them even celibate), only two or three have come out publically, according to Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest and editor-at-large for *America* magazine, which is why Meier’s announcement caused such a stir.

<http://newwaysministryblog.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/exclusive-interview-father-gary-meier>

In his *Huffington Post* article, Meier admits he wanted the world to know the truth about who he is: “I began to realize that what I really want is the truth to be out. I want the truth about homosexuality to be out. I want others to know that homosexuality is a gift. That you can live and love as God created you to love. We are created by love for love. Homosexuality is not a cross, it’s not a curse, it’s not an intrinsic disorder; it is a gift, created by love for love. It is a life-giving gift from God that embodies the infinite ways God’s love can be manifested in our world. That’s what I want. I want the truth to be out. I want people to know, to love, and to respect one another by accepting this truth... I see my speaking out as an act of love toward a community which was born of God’s radical inclusivity.”

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/fr-gary-m-meier/why-i-decided-to-come-out>

In Matthew 16: 13-24, Peter and the disciples were faced with *the* identity question of the Gospel: Who is Jesus and then in light of the answer, who am I? Initially Jesus asks rather casually, “What’s the buzz? What are people saying about me?” One might say Jesus is engaging in the first century equivalent of googling himself, though he is probably contrasting the way the world views him versus how he hopes his followers see him. He then turns the tables so that the disciples must personally answer the question of who he was to them. Peter, speaking on behalf of all the disciples, replies that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world, not just a wonderful teacher and miracle worker. Peter doesn’t fully understand the meaning of his words, envisioning Jesus more as a militant leader who would free Israel from the Romans, rather than the nonviolent, seemingly defeated “criminal” who would be nailed to the cross.
<http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew16.htm>

Realizing the disciples don’t comprehend his true identity, Jesus instructs them to tell no one that he is the Christ. They shouldn’t try to explain to others what they don’t yet fully understand themselves. Still, Peter’s own connection and openness to God as well as his personal relationship with Jesus, listening to his teaching words, and observing his mighty deeds, has allowed him to receive the revelation that God had come to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth to show us what God is really like. By calling Jesus the Son of the Living God, Peter is acknowledging him as the Source of all life, who bestows the gift of life on all creatures in all their diversity.

This episode at Caesarea Philippi gives a poignant partial glimpse of who Jesus is. Here Jesus is establishing his church on Peter, the same Peter who tried to put his best foot forward but often wound up sticking it back in his mouth. And it wasn’t the last time that Peter said the wrong thing, asked the wrong question, got the wrong point, failed to do the right action, or was impulsive, thin-skinned, and boastful. Yet imagine Jesus, who created the world, being willing to stake the future success of his earthly mission on this imperfect vessel, saying you *are* damaged goods, but I choose you because I love you and *yes* I can use you. Peter’s limitations and weaknesses (true of all of us) didn’t deter Jesus from entrusting him with power and authority, both meant to be used to serve, not to dominate. Flaws need not be obstacles to divine grace, as there will be no question that the actual source of any success experienced is God.

Note here as well that because Jesus is willing to use faulty human beings to fulfill the promises of his reign, the church will not be free of trouble (the gates of Hades) or error. But Jesus does vow that hell and the powers of death do not have the final word, that he will save and protect his own. God will never abandon the church and will work through the church (whatever you bind and loose on earth will be bound and loosed in heaven) and her defects, to keep her faithful to the Gospel message of liberation, healing, and forgiveness.

The hopeful message for us about Jesus’ question is that we are not defined exclusively by where we have been, nor even by where we are now, but rather by where we are *going!* Jesus always knows our capabilities, wanting us to fulfill God’s desire to see us become everything we were originally created for and intended by God to be. Our identities lie in expectation of the extraordinary things we can and will do, because we are made and continue to be shaped into the image of God. When we bare our souls to Jesus, all the disparate, conflicting, and broken parts of ourselves begin to be re-created into a new integrated whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. It means that we can open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to feel Jesus’ presence and power in our daily circumstances, all of which give us clues to Jesus’ identity in our lives.

We want our faith and relationship to Jesus to be a dynamic living reality pointing us forward and helping us reaffirm our conscious decision to follow him wherever he leads us. We cannot be who we are unless we allow God to be who God is.

Jesus is always different from our expectations, always wonderfully surprising us. Often we view Jesus as an empty canvas on which we can paint any picture we desire and make him conform (or fashion him) to our own agendas (especially religious ones), instead of molding ourselves into Jesus' likeness. Just as Jesus helped Simon the fisherman discover there is something in him that made him Peter the rock, so he will draw out of us potential we never suspected we possessed. He will help us escape the prison of our egocentric self-interests and discover our true self-transcending love of others, by learning to see others as he has seen us. It is our love of others whoever they may be, that defines our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our role is to listen and reevaluate continually who we are in light of who Jesus is, as we progress through the various stages of growth in our lives. The key becomes not clinging to prescribed answers, even if they come from the church, but personally discerning who Jesus wants to be for us in light of our particular current situation and where we are on our faith journey. Such discernment enables us to be loving and compassionate.

Certainly the Gospel calls us to reevaluate constantly who we are in light of who God is. I believe this is the definition of integrity raised by the New Testament and became the motivating factor behind Fr. Meier's decision to out himself publically. It is because we are loved by God that we can speak the God-given truth of who we are, even if it is a truth both society and the church will critique. Certainly, secular society and the religious authorities of his time criticized the truth Jesus was proclaiming. For Meier, his understanding of integrity involves no longer living a lie. Any Gospel definition of identity would involve people not maintaining a secret life or being unfaithful to the truth of who they are or who God made them to be. For its clergy the Catholic Church in effect imposes a don't ask, don't tell policy (it's okay to be gay in private, but for heaven's sake don't talk about it or admit the truth in public). Fr. Meier by coming out publically is saying that as was true in the U.S. military, this policy doesn't work in the church. By coming out, LGBT people are saying they no longer want to hate the homosexuality in themselves, but to love and embrace it, as well as share this gift with other people. Inauthenticity is easily noticed and compromises one's ability to minister to other people, since most of us have a keen radar for detecting spiritual phonies or frauds. I think for LGBT folk knowing the truth about who they are is often a long delayed process, because while it eventually becomes good news to them, they know it will not always be good news to the people whom they know and love. Thus for LGBTs if they are honest, revealing the truth is an ambivalent proposition, though its ability to set them free still holds, even if it doesn't always make them happy.

One of the key ways that our disparate, conflicting, and broken parts of ourselves can begin to be healed and re-created into a new integrated whole is through marriage, the joining of our bodies, minds, and spirits with another person. If we believe that God created us to love, we will then be given the strength and courage to live and love, knowing as Fr. Meier so aptly phrases it, that we are created by love for love. Why do we think there is only one way to love, given Fr. Meier's astute remark that homosexuality embodies one of the infinite ways God's love can be manifested in our world? Why would the church want to limit God? Shouldn't the church be a safe space where all people as children of God, can reveal who they are, be vulnerable, and find acceptance

rather than judgment? If being gay is who God wants us to be, created us to be, why can't it be manifested without denunciation? Marriage equality is as much about authenticity as it is about equal rights. It's saying *This is who I am and how I express the love given to me by God as God formed me, emphasizing the values of commitment, fidelity, stability, and family.* When Jesus is discussing who people think he is with his disciples, he does not reject the prophetic possibilities mentioned but in accord with Peter's divine insight, he absorbs and expands those possibilities to an infinite range. In other words, we are not to box God in, confine how God expresses God's self in the world or to restrict God to socially acceptable, safe categories. Peter's confession at Caesaria Philippi is a warning not to curb God who is determined to explode all our expectations of what we perceive God embraces. I think LGBT people serve as a reminder to the world not to limit how God's love can be expressed.

A poll released on June 13 by the Pew Research Center found that gay and lesbian Americans are much less religious than the general U.S. population, and about three in 10 of them say they have felt unwelcome in a house of worship. Almost 50 percent of LGBT adults say they have no religious affiliation, compared to 20 percent of the general population. One-third of religiously affiliated gay and lesbian adults say there is a conflict between their faith beliefs and their sexual orientation or gender identity. While nearly one-third of 18 to 29-year-olds in the general public are not affiliated with a religion, almost double that share – 60 percent – of gays and lesbians in that age group are unaffiliated. In this same study, 79 percent of those questioned rated Catholicism as “unfriendly” to LGBT people. Only four percent view our church as “friendly.”

These are troubling numbers, though not surprising considering the loud public anti-gay stance of the church (via the unwelcoming bishops). What these statistics express is that many LGBT people do not name Christianity and particularly Roman Catholicism as part of their identity, even though previous surveys have found that 71 percent of Catholics support civil same-gender marriage (as well as a high number of Roman Catholic governors who have promoted gay marriage in their States and along with their constituents see it as a social justice issue) and only 39 percent say homosexual behavior is morally wrong. The hierarchy has set the hostile tone for the church (with the media publicizing all the antagonism) which has served to alienate many LGBTs from Catholicism. All the good work that inclusive parishes and individuals do gets lost in the cacophony of the media coverage of discordant and strident voices. If more priests such as Fr. Meier came out and could have a viable ministry to LGBTs, as well as modeling how one's spirituality and sexuality can nurture each other, such actions might prevent more gay and lesbian people from leaving and serve to welcome in some new ones. Because the vast majority of LGBT people experience some degree of discrimination and hatred from the general population, they don't want to tolerate rejection from the one source from which they should expect to receive consolation and support. And hiding such a major innate part of one's personality in the don't ask, don't tell policy of the church is not attractive to most gay and lesbian people.

For lay people, same-gender marriage violates the don't ask, don't tell policy as well. In a recent interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, SF Archbishop Cordileone explained why he opposes same-gender marriage: “Legalizing gay marriage would result in the law teaching that children do not need an institution that connects them to their biological parents and their parents to each other... Too many children are being hurt by our culture's strange and increasing inability to appreciate how important it is to bring together mothers and fathers for children in one loving

home... The ideal for a child is for the child to be connected to their mother and father. To not have one or the other in their life is a deprivation. That's not to say they can't grow to be successful and happy in life, but it is a deprivation." This fear-inducing argument about the necessity for having a father and mother in order to have healthy children has been debunked in many studies. In fact, there is increasing proof that children raised in same-gender households may even be more psychologically well-adjusted than their heterosexual counterparts. And with the increasing number of single-parent households, the mother/father married paradigm is occurring far less frequently. Also, it has been my own observation that in same-gender marriages, male/female roles differ, with both parents assuming both roles, or one partner taking on the father or mother role more prominently. And often, a family member or close friend can assume the gender role "missing" from the child having two same-gender parents. Again, Cordileone offers a narrow understanding of how mothering and fathering roles can function in children's lives. True "deprivation" is children believing their same-gender parents and families are second rate, unworthy, or "intrinsically disordered" because they are not heterosexual and thus may be denied their basic civil rights and viewed as immoral. In the marriage debate, Cordileone and his ilk resent the public rejection of the church's teaching that gay and lesbian Catholics should be celibate. Until the church develops a more realistic, compassionate theology of sexuality in general, they will never show approval for same-gender marriage. Until homosexuality is seen as a normal variation on a sexuality continuum, non-celibate LGBT people and couples will never be fully accepted in the church. All this relates to Peter's identity crisis, for if Jesus is God and God made me who I am, then any ministry I do in Jesus' name must reflect the gifts, talents, and personality I have been given and bring to those I serve. If I can't be who I am, as God created and called me to be, then my ministry becomes a hollow charade and others will see through my self-deception. Self-deception is always contrary to the Gospel.

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/Campaigner-against-same-sex-marriage-4603267.php>

So in the nearly four years *Communion* has been published, the core issue behind marriage equality is still equality of LGBTs as Christian brothers and sisters in "good" standing, whether they are celibate or not. Because of our baptism, divisions or advantages based on ethnicity, economic status, gender, or sexual orientation are supposedly erased. LGBT people deserve the same rights that heterosexual Christians possess, including having their relationships recognized by the state *and* the church. People like Fr. Meier no longer want to be second-class citizens in the church. LGBT folk are not separate but equal, which implies I'm less than you are (contrary to what Jesus taught). If the purpose and intention of permanent, committed relationships are the same and equal, whether the partners be straight or gay, then why not the same legal status and name? The marriage debate in the church is just beginning. LGBTs want their gifts and contributions to be respected equally with their straight sisters and brothers in Christ, because as Peter said in effect at Caesaria Philippi, we are all created by the Living God, and we are all equal in Christ. So even when civil marriage has been won, the struggle for sacramental marriage equality will continue.

With possible reform in the air, perhaps it is fitting to let Pope Francis have the last word. In his daily Mass on May 25th Pope Francis argued that the church should be more welcoming, allowing people to come into the church. They should not be intercepted by rules or self-appointed gatekeepers who would institute an eighth sacrament, that of the "pastoral customs office." He gave the examples of a young couple seeking a church wedding, and an unwed mother seeking baptism for her baby. Everyone should be invited with joy, as the Spirit is behind their desire to

participate in the church: “We think today of Jesus who always wants us all to be closer to Him, we think of the Holy People of God, a simple people, who want to get closer to Jesus, and we think of so many Christians of good will who are wrong and that instead of opening a door, they close the door of goodwill...So we ask the Lord that all those who come to the church find the doors open...open to meet this love of Jesus.”

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/cotidie/2013/en/papa-francesco-cotidie_20130525_christian-acceptance_en.html

<http://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/pope-francis-open-doors>

Open doors are what LGBT people have been asking from the church for decades, doors that also welcome LGBT married couples, which has been the purpose of *Communion* from the very start. Who are we as LGBT Christians? We are what God has made and intended us to be, living out our faith in Jesus Christ. Together with Peter, *we* are the building blocks of the church. Peter may be the foundation rock, but we are all the pieces of stone with which the church is constructed, stones of every size, form, and color. Are we letting God shape us and if so, how is God using us to build up the church and make it more Christ-like? LGBT people fulfill this purpose by remaining in the church as equal members and letting their answers to who they say Jesus is (like Peter), become authentic by the way they live. Will people meeting us, as Pope Francis suggests, experience open hearts that act as doorways to the love of Jesus?

In the years ahead as we continue the struggle for marriage equality, as LGBT Christians, this is our ultimate goal regardless of secular and sacramental outcomes. Our identity in line with Peter’s confession is to live out who God uniquely created us to be in Christ Jesus, challenging people to see God’s presence in unexpected even socially unacceptable ways that transcend convenient and comfortable human categories. For if other people discern the living, palpating Holy Spirit breathing new life within us, they can no longer doubt the legitimacy of our place and role in building up God’s reign. Then questions about whether priests can come out publically and same-gender couples can be married, civilly or sacramentally, will be obsolete. May it be so and may it be soon. Amen!

What’s Wrong with Homosexuality?

Corvino, John. *What’s Wrong with Homosexuality?* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 170 pp.

John Corvino’s latest book is the fruit of twenty years’ reflection and many years of public debate on the topic of homosexuality. Dubbed “the gay moralist,” Corvino is a fine writer and apologist *pro vita sua*. His ample skills are in evidence from the beginning of the first chapter, which describes his morning routine as a gay man waking up next to “Cranky” (his partner Mark). He also describes his friendship-in-progress with anti-gay activist Glenn Stanton of Focus on the Family. A third anecdote contrasts Stanton with an audience member at a forum who delivered a conversation-stopping rant against the supposed evils of homosexuality.

As Corvino asserts, homosexuality is not abstract, but personal (think: John and Mark), and has everything to do with its moral status. Thus we need apologists like Corvino to engage more reasonable anti-gay activists such as Stanton and Gallagher so that through their dialogue all of us

can come to understand that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality. The case for same-gender relationships is in his view quite simple: they make some people happy. This book, however, focuses not on the positive case, but on refuting anti-gay arguments.

Chapter two opens with the ranting woman's assertion that God was the author of her views, which were therefore irrefutable. Although Stanton and Gallagher rarely reference religion in public debates, anti-gay religious traditions can be a big hurdle for believers. This chapter, however, shows that the Bible doesn't always say what anti-gay interpreters claim it says, and that even when it is apparently homophobic, the application to the contemporary situation is less than obvious. Corvino identifies three approaches to the interpretation of scripture. Traditionalists hold that it categorically condemns all homosexual acts; revisionists hold that only some acts are condemned. Corvino takes the skeptical position that while the Bible condemns some or all homosexual acts, it is not inerrant. He also finds some revisionist arguments persuasive. Corvino was once a candidate for the Catholic priesthood who "took the Bible very seriously as the word of God." (47) His training in philosophy and theology helped him to ask questions that eventually helped him to see that scripture contains errors. Even if the Bible is unclear on homosexuality, scripture gets it wrong on slavery, for example, ergo it is not infallible and not an infallible source of God's opinions. It is certainly not a transcript of God's actual words.

Chapter three responds to the somewhat dated argument that homosexuality is dangerous. As Corvino points out, these arguments focus on gay men rather than lesbians, since lesbian sex is usually less and not more risky than heterosexual sex. Most of these arguments rely on junk science and ignore the increasingly ubiquitous evidence of actual gay and lesbian lives. Increased visibility, advances in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, and increased awareness of the dangers of heterosexual sex have caused this argument to fall out of favor in recent years.

Chapter four considers natural law arguments. When homosexuality is referred to as "unnatural," it is often to express disgust. It can mean many things. It can mean that homosexuality is statistically unusual, or unconventional. It can mean that homosexuality is not practiced by other animals, an absurd argument on two counts: other animals frequently engage in homosexual practices, and even if they didn't, there are many things that human beings do uniquely that are not labeled "unnatural." It could mean that homosexuality is not innate, based on the theory that we are all programmed to be heterosexual. More traditionally, it can mean homosexuality violates the intended purpose of specific sexual organs. This is the view associated with St. Thomas Aquinas, and modified by a group of anti-gay intellectuals described as the New Natural Law theorists. The most familiar of these is probably Robert George. These writers place a great deal of emphasis on marriage as an "organic bodily union" effectuated when a man places his erect penis in a woman's vagina.

Chapter five opens by taking us back to Melissa Etheridge's chastisement of Gov. Bill Richardson, an LGBT ally, for "incorrectly" answering her question about whether homosexuality was "a choice" or "biological." He said it was a choice. Corvino argues that people typically say they were "born this way" to assert that sexual orientation is immutable, which should be a distinct question. They also want to say that they can't be blamed for it, and that they have a right to be the way they are. Again, distinct questions. Finally they want to say it's not a disorder; it's natural; and it's a deep and important fact about themselves. All true, but unrelated to the question of

whether sexual orientation is genetic. The chapter also tells Corvino's coming out story. He grew up in an Italian-Catholic family in suburban New York. He confessed to sympathetic priests, and prayed to be healed. He decided to become a priest. On a discernment weekend with the grey friars he attended a talk by Fr. Richard Cardarelli, who referred to himself unapologetically as "a gay man." Months later, Corvino had a "road to Damascus" moment and came out of the closet. Many of us knew the late Richard Cardarelli as Br. Richard Jonathan, SSF. Br. Richard was a friend of Dignity/San Francisco and CME, and offered reflections on the Glorious Mysteries at one of our rosary vigils at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Chapter six addresses what Corvino calls the polygamy, incest and bestiality (PIB) argument. There are two versions of this argument, the logical and the causal. The logical version claims that accepting homosexuality according to a particular logic would, by the same logic require accepting PIB. So the pro-gay argument has been reduced to absurdity and must be abandoned. The problem is that the logical PIB argument tends to misrepresent the pro-gay position as holding that people should have a right to any kind of sexual activity they find fulfilling. A more accurate characterization of the pro-gay position is that sexual expression is important, but must be balanced against other moral considerations. There are few if any moral considerations that would argue against permitting gay and lesbian relationships. There are, however, weighty considerations against PIB. Polygamy tends to reproduce sexism and classism. Incest can produce genetic problems in offspring, and problems for family dynamics. Bestiality could harm a person's ability to properly relate to human beings. The causal version of the PIB argument usually focuses on polygamy, predicting that it will follow from same-gender marriage.

In chapter seven, Corvino returns to his relationships with Stanton and Gallagher. When Corvino revealed to the former that he and his partner were having a commitment ceremony, Stanton offered congratulations. Further conversation clarified that Stanton was happy for the gay couple's happiness, even if he did not approve of their sexual conduct. In a conversation with Gallagher, Corvino showed her a picture of Mark. She said she could see why Corvino called him "home." Yet both Stanton and Gallagher have caused so much harm by their anti-gay activism. Are they not "bigots" to be opposed from a distance? Corvino writes that he was on the 700 Club with Stanton after Prop 8 passed, when protestors were being cast as angry and violent. The producers had wanted to present Corvino as the alternative "good" gay. But he actually sympathized with the protestors: "LGBT Californians and their allies had good reason to be upset, and they channeled their anger in mostly productive ways." (142) Corvino explains that he avoids the term "bigot" because it is a conversation-stopper, though it is technically accurate. And we are all bigots in one way or another, on one issue or another. He describes his own grandparents' blind spot on interracial marriage. The chapter concludes with brief comments on same-gender marriage, which he discusses more fully in the book he co-wrote with Maggie Gallagher.

Dissenting with Love

By Tom Luce

<http://leastharm.weebly.com>

The battle lines have been drawn in the fight between LGBT folks and the hierarchy, but it shouldn't be a battle and I'm worried about what will be left to us in the long run. Moreover this is not just a clash with "the hierarchy," but rather a problem of dissent within the communion of

the faithful. So why not try something different, which I will call the Galileo Reconciliation Commission: Dissenting with Love (GRC:DL)? My credentials: 75 years old; ordained a Catholic priest in 1963 during Vatican II with degrees from the Gregorian University; 13 plus years a faithful celibate; married/excommunicated/lost total church standing in 1970 (43 years still faithfully married, three children, three grandchildren); M.Ed. Counseling, MA foreign languages; self-declared as Same Gender Oriented in 2000 during Vermont marriage debate (SGO, to avoid wrong connotations from the “g” word); a lifetime of fighting for social justice in Boston, Central America, Haiti and in the church.

Actually my best qualification as a proponent of the GRC:DL is my own personal conscience from lived experience, not any expertise in theology or whatever. I am a person with an innate, physical/psychological attraction for males and over a lifetime it has become clear that this is a God-given quality, not a sickness curable by prayer or by disciplined total abstinence. Same gender love can be as divine as opposite gender love. Maybe my marriage to a woman can be useful also as an example of conscience. I believe that a loving—physical and spiritual—relationship cemented by marriage trumps any need of changing my marital status after so much time and such profound relationships with my wife and family. This in spite of a church leader here and some others who told me I couldn’t advocate for LGBT rights until I not only “talked the talk,” but “walked the walk,” meaning leave my wife and live honestly with a man. Sorry, my moral discernment doesn’t take me there.

The Galileo Reconciliation Commission: Dissenting with Love is a very simple mechanism. Everyone in the twenty-first century is appalled by the way the medieval church treated dissenters and so much murder was committed by all groups who found themselves in power or wanted to defend themselves. But did the differences between Peter and Paul result in excommunication? So why has the church since then not found a way to accommodate loving dissent? Oh I know: silence. Families keep the peace by forbidding discussion of politics, religion, or sex at the dinner table. Yet this has no foundation in the Christian tradition, where love trumps all. So the approach with the GRC:DL is to share our differences in a way that will do the least harm. When we accept one another on good faith, love takes over. No bad mouthing is allowed, especially in religious blogs not to mention in papal pronouncements.

Today I believe the majority of defenders of SGO marriage remain silent because they are beholden to the current rules against speaking out. The same is true on many other subjects, including birth control. Some time ago I announced my belief that priests should be able to marry. That conviction of conscience was costly. I was robbed of my retirement and health benefits and robbed of my priesthood. I thought that the thousands of us who did this in the 70s would by sheer numbers create such a moral force that the practice would be changed. No. So what did I do? Well I moved over to the Quakers since they definitely witnessed to the very basics of Jesus’ teaching. And I know, unfortunately, that in doing so I left more room for those who disagree with me to eventually get the conservative control of the Catholic Church they now have.

But what if the idea of a Galileo Reconciliation Commission were simply, unrelentingly, lovingly pursued in parish structures, diocesan structures, and beyond? Yes, we would have to be organized. We would have to be ready for ecclesial disobedience and even non-violent direct action. But if our numbers were large enough, I think the most warlike of our sisters and brothers would

be forced to “love” (or at least stop hurting) us. No more of the false dichotomy foisted on bishops or priests, love us but hate the sin. We simply achieve a Galileo milestone and declare our dissent with doctrine. We then spend our time working on dialogue, and hopefully the killings/suicides/persecution of LGBT persons will diminish.

Finally it comes down to the threat of damnation that is still used to mold the behavior of Catholics based on magisterial definitions of sin. Petitions to bishops to reinstate church workers, media interviews trying to teach bishops how to really love us are fine, but we need to address the doctrine. An effective mechanism of loving dissent committed to the principle of doing the least harm would keep more of us in the church while fostering the dialogue that will eventually lead to the revision of official dogma.

Note: Readers may also be interested in the “Courageous Conversations” flyer and campaign sponsored by Equally Blessed.

<http://www.equally-blessed.org/content/courageous-conversations>

A Brief, Queer Glance at God

By Joseph N. Goh

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It has long been held that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Groomed by dedicated Roman Catholic teachers in Malaysian schools, my idea of God had always been gripped by this predominantly male representation of the Trinity, and never exceeded it. It was easy enough to hold such a notion in my teenage head. God was *Bapa* because as Progenitor, He created everything. *Putera* proceeded from the *Bapa* and saved the world. *Roh Kudus* was a mystical figure that was sent by the *Bapa* and the *Putera* to sanctify the world and carry on the mission of Christ. Life as a teenager was simple, and God was relegated to mystery which did not require as much comprehension as it did unquestioning acceptance. As I grew up and found my niche in theological pursuits as a religious and a Roman Catholic minister, the idea of the Trinity was a fail-safe, and God retained the infinite mystery of detachment. One could never understand God in God’s fullness, and that ensured a sense of security and safe distance. Furthermore, as it was pointed out to me, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned in the Bible, and so there.

Oddly, a growing transgression of theological boundaries through academia, and a spirituality birthed by an eventual departure from both religious life and a full-time Roman Catholic ministry became the portals to a deeper understanding of, and communion with God. This is an ongoing life project, and feels like an unceasing invitation into the divine perichoresis. As I write, I ponder: If perichoresis is the interpenetration of God in Trinity, as the earliest theologians of the church describe it, I am scandalously delighted with the sexual undertones of the inner life of God. My God is a God of *perisetubuhan*, of divine intercourse, and the Coursing Love-Energy that is God flows in the veins of every human person who has ever given and experienced love. The dynamic love-operations within God which overflows to and rages within human persons reveal new insights to me of the God I loved. *Perisetubuhan* reflects perichoresis, and I am overjoyed, for I see God reflected in some of the most intimate and vulnerable moments of human existence.

I realise that this realisation cannot be anything less than an invitation to pass through the threshold of static theologising. I am drawn to an iconoclastic understanding of God, one which would require the building blocks of my own queer life unfoldings, in the effort to bridge this impenetrable Mystery with my own life mysteries. God is inviting me to participate in the ceaseless, energetic, unstable identity that is God, and as much as I want to hold on to the only anchors I know in my own spiritual life, I know that my God-education can only grow by leaps and bounds if I trust enough to let go. And so I do, or at least try.

I am both enraptured and repulsed by the heteronormative and patriarchal engineering of God which had, for centuries, been uncritically accepted and aggrandised, even in its origins in the scriptures. As I see it, God cannot be equated with a specific gender or sexual description. God made Man in His own image and likeness, and the Heteronormalised Man repaid the compliment. I suspect that I can only release God from the cages of patriarchal heteronormativity if my own life is sufficiently invested in this peculiar project. I believe that like me, God is queer, and it is only in this transgressive realisation that being made in the image and likeness of God makes enough sense to me. God is queer because the inner life of God tramples on the preservation of heteronormative theological agendas which secure multiple forms of power at the price of dismissing and denouncing all others who refuse to conform to constructed gender and sexual normalcies. God is queer because the inner life of the interpenetrative God is reflected in the corporeal and sexual experiences of all human persons which are steeped in respect and love, rather than being carnal obstacles.

Viewing through a queer prism, I see God as creativity, outreach and courage. The world that I see around me need not be clenched by helpless, forced conformings, but by elegant diversities. The richness of an evolving world reveals God to me, and I am pained by how this creativity is curtailed by heteronormative prescriptions. I see God in numerous efforts of outreach towards persons who are discriminated due to colour, class, economic status, education, appearance, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and religion. I see multiple incarnations in which God appears again and again, and it allows me to recall the meals, the stories, the blood and the sweat of the Man of Jerusalem through whom the countenance of God broke through. In these efforts, I see myriad forms of courage, which are nothing less than divine displays. God is once again fanning the winds of upheaval, challenging the perceptions of those who claim exclusive rights to God. The collapsing and flattening of human persons into textureless, single-hued, undifferentiated, static identities are challenged by a God whom I now see as Creativity, Outreach and Courage, the God who was, who is, who is to come.

A God of Mercy

By Mateo Williamson

This past week was certainly an emotional one for the LGBT community, and I know many of us will be taking in the gravity of these events for a long time to come. While perhaps less momentous than the DOMA and Prop 8 rulings, we were also recently met with a weighty announcement from Alan Chambers, the director of Exodus International, concerning the dissolution of his ex-gay organization. Exodus International has been one of the nation's leaders in the dissemination of reparative therapy beliefs for nearly the past four decades. In announcing his decision to close the organization, Chambers also issued a public apology to the LGBT community for the

irreparable pain and damage that Exodus has caused. I will admit that this news came as a shock to me because I have been following conversion therapy organizations like Exodus for the past few years, and I didn't see any signs of them changing or slowing down. In many ways it appeared that they were growing in strength with their continued expansion overseas, because of which it is difficult to assess just how far-reaching and damaging the message of Exodus has been.

Just weeks ago I wrote an article for *Communion* about the history of the ex-gay movement and my efforts in speaking with the director of Courage International, a Catholic ministry that promotes stereotypes about the "precarious gay lifestyle" and emphasizes an imposed life of celibacy for LGBT individuals. Thus when I heard the news about Exodus, my mind had already been occupied by the stories of victims of various reparative therapy efforts, and I had been wondering how anyone could believe the outrageous theories that Exodus and related organizations represent. We have yet to see how this decision by Chambers will affect similar ministries, and what kind of message will ultimately be communicated by the organization that will replace it, but one thing is for sure: the conversation about the damage of conversion therapy has been rekindled, and the voices of survivors must be heard.

Just days before Chambers' announcement, I also spoke on the phone with Dr. Joseph Nicolosi about his organization called NARTH, which provides the pseudo-scientific fuel for many of these reparative therapy ministries. Though I was calling to directly discuss my concerns about his work rather than for psychological advice as a transgender male, Nicolosi made sure to probe my childhood relationship with my mother before ending our conversation. I would love to reopen our discussion in light of the news about Exodus and the concerns that were raised during the painful testimonies given by ex-gay victims in Lisa Ling's television special, but I know that a call to empathy won't deter him. Joseph Nicolosi is in his own world, just like many of the U.S. bishops, as reflected once again with the recent USCCB statement that deemed the SCOTUS ruling a "tragic day for marriage and for our nation."

<http://www.usccb.org/news/2013/13-126.cfm>

In Matthew 12: 1-8, Jesus responds to the judgments of religious leaders when his hungry disciples eat from a field of grain on the Sabbath. The Pharisees voice their concerns to Jesus as they believe the disciples' actions were contrary to the faith tradition: "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." Here the Pharisees remind me of those Christians who mask their judgment of others with the catchphrase "Love the sinner, hate the sin." People like this are always going on about another person's sins, the integrity of the flock, or the moral welfare of the nation. They are also the first to cry foul about a lack of strict adherence to their interpretation of church doctrine. These Christians arbitrate the actions of others according to their perceptions, and will gladly act as informants to the bishops regarding clergy who follow their conscience or do not speak loudly enough against a particular social issue.

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/12>

In response Jesus gives examples of when the doctrines of the faith tradition of the day were broken in the name of justice and righteousness, and he directs the Pharisees to the greater truth that in God's kingdom on earth the predominant, guiding principle will always be mercy. Jesus reminds us that "something greater than the temple is here." To me this sounds like a call to always discern and stand up for what is right, even when my church does not stand with me. As

Joseph Ratzinger has written: “Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority there still stands one’s own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. Conscience confronts [the individual] with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official church.” On June 30th Pope Francis preached a fine homily on conscience.

<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-sunday-angelus-full-text-2>

We are called to always form our own consciences through discernment and prayer, and to remember that a deep respect for the humanity of all others outweighs doctrinal matters in the process of making a good decision. Jesus recognized that sometimes the faith community just does not get it right and that at times our spiritual leaders do not accurately perceive the human condition in light of God’s grace. In reply to the Pharisees’ notion that eating grain on the Sabbath is sinful, Jesus also reminds them that the “Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” In other words, God’s will is what matters most, not the convictions of others, and in this case God’s compassion and care for the welfare of his children is what triumphs. Likewise, when it comes to upholding the dignity of all people in our church in regards to issues like gender discrimination or the treatment of LGBT people, we must always allow our consciences to guide us and to remind us that God is above all a God of mercy.

Let me conclude with these words from Nelson Mandela:

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.

Things You Should(n’t) Say

By Vatican Tootsie

It was a “tragic” day—for bigotry (unlike the day before). Funny how an advance for marriage and all families would be denounced as “tragic,” while the gutting of the Voting Rights Act evoked no comment. It is clear to me that our opponents are “bigots” and “haters,” even if there are good reasons to avoid those terms when one is wearing pants. But put a man in a dress and she’ll say anything. Sally *is* a bigot. Yes, Virginia there is already prejudice in what passes for church teaching, but homo (self?) haters like Silly have tried to cloak their bigotry in God language and impose it on everyone. And s/he doesn’t have an off switch...

I may be forgiven for venting. Meanwhile I don’t plan to mud-wrestle for tips with the likes of her. I can let H8 die, and any temptation to resent its architects. This Jesus crush tells me to love my enemies and I’m trying to do that. At an LGBT Mass recently, I prayed for my hero Pope Francis, all the bishops and especially Abp. Cordileone. I prayed so convincingly that country people in attendance thought Sal had been my classmate from the convent. I got a good laugh out of that, with Mary and all the saints. God it turns out has a BIG sense of humor and in the lip-synched words of Miss Conception, her vajeje is eight miles wide!

Before I sign off here or get the hook, there is something I've wanted to share with you for some time, and since this is the last issue I guess it's now or never so I'll just come right out with it: I have attempted suicide three times—once when I was eighteen, again in my early twenties, and a third time in my early forties. I know this a startling thing to reveal, but I share this in case my story may help somebody else. Since my last attempt some years ago I've tried to sort through what happened and why so I could figure out what to do about it. But I am poor and psychiatry-averse, so mostly I did it on my own and relying on friends and especially my faith community. I tried a couple of different “prescriptions”...

The LGBT prescription provided an immediate sense of relief. LGBT suicide attempts are incredibly common, and it was not difficult to find fellow suicide survivors, literature, and empathy. The only problem was that between my second and third attempts I had already come out of the closet, explored my sexuality, and made a life for myself in a gay mecca. I mulled it over: Perhaps I hadn't sufficiently reconciled my sexuality and spirituality; or I had reconciled them, but under duress I relapsed. I had quit MCC and become Catholic, then a death in the family made me vulnerable. The homophobic demons came back. Or perhaps it had something to do with HIV/AIDS. Practically I took steps to deepen my connection to queer community, and especially I became an activist (again).

Then there was the psychiatric prescription, though I only got the cheap stuff of free books and talk with friends (real and imagined). Even if my psychiatric issues weren't primarily or only LGBT-related (my demons were legion), I was a person with multiple unresolved issues that must've led to the suicide attempt. Lately I've been working through a new reality-based med concocted from socio-economic factors. I had become isolated/lonely, stuck in school where I was borrowing money left and right, working dead-end part-time jobs. Update: I've met someone and graduated, but am still trying to get my shit together.

I wouldn't say that I'm “cured,” because like every other person on the planet I am just in recovery. I haven't figured it all out, and I haven't had a dramatic conversion experience. I go for walks; I breathe; I try to find the divine rhythm in the task that is before me—preparing a meal, praying the rosary, sending out that job application. So what if I do(n't) accept my sexuality? So what if I have(n't) dealt with all of my issues? So what if I am still poor? Life is a banquet and Jesus has invited everyone--the B list, the C list; even no list queens like me with crooked lipstick (and the A list). What a gift!

Did God Hurt Me?

By Anthony Mohamed

I gave my life to Christ at a youth retreat in my early teens during the early 1980s. It was at this time that all self-hatred and confusion about my sexuality started to dissipate. I felt in my heart that God made me different from others and being gay was part of his plan for me.

This was a time when media, religion, government, education and other institutions were not so LGBT aware or friendly. There was no formal protection in the Ontario Human Rights Code or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the only role model on TV I can remember was the character of Jack Tripper pretending to be gay in the sitcom, *Three's Company*.

Growing up in a Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Church in Toronto, I was heavily involved in their operations and attended up to five days per week. I volunteered to run the sound system, teach Sunday school and peer-manage the youth group. Another boy in the youth group was struggling with his sexuality and went to the pastor to seek counsel. During their sessions, the pastor asked if he was aware of others who were also gay and *voila*, I was outed.

My parents both worked and as a result, I was often home alone after school. One day, our newly appointed pastor came over for an unexpected visit. He said that he had found out that “I thought I was gay” and that he wanted me to stop running the sound system, teaching and coming to the youth group. Being young, I was confused and did not have the language necessary to counter his arguments.

Then, approximately a week later, he came over again and asked me to stop coming to “his” church. He said that on judgment day, he would be responsible for his congregation and didn’t want a gay person being part of his responsibility. The actual words he used were “a thorn in the body of Christ.” Again, I didn’t know how to react and just stopped attending. My parents kept asking why I wasn’t going and all my friends, who were part of the youth group, asked where I was. As I wasn’t publically out, it was difficult to know how to answer.

There is real difference in the way society handles discrimination. When I was called racist names in public school, my teachers, other students and my parents made it clear this was unacceptable behavior. However, when racist terms became homophobic ones in high school, my options were severely limited. I felt my parents would not understand and when I approached the counselor in my school, he said that he would get in trouble if he talked about “those issues.”

Around the same time, in health class there was a discussion about the love between a father and son and a lot of guys made homophobic jokes. Instead of challenging them, the teacher said, “Love has nothing to do with homosexuality, it’s only lust.” I really felt alone.

About three months later I returned to my church due to pressure from my parents. To my surprise, there was a different pastor. I asked a girl from the youth group what had happened and she said that when the deacons found out that the former pastor had asked me to leave they told him that he was probably not the right person to be pastor in an urban setting. I was shocked.

It took me a while to realize that God did not hurt me, it was this man. Although I never felt comfortable going back to that church full time, my faith in Jesus continued to grow and I sought spiritually welcoming spaces within the LGBT community. More than 30 years later, I remain active in a Baptist church near my home. Although the theology of the broader organization is questionable regarding LGBT people and women, my specific congregation has been a warm and welcoming environment for me to worship, fellowship and learn. I wish all churches could be like my church and youth would never have to feel like they have no one to talk to.

Anthony Mohamed has a successful career in the field of health equity and lives with his partner and their neighbor’s cat in Toronto, Canada.

Journal of an Alien Street Priest

By River Sims

www.temenos.org

There is a lot going on in the world... The Roman Church has a new pope; the world is faced with many wars; there is a growing gap between the wealthy and the ones who have nothing; millions of poor migrate, seeking a home where they can live securely, away from poverty and war.

All any of us really need is to survive as human beings.

Each day I serve young men and women who have next to nothing. I remember one night last week, when a young man said to me he had not eaten in three days. My heart broke. I hear this all the time, and it seems endless—one meal, one pair of socks after another.

We tend to talk of groups of people, i.e. giving to “the homeless,” rather than to look in the face of an individual, call him or her by name. When we talk about individuals, we have feelings, we have sorrow, and pain. With an individual, we engage ourselves in their lives, and want to provide for them to the best of our ability. I see each person as an individual, I work with that person, and that is what I try to get others to do as well. It is hard to work this way. It is difficult to see the pain, the sadness, the stubbornness of the person I’m working with. It is wearing to see the damage a person does to his or her own life, to see the futility.

But then, I am reminded that in Jesus there is always hope. We are *his* hands, *his* feet, he serves through us and he holds our hope. We are called simply to take one step at a time. I am reminded by the Gospel each day that we are called to give totally of ourselves, as Jesus did. We want rewards, but Jesus calls us to renounce the desire for rewards. Becoming like Christ is the only reward worth desiring in following Christ. And when one becomes like Christ everything else loses its appeal.

John Wesley said, “All the world is my parish,” and as I have done this ministry for nearly nineteen years, I have learned how true this is. There are times I feel envy of pastors with their nice churches, their nice incomes. But then I laugh, because the whole world is my parish. And the more I give up the more all the rest loses its appeal. My invitation to you is to join me in giving up. Give it all up, and lose yourself in service to Christ, for that is where we find our real satisfaction.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for journeying with me, for making this ministry possible. For me personally, it is a real joy to do this work. Painful, yes, but always a real joy, and I owe that to each one of you, so thank you. A special thank you goes to those who joined us in San Francisco for Pride on June 29-30, as we celebrated Queer rights, and all of our rights.

Deo gratias! Thanks be to God!

Messages from Casey Lopata

Eugene, you should be proud of all you've done with Catholics for Marriage Equality CA. Your efforts clearly made a positive difference in the overall effort. God bless you in all your future endeavors. Blessings! Casey

Thanks, Kara! Deb Word is amazing! We're thrilled that she's going to be the next Fortunate Families president. I saw Eugene's notice about *Communion*. Both of you should be proud of its influence, as well as your efforts with Catholics for Marriage Equality CA. You turned it all around. Blessings! Casey

This Far by Faith

By Kara Speltz and Eugene McMullan

Kara:

In the summer of 2008, shortly after Prop 8 qualified for inclusion on the November ballot, I had a conversation with a friend of mine. He was a young, brilliant doctoral student at the Graduate Theological Union. He told me that he would be supporting Prop 8. I was stunned because this was a young man who openly challenged the church on its failure to follow the nonviolent Jesus, but had been caught up in the lies being perpetuated around Prop 8.



When I asked him why, his response was that if Prop 8 failed, it would force the church to defend itself against lawsuits from gays and lesbians seeking the right to marry in the church. I couldn't believe that he actually believed that. I reminded him that throughout the history of the church in this country, they had denied the right to the sacrament of marriage to anyone who had been previously married, and that there had never been a lawsuit to challenge that. Still, I was unable to persuade him to take a second look at Prop 8.

But that conversation opened my eyes. I realized that if my highly educated friend believed the lies that the church was putting out around Prop 8, then the probability of its passing was great! In the conversation, this same friend mentioned that the diocese would be having a meeting in the fall, to educate people about "voting Catholic values." Hearing about that meeting, I realized that I, personally, had to do something to help educate people around this issue. So I sat down and created the text for a short flyer:

Since the Catholic Church has never attempted to deny the civil rights of divorced heterosexuals, what is really behind their support of Proposition 8?

Conservatives would have you believe that the recent court decision declaring marriage a fundamental right, would force churches to perform same gender weddings. The Catholic Church has been refusing marriage to divorced people for centuries. The situation for lesbians and gays would be exactly the same as any divorced Catholic heterosexual. No church would be forced to perform weddings contrary to their doctrine.

The California bishops have already begun a campaign urging Catholics to support Prop 8. The Knights of Columbus just donated \$1,000,000 in support of Prop 8. Where is the moral leadership in denying equal rights to all California citizens? Please stand with us in asking for justice for all Californians and vote NO on Proposition 8.

CATHOLICS AGAINST PROP. 8 (CAP8)

Once I found out the date and place of the diocesan meeting, I asked a Catholic Worker friend of mine to come with me. So I printed up hundreds of leaflets and the two of us traveled out to Concord to attend the diocesan meeting, which began with Mass. Michael and I arrived early and went into the chapel and attended Mass, receiving Communion.

Just prior to the end of Mass, we quietly went out the back door, so as to pass out the leaflets. I wasn't ready for the hostility that we encountered from people who had just received the body and blood of Christ. They screamed at us, they tore flyers from our hands and told us to get off the property. I wondered, how does one receive Christ in our bodies and then act that way towards another child of God!

We were ordered off the property by one of the diocesan officials, but as Catholics we refused to go, saying we had a right to be there. As the meeting began, Michael and I quietly attended the meeting and sat silently, hoping to be able to ask questions at the end. But the diocese set up a system where you had to write out your question in advance and they would select which ones they would answer. So needless to say, we never got an opportunity, outside of the flyer, to address the issue.

In all fairness, I must add that several people came up to us after the meeting, and apologized for the way they had acted. I was relieved that they were able to acknowledge the inhospitality. It brings me great joy to see the changes in Catholics over these last years. Now Catholics in the pews are the most supportive of marriage equality. The recent passing of marriage equality in so many states with strong Catholic majorities indicates to me that while the bishops have long forgotten gospel justice, the people continue to remember that Jesus spoke for the exiled. I'll never know if that little flyer had any effect at all, but at least I hadn't remained silent in the face of the church's crusade against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

Eugene:

In June 2009 I sent around an email inviting people to a meeting to start a Catholic-oriented group we were calling Catholics for Marriage Equality (CME). I didn't realize at the time that



Eileen Harrington in Sacramento was already using that name. When I got a friendly email from her later, we started calling the group Catholics for Marriage Equality San Francisco Bay Area, to avoid confusion, and eventually Catholics for Marriage Equality in California. This was before Anne Underwood and Charles Martel started the national group Catholics for Marriage Equality. I had proposed the name because of its similarity to Catholics for Human Dignity, which had been organized to fight the Briggs Initiative in the 70s.

There were just a few of us at that first CME meeting: John, Amy, myself and Marvin. We settled on a mission statement, a logo inspired by the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and a plan of action. We discussed our first action, a rosary vigil at St. Mary's Cathedral on August 15. That vigil was a success, due in part to networking, participation by Dignity/San Francisco, and notice given in the *Bay Area Reporter*. We prayed the Relational Mysteries, part of the Peace and Justice Rosary that is familiar to readers of *Communion*. They didn't seem controversial to the fifty or sixty of us that were gathered there in the plaza of St. Mary's. A couple of months later the global Catholic right blasted us for promoting a "queer rosary."

I had met Marvin in the spring of 2009, the same week I was involved in the Day of Decision action at Grove and Van Ness. We went together to the national Dignity convention in San Francisco in July, though to be honest we were so much in the throes of new love that we only attended a couple of sessions. I had been asked to participate in a marriage equality panel organized by Dr. John Brown, to promote the new group and also due to my academic research involving religion and the LGBT movement, and my participation in the March to Sacramento for marriage equality organized by One Struggle One Fight.

The passage of Proposition 8 had been my wake up call. In the fall of 2008 I was emotionally invested in the outcome of the Presidential campaign, and had simply not allowed myself to contemplate the real possibility that marriage equality, which had come to California just months before, would be overturned. Apart from attending the occasional anti-war rally, I was not politically active. I was a teaching assistant at the Episcopal seminary, part of the Graduate Theological Union where I was enrolled in a Ph.D. program in History. My professor, Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski warned me privately that Proposition 8 was gaining momentum and could very well pass. I made a mental note, but didn't do anything. One day before class I noticed a "Yes on 8" sign in the yard of the GTU library. I promptly pulled it up and delivered it to the circulation desk. I think it was re-delivered to the Dean. Much later I learned to my great surprise that one of my fellow Catholic graduate students at the GTU had been organizing for Proposition 8, and that one of the administrators at a Catholic school in the GTU was involved with the pro-H8 Catholics for the Common Good. To his credit, my school mate confessed this to me and asked for my forgiveness (as if that could come from me) and has apparently changed course.

We made our presence known at the GTU in September 2009 when Bp. Cordileone had just been appointed to Oakland and was invited to play a small role in a ceremony at the Jesuit School of Theology. Paul Arensmeyer, a fellow GTU student, was talking about Cordileone to his advisor, a veteran of the Black Civil Rights struggle who helped him discern that Cordileone's anti-gay activism was an evil to be actively opposed. So Paul sent around a flyer for a demonstration and when I got it, CME joined as co-sponsor. The two of us met with JST administration to establish a dialogue and ground rules, and Ann Craig helped us prepare a media release. I prepared a one-page handout with responses to Cordileone's anti-gay arguments and we made signs. I also thought it would be a good idea to give out free rosaries to all takers, an action some Catholic students (who weren't there) objected to later, feeling that it was not sufficiently respectful of the Catholic tradition. As a practicing Catholic, I did not see any problem with having allies express their solidarity in this way. Besides Mary belongs to the people, and who can say who should or shouldn't have access to her! That was my feeling.

Kara:

When I heard that GTU students were planning a protest directed at Bp. Cordileone, I printed up more of the CAP8 flyers and joined the protest. It had become common knowledge by this time that Cordileone was the primary fund raiser for Prop 8. I was quite amazed at the number of people who showed up for the protest. Bp. Cordileone and his bodyguards unfortunately snuck in the back door, to avoid coming in contact with us. It was at this demonstration that I first met Eugene. We exchanged phone numbers and agreed to talk later on in the month.

Eugene was interested in starting a monthly newsletter, and I had done a great deal of writing and editing for Soulforce, so the two of us and Tom Luce, who had written about the church's negative attitudes toward LGBTs, discussed ideas that we had. As Eugene and I continued to talk, it seemed that we were more on the same path in terms of directions for the newsletter. Truthfully, I never foresaw it as the three-and-a-half year project it became. But the most enjoyable thing about putting out *Communion* was our process. Collaboration can be a very difficult thing but we seemed to fall into a fairly easy process, trusting in the Holy Spirit to get us through when we weren't exactly sure about things. I was consistently surprised at the quality of the articles we received and the responses that we got.

Eugene:

In October 2009 we began a series of Five First Saturday vigils alternating between the cathedrals in San Francisco and Oakland. It had been just after the JST demonstration in September that Catholic websites the world over began posting and re-posting hit pieces (based on an original in the California Catholic) on "the queer rosary." So this time we used only the traditional mysteries plus the newer ones associated with John Paul II. As I recall Rev. Jim Mitulski offered memorable reflections on the Luminous Mysteries at the First Saturday vigil in Oakland that was co-sponsored by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry and New Spirit Community Church. Dignity/San Francisco was the indispensable partner in our vigils, with Paul Riofski providing musical leadership and making programs, and Deacon Vince Jang, Raul Salazar, Richard Cardarelli, Laura J. Merrell and others offering reflections and/or distributing Eucharist. We made signs featuring the CME logo on one side and "Pray for Marriage Equality" on the other. In San Francisco we prayed freely in the plaza, and even dared to leave our extra programs in the foyer of the cathedral. Oakland, however, was a different story as Bp. Cordileone used security guards to keep us on the sidewalk.

At this time I was already in love with Marvin, and had already asked him to marry me twice. The first time he had said, "Ask me again later." So my stake in the politics of gay marriage had become very personal. And yet I knew that I wasn't in it only for myself. I was fighting for "my" rights and for "our" rights, and for those of countless others like us who would come after. The Relational Mysteries had not been a self-referential exercise in revisionist biblical interpretation (as critics implied). They were the first installment of a Peace and Justice Rosary, which I pray every day and have shared according to my spiritual discernment. Working with Kara has been a delight, and I have learned a great deal from her. The rest of our history can be gleaned from reviewing back issues of *Communion*, which are posted on the Dignity/San Francisco website. <http://www.dignitysanfrancisco.org/CME>

Where Do We Go from Here?

By Kara Speltz and Eugene McMullan

As we come to the end of this particular journey, we are conscious of the need for a deeper, more thoroughgoing and sustained critique of the military industrial complex. This critique would have to go beyond any specific issue such as drones, government surveillance, Guantanamo, and Bradley Manning. These are only symptomatic, and the Obama administration could give us what we want on all of these issues without addressing the fundamental problem, which has to do with how the global economy is organized by and for the 1% which now has seemingly unlimited control of the economy, society, politics and culture.

Nation-states that theoretically give the dog the capacity to wag the tail, serve mostly to incapacitate and mystify the poor so that they will not demand a more equal distribution of goods. The Democratic Party in its last convention gave barely a nod to the poor in its rhetoric, referring instead and constantly to a theoretical “middle class” that would apparently be rescued and reconstituted by the good rich who control the Democratic Party. But who left the foxes in charge of the hen house? Actual democracy would empower the multitude to effect a broader sharing. Instead, the Citizens United decision authored by Justice Anthony Kennedy allows corporations unlimited influence in our politics. Contrary to the dominant concept, enshrined in law, corporations are not people, and they do *not* create jobs or *generate* wealth: They *transfer* extracted wealth to stockholders. According to Catholic teaching, everything belongs to God and we are accountable to God for its use and distribution. However, instead of protecting the creation and sharing its abundance in responsible ways, taking into account the common good and the need to pass along a worthy inheritance to the next generation, we have been duped into trashing the planet for the maximal benefit of a very few.

Militarism and war also play a big role. Perhaps this is the piece of the analysis that is most needed, especially with respect to the U.S. nation-state which is rapidly evolving into a perpetual war machine. The majority of us claim to follow Jesus, who taught us to turn the other cheek and love our enemies. Yet there is gulf between the religious teachings we embrace and the politics we permit. Even the just war tradition has become ineffectual or worse, being used by cynical interpreters not to prevent but to mask unjust wars. Many of us in the Catholic peace movement believe that it is time for another approach. Therefore we call upon Pope Francis and the bishops to take the church one step further in its radical peace witness, and to adopt the pacifist position as church doctrine. We declare it to be the sense of the earth’s people, and dare predict that if a planetary vote were ever taken, war would be banned in a heartbeat. Let this eschatological vision—a world without war—guide our lives and find a fuller expression in the official teaching of the church.

A deeper analysis of the military industrial complex is crucial so that our work for peace and justice can really begin to get at the underlying issues. The human person, who should be “wagging the tail,” is “being wagged” instead. To recover our agency so that we can take more meaningful action for peace and justice, we have to understand what is really happening, an increasingly difficult thing to do in a world in which the production of knowledge is controlled by the 1%. We note that the poor are rarely represented and that our culture prefers to depict the wealthy, or at

least people who do not have to work degrading jobs, rely on food stamps, or live in the streets. People on television and in the movies are usually beautiful, frivolous people who deal with non-structural problems. Consistent with the new direction Pope Francis is setting for the church, we call for a production of knowledge by and for the poor, a production from below.

Now that we've won marriage equality in California, let us not rest on our laurels. The larger struggle for peace and justice continues, and touches many issues other than marriage and LGBT civil rights. We agree with some of the criticisms made of marriage equality and LGBT military service as movement goals. Though they were emblematic of full citizenship, we have to ask what kind of citizens we would become. We are keenly aware of the problem of nationalism, in which a good and "natural" love of country becomes distorted and idolatrous. We also want to avoid the logic of "My country, right or wrong," and the temptation to rationalize our sins by an appeal to national "interests" or "security." Precarity, and not security, is the preoccupation of God, who desires not the absolute security of the 1%, but the relative security and graced flourishing of all the earth's inhabitants. So let us remain anchored in the deep solidarity of the Beloved Community, which teaches us to love broadly and to see things from multiple perspectives. Then we will be "go givers" who work in concert on multiple issues, sharing the gifts of God that are held in common for everyone, regardless of age, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, creed, religion, ability, or class.

Marvin Loves This French Toast

Three thick slices of day old bread
Three eggs
Milk
1 T Sugar
Cinnamon
Butter or bacon grease

Pre-heat oven to 350 F. Cut range in a long baking dish. they are quite soggy. Dust the namon. Beat the eggs and sug-es and move them about until you feel like stuffing the toast, the side and insert a teaspoon or butter and banana. Bake in the grant and firm. Use a spatula to quickly brown them on the grease. Serve with Canadian syrup and everlasting love.

(Photo by Rodney Braun)



bread slices in half and ar-
Pour milk over slices until
slices (both sides) with cin-
ar; pour over slices. Flip slic-
egg is evenly distributed. If
carefully slit the slices from
so of peanut butter, or peanut
oven just until toast is fra-
carefully remove slices, then
stovetop in butter or bacon

Catholics for Marriage Equality was established in June 2009 to advance civil marriage equality through prayer, presence and education. Address correspondence to co-editors Eugene McMullan (wmcullan@ses.gtu.edu) and Kara Speltz (kara4peace@aol.com).