

Communion

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Catholics for Marriage Equality
In California

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A Church for the World

By Fr. Donal Godfrey, S.J.

(from a homily given at Most Holy Redeemer, 25 July 2010)

If you signed on for a Facebook account this week you might have been the 500th million person to do so. I posted an update Friday saying: "Struggling writing a homily for the Sunday Masses at Most Holy Redeemer." By last evening there were seventeen comments and four people liked it! Former parishioners Jamie Cherrie and his husband Jim Gunther sent supportive messages. Jim told me to share my struggles with you so I will!

What kept coming back to me during the week was how tough I find it to be a Catholic right now. And I have the sense that this cloud will not lift any time soon. In Ireland visiting my mother I came across a demoralized church with dwindling congregations. Returning here I got a phone call from another former parishioner Ric Meyer upset at how St. Francis Xavier parish in New York had been banned from marching in the gay pride parade. This week a woman professor at the University of San Francisco where I work spoke of the outrage many feel with the recent document from the Vatican that brought together the issue of women's ordination with that of clerical sexual abuse. Unusually for a Jesuit I find myself agreeing with a Dominican, their former Master General, Fr. Timothy Radcliff who said in a mass in Soho, London a few weeks ago, "My indignation with what the Vatican says is only exceeded by my indignation at its willful misrepresentation by the press. Something must be done, but how to discover what it is?"

Fr. Radcliff spoke of how one time he had an orchid that seemed dead and was about to throw it out but instead asked one of his community, with a doctorate in photosynthesis, what he might do about it. This expert suggested feeding the plant, and within one day of feeding it with orchid food signs of life came back and eventually it flowered again. I feel in need of some such nurturing in the church right now. As the poet Hopkins wrote, "Give my roots rain"!

I believe the answer to this question is found in the Gospel today. As Fr. Radcliff says if we do not connect with what Jesus points us to in this Gospel we may find ourselves very busy, doing all sorts of things, making noise, planning demonstrations, but we will be unlikely to change anything very profoundly.

In speaking of God as *Abba*, Father, Jesus signifies, as author Elizabeth Johnson says, an intimate, compassionate, liberating God who is grossly distorted when made into a symbol and supporter of patriarchal rule. This father, rather, is a God of the oppressed, of community and of celebration. For Jesus, God was not simply an article of belief but an experienced reality. In and through Jesus as Church and as individuals we need to rediscover the God who will show us what we are to do, who will bring us the new life we so need.

Jesus refused to believe the worst about God. Jesus came intimately to know a God who cared passionately that God's kingdom, God's dream, be established on earth as in heaven. The Kingdom has already been established in heaven, the problem is here on earth—where it has not been established. So it all depends on who we think God is. A Jesuit friend Rob Marsh touched a chord in me when he reversed the Gospel sayings today. This week I thought it is God who does not get what God wants, in terms of this kingdom. Does God ask and not receive, seek and not find, knock and have the door slammed shut?

This summer a wonderful Jesuit theologian from Africa, Fr. Arobator has been staying with us and giving lectures at the University of San Francisco and the Lane Center. He spoke of how the Catholic Church is the main provider of care for those with HIV Disease, providing innovative care and programs throughout the continent. However somehow the media and even the church sometimes fixates on certain means of prevention rather than focusing most on what God is doing and calling us to. I know that the Spirit of God is powerfully at work right now in this church, and in the Catholic Church throughout the world. You know the scripture that God so loved the world; well it is the world not the Roman Catholic Church. As Episcopalian writer

Marcus Borg writes, the Church exists for the sake of the world, it does not exist for its own sake. We are grounded in a God who “so loved the world” and our mission as church is to be a mediator of God’s passion and love for the world’s well being.

It took a Greek Orthodox priest, Michael Pappas to remind me of this during the week, and that here at Most Holy Redeemer we are called to a unique mission. Now is not the time to be tempted to give up or throw in the towel. Now is the moment when we are most needed by God. God cares about the church and our mission because it is a mission for the well being of the whole world. We need a spirituality of the long haul, one rooted in prayer and the Abba God Jesus knew so well. As I conclude this homily I find in a roundabout way I did end up talking about the value of prayer after all. When we take Jesus seriously we will be connected to this Abba God, our mother and our father, one who is passionate that together we establish God’s dream, God’s kingdom of justice, compassion and love here on earth.

Argentina

By Kara Speltz

Marriage equality came to Argentina last month despite a concerted anti-marriage effort by Roman Catholic officials and conservative evangelicals. Buenos Aires Abp. Jorge Mario Bergoglio had said that same-sex marriage is a war against God. San Juan de Cuyo Abp. Alfonso Rogelio Delgado Evers had claimed marriage equality entails discrimination against “normal” people. After 15 hours of debate, the Senate voted 33-27 for equality, despite an anti-marriage rally which drew 60,000 people. The pro-marriage legislation was sponsored by the administration of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

Actor Ernesto Larrese and his partner of 34 years were the first to marry in Buenos Aires. “The sick are the homophobes, not the homosexuals,” he said. “The sick are the people with claustrophobia, not the elevators. The sick are the people with xenophobia, not the foreigners. Why would an airplane be at fault for someone’s fear of heights?”

Elsewhere in the region, the Supreme Court in Mexico has signed off on marriage equality in Mexico City, which last year became the first jurisdiction in Latin America to legalize same-sex marriage. Uruguay, Colombia and Ecuador—along with various local jurisdictions—have recognized civil unions.

C4ME Statement on Ruling

By Anne Underwood and Charles Martel

Catholics for Marriage Equality celebrates California Federal District Court Judge Vaughn Walker’s ruling that barring same-sex couples from civil marriage is unconstitutional. He found, based on compelling evidence, that same-sex marriages are no different from heterosexual marriages in their potential for life-long loving bonds that produce, nurture and honor the family commitments central to our civic and religious ideals. The ruling clearly addresses only civil marriage rights and responsibilities. The Catholic Church retains its constitutional right to determine whose marriages it solemnizes, whose marriages it deems valid. It is time for our Catholic

hierarchy to respect the constitutional rights of states and of other faith traditions to marry same-sex couples. Civil marriage is not within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic hierarchy. A 2010 Gallup poll found that 63% of American Catholics support full legal equality for lesbian and gay people. According to a Public Religion Research Institute 2010 survey, 57% of Latino American Catholics support full legal equality for lesbian and gay Americans. Full legal equality includes the right to civil marriage.

Be sure to visit the website and sign the CAME petition:
<http://www.catholicsformarriageequality.net/>

Faith in America Statement

Yesterday, Federal Court Judge Vaughn Walker ruled that Proposition 8, which passed in California in 2008 banning same-sex couples from marrying, is unconstitutional. “In addition to ruling that Prop 8 violated equal-protection and due-process, we are gratified that Judge Walker’s decision acknowledged the devastating impact of religious bias and hostility toward gay people,” said Mitchell Gold, founder of Faith in America who recently married his partner Tim Scofield. “For the first time, a federal court has specifically found that ‘religious beliefs that gay and lesbian relationships are sinful or inferior to heterosexual relationships harm gays and lesbians.’” That finding shines a powerful light on the damage inflicted every day on countless children, youth, and adults who have been told that they are sinful and bad because of who they are. Today’s decision is historic for many reasons, not the least of which is the court’s unprecedented acknowledgement that religion has been misused to justify harmful discrimination against same-sex couples and their families,” said Shannon Minter, Faith in America Board Member and the attorney who successfully argued the case before the California Supreme Court that originally allowed same-sex couples to marry in that state.

During the Perry trial, the court heard extensive testimony about the central role played by religious organizations in promoting Prop 8 and propagating anti-LGBT stereotypes and myths, such as the false claim that lesbians and gay men pose a threat to children. Based on that evidence, as well as expert testimony from both sides, Judge Walker found that religious beliefs condemning gay relationships as sinful cause serious harm to LGBT people of all faiths. Judge Walker also noted that Professor Paul Nathanson, who was identified as an expert on religious attitudes by the proponents of Prop 8, testified in his deposition, that, “religion lies at the heart of the hostility and violence directed at gays and lesbians.” Nationally, a growing number of religious leaders and denominations are rejecting discriminatory attitudes and beliefs and working to redress the harms caused by religious justifications for stigmatizing LGBT people and depriving them of basic rights.

AFA and NOM Backlash

By Kara Speltz

The American Family Association is asking its 2.3 million members to pressure Congress to impeach Judge Vaughn Walker. Their website characterizes Judge Walker as “a black-robed tyrant whose own lifestyle choices make it impossible to believe he could be impartial.” What people fail to understand is that our Constitutional democracy has never allowed minority rights be sub-

ject to the whims of an uninformed population. A Gallup poll taken in 1958 (the first ever to ask a question concerning interracial marriage) indicated that 94% of Americans opposed interracial marriage. After years of Civil Rights activism, and the Loving vs. Virginia decision in 1967, a Gallup poll in 1968 showed that a large majority (72%) still opposed interracial marriage. Today we take interracial marriage for granted.

The National Organization for Marriage applauded anti-Walker comments by Rush Limbaugh. NOM Board Chair Maggie Gallagher, a Catholic who was present at one of the recent GTU summits with Bp. Cordileone, said “At a time when many Republicans shy away from so-called social issues, Rush Limbaugh, who is not himself noted as a social conservative, had the courage to call Judge Walker's opinion what it really is: a slur against the American people. And he's right, too: Democrats will pay a price for Judge Walker's sins this November.” NOM has recently undertaken a summer tour, which has attracted fewer than 30 anti-gay zealots per stop. None of those stops was in California. It has been speculated that the tour is a cynical attempt to incite anti-NOM harassment and violence, for publicity purposes.

Catholics on the Supreme Court

Six of the nine justices presently serving on the U.S. Supreme Court are Catholic. Republican appointees Samuel Alito, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Chief Justice John Roberts tend to vote together as a conservative bloc. Republican-appointed Sacramento native Anthony Kennedy is a moderate. Obama pick Sonia Sotomayor tends to vote with Jewish liberals Ruth Bader Ginsberg and San Francisco native Stephen G. Breyer. Elena Kagan, also Jewish, will fill the seat vacated by John Paul Stevens, who was the last Protestant and ranking liberal on the court.

It is widely believed that Republican presidents have selected Catholic justices in order to slant the court reliably to the right. But as the saying goes, be careful what you pray for! Many Catholics, including those who identify as conservative, now support marriage equality. If recent gains in Mexico, Portugal and Argentina are any indication, the anti-gay activism of church officials has backfired. Church credibility on matters of human sexuality is at an all-time low.

In Massachusetts, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Tauro, a Nixon appointee, ruled in two separate decisions that the so-called Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional. It is likely that the Supreme Court will eventually hear one of those cases and/or the case challenging the legality of Proposition 8 in California.

L.A.'s New Archbishop

Abp. Jose H. Gomez of San Antonio became the Coadjutor Abp. of Los Angeles on April 6, 2010. Appointed by Pope Benedict, he will become the Archbishop of the three-county Archdiocese of L.A. when the outgoing Roger Cardinal Mahoney retires on February 27, 2011. Gomez will be the first Hispanic Archbishop of the largest Archdiocese in the U.S., with 5 million Catholics. Of those, 3.5 million (or 70%) are Hispanic.

In 1986 Mahoney founded the Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics, which is supported at the parish level throughout the Archdiocese of L.A. According to the Archdiocesan website, MLGC's primary goal is "to foster a spirit of community and fellowship among gay Catholics so that they can offer and receive mutual support in living out their lives of faith with the Church." MLGC "supports the Church as pastors in condemning any treatment in which lesbians and homosexual men are the object of violent malice in speech, action, and law, wherever it occurs." The Archdiocese also supports a ministry for parents.

<http://www.archdiocese.la/ministry/mlgc/index.php>

<http://www.archdiocese.la/ministry/mlgc/parents.html>

Our prayer is that Abp. Gomez will actively promote these ministries, and shun the extremism for which some of the more conservative bishops are deservedly infamous. Recent survey data supports the prudence of a moderate approach, especially among the Latino majority. 57% of Latino Catholics support the legalization of same-sex marriage, and they trust parents of LGBT persons more than (anti-gay) clergy. Fr. Joseph Palacios, a Berkeley grad, Professor at Georgetown and leader of the national coalition Catholics for Equality, has analyzed the survey results in the *Washington Post*.

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2010/07/us_catholic_latinos_liberal_on_gay_marriage.html

Safer Parishes in Profile: St. Matthew's

<http://www.stmatthewlb.org>

St. Matthew's in Long Beach is committed to the proclamation of the Good News of God's kingdom through witness and faithful service. St. Matthew's is the home of Comunidad, an LGBT ministry established in 1986. They meet once a month, and sponsor various activities, including an annual retreat, to be held this year at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside October 8-10. The Retreat Director will be Fr. Chris Bazyouros, pastor of St. Albert the Great in Compton. For more information, see www.comunidadlb.org. If you think yours is a "safer parish" and would like it to be profiled in future issues, please let us know or better, write up a succinct profile (less than a page) and send it to the co-editors wmcnullan@ses.gtu.edu and ka-ra4peace@aol.com.

Letter from a Catholic Parent

Please sign me up for information about Catholics working for Equality. My husband and I are Roman Catholic and have been blessed with two sons who are gay. One was married to a wonderful man two years ago in Massachusetts. Thank you for your efforts!

Florence DeWitt, M Div, MA, LPCC-S
Cincinnati, Ohio

Letter from Malaysia

Having recently undergone a major life transition from active RC clerical ministry to professional lay ministry with the Pink Triangle Foundation Malaysia (PTF) in Kuala Lumpur, the invitations of God have been astounding. Here, with a master's degree in systematic theology from JST, I serve as program manager for voluntary counseling and testing, as well as provide life-giving and image-building resources for the LGBTQ community.

Malaysia does not recognize LGBTQ *per se*, but reluctantly acknowledges the presence of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) and Transgender people (*Mak Nyah*) insofar as they have been identified as two of the five groups that are most at risk in the AIDS pandemic. Such an approach obviously precludes any form of recognition of same-gender love and commitment.

I continue to plod and strive to give hope and affirmation through writing, body language and family gatherings.

Joseph can be contacted at josephngoh@gmail.com. He welcomes feedback, suggestions and friendship.

Ode to One Who Will Be Mine

By Joseph N. Goh

What is this beauty I see?
Captivated, enthralled ... I blush at my fortune.
I want to embrace, but I fear, to do so would make you flee.
It is facile, all too facile, to pass the details by,
To chance over the gems glittering in greater years,
My presence here? Perhaps to try,
To see if per chance
That which seizes my heart
May perhaps respond with a glance
And to see that beneath this drab facade,
lies a man with passion and zest,
and love and life,
and much, much more.

Letter from Fr. Joe Nassal

Thank you for sending me your newsletter, *Communion*. I appreciate the information it conveys and the links you provide. Your article (The Logic of Love) especially struck me as I do many retreats on the themes of Compassion and Reconciliation. The NYT article, "We May Be Born With an Urge to Help," is something I always believe—we have a natural tendency to compassion and communion (it's in our DNA!)—and the new biology proves it!

From a spiritual/theological viewpoint, it all depends on where we begin. Do we begin with the belief that we are created flawed (original sin) or do we begin with the premise that we are made in the image and likeness of God? I believe it is the latter which is why DIGNITY is such a powerful and appropriate name. We are made in God's image!

Dave Matz and I were able to attend the Dignity Mass on Sunday and it was a prayerful and spirit-filled liturgy. The priest gave a wonderful reflection on “the other” as “the beloved.”

Again, thanks for including me on your mailing list, and I look forward to meeting you in person!

Joseph Nassal, CPPS
Sonnino Mission House
Berkeley

Bay Area Liturgies August 9, 10, 15

On Monday, August 9 at 7 p.m., Newman Hall/Holy Spirit Parish 2700 Dwight Way, Berkeley, will hold a prayer service to mark the 65th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki. The evening will include prayer, video, meditation and a call to end nuclear proliferation. On Tuesday, August 10 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, 290 Dolores Street (at 16th), San Francisco, will host an interfaith, “Taizé-inspired” service to celebrate the Walker ruling. On Sunday, August 15 at 11:00 a.m., New Spirit Community Church will mark the Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven with a procession and special Eucharist for the healing of the Earth and the environment. New Spirit meets in the chapel of the Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Avenue in Berkeley.

CALGM Meeting Santa Barbara September 18

CALGM (Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry) will host a regional meeting and its annual membership meeting 18 September at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1500 State Street in Santa Barbara. Profs. Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler will be the featured speakers. They will discuss their book *The Sexual Person*, which brings Catholic theology and ethics into conversation with modern anthropology. The cost is \$15, or \$22 with lunch. A registration form can be downloaded from www.calgm.org.

Pax Christi So Cal Conference October 2

The Pax Christi Southern California Regional Assembly and Conference will be held 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. October 2 at St. Matthias High School, 7851 Gardendale St., Downey. The event will feature a keynote by Sr. Diane Ortiz, OSU, a survivor of torture in Guatemala and Office Director for Pax Christi in Washington, D.C. The day will also include breakfast groups, lunch and mass with Bp. Gabino Zavala. The cost of the conference is \$25. To register, contact Fr. Chris Ponnet at cponnet@stcamillus.ftml.net.

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).