

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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Unwanted Journeys

By Deacon Brian

Have you ever gone on a journey you did not want to take? Steve and Pati Fehr of Granite Bay near Sacramento have gone on the worst journey two parents can take following the suicide of their 18-year-old son, Jeffrey. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, in the early hours of New Year's Day, Jeffrey hanged himself in the front entrance to his family's home. Jeffrey was gay and had recently ended a relationship. His parents are convinced that a lifetime of taunts and bullying contributed to his decision to take his own life.

<http://www.sacbee.com/2012/01/15/4188596/granite-bay-teen-who-committed.html>

"We will second-guess ourselves forever," his father said. "But we do know that for years, people knocked him down for being different. It damaged him. It wore on him. He could never fully believe how wonderful he was, and how many people loved him," as evidenced by the more than 800 people that packed their local Catholic church to say good-bye.

As early as third grade, Jeffrey was the target of bullies. "He would come home from school and cry," said Tyler, his older brother. "He would say he felt alone, that he wasn't accepted for the things he liked, such as dancing and jumping on the trampoline." His first two years of high school were hell with someone painting the driveway next to the Fehr home with gay slurs directed at Jeffrey or students throwing down his lunch tray on the floor and laughing at him as others joined in the ridicule. His parents sent him to counseling and he was treated for depression. In his sophomore year, Jeffrey told his family he was gay and came out on Facebook. "We told him that it was Ok, that we loved him unconditionally," his mother said, "We were proud of him for embracing who he was." After that, he joined the high school cheer squad, whose members previously had all been girls, and found a community that adored him. As a senior he was the team's captain, and mastered handsprings, back flips, and other gymnastics, all of which gave him a degree of acceptance, but the bullying never quite went away.

"We have so many questions that will never have answers," his father said. "But I do know that something was taken away from Jeff because of all those years he was bullied. He carried around that pain." Inside a reception hall with his son's image smiling from video screens, and teenagers wearing shirts with Jeffrey's picture on them, Steve Fehr asked those gathered to "embrace diversity, be tolerant, and do not bully. A bully might say something and forget about it in 10 seconds," he said. "But people like Jeff never forget those words." By making their struggle public, Steve and Pati Fehr are hoping no parents will ever again have to take the journey they've had to endure.

Like the Fehrs, the prophet Jonah was on a journey he would rather not take. He had been sent by God to warn the violent city of Nineveh, near modern Bagdad, of its great evil and imminent destruction. God was giving them one last chance. The Assyrian empire had several centuries earlier invaded and conquered Israel.

In Jonah's view, since Nineveh was the capital of Israel's mortal enemy and a symbol of wickedness in the ancient world, it did not deserve a second chance. So Jonah boarded a ship traveling 180 degrees in the opposite direction of Nineveh. During a severe storm, Jonah was cast into

the sea and swallowed by a great fish. After three days in the belly of the great fish, Jonah was vomited alive onto dry land. Jonah seems to have had a disposition sour enough to curdle milk! But God gave him another chance to warn Nineveh by delivering the shortest and louisiest sermon in Scriptural history, just five Hebrew words of gloom and doom.

To Jonah's great surprise, Nineveh actually listens to God's message and repents, unlike Jonah who heard God, but refused to obey. In spite of God's earlier promise to destroy them, God changes God's mind and forgives them. Jonah is outraged and stunned that God's justice does not match his own.

Jonah's attitude was similar to that of a woman who placed an ad stating: "Mercedes 500 SEL, for sale. Mint condition, \$50." A man phoned the number and asked, "Are you sure you know what kind of car you are selling?" She said, "Yes." He said, "You want \$50 for it?" She said, "Yes." "And it's a Mercedes 500 SEL?" "Oh, Yes!" He immediately raced over and saw that the car was practically new. He got in it, drove it, and fell in love with it instantly. He returned to the woman saying, "Here's your \$50." She gave him the title to the car. He said, "Why are you selling this \$80,000 car for \$50?" She replied, "Well, last week my husband ran off with his secretary and he told me to sell his new Mercedes for whatever I could get for it. So all \$50 will go to him!"

Like this woman, Jonah is resentful because instead of raining fire and brimstone, God loves all nations and peoples and not just the "correct" people. God's universal compassion, mercy, and kindness extend way beyond the human logic of what is fair and unfair. No person, however ridiculed, hated, or atheistic, is excluded from God's caring concern. Here we are presented with the case of so-called "godless" people who are more open to God and God's word than so-called "religious" people of faith.

In spite of Jonah's rejection of God, however, God does not reject Jonah and in his moment of utter darkness and desolation, in the belly of the great fish, God hears and answers Jonah's prayer for deliverance. No matter the depth of our despair or how low we may have fallen, nothing can drown out our pleas to God.

Our God is a passionate God who does not give up on us, who is not a gatekeeper but opens all the doors and welcomes everyone, whose mercy far exceeds judgment, and who waits patiently for us to love God back no matter how long it takes.

Yes, God does challenge us to go places we'd rather not go, but only because God, through Jesus Christ, has traveled the same trip on the road to Calvary, a journey he did not want to take, a cup he did not want to drink. Knowing the suffering and anxiety of our disheartening quests, God never abandons us and always walks alongside us, cheering us on towards healing and wholeness and comforting us during our moments of pain and uncertainty.

In our unwanted journeys we meet a God who shows no partiality or boundaries in kindness and a merciful God who wants both insiders and outsiders to be part of the same divinely inspired faith community, a God whose awesome goodness refuses to be boxed in by human fears, anger, cynicism, or prejudices and who thankfully doesn't always do what we think God should do.

Whether it be Steve and Pati Fehr's journey to understand and cope with their gay son's suicide, or Jonah's encounter with a magnanimous God who commutes the death sentence of the Ninevites, God is always surprising us with God's breathtaking compassion for all sufferers in the world, whoever they might be and no matter what has caused their misery.

And what of our own journeys we do not want to take, whether it be undergoing 6 months of chemotherapy for a potentially fatal cancer, or selling a home we've lived in for 40 years and moving to an assisted living facility, or starting the search for a job in a new field after losing a long-held and cherished position?

In these journeys God may not give us an explanation, but God does tell us that we are loved just the way we are, beyond our wildest imaginings. God is with us saying, *Here I am and I will carry you through this trial you don't want to undergo, because like the Cross, there is no journey so dark that I cannot turn it to good. I only want the best for you.* And in seemingly random people, events, and situations we could never have foreseen, we may encounter the hidden presence and actions of the living God.

Therefore, we can be grateful for the journeys we did not want to take, because God, by creating life amidst death and constantly birthing new opportunities to receive grace, has gently cracked open and widened our hearts and nothing will ever be the same again!

Mother of God, Light in All Darkness

From a shrine dedicated to people living with HIV/AIDS

Mother of God, Light in All Darkness,
Shelter Him our flame of hope
With your tender hands;
And in our times of dread
And nightmares,
Let Him be our dream of comfort;
And in our times of physical pain
And suffering,
Let Him be our Healer;
And in our times of separation
From God and one another,
Let Him be our communion.

Another Catholic Governor!

Add to the list of pro-marriage Catholic governors Chris Gregorie (D) of Washington, who has taken the lead in the battle for marriage equality in that State, giving her full support to legislation introduced by gay Catholic senator Ed Murray (D) and gay representative Jamie Pederson. She had previously supported domestic partner legislation that was approved by voter referendum in 2009. The bishops of Washington are not happy with the proposed legislation, and have

responded with “Marriage and the Common Good: A Statement on Legislation to Redefine Marriage.”

<http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/ARCH/BishopsMarriageStatement.pdf>

The bishops cite present law as a model that should not be changed. Prohibiting the marriage of “close-blood relations,” present law assumes that marriage is for “bringing children into the world and the continuation of the human race.” Changing this concept of marriage, they argue, would not be in the public interest.

The problem with this argument is that while many heterosexual couples remain childless, increasing numbers of lesbian and gay couples reproduce or adopt. All the while the global population continues to swell, threatening the “continuation of the human race” with the population bomb. The biblical command “be fruitful and multiply” made more sense in the ancient past, when there were so few of us.

Gender anxiety is at the root of opposition to marriage equality. There are many social conservatives who believe that God in nature has ordained the subordination of a wife to her husband. These opponents resist marriage equality because they understand that it will undermine masculine authority and chip away at the supposed “naturalness” of women’s subordination.

In a telling usage, the bishops assert that “special laws” are necessary to support and confer recognition on heterosexual couples: “Were the definition of marriage to change, there would be no special laws to support and recognize the irreplaceable contribution that these married couples make to society and to the common good by bringing to life the next generation.”

Educating for Justice and Peace

By Eugene McMullan

The pope’s recent letter begins by acknowledging a “growing sense of frustration” due to the global economic crisis, which is like a “shadow” that had “fallen over our time, preventing us from clearly seeing the light of day.” Yet the roots of this crisis are “primarily cultural and anthropological,” which suggests that its antidote may also be cultural and anthropological. Significantly, he does not attribute our economic woes to a lack of resources or factors that could be evaluated in the dense terminology and statistics of economics. But the letter isn’t about the economy *per se*; it is about the broad “cultural and anthropological” shift sought in connection with the new evangelization.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20111208_xlv-world-day-peace_en.html

In this shadow, however, human hearts continue to wait for the dawn of which the Psalmist speaks. Because this expectation is particularly powerful and evident in young people, my thoughts turn to them and to the contribution which they can and must make to society. I would like therefore to devote this message for the XLV World Day of Peace to the theme of education: “Educating Young People in Justice and Peace,” in the conviction that the young, with their enthusiasm and idealism, can offer new hope to the world.

The concerns expressed in recent times by many young people around the world demonstrate that they desire to look to the future with solid hope. At the present time, they are experiencing apprehension about many things: they want to receive an education which prepares them more fully to deal with the real world, they see how difficult it is to form a family and to find stable employment; they wonder if they can really contribute to political, cultural and economic life in order to build a society with a more human and fraternal face.

The pope is well aware of the activism initiated when Mohamed Bouazizi, a 20-something street vendor in Tunisia, set himself on fire in December 2010. Bouazizi died 4 January 2011, and leader Ben Ali fled the country 14 January 2011. The protests spread to Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign on 11 February 2011 (Our Lady of Lourdes). In September 2011 Occupy Wall Street marked the beginning of a global protest against economic injustice.

It is important that this unease and its underlying idealism receive due attention at every level of society. The Church looks to young people with hope and confidence; she encourages them to seek truth, to defend the common good, to be open to the world around them and willing to see “new things” (Is 42:9; 48:6).

Significantly, the pope does not call for young people to study papal documents, for example, or to defend tradition against perceived threats. Rather he asks them to be “open to the world,” engaged, and genuinely perceptive. The “new things” that God is doing are happening quite apart from religious institutions.

Education is the most interesting and difficult adventure in life. Educating – from the Latin educere – means leading young people to move beyond themselves and introducing them to reality, towards a fullness that leads to growth. This process is fostered by the encounter of two freedoms, that of adults and that of the young. It calls for responsibility on the part of the learners, who must be open to being led to the knowledge of reality, and on the part of educators, who must be ready to give of themselves. For this reason, today more than ever we need authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts; we need witnesses capable of seeing farther than others because their life is so much broader. A witness is someone who first lives the life that he proposes to others.

The qualifications of a religious educator include having a considerable experience of life and the subject being taught. And in all cases the teacher should be a lover of truth who is ready to learn something new, even and especially when that new insight emerges from an unexpected source. For an educator, being willing to learn teaches youth that truth is not always and only a function of power.

Where does true education in peace and justice take place? First of all, in the family, since parents are the first educators. The family is the primary cell of society; “it is in the family that children learn the human and Christian values which enable them to have a constructive and peaceful coexistence. It is in the family that they learn solidarity between the generations, respect for rules, forgiveness and how to welcome others.” The family is the first school in which we are trained in justice and peace.

If only families did a better job of training youth for justice and peace! As the pope noted, however, an educator should be a witness who has had experience of the subject, and is able to live what s/he would teach. Imagine the general impact if parents were schooled in justice and peace, and taught their children well.

We are living in a world where families, and life itself, are constantly threatened and not infrequently fragmented. Working conditions which are often incompatible with family responsibilities, worries about the future, the frenetic pace of life, the need to move frequently to ensure an adequate livelihood, to say nothing of mere survival – all this makes it hard to ensure that children receive one of the most precious of treasures: the presence of their parents. This presence makes it possible to share more deeply in the journey of life and thus to pass on experiences and convictions gained with the passing of the years, experiences and convictions which can only be communicated by spending time together. I would urge parents not to grow disheartened! May they encourage children by the example of their lives to put their hope before all else in God, the one source of authentic justice and peace.

Nowhere in this letter does the pope repeat an anti-gay definition of family. Here he refers to threats to families and to “life itself,” chief among them working conditions that make it necessary for parents to be separated from their children. We are living in a world in which the rich can increasingly work at home (or not at all), while the poor are forced to migrate to foreign countries even at the cost of being separated from their children. An equally unjust separation is forced upon families with LGBT children who do not receive sufficient support and education in peace and justice from their local parish and church officials at every level.

I would also like to address a word to those in charge of educational institutions: with a great sense of responsibility may they ensure that the dignity of each person is always respected and appreciated. Let them be concerned that every young person be able to discover his or her own vocation and helped to develop his or her God-given gifts. May they reassure families that their children can receive an education that does not conflict with their consciences and their religious principles.

Every educational setting can be a place of openness to the transcendent and to others; a place of dialogue, cohesiveness and attentive listening, where young people feel appreciated for their personal abilities and inner riches, and can learn to esteem their brothers and sisters. May young people be taught to savor the joy which comes from the daily exercise of charity and compassion towards others and from taking an active part in the building of a more humane and fraternal society.

Presumably the pope is a fan of Catholic education, and his remarks would apply especially to parochial schools. He emphasizes the dignity of the human person, and the role of the institution in fostering awareness of gifts and vocation. Youth are to be educated in a way that would not violate the consciences or religion of their families. If parochial schools admit students from a variety of religious backgrounds, they should permit students to opt out of specifically Catholic religious exercises or instruction.

Many same-gender couples have enrolled their children in Catholic schools, and many Catholic school students have come out as LGBT. If Catholic schools, like Catholic families, are to teach justice and peace, they will first have to learn it and live it themselves.

Saint Augustine once asked: “Quid enim fortius desiderat anima quam veritatem? – What does man desire more deeply than truth?” The human face of a society depends very much on the contribution of education to keep this irrepressible question alive. Education, indeed, is concerned with the integral formation of the person, including the moral and spiritual dimension, focused upon man’s final end and the good of the society to which he belongs. Therefore, in order to educate in truth, it is necessary first and foremost to know who the human person is, to know human nature. Contemplating the world around him, the Psalmist reflects: “When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:4-5). This is the fundamental question that must be asked: who is man? Man is a being who bears within his heart a thirst for the infinite, a thirst for truth – a truth which is not partial but capable of explaining life’s meaning – since he was created in the image and likeness of God. The grateful recognition that life is an inestimable gift, then, leads to the discovery of one’s own profound dignity and the inviolability of every single person. Hence the first step in education is learning to recognize the Creator’s image in man, and consequently learning to have a profound respect for every human being and helping others to live a life consonant with this supreme dignity. We must never forget that “authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension,” including the transcendent dimension, and that the person cannot be sacrificed for the sake of attaining a particular good, whether this be economic or social, individual or collective.

The pope here gives credence to the position advanced by Catholic scholars Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler in *The Sexual Person*. If every dimension of the whole person is to be developed, that would include the sexual dimension, and if life is “an inestimable gift,” then sexual personhood, which is so closely bound up with our ability to love and bring new life into the world, is also an inestimable gift, or an aspect of that gift. The pope insists rightly that “the transcendent dimension” of the human person is not to be sacrificed, which is a common if unintended effect of what happens when LGBT persons are given “the counsel of the cross,” and asked to sacrifice their sexual desires and/or gender difference. The pope’s remarks imply that it is time for the church to reconsider its relationship to its LGBT members, and pro-LGBT Catholic ministries (including Dignity).

It is the task of education to form people in authentic freedom. This is not the absence of constraint or the supremacy of free will; it is not the absolutism of the self. When man believes himself to be absolute, to depend on nothing and no one, to be able to do anything he wants, he ends up contradicting the truth of his own being and forfeiting his freedom. On the contrary, man is a relational being, who lives in relationship with others and especially with God.

Deep within his conscience, man discovers a law that he did not lay upon himself, but which he must obey. Its voice calls him to love and to do what is good, to avoid evil and to take responsibility for the good he does and the evil he commits. Thus, the exercise of freedom is intimately linked to the natural moral law, which is universal in character, expresses the dignity of every

person and forms the basis of fundamental human rights and duties: consequently, in the final analysis, it forms the basis for just and peaceful coexistence.

Here the pope does not mention sexuality, gender or marriage. Rather he presents “natural moral law” (a clearer contemporary expression than “natural law”) as the basis of human rights and peace. Based on a concept of universal human dignity, the natural law case for LGBT rights is also the case for justice and peace. In contemporary politics, we often see that the parties that are most opposed to LGBT civil rights are those most aligned with the violence of empire. We must almost admit that there is a danger that LGBT civil rights (along with multiculturalism, religious pluralism, and feminism) will be absorbed into the ideology of empire.

The right use of freedom, then, is central to the promotion of justice and peace, which require respect for oneself and others, including those whose way of being and living differs greatly from one’s own. This attitude engenders the elements without which peace and justice remain merely words without content: mutual trust, the capacity to hold constructive dialogue, the possibility of forgiveness, which one constantly wishes to receive but finds hard to bestow, mutual charity, compassion towards the weakest, as well as readiness to make sacrifices.

I recently re-read *Gaudium et spes*, and was struck by just how much Vatican II had to say about traditional marriage. In this letter the pope does not address human sexuality, which has been a pronounced concern in some traditional approaches to religious education. The skill of not saying too much, especially avoiding saying things that may be perceived as demeaning and derogatory, is essential to the “constructive dialogue” that makes justice and peace possible.

In this world of ours, in which, despite the profession of good intentions, the value of the person, of human dignity and human rights is seriously threatened by the widespread tendency to have recourse exclusively to the criteria of utility, profit and material possessions, it is important not to detach the concept of justice from its transcendent roots. Justice, indeed, is not simply a human convention, since what is just is ultimately determined not by positive law, but by the profound identity of the human being. It is the integral vision of man that saves us from falling into a contractual conception of justice and enables us to locate justice within the horizon of solidarity and love.

As noted in the ringing first words of *Gaudium et spes*: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.” The pope throughout references and develops ideas presented in *Gaudium et spes*, though in charity he avoids repeating its comments about traditional marriage. He issued the present letter on 8 December, one day after Paul VI promulgated the conciliar *Gaudium et spes* on 7 December in 1965.

We cannot ignore the fact that some currents of modern culture, built upon rationalist and individualist economic principles, have cut off the concept of justice from its transcendent roots, detaching it from charity and solidarity: “The ‘earthly city’ is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. Charity always manifests God’s love in human rela-

tionships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world.”

Justice is not only a matter of parsing out rights, and its requirements run much deeper than anything that could be codified in human laws. Justice concerns “the profound identity of the human being,” which has been impressed with the divine image and fashioned for love. The work of justice and peace maximizes human flourishing in, through, and because of charity.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt5:6). They shall be satisfied because they hunger and thirst for right relations with God, with themselves, with their brothers and sisters, and with the whole of creation.

The order here is significant: right relationship with God engenders charity, which makes it possible for us to be in right relation with ourselves, other persons and creation.

“Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity.” We Christians believe that Christ is our true peace: in him, by his Cross, God has reconciled the world to himself and has broken down the walls of division that separated us from one another (cf. Eph 2:14-18); in him, there is but one family, reconciled in love.

Peace, however, is not merely a gift to be received: it is also a task to be undertaken. In order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity, in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God,” as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:9).

What is the relationship between the interior, theological peace with God obtained for us by Jesus, and the exterior, also theological world peace that we are called to build? If the one is gift, and the other task, it is also true that peace is always both gift and task. Our interior peace comes by the cross of Jesus which has broken down the walls that separate us, making us a single family in Christ. Yet there is violence and war even among Christians.

Peace for all is the fruit of justice for all, and no one can shirk this essential task of promoting justice, according to one’s particular areas of competence and responsibility. To the young, who have such a strong attachment to ideals, I extend a particular invitation to be patient and persevering in seeking justice and peace, in cultivating the taste for what is just and true, even when it involves sacrifice and swimming against the tide.

Empire robs us of the justice that makes peace possible.

Before the difficult challenge of walking the paths of justice and peace, we may be tempted to ask, in the words of the Psalmist: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains: from where shall come my help?" (Ps 121:1).

To all, and to young people in particular, I wish to say emphatically: "It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true ... an unconditional return to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from love?" Love takes delight in truth, it is the force that enables us to make a commitment to truth, to justice, to peace, because it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13).

For decades now the Vatican has opposed many of the presuppositions and effects of both capitalism and communism, which have in distinct, but overlapping ways obscured the fundamental dignity of the human person. Only a "return to God" can save the human person, and thus the world. The rule of Love is practical, not ideological.

Dear young people, you are a precious gift for society. Do not yield to discouragement in the face of difficulties and do not abandon yourselves to false solutions which often seem the easiest way to overcome problems. Do not be afraid to make a commitment, to face hard work and sacrifice, to choose the paths that demand fidelity and constancy, humility and dedication. Be confident in your youth and its profound desires for happiness, truth, beauty and genuine love! Live fully this time in your life so rich and so full of enthusiasm.

Realize that you yourselves are an example and an inspiration to adults, even more so to the extent that you seek to overcome injustice and corruption and strive to build a better future. Be aware of your potential; never become self-centered but work for a brighter future for all. You are never alone. The Church has confidence in you, follows you, encourages you and wishes to offer you the most precious gift she has: the opportunity to raise your eyes to God, to encounter Jesus Christ, who is himself justice and peace.

In the image of Jesus the Divine Mercy revealed to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, the Lord is touching his chest, from which red and pale rays issue, reminiscent of the blood and water that poured from his side at the crucifixion. The blood of Christ bought our peace with God. A victim of empire, he reconciles us to God and makes another world possible. The water symbolizes forgiveness of sins and spiritual rebirth. It is also a symbol of justice: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream." (Amos 5:24)

Sopas

By Mirabelle Vergara

Elbow macaroni
Chicken
Chicken broth
Oil
Evaporated milk

Garlic
Onion
Carrots
Hot dogs
Salt and pepper
Eggs
Green onion

In a large soup pot, lightly fry sliced garlic, onion, and carrots in a little oil, then add broth. Bring to a simmer. Add sliced hot dogs, and chicken pieces. In a separate pot, boil macaroni until half-done, then drain and add to main pot. Add evaporated milk and season to taste. Garnish with chopped hard-boiled eggs and green onion. For a vegetarian version, substitute a good vegetarian broth such as Harvest brand chicken flavor (Chinese), oyster mushrooms (instead of chicken), and vegetarian hot dogs.

Civil Unions, Pope to Cuba

LGBT rights activist Mariela Castro, daughter of President Raul Castro, revealed on Cuba's state media recently that lawmakers this year will consider modifying Cuba's family code to legalize same-gender civil unions. The now LGBT-friendly government of Cuba has sponsored campaigns against homophobia, and pays for gender reassignment surgery.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/americas/raul-castro-daughter-top-gay-rights-activist-says-cuba-lawmakers-toconsider-same-sex-unions/2012/01/17/gIQAYYB55P_story.html

Her announcement comes as Cuba is preparing to welcome Pope Benedict XVI to the island March 26-28, following his visit to Mexico. Raul Castro announced in December that he would release 3,000 prisoners in honor of the papal visit. The pope will say Mass in Revolution Square in Havana. His predecessor Pope John Paul II visited Cuba in 1998, prompting Fidel Castro to declare Cuba an officially secular state with no opinion on religious matters.

The Bishop's Man

Linden MacIntyre has written an excellent novel concerning the sexual abuse crisis. It is told from the perspective of Fr. Duncan MacAskill, a Canadian priest who was known as the bishop's purificator (the cloth used to wipe the communion cup). When a priest got into trouble, MacAskill was sent in as a one-person inquisition to interview the wrongdoer and impose discipline. Generally that involved transferring the person to a new assignment and/or sending them off to a treatment center.

Early in his career MacAskill had been outraged by an incident of abuse he had witnessed and then reported to the bishop. The bishop had talked him out of his perceptions, and then sent him away to Central America, where he formed close ties with the radical Fr. Alfonso, and Jacinta. He fell in love with Jacinta; Alfonso was murdered. MacAskill was sent back to Canada when rumors about his relationship with Jacinta put his life in danger.

In the 1990s, with scandal looming, the bishop hid MacAskill away in a rural parish, where he was forced to confront his past—from the woman he had made out with, when they had been

teenagers, to young Danny MacKay, a possible victim of a priest MacAskill had attempted to “clean up.”

If the novel deals with the sexual abuse crisis, it also addresses other issues, including sexuality, class, the mission of the church, and the challenges of being a priest. It is an illuminating, if not a particularly cheerful read, and yet it is difficult to put down. MacIntyre has given us a realistic, unwashed portrait of the church today.

Beyond Velvet Rage SF February 4

Fr. Michael Guimon and E.J. Gibbons will facilitate an interactive workshop at the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco 150 Eureka Street February 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The all-day session will be based on concepts in Alan Downs’ book *The Velvet Rage: Overcoming the Pain of Growing Up Gay in a Straight Man’s World*. The dialogue will follow along with the book’s main messages, validate personal experience, and assist individuals in becoming more conscious of life choices by looking at where they have been, are now and want to go next. There is no cost for the workshop. Books will be available for purchase at the session. RSVP and questions to Ed at edtrains@sbcglobal.net.

Sisters Exhibit Sacramento

www.womenandspirit.org

Through photographs, artifacts and documentary material drawn from the archives of many congregations, “Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America” tells the story of religious sisters in the U.S. from colonial days through the present. The exhibit will run through June 3 at the California Museum of History, Women and the Arts in Sacramento. The museum is open 10-5, except on Sundays (when it is open 12-5), and is located at 1020 O Street, one block south of the State Capitol Park.

Susan Casslan @ Modern Times February 15

Fr. Richard Purcell was an openly gay Franciscan priest who died in 2011 of Lou Gehrig’s disease. He spent his last years in San Francisco where he ran a homeless shelter in the Mission District for men with AIDS. Purcell was widely admired for his humor and spiritual insights, and he garnered much of his spirituality from his decades of work with Native Americans in Arizona. Susan Casslan, author of *Conversations with Richard Purcell*, will be read from her work 7:00 p.m. February 15th at Modern Times Bookstore, 2919 24th Street, San Francisco.

Pax et Bonum February 18

www.brownpapertickets.com/event/223500

Dignity San Francisco will host its annual Pax et Bonum awards banquet February 18th at the Soluna Café in San Francisco. Emmanuel Romero, Rev. Jim Mitulski, and COLAGE will be honored for their service to the chapter, the church and the LGBT community.

Day of Dialogue Danville February 19

www.sandamiano.org

The Quarterly Day of Dialogue for LGBT and allied Catholics and non-Catholics will meet at the San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville on the afternoon of 19 February 2012. The facilitated discussion will center on the book *The Velvet Rage*. There will also be time for open discussion. All are welcome.

Lenten Retreat Berkeley March 3

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood will host another LGBT Day of Reflection at the Sonni-no House in Berkeley on Saturday, March 3rd from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For more information contact dmatzcpps@gmail.com.

New Ways Symposium March 15-17

<http://www.newwaysministry.org/symp2012.html>

Relationships are at the heart of lesbian/gay ministry in the Catholic Church. Many types of relationships impact this ministry: within families, within parish communities, with the institutional structures of Catholicism, with friends, with society, with one's conscience, with God. Rooted in our Catholic faith, we believe that the power of relationship is the power to transform people and structures. As the Gospel story of the wedding miracle at Cana tells us, when Jesus enters into our relationships, they are transformed from ordinary into miraculous, from water to wine.

“From Water to Wine: Lesbian/Gay Catholics and Relationships” will feature presentations by Bp. Geoffrey Robinson, Luke Timothy Johnson, Patricia Beattie Jung, Richard Rodriguez, and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, and will include workshops on marriage equality, transgender issues, African American issues, youth and young adults, lesbian nuns and gay priests/religious, Latino/a issues, and coalition building. For more information or to register online contact info@NewWaysMinistry.org.

LA Congress Anaheim March 23-25

www.recongress.org

The annual Archdiocese of Los Angeles-sponsored Religious Education Congress will take place March 23-25 at the Anaheim Convention Center, 800 West Katella Avenue in Anaheim. This year's theme is “Voice Infusing Life.” Workshops include “Christian Morality 2012: Relationships Trump Rules” by Richard C. Sparks, CSP (Friday); “Catholic Identity and Homosexuality” by Greer Gordon and panel (Saturday); “The Death Penalty is a Pro-Life Issue” by Sr. Helen Prejean (Saturday); “The Prophetic Voices of Mary, Elizabeth and Anna” by Sr. Barbara E. Reid (Saturday); “Religion and Politics” by Thomas J. Reese, SJ (Sunday); “Feeling God's Voice Through Physical and Mystical Touch: Some Sacramental and Mystical Images” by Ron Rolheiser, OMI (Sunday); and “No Greater Love: The Path toward True Intimacy” by Fran Ferder, FSPA, and John Heagle (Sunday).

Catholics for Marriage Equality 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 (wmcnullan@ses.gtu.edu) and Kara Speltz (kara4peace@aol.com).