Communion

The Monthly Newsletter of
Catholics for Marriage Equality
In California

"One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation."
Caritas in veritate

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Finishing Together

By Deacon Brian

In the last few weeks, we have heard parables teaching the disciples, that until Jesus returns, they must always be ready and not be afraid to act. Now in today's parable we are shown how to act, namely out of love and sincere concern, especially towards those who have been most deprived. In Matthew this is Jesus' farewell speech right before his crucifixion. It's meant to be intimidating, because it's a judgment scene, which virtually shouts at us to get our attention, as if to say, take your Christian life seriously!

Is our passion, our love of God, so great and has this relationship changed us so completely, that we can forget ourselves in God's passion for the people God loves, the least among us? As one commentator has noted, when we open our hearts to Jesus, he brings all needy humanity with him. In reality this should not be shocking because during his life, Jesus was hungry, thirsty, often homeless, and was a stranger to many people.

We are not going to be judged, according to this parable, on standards of personal behavior as defined by religious authorities. Rather Jesus says judgment will be based on our relations with other people, and whether or not we were compassionate. Now what is fascinating about the parable is that neither the sheep nor the goats knew that what they were doing or not doing was for Jesus, probably because they assumed he would appear in a majestic, triumphant form, rather than in the disfigured faces of the poor.

The main difference between the sheep and goats was that the sheep saw the world through the eyes of Jesus, namely with no categories, no distinctions, no conditions. This precipitated merciful behavior, performed with humility as they simply acted out who they were, at their core, not to get recognition or earn points in heaven. They couldn't even remember doing these deeds, because they hadn't done them for selfish reasons.

Jesus says every person we refused to help was him. Why? Because every human life is sacred bearing the image of God, and thus deserves dignity and aid in his/her need. Can we see God's glory inside every person? Yes, serving poor and homeless people can sometimes be scary, but do we love Jesus enough to follow him wherever he leads us rather than where we want to go? Christ the King challenges us to follow him in the most unexpected places and people.

The challenging conclusion of this parable is that it is not enough to say I am a good person. If like the goats we ignore doing simple acts of love for our neighbors in need, all our other good deeds don't really matter and nor can we hide behind our noble causes or religious activities to shield us from the harder and more demanding task of helping those nearest to us.

Four weeks ago I participated in an interfaith protest march through the financial district following a replica of a golden calf, a symbol of the idolatry of wealth, to show support for Occupy San Francisco. As we demonstrated before the major banks and the Federal Reserve building, it felt as if we were "praying with our feet." Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel coined that phrase when he marched at Selma with Martin Luther King in 1965. The protesters are upset that three years ago, Wall Street wrecked the U.S. economy and not one single person has been held

responsible for it. They are standing in unity with millions of Americans suffering from the consequences of corporate greed, especially banks that gamble with our savings and foreclose on our homes yet get infused with hundreds of billions of dollars to stay afloat. Corporations make record profits while a real unemployment rate hovers at 16%, and corporate monies are used to curry political favor.

The top 1% of the U.S. population earns more income than the bottom 50%, but pays lower taxes, and the richest 400 Americans own more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans, creating a tremendous disparity between the rich and even the middle class, which is rapidly shrinking. The Occupy movement has said they don't have confidence in our leaders to fix these problems or even hear the pain of the marginalized, so they're going to show up, speak up, and stay till someone does something right.

What I noticed when I visited Occupy SF, was how the employed and the unemployed were standing together with the truly homeless, everyone with an equal say. There was no us vs. them, only we, the 99%. I agree that we must find solidarity with each other, putting aside normal divisions, as we together seek a society that works justly for all 100 %, in which the ethic of materialism and the selfishness of global capitalism gives way to a prosperity that can be shared by all and not hoarded by a few.

The connection of the Occupy movement with our Gospel is that if we are to commit ourselves to care for the poor, the homeless, the unemployed, the helpless, then we need to speak out against sinful systems that create poverty, economic injustice, and oppression.

There is a story about a Special Olympics race. The teen-aged participants excitedly placed themselves along the starting line. At the sound of the gun, the race to win began. Not many competitors were fast, but all of them were running their best until a young woman tripped and fell. As she stumbled, a competitor saw what had happened and came to a full, sudden stop. Danny knelt down and asked in a loud voice, "Marlene, are you okay?" One by one the other runners went to the spot where Danny was helping Marlene up. Then all the contestants linked arms and walked together to the finish line. They knew that it did not really matter who crossed the finish line first. They understood that the important thing was supportive relationships of trust and friendship.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, this is the image of the radical, caring community that Jesus imagined in our Gospel, based not on getting ahead or competition but rather on offering each other the kind mercy God has lavished on every one of us. Jesus is calling us to be the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes, to think and act differently, to be more sheep than goat, and to let love, justice, and compassion be the primary criteria by which we as disciples live the faith we profess.

During these perilous economic and politically divisive times when so much is at stake now and for the future, as Christians, are we willing to be as passionate and creative as Jesus was in our efforts to transform the world?

Deliberate Distortions

By Kara Speltz and Eugene McMullan

One of the scariest things coming out of the November annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is their false claim that our religious freedom—and they claim to speak for all Catholics—is under attack. In the midst of the worst economic crisis this country has seen since the Great Depression, rather than focusing on economic inequalities the bishops have created a bogus distraction, hoping to move the Catholic electorate to the right.

Oakland's *Catholic Voice* recently carried a lead story stating that our religious freedom is at risk. Many of us ordinary Catholics think that while our religious freedom is not at risk, it could be put at risk if the hierarchy continues to bring scandal to the church by its handling of the sex abuse crisis, its contempt for the laity, and its shady interventions in U.S. politics (Prop 8 for example).
http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1104037.htm

The days of the persecuted Catholic Church in America are over, as the country is no longer dominated by Protestants. There is not even a single Protestant left on the Supreme Court, which is now comprised entirely of Catholics and Jews. The bishops are using the defense of religious freedom as an excuse and/or mask for their prejudice and discrimination.

Their real goal is to have Catholic dogma as defined by them "trump" and subvert the rights of those whose faith supports equality. Ironically the United Church of Christ, descended from the Puritans and formed when Protestantism was still dominant, supports marriage equality, while the once-persecuted Catholic Church is opposed. Who is the bully now?

The religious freedom in question is that of persons in the UCC and other pro-equality believers, including the majority of Catholics. A UCC military chaplain, for example, is not allowed to perform a wedding of same-gender spouses in a military chapel in California.

According to the *Voice* article, the bishops seek to protect "the right of a private individual to deny renting an apartment to a same-sex couple on religious grounds." The article then raises the fearful specter that a "public school teacher could be fired for refusing to talk about same-sex marriage as a justice issue." They don't believe this for a minute. The bishops are not ignorant people; they know exactly what they are doing with their deliberate distortions.

Their real concern is access to government funding: "A religious organization that does not recognize same-sex marriage can be considered discriminatory by a state or local government and lose any contract for services."

Churches are already tax exempt, which frees up more of our donations to be used for anti-gay activism! Now the bishops want to secure a privileged access to taxpayer monies, while refusing to respect the rule that those who feed at the government trough must respect its definitions of civil rights.

Letter to *Catholic Voice*

By Randy Dixon

I was dismayed when I read the article in the November 7 issue of the *Catholic Voice* entitled "Advance of Same-Sex Marriage Deepens Concern for Religious Liberty." While I am a heterosexual married man, I do not find same-sex marriages a threat to my marriage. Many things can threaten a heterosexual marriage such as, financial problems, health issues, incompatibility, having children, sexual tension, and religious differences, but that another couple of the same sex who love each other and wish to commit to each other in marriage should have no bearing on a heterosexual couple's ability to maintain their relationship.

Jesus taught us to love one another. I am always amazed by how much hatred people have for those who love each other and at what efforts they will go to prevent love. There are also far too many unloved children to be focused on preventing loving same-sex parents from adopting children. It seems that we would make better use of our time by assisting marriages that are in trouble by focusing on economic disparity, providing needed health services, and counseling. In this way we would truly be in defense of marriage.

Locus of Authority

http://tinyurl.com/753dndx

Majorities of Catholics surveyed say that the locus of moral authority resides with individuals, who should make moral decisions for themselves after taking church teachings into account. One in five Catholics or fewer says that church leaders such as the pope and bishops are the proper arbiters of right and wrong in these areas. Between one-fifth and one-third of Catholics say that moral authority is best exercised by individuals and church leaders working together.

Transgender Remembrance

Catholics for Equality marked Transgender Day of Remembrance (20 November 2011) by calling upon Catholics to contact their political representatives to lobby for transgender non-discrimination measures such as the inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act. The annual Day of Remembrance began in 1991 to honor the victims of anti-transgender hate crimes and to bring attention to the problem of anti-transgender violence and discrimination. A groundbreaking survey produced this year by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality found staggering levels of anti-transgender harassment, physical assault, sexual assault, workplace discrimination, and discrimination related suicide.

"It is impossible for any Catholic, or any person of faith, to listen to the consistent stories from our transgender brothers and sisters and not be brought to tears," said Catholics for Equality Executive Director Phil Attey. "But it's not enough to pray for a better world for transgender people. We must call on our elected officials to pass legislation to end discrimination." Catholics for Equality Foundation Director Joseph Palacios added, "Our faith calls us to respect the dignity of the human person. And fundamental to allowing a person to live with dignity is supporting their ability live in society without being harassed or assaulted, earn a living, and be a full and complete person. In all these areas, our society fails our transgender brothers and sisters."

93% Support Transgender Equality

A recent PRRI poll found that 93 percent of U.S. Catholics support transgender equality. "This is a momentous finding reinforcing the fact that Catholics have clearly formed their consciences despite being fed nothing but inaccurate information by the bishops," said Casey Lopata, co-founder of Fortunate Families, a member of Equally Blessed, a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for LGBT people in the church and in civil society. "The survey results give us reason to be glad," said Frank DeBernardo, director of New Ways Ministry, another Equally Blessed member organization. "Over and over again we have seen lay Catholics ignore a hierarchy that urges them to acquiesce when friends and family members are marginalized by unjust laws."

The survey also found that approximately three-quarters of Americans—from across the political and religious spectrum—believe that Congress should pass employment nondiscrimination laws to protect transgender people. A similar majority favor Congress's recent expansion of hate crimes legislation to protect transgender people. U. S. Catholic bishops have opposed laws that extend legal protections to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Letter to LGBT and Allied Catholics

By Billy Bradford

I want to be clear that I am not a Catholic and I'm not a Christian. I'm a humanist and I believe in good people doing good things for and with each other. I do not believe that prayer has any real world effect, and I KNOW that inaction doesn't change anything. And I do not, under any circumstance, feel the need to 'respect' anyone's belief system any more than I respect a belief in ghosts or aliens. I respect *people* over institutionalized worship. But in particular *I will not respect a church that so vigorously attacks LGBT people.* That is YOUR church.

Everywhere in the world where LGBT people are pushing to be treated equally, the Catholic Church is pushing back, and attacking us at every turn. In my opinion the time to have conference calls and send around newsletters is over. It is time for all Catholics to take action. It is time for every Catholic who believes in 'justice for all' to rise up and walk OUT of their churches and STOP giving them money.

When will Catholics start to occupy the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and diocesan offices across the country to demand a moral voice that focuses on Christ's message of love and justice?
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joseph-amodeo/catholic-leaders-and-religious-liberty_b_1094978.html

Recently Archbishop Dolan with President Obama with one overriding concern: do not allow gays to be treated equally in our country.

Here are further examples of the Catholic Church working RIGHT NOW to vigorously deny LGBT families:

A brand new Catholic website dedicated to denying gay families the right to marry:
http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/
The website claims that "protecting marriage as the union of one man and one woman is a matter of justice." Justice? For whom?

On that website Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone argues that denying gays and lesbians the right to marry "affirms the inviolable dignity of every human person." Cordileone promises to pray for the anti-gay marriage initiatives moving forward in Minnesota and North Carolina. *He is praying to your God that gay couples can never get married.*

Recently Archbishop Dolan issued an official Catholic Church statement saying:

1. No member of the clergy (priest or deacon) incardinated or assisting in the Archdiocese of New York, or any person while acting as an employee of the Church, may participate in the civil solemnization or celebration of a same-sex marriage, which includes but is not limited to providing services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privilege for such event. Ecclesiastical solemnization or celebration of same-sex marriages is expressly forbidden by Canon law.

2. No Catholic facility or property, including but not limited to parishes, missions, chapels, meeting halls, Catholic educational, health, or charitable institutions or benevolent orders, or any place dedicated, consecrated, or used for Catholic worship may be used for the solemnization or consecration of same-sex marriages.

Dolan also said: "The marital union between one man and one woman was universally accepted by civil law as a constitutive element of human society, which is vital to the human family and to the continuation of the human race. In reversal of this tradition, the New York State Legislature recently enacted a law that recognized same-sex union as marriage in the State of New York. This law is irreconcilable with the nature and the definition of marriage as established by Divine law."

That's pretty clear, isn't it? The Catholic is vehemently opposed to treating gay couples and gay families equally under the law in our country.

Bishop Stephen Blaire of the Stockton Diocese recently encouraged his parishioners to sign up for a newsletter from the diocese, and urged them to contact Dianne Feinstein about how she should vote on DOMA. *And of course he doesn't want them to urge her to vote to repeal DOMA, does he?*

Father Brandon Ware of St. Anne's recently said: "Every child has the right to be reared and loved by both mother and father, and unparalleled social benefits accrue from the bond of husband and wife. The family, founded upon marriage as the union of a man and a woman, is the key cell of society. Protecting marriage is essential to upholding the common good." *So my family is clearly not part of the common good, is it?*

Bishop William Lori of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee on Oct. 26 about the "grave threats to religious liberty that have emerged even since June." Lori specifically singled out the administration's refusal to defend the constitutionality of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act and state efforts to expand marriage equality to gays and lesbians.

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, head of the Diocese of Los Angeles (the nation's largest), recently said that "the push to legalize 'same-sex marriages' has posed a new set of challenges to our freedoms. Church adoption and foster-care ministries have already been forced to shut down rather than submit to government demands that they place children with same-sex couples or provide benefits for same-sex employees."

In November Daniel Avila, a policy advisor, lobbyist and spokesperson for the USCCB wrote that homosexuality is not genetic, and therefore, it is literally the work of the devil. He said that "the Devil" is responsible for making people homosexual, and that homosexuality is a "natural disaster." "God does not cause same-sex attraction," Avila wrote in the *Boston Pilot*, America's oldest Catholic newspaper. *The* Pilot *apologized and has since fired him, but why did they print it in the first place?*

This past June the New York Catholic Conference announced it will "oppose efforts to legalize same-sex marriage or to grant equivalent status to non-marital relationships, and will support legislation to prohibit the recognition of same-sex civil unions and/or same-sex marriages."

Cardinal Francis George, head of the Chicago archdiocese spoke out in 2010 against Illinois civil unions (not marriage) and campaigned hard against SB 1716. He called on the Illinois General Assembly to reject the bill. *To ensure that gay couples were not even granted second-class status.*

The Illinois Council of Bishops issued a statement regarding that state's vote on Civil Unions. Not marriage, mind you, but Civil Unions. They said "Everyone has a right to marry, but no one has the right to change the nature of marriage. In our country marriage is granted unique protections and benefits under the law because marriage is the foundation of family and society." *In their opinion, gay couples don't deserve those benefits.*

On June 15th of this year, Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone urged his fellow bishops to "fight back in the war of words over efforts to redefine traditional marriage." *Fight back, against you and me and all gay families.*

In 2008 Bishop Cordileone said same-sex marriage is a "satanic plot by the evil one." *Yes indeed, by demanding to be treated equally in the eyes of the law, I am doing Satan's bidding.*

Sacramento Bishop Soto recently "reiterated the Church's teaching that homosexual acts are sinful."

In July Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles said California's SB48 "would require school textbooks to teach about the sexual orientations of figures in American history. This amounts to the government rewriting history books based on pressure-group politics."

From the Manhattan Declaration, signed by dozens of Catholic Church leaders, we read: "We acknowledge that there are those who are disposed towards homosexual conduct and relationships, just as there are those who are disposed towards other forms of immoral conduct." *You and me, we are immoral. You cannot imagine the hurt this conveys to me.*

Hawaiian Bishop Larry Silva and other diocesan leaders made vigorous efforts to defeat a civil union bill before the state legislature. In letters to state lawmakers, in public testimony, in pulpit statements, in letters to the editor, top diocesan officials have been applying pressure, and urging the pressure of Catholic constituents to fight HB 444, which grants all the rights and benefits of marriage to same-sex couples in Hawaii. Bishop Silva said "Society has a stake in marriage. It is not a private affair. One of the obvious purposes of marriage, from time immemorial, is the procreation and formation of children. Such procreation is not possible in a same-sex union and therefore [a same-sex union] should not be given the same dignity or protection as marriage." *Hey gay people, no dignity for you. Period.*

After playing a key role in defeating a push for marriage equality, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence urged Rhode Island lawmakers to reject an alternative establishing civil unions for gay couples, calling them a "stepping stone" to gay marriage.

Maine's Bishop Richard Malone "asked churches to take up a special second collection to support Stand For Marriage Maine, the group leading the effort to repeal Maine's same-sex marriage law. Fifty Catholic dioceses contributed over $550,000 to the Diocese of Portland, Maine, to aid its fight against a gay marriage law. *Special collections to deny your rights.*

Nicaragua's largest Catholic diocese spoke out against marriage equality. They urged lawmakers not to legalize same-sex marriage. The Archbishop followed that by saying "The church makes a distinction between the respect for every person regardless of sexual orientation, but rejects homosexual and lesbian practices as an act objectively contrary to God's plan for the human race. The family is at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and those who are opposed to love," he added. *"Those who are opposed to love." He's talking about my friends. He's talking about you.*

Minnesota's Archbishop John Nienstedt mailed every Catholic in that state a DVD defending marriage as between one man and one woman. He hoped to "rally the troops" around the Church's position on the issue. *He used church money for that. Shouldn't that money have gone to help people in need? Isn't that why we are here, to help other people?* I emailed the Archbishop. He didn't respond.

St. Anne's Catholic Church leaders in San Antonio, Texas, discontinued a Mass that had been offered for more than 15 years to the gay and lesbian community. Bishop Oscar Cantú said the Mass conflicted with Catholic teaching because it was offered to a gay Catholic group. He said: "The Mass … continues to send conflicting messages about the Church's official teaching concerning the proper celebration of the Eucharist and living an active homosexual lifestyle." *So gay people can't celebrate the Eucharist. They aren't worthy.* I contacted this church directly. They didn't respond.

When Washington DC announced that it intended to legalize marriage equality (and it since has), the Catholic Church immediately said that it would withdraw all its welfare services in protest. Since Catholic charities cannot legally discriminate against gay married couples in DC by withholding services, it has decided that rather than treat everyone fairly, it will treat everyone unfairly.

The Catholic News Agency's article "Five Reasons Why Same-Sex Marriage Will Harm Children." *This is simply outrageous, disgusting, hateful garbage.*
http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resource.php?n=539

Minnesota's Catholic bishops spokesperson Father Michael Becker said that gay and lesbian couples cannot feel love for each other and that it's just about sex which is "essentially one person using another." He says allowing gay people to marry "harms the dignity of marriage in general." *I communicated with Father Becker myself and he reiterated that position. He said to me that my love literally does not count.*

Bishops in the Catholic Church of Ireland have attacked a civil partnerships bill for "undermining" marriage. The Bishops said "Same-sex relationships, by their very nature, cannot be considered equal to marriage or almost equal to marriage." *We can't even get close.*

The Bishop of the city of Tursi has declared homosexuals should not receive communion or be given funerals. He said "Homosexuality, which is a disease, has become something normal. They sprout like poisonous mushrooms, and instead of feeling shame they celebrate this plague and the church itself minimizes these sins." *Imagine a young gay catholic reading that. Do you wonder why they have low self esteem? Why they take their own lives?*

How can we tell our gay kids it gets better? The Catholic Church is telling them it surely does not.

Can you give me ONE Bishop or ONE Archbishop who has publicly and vocally supported LGBT civil rights? Just one, in the entire world? How about even ONE Priest who is willing to fight back? I'm not talking about a Catholic church that allows a gay group to meet in the building, I'm talking about a Catholic Priest who gets UP in his church and speaks OUT for LGBT families, and denounces all the hatred you just read above. Where is that man? He does not exist. Yes, there are lay people who speak out (a little) but it's not nearly enough. The word 'justice' is thrown around in the Catholic Church, but there is NO justice for gay people.

The Catholic Church, with the lesser assistance of the Mormon Church, is the number one reason for the oppression of LGBT people worldwide. That's not my bias or my personal opinion; that is an objective fact. In every state in this country where marriage equality comes up, and anywhere in the world, your church actively fundraises and spends literally millions of dollars to deny you and me recognition under civil law. They make public statements, they issue press releases, they continually urge their members to work against us. These are objective facts, and cannot be argued. What the church recognizes or doesn't recognize behind the closed doors of their churches is their own business. That they spend millions of dollars annually to successfully get our state governments to deny us equality is the act of a gay-bashing hate group. Also, an objective fact not subject to argument. If there is some reason that you find that kind of ongoing gay-bashing acceptable, you are certainly entitled to that opinion.

I make absolutely no apologies for what I say and do about the Catholic Church. In the words of our President: "We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing hatred and denying our families, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken—you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

And I don't just rant about the Catholic Church online, I get involved. I met with the wonderful parish council of Transfiguration Church in Castro Valley. We talked for about an hour and they were very nice and felt badly about how the Catholic Church treats gay people – but they refused to speak out or get involved *even though they apparently agreed with me*. Why? Because they were afraid of what the Oakland Diocese would do to them if they did. THAT IS NOT JUSTICE, THAT IS FEAR. And that my friends, is not what Jesus would do, is it?

I have made numerous requests to meet with the larger Our Lady of Grace church in Castro Valley, to discuss LGBT rights and bullying, they refuse. They told me to "go talk to the Oakland Diocese, they are in charge." This church has a 'Justice Film' night and I contacted them, asking if I could show a film on LGBT rights. No response.

I have sent countless requests to the Oakland Diocese asking to meet with them. No response, ever. I tried to reach out to Bishop Soto in Sacramento, again no response. I have spent many Sunday mornings outside the Oakland Diocese with Father Tim Stier and the Sisters of Magdala, protesting the Diocese and speaking to churchgoers about change. I can't go every Sunday because I have kids and spending time with them is far more important. But I go when I can and I get involved. Where are all the other concerned Catholics? Why aren't they protesting?

IN EVERY STATE AND EVERY COUNTRY, RIGHT NOW AND ALWAYS THOUGHOUT HISTORY, WHERE GAY PEOPLE WANT THE SAME RIGHTS AS STRAIGHT PEOPLE, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH FIGHTS THEM.

It's time for you to take strong action. Stop the demonization of LGBT people by YOUR church.

Response to Billy Bradford

By Eugene McMullan

There are a number of issues Billy's letter raises for me, and I think it is a strong, provocative letter that deserves to be read and considered by thoughtful LGBT and allied Catholics everywhere. At the outset I have to say that I agree with his strong critique of the anti-gay activism of church officials, and was already well aware of most of the examples included in his litany of shame, which outlines a compelling case against those church officials. I especially like the interspersed affective comments.

Before proceeding with other reactions, I have to say that I am sorry for the pain that the spokesmen of my church have caused for you, Billy, for your friends and family, and for all LGBT and allied persons everywhere, including me and my loved ones. I am especially sorry for the pain that church officials are causing for LGBT Catholic youth.

I am concerned, however, about the assumptions you make about who and what constitutes the Catholic Church. The church is people. The bishops are people, it is true, but a rather small sampling of the whole. We are all the church. The privilege of being church belongs to us by virtue of our baptism. Vatican II offered an even broader definition of church as the "people of God," which would include everyone on the planet. In any case, your criticisms of "the Catholic Church" should be directed specifically and only to the anti-gay bishops and other anti-gay Catholic activists.

Another issue is the size of the church. Do you know how big the church is? When you string together a list of examples of anti-gay activism, you give the impression that the church has become a fully mobilized anti-gay army, but the truth is far from that. The anti-gay activists are a small minority, though it happens that they have for the time being hijacked the institutional apparatus to a startling degree, and thus have "seized the microphone."

You ask LGBT and allied Catholics to leave the church, but why should we? It seems an inappropriate request bordering on violence. We all have a right to practice our religion. It is fair of you to raise questions about our beliefs and practices, questions of any sort, but not fair for you to ask us to give up our religion. Most of us understand our religion as requiring us to "stay in the church."

You ask us to stop giving money. Some churches have sought creative ways to avoid asking parishioners to give money that could be used to support anti-gay activism. In general, however, it is not possible to prevent such misuses of funds. The argument could be made that it is still important to contribute money, as the local parish and even the diocese depends on those funds to perform a vast array of laudable and necessary works. I am going out on a limb here, and presuming that you pay taxes to the federal government. I might ask how you can let your money be used to wage a war on terrorism, or in other ways that you might consider unjust.

I also question the political logic of your proposed exodus. There is power in staying, and there is a transformation that is possible only through the faithful witness of LGBT and allied souls who remain. If we leave the church, we rob the church of our witness. A single queer parishioner

makes a difference, and the collective witness of just a few such parishioners can significantly impact attitudes and votes. There are also ethical reasons to stay. We are needed by other LGBT and allied persons, including youth who may struggle with issues of coming out. They need our friendship. They also need to know if only by our example that it is indeed possible to be LGBT and Catholic.

Flint Strategy in Minnesota
http://tinyurl.com/3sltc2g

The archbishop of Minnesota John Nienstedt sent a letter in October to all of the state's priests urging them to organize their parishes to help pass a constitutional ban on same-gender marriage. He wants priests to identify a captain in each parish, who will set up an ad hoc anti-gay committee. Church captains would answer to the Minnesota Catholic Conference. The "church captain" approach is part of the Shubert Flint public affairs firm strategy that helped pass Prop 8. Flint has been active in Minnesota, where it created ads smearing pro-equality gubernatorial candidates in 2010. The statewide anti-gay coalition Minnesota for Marriage consists of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the Minnesota Family Council, and the National Organization for Marriage.

Footloose

The original *Footloose* seems to reproduce an easy stereotype of repressed small town life, and libido in need of liberation. Yet history and life are usually more complex (and ambiguous) than the easy stereotype will admit. While some think the Puritans hated pleasure, for example, and associate them with repression, the truth is that they liked to toss back a pint or two, and they invented "bundling" to test erotic compatibility *before* marriage.

A young Kevin Bacon plays Ren, who has suffered the inglorious fate of having to finish his senior year of high school in a strange ("repressed") and very small town. He has moved into Bomont with his mother, and they are staying with relatives. Religion is very important here, and Ren and his mother dutifully attend church where Rev. Shaw Moore, played by John Lithgow, delivers an inspiring plea for spiritual vigilance. Ren is rather good-looking and draws the attention of lusty admirers, including the preacher's daughter Ariel, played by Lori Singer.

A few years ago Ariel's brother had died in a car crash, and since then, as Ariel reveals, her dad has made it his mission to prevent such catastrophes by offering the town to God with her as the cherry on top. She resists that role, and has become the sort of girl who, according to Ren's new best bud Willard, "gets kissed a lot." Not to mention being an all around hellion who risks her life in foolish stunts. She can't wait to leave this small town and her father's crushing vision. College will be her ticket out. A closet intellectual, she collects forbidden passages and composes poetry, which she shares with Ren.

Ren decides to petition for a senior dance. Ariel gives him a Bible in which she has marked all of the pro-dancing passages. Ren's "confrontation" with the Town Council is quite respectful. When the proposal loses, Ren is pragmatic, conceding defeat. Then his boss at his part-time job encourages him to find another way. So they rent a warehouse just beyond the city limits. Meanwhile Ariel, Ariel's mother and even Ren continue to work on the preacher. Ariel says she

probably doesn't believe all of his doctrines, but she does believe in him; Ariel's mother tells him that he needs to work on the "one-to-one"; Ren tells him about his father. The preacher relents, permits the dance, then admits to another character that he is not sure he has done the right thing. It was "close to right," the character assures him.

If the film had been about libidinal liberation, you would expect something more than a high school prom as climax. It is true that the more "repressed" characters—Ariel's father and mother—become somewhat "freer" by the end, holding each other close and "almost dancing." Yet there is no drunken orgy, no scene of leaving the town behind forever, no scene in which pent-up energies are dramatically unleashed and the town gets its come-uppance.

Footloose launched six top-40 hits, including "Almost Paradise." If the town was not to be a dramatically distinct city of the elect crowned by Ariel's cherry, perhaps it would now become what it should have been all along: a more humble, gracious and grace-filled city of actual human beings content to live together and work on the "one-to-one."

The features on the DVD introduce writer Dean Pitchford, who came to Hollywood after achieving success by writing songs for *Fame*. He strikes me as gay or bisexual, but who knows. He was inspired to create *Footloose* after reading about the small town of Elmore City, Oklahoma, where dancing had recently overturned a longstanding ban.

Cornbread Dressing

1 c butter
3 c white cornmeal
1 c flour
2 t baking powder
1 t baking soda
2 T sugar
1 t salt
7 eggs
3 cups buttermilk
3 cups crumbled buttermilk biscuits
2 onions, diced
1 bunch celery, diced
½ cup finely chopped fresh sage
6 10 oz. cans chicken broth

Preheat oven to 425F. Combine cornmeal, flour, baking powder, soda, sugar, and salt. Stir in 3 eggs and buttermilk. Melt ½ c. butter in casserole dish on stove. Remove from heat. Stir melted butter into batter, then return batter to casserole dish and bake until golden. Let cool. Crumble into large bowl with biscuit crumbs. Melt remaining ½ c. butter in skillet. Saute onions and celery until tender. Stir in sage and cook a minute longer. Stir vegetables into bread crumbs, with the remaining 4 eggs, some pepper and enough broth to make a very wet mixture. Divide between lightly greased large and medium casserole dishes. Cover and chill at least 8 hours. Bake uncovered at 375F until golden.

World AIDS Day Taizé Santa Monica

St. Monica's (725 California Avenue, Santa Monica) will host an Interfaith Taizé service on World AIDs Day Thursday, December 1st from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. We will join with the worldwide community to remember those who have died from HIV/AIDS, support those challenged with HIV/AIDS, and pray for all those affected by the disease in any way. A light reception will follow the service. Contact Delis for more information at delis@stmonica.net or (310) 566-1531.

Christmas Potluck Berkeley December 1

Join the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Catholics of Holy Spirit Parish-Newman Center in Berkeley as we share in the spirit of community and hope at our annual Christmas Party Potluck on Thursday, December 1st from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Newman Center lounge. Bring your favorite dish/dessert, share stories, invite a friend and make new friends. We'll have drinks ready to be served and a cozy space to socialize by a warm fireplace. All are welcome.

Mark Jordan at Grace December 4

Prof. Mark D. Jordan of Harvard Divinity School will present a lecture entitled, "How Christians Talk about Homosexuality," at the Forum at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco Sunday, December 4th from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in Gresham Hall. Jordan's books include the *Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (1997), *The Ethics of Sex* (2002), *Telling Truths in Church* (2003), *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (2006), and *Recruiting Young Love* (2011).

GLO Party December 11

St. Monica's Gay & Lesbian Outreach invites you invites you to celebrate the Christmas Season with your GLO Family, Friends, and Loved Ones at our Annual GLO Christmas Party. There will be great food, friends, and lots of fun! So don't miss this fabulous event! The party will take place at El Cholo Mexican Restaurant, 1025 Wilshire Blvd. in Santa Monica beginning with cocktails from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. Cost is $35 per person. Tickets must be purchased by December 4th. Go to the GLO Christmas Party event page on Facebook for more information. Also be sure to friend the new GLO Facebook page, "St. Monica Catholic Community GLO Ministry."

Day of Dialogue Danville February 19

The Quarterly Day of Dialogue for LGBT and allied Catholics and non-Catholics will meet again at the San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville on the afternoon of 19 February 2012. There will be a facilitated discussion on the book *The Velvet Rage*. Participants will not have to have read the book, but it wouldn't hurt. We will also have time for an open discussion. All are welcome. Drawing on contemporary psychological research, the author's own journey to be free of anger and of shame, as well as the stories of many of his friends and clients, *The Velvet Rage* outlines three distinct stages to emotional well-being for gay men. Offering strategies to stop the insidious cycle of avoidance and self-defeating behavior, *The Velvet Rage* is billed as an empowering book that will influence the public discourse on gay culture, and positively change the lives of gay men who read it.

***C**atholics for **M**arriage **E**quality was established in June 2009 to advance civil marriage equality through prayer, presence and education. Address newsletter submissions and correspondence to co-editors Eugene McMullan (wmcmullan@ses.gtu.edu) and Kara Speltz (kara4peace@aol.com).*