

dignity san francisco

Spirit

"Lord Send Out Your SPIRIT!"

Dear Members & Friends,

In 1975 Pope Paul VI confirmed a statement which calls for understanding homosexual Catholics while condemning homosexual acts.

I was 23 years old and a member of *Dignity/Boston* for one year. I had spent twelve months trying to gather gay and lesbian Catholics in Connecticut to start a chapter in the greater Hartford area. During the spring of 1975, I met Fr. Bob Arpin of Springfield, MA and together, along with other founding members, we began a chapter which drew members from both Massachusetts and Connecticut. When Father Bob moved to California, *Dignity/Hartford* continued **our mission to provide safe space where LGBT Catholics could be nourished by both a welcoming Word preached at the pulpit and by a non-discriminating invitation to partake in the body and Blood of Christ at the altar.** Our understanding of Catholic social teaching compelled us to move outside of our circle to minister to the hungry and homeless of Hartford; with the advent of the AIDS epidemic, we brought the healing touch and sacraments of the Church to those who were shunned by members of both Church and State; we testified in the judiciary halls, working with local LGBT civil rights groups to pass "gay rights" legislation, carried on even today in the fight for same-sex marriage; we marched in Gay Pride Parades in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Washington, D.C.; and we prayed

with members of the *Metropolitan Community Church* and other spiritual communities which upheld the dignity of all human persons.

Meanwhile, the institutional Church continued its teaching which, in a letter from Rome in 1986, referred to the homosexual inclination of persons as "a strong tendency to an intrinsic moral evil...an objective disorder." In response, *Dignity/Hartford* stood in solidarity with *Dignity/USA* which clarified our Statement of Position and Purpose in 1987. **Thus began our journey into exile as we were expelled from church facilities but continued our prophetic ministry,** demonstrating at the chancery and cathedral when the Vatican silenced those who disagreed with official Church teaching; we denounced the Vatican's assessment of gay adoption as doing "violence to children". We stood in defiance of the pope's war on gay marriage; we spoke out against the Church's ban on ordaining persons with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies", and we questioned the pastoral value of the American bishops' 2006 guidelines for ministry to LGBT persons.

In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI published his "Apostolic Exhortation" in which he stated that Catholic politicians have a moral duty to oppose gay marriage. Under this cloud, *Dignity/Hartford* celebrated its last Mass and asked me to preach at this Mass. It was bittersweet: as I preached, I looked out over the congregation and saw many of the founders, no longer young

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BROTHER RICHARD

JONATHAN, SSF

& NEIL CHRISTENSEN,

CO-CHAIRS

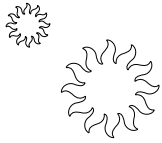


CELEBRATING

OUR SEXUALITY

AND LOVE AS

GIFTS FROM GOD



An Easter Prayer

Let our Easter Celebration raise us up

And renew our lives by the Spirit

Who lives within us!

— From the Collect of Easter Sunday

and energetic. The pews were filled with members who fought the fights illustrated in this article. Our beloved chapter had closed, but our family was still intact, still running on hope and still committed to justice for the LGBT community and the larger Church. Only now, new ways needed to be found to do so in the greater Hartford area.

I am blessed to have the *Dignity/San Francisco* family as my own. **On Palm Sunday, I shall celebrate my 33rd anniversary with Dignity and I thank everyone connected with our San Francisco chapter for allowing me to continue to be ministered to by our very special community.** Now, more than ever, *Dignity* is needed by so many people and I encourage all who read these words to recommit to our mission. I am excited about the enthusiasm shown by our new Board of Directors. I hope that when we renew our baptismal vows this Easter, we shall hold up our community in prayer and renew our dedication to pastoral ministry and justice for our LGBT sisters and brothers.

Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!

— Br. Richard Jonathan, *SSF, Co-Chair*

• **Spring has sprung: the bunnies are dancing; and you can be too!**

Thursday, April 28th, at 7:00pm you can ascend the grand staircase (or take the elevator if you're old and infirm like me), and be swept into the Elizabethan/Venetian world of the *Sir Francis Drake Hotel*. He was by some accounts "one of us", so it is fitting that we celebrate our **Pax et Bonum annual Awards Dinner Fundraiser Dance** there. Even if he wasn't, this hotel is more than gay friendly and there are many of us working there, including my husband Toshi. It's going to be a great night. **With the special addition of the Starlight Room as the setting for our after-party** (just like our

proms in high school), Harry Denton and his band will play as we sip the beverage of our choice and look out at the skyline of our favorite city.

The chef has arraigned a great menu, and having eaten there with Toshi at other parties, I can promise you it will be superb! Our Awardees are FABULOUS, and the same DJ joins us to offer the same diverse range of music as last year. It's going to be a great night. I really hope you can join us. **Tickets are available NOW. Donations above the ticket price can help allow us to provide assistance to attend for those who need it.**

• **The Silence of Jesus**

I was reflecting on old practices from my youth for Holy week, and would like to share one with you. Sister told us that it would be a great gift to Jesus, at a "Grand Silence!", if we could keep our mouths shut and be silent for the three hours time that he hung on the cross. That was, for elementary school kids and high schoolers, quite a sacrifice. Most of us said "yes Sister!", and at least tried. Our parents didn't understand, even when we tried to explain it to them. "But, you're just kids?" they said.

Whether or not that pleased Jesus or was efficacious to our salvation may be questionable; but it certainly was a penitential sacrifice. Even today, I attempt to keep silent, walk the cemetery during that period praying my Rosary for the dead. I may have a more mature view of this practice, but the underlying theme of silence remains the same. It is Jesus' time to talk to me.

My silence permits the Holy Spirit to guide me away from the mundane matters and commune more readily with God. Nothing really earth shaking is revealed, but I do remember having thoughts of being more loved and being part of something far greater than myself. For a gay kid, that in itself is revealing.

Yesterday, I read an email in which a radical religious right mother, Linda Harvy (leader of "Not our Children!") was asking parents to keep

"The breeze at dawn has secrets

to tell you; Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really

want; Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth

across the doorsill where the two

worlds touch. The door is round

and open. Don't go back to sleep.



their high schooler children out of classes on the April 18th. (That's the *National Day of Silence*.)

"My children", the woman said, "shouldn't be forced to participate in that homosexual plot to make their lifestyle legitimate!" Yea, right!, I thought. Here is a chance for our youth to be made aware of how we as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons are closeted and silenced daily. **The non-gay kids, who support us, by not speaking, gift many of their peers with a chance to reevaluate their prejudices against the LGBTQ community.** It's a win-win situation; till the *rabid* Christians get themselves involved! Like those who taunted the silent Jesus on the cross, these modern day self-righteous Pharisees mock the Children of God. I really wanted to reel-off a nasty reply to her, but that would defeat the entire purpose of the movement.

I imagined however that the following could be a both kind, Christian, and to the point reply:

"Dear Mrs. _____;

Yes, I totally agree, keep your poor children home, and continue to work to have other like-minded parents.

Keep their children home too! That way WE, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth of your community will have ONE day where there will be no gay-bashing, overt verbal abuse, assaults on our person, or murder of gay youth! Yes indeed, keep your right-thinking children at home!

Sincerely yours, _____"

Silence is very powerful, scary even. **Perhaps you would like to try it, not just during the three hours of Good Friday, but on "The Day of Silence" too.**

— Neil Christensen, C.S.E.F., Co-Chair

• **Calendar of Special Upcoming Events**

Palm Sunday, April 1 @ 5:00pm:

Palm Sunday Liturgy & Pizza Night Out

Holy Thursday, April 5 @ 7:30pm:

We join St. John of God Parish for their Liturgy @ Irving and 5th Avenue

Good Friday, April 6 @ 7:30pm:

We join Seventh Avenue Presbyterian for their Good Friday Service.

NOTE: There is no Easter Vigil at Dignity

Easter Sunday, April 8 @ 5:00pm:

Dignity Liturgy

Saturday, April 15 @ 2:30pm:

Dignity/SF Board Meeting: all invited to attend, followed by our Weekly Sunday Mass @5:00pm

Saturday, April 28:

Pax et Bonum

Awards • Dinner • Dance • Fundraiser

Convention 2007: July 5-8, Austin Texas:

Dignity/USA 18th Biennial Convention – Please mark your calendars! Join members of *Dignity/San Francisco* and our extended family throughout the world in our family reunion! See any of our Board members for further information.

• **Twenty-fourth Annual Pax et Bonum Award Recipients**

FOR SERVICE TO THE DIGNITYSF COMMUNITY:

Neil Christensen, C.S.E.F.

FOR SERVICE TO THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY:

Father Tom Seagrave

FOR SERVICE TO THE LGBT COMMUNITY:

Lenny Broberg & Donna Sachet

FOR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE:

The San Francisco Unified School District Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps Program



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Marian Hernandez

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Angelo Wong



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