

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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Advent Reflection

By Kara Speltz

Advent is about inviting Christ to enter our lives more fully. In order for God to become truly incarnate in us, we need to deepen the fire in our prayer. Our worship and devotion will have to stoke the kind of fire in our souls that will transform our hearts. It is a vital preparation for the coming of Jesus, for without that, there is no room at the inn.

It is far too easy, in the midst of our busy preparations for Christmas, to lose track of what Christmas is really all about. Advent invites us to take time, slow down, be still, and to be awake to the Divine Mystery that looks so common and so ordinary, yet is wondrously present. We get so caught up in decorating, preparing food, and cleaning in preparation for the feast of Christmas that we actually miss the coming of Christ. Hurt feelings, anger, impatience, injured egos blinds us to the full comprehension of what this holy season is really about.

Advent might be thought of as a winter training camp for those who desire peace. Through reflection, prayer, reading and meditation, we create in our hearts a place where the Prince of Peace can find room at the inn.

Author Edward Hays suggests that we make an Advent examination daily. Do we harbor resentment in our hearts, or an unforgiven injury? Are we generous with the gifts that have been given to us, seeing ourselves as their stewards and not their owners? Are we reverent of others, their ideas and needs, and of creation? These and other questions become Advent lights by which we may search the deep, dark corners of our hearts.

Someone once described a life lived in Christian authenticity as living in a place of not knowing while remaining open to the mystery of faith. It is about remembering that God became human, not so that he might be with us, but so that *we might be with him*. In other words, the incarnation is the starting point of our divinization. It comes about so that, having become in a sense “divine,” we may be capable of effectively working with Christ to rebuild the world. We are thus not passive bystanders at the incarnation. The incarnation radically transforms the history of the world and the personal history of each of us. Because of it, each of us must measure up to God’s plan and play our proper role in it. This is what the call to prophetic witness described in Matthew 11 is all about.

It reminds us that Christmas is about God entering our world so thoroughly that nothing has been the same since. God continues to take flesh in our midst, in the men and women and children who form his body today. The birth we celebrate is not just the past historical event but Christ’s continuing birth in his members, accomplished by the power of the Spirit through the waters of baptism.

Advent then asks us to forget what we have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for us; to ignore what the world owes us, and to think what we owe the world; to acknowledge that the reason for our existence is what we are going to give to life. Are we willing to trim our own lamps, so to speak, so that they will give more light and less smoke, and to carry them in front enabling them to cast our shadow behind us? For in doing this, our gifts to others become gifts to the baby Jesus, as He makes room for them in our souls.

Facebook

By Susan Casslan (with permission)

www.susancasslan.com

Facebook is an amazing phenomenon. I don't think many of us yet realize its implications. It's too new. It's a powerful tool that has been placed in the hands of people who aren't sure how to use it. So they fool around with it. Some use it for political organizing, some families post on it to stay in touch. Others sell things or look for sex.

I recently jumped onto the Facebook bandwagon to find out what the hoopla was all about. Now my pages carry a mishmash of friends from various points and places of my life. The people I see or speak to regularly are not included. So my Facebook is like a party where nobody knows each other and most have little in common—other than the fact that they all know me. And some have not seen me in decades, so they know different parts of me, or persons I may once have been. In some ways, Facebook is quite extraordinary. It would seem to have transcended the limits of space and time—with unintended consequences.

For the LGBT community, Facebook has implications that are unique and quite serious. First, there's the whole issue of coming out. Another is post traumatic stress. The sudden reappearance of people from the past, often from childhood or high school years, may bring up old feelings. When triggered, these feelings re-surface as if what brought them on occurred only yesterday. Sometimes they even plant themselves in parts of our bodies, and may lead to disease. One friend had been bullied in high school for being feminine. Like so many LGBTs, he had run away to a more tolerant big city, where he tried to bury his past and his tracks. But Facebook blew his cover. Now he was right back where he started. It was a bizarre experience and he found himself wanting to return to the bottle in order to deal with it.

J.R. Dillon (2001) reports that more than half of all LGBTs have experienced some form of victimization due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Verbal abuse and threats are the most common. The author cites another study finding 20% of women and 25% of men have experienced some type of bias crime related to being gay. Victims of bias crimes may have more risk of PTSD than victims of other traumas or non bias-crimes. Dillon speculates that this could be due to internalized homophobia. Because gay people often internalize society's negative messages about themselves, they frequently blame themselves on some level for their victimization. This increases the damage caused by trauma and hinders the victim's recovery process and their willingness to seek help.

D. J. Carbone (2008) outlines some of the symptoms that may occur with PTSD: avoiding stimuli associated with the trauma, memory disturbances, social withdrawal, increased aggressiveness and irritability, insomnia, startle responses and hyper vigilance. A PTSD victim might also have social anxiety and the desire to numb unpleasant feelings with drugs and alcohol.

Carbone mentions some protective strategies that parents or loved ones can insert into a gay person's life to prevent PTSD. These include offering the kind of support that increases a person's self esteem and feelings of security. Organizations such as gay-straight alliances or out teachers that serve as positive role models are especially helpful.

For a few of my gay friends, reconnecting with old acquaintances on Facebook has also had positive outcomes. One told me, “Once I finally came out, people had no problems with my being gay. In fact, they said they wondered what ever had become of me and had truly missed my friendship. I had no idea that they cared this much. A lot of people told me that they had gay friends and relatives—even gay kids. It was amazing.”

Such stories are heartening. We're all here on this planet for a very brief period, and the connections we make could be more profound and important than we realize. Many of us have tried to bury our past through relocation or drugs and alcohol. But it's possible that the episodes and encounters of our life will reemerge in another form, like a blade of grass poking through concrete. Or a river breaching ice at winter's end.

Susan Casslan is a writer and nurse who lives in San Francisco.

A Journey of Grace

By Joseph N. Goh

Coming out is an ongoing journey of sacramental grace and exploration for me. My journey began in my tender years in Malaysia when I began to sense that I was different from others. I found myself increasingly uncomfortable with heterosexist remarks from family and friends although I could neither ascertain the cause, nor articulate the feelings that were fast welling up within me.

The teenage years were excruciating for me as a young gay person as the closet proved to be unbearably stifling. Did I have other options? Yes, of course I did, but these options meant putting myself at risk of being estranged from my family, as well as setting myself and my family up for ridicule. I sought refuge in the façade of a prim but asexual young man, wagging a disapproving finger at all things sexual while struggling within myself. These were years that were wracked with guilt and shame.

When I transitioned into a young adult, I fled to religious life and studied for the priesthood in Singapore, feeling that I had at long last fettered the homosexual devil within me. My years in training, as well as ministering as an ordained Roman Catholic priest for a period of ten years were filled with so many irreconcilable differences. I experienced great fulfilment in guiding so many people to God, but painfully realised I that was ministering within an institution that condemned people like me at the slightest hint of homosexual expression. I entered an Order with its array of vows and regulations to help me suppress my gayness, only to find others like me who ministered by my side.

It was at this point that I first began to come out cautiously in baby steps to some fellow religious, to close friends and to my sister, but I was careful to appear straight to the relevant people. In religious life, my sexuality was tethered, yet I found myself unable to fully live up to expectations of celibacy. What I thought was buried and gone was in fact well and alive. A watershed moment occurred when I feel deeply in love with a wonderful man who showed me that I was capable of loving and being loved as a gay man. I consider that incident as a pivotal moment of coming out, chiefly because I finally came out to myself in such a forceful and unequivocal fash-

ion that it changed me completely. All the guilt and shame that was in me dissolved in the brilliant rays of a love that was gay, pure and true. My life as I knew it was now irrevocably disrupted.

Prior to that incident, I did not possess a sufficient degree of self-awareness to understand that I was turning my back on my authentic self. I was content to settle for sexual schizophrenia. Thereafter, I appropriated the responsibility to be the fully liberated, sexual person that the Great Breath had intended me to be when I first came to be in this world. My image of God changed as well, from that of a loving disciplinarian to a loving Being who had me in mind as a gay person when I was created, and who continues to rejoice and celebrate with me in my growing epiphany as a gay man.

My years in the U.S. were experimental but decisive. Academia, a greater atmosphere of freedom and geographical distance proved to be a life-giving combination that afforded me the luxury to finally admit that I could no longer put the brakes on my journey as a holistic homosexual person. It became evident that I could no longer minister to others in structures that expected me to preach hypocritically against others like myself. I yearned to be part of the message that being gay was not only compatible with a loving relationship with God, but that being gay was a great and totally gratuitous gift from that God to me!

Coming out to my parents this year was a decision I arrived at with the utmost clarity, albeit not without a good measure of fear. Their total acceptance of me became one more sign that I was on the right track. I have left religious life and the priesthood behind me in pursuit of a deeper vocation as a human being. The entirety of my being—intellectual, emotional, spiritual and corporeal—continues to provide rich hermeneutics through which God is revealed in ways that were previously uncharted. It is as though I have been created anew in a fuller measure as God's minister, schooled by the authority of my experience and revealing the presence of God through the sacraments of my continual joyful and confident disclosures as a gay man.

Yam Casserole

3 lbs. yams (with brightly-colored orange flesh)
½ cup sugar
1 egg
¼ cup evaporated milk
1 cup brown sugar
¼ cup melted butter
1 cup roughly chopped pecans

Slice yams into large pieces with skin. Boil until tender. Allow to drain and cool in a colander in the refrigerator (about 20 minutes). Meanwhile, combine brown sugar, melted butter, and pecans. Set aside. [This will be the topping]. When yams are cool, peel and mash, then stir in sugar. In a separate bowl, lightly beat egg and stir in evaporated milk. Combine with yam mixture. Transfer to a casserole dish, and then layer on the topping. Bake in pre-heated 350 degree oven for 40 minutes.

Kisses for the Pope

On his recent visit to Spain, the pope was greeted with gay kisses. Some 200 protestors staged the kiss-in in response to his negativity, which was again on display as he held forth in the unfinished Gaudi monument to la Sagrada Familia. Spain has become “aggressively” anti-church, he said. The pope is unhappy with the Socialist government of Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Under Zapatero’s leadership, Spain has reduced restrictions on abortion, and legalized same-gender marriage.

22-year-old nursing student Sergi Benavent said he protested to show that there are multiple ways of expressing love. His 27-year-old partner Andreu Martinez added that he was protesting the church’s “antiquated, homophobic and sexist hierarchy.”

Benedict on Marriage

By Geoff Farrow

<http://fathergeofffarrow.blogspot.com/>

In Barcelona, Pope Benedict stated: “The generous and indissoluble love of a man and a woman is the effective context and foundation of human life in its gestation, birth, growth and natural end.” Let’s examine Benedict’s statement more closely.

“Indissoluble” in plain English means that divorce is forbidden (and should be illegal, but we can’t quite pull that off yet). Benedict would point to the Gospel as the scriptural proof for this statement. However, the Catholic Church itself finds a legal way around these scriptural requirements for heterosexual couples.

“Context and foundation” also needs fleshing out. Yes, biological reproduction necessitates a sperm and an egg. However, not all heterosexual marriages are capable of biological reproduction.

The first marriage I officiated as a priest was between two people in their 70s. The Catholic Church has always recognized marriages incapable of biological reproduction as valid and sacramental marriages. In fact, in the marriage rites of the Catholic Church references to children appear in red brackets. This is so the priest may easily omit such references in the cases where the begetting of children is impossible. So if two heterosexuals who are incapable of reproduction may enter into marriage, which the Catholic Church defines as a “Union of Love and Life,” then why can’t two people of the same gender enter into marriage?

Note: Fr. Geoff Farrow was recently arrested for chaining himself to the White House fence.

Condemn Bullying, Not Marriage Equality

National Coalition of American Nuns

On behalf of GLBT Catholics, their families and friends, and thoughtful Catholics across the United States, the National Coalition of American Nuns is appalled at the lack of sensitivity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to lesbian and gay persons.

More than a month has gone by since the media broke the news about a series of gay suicides. During that time, the US Catholic Bishops failed to make a single statement regarding these tragic, preventable deaths. Not one bishop's voice was raised to condemn a culture where youths are bullied for being who God created them to be and are sometimes pushed by society's judgments to attempt suicide. Many people have accused certain segments of organized religion, including the Catholic hierarchy, of fueling these attacks and contributing to suicides.

The annual meeting in Baltimore of the US Catholic Bishops offered an opportunity to decry these horrendous events. Instead, the bishops chose to discuss "the defense of marriage," their well-funded attack on same-gender couples. They fail to see that the Catholic community is embarrassed by their silence in the face of brutality and incensed by their push of a political agenda against marriage equality—all at a time when their credibility on sexual matters is at a record low.

The bishops have not learned from the Minnesota experience, where Catholics returned the anti-gay DVD's the hierarchy sent to each household in the state. The anger of Minnesota Catholics is erupting all across our country. Faithful Catholics believe their bishops should be preaching a message of concern and understanding, instead of rejection and hate.

The National Coalition of American Nuns calls on all US Catholics to rise up and say, "Enough, enough! No more discriminatory rhetoric and repressive measures from men who lay heavy burdens on the shoulders of others and do not lift one finger of human kindness and compassion. We all need to work for a holy and just society and church."

Founded in 1969 to study and to speak out on issues of justice in church and society, the National Coalition of American Nuns consists of approximately 500 Catholic sisters from various congregations of women religious in the United States.

Bishops Elect Dolan, Kurtz

In their recent annual meeting in Baltimore, the U.S. bishops elected Abp. Timothy Dolan of New York as their president, and Abp. Joseph Kurtz of Kentucky as Vice President. They are both anti-gay activists. Dolan was elected 128-111 on the third ballot, and Kurtz was elected 147-91 on the third vice-presidential ballot. They will serve terms of three years. Readers will recall that Dolan ordered St. Francis Xavier out of the annual Pride parade in NYC.

Kurtz is the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage, which "assists the bishops and State Catholic Conferences in promoting and defending the authentic teaching of the Church regarding the nature of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman directed to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children." The "mandate" of the Committee "includes both catechesis/education and public policy advocacy." As noted on the USCCB website, "The Committee is grateful for the generous support and solidarity of the Knights of Columbus." Other members of this notorious anti-gay propaganda machine include Cardinal-designate Donald Wuerl of Washington, Bp. Salvatore Cordileone of Oakland, Bp. William Lori of Bridgeport, and Bp. Gabino Zavala of Los Angeles.

Anti-Gay “Formation” 2010

This has been a busy year for our adversaries who call themselves Catholics for the Common Good (CCG). As part of their Stand with Children Training and Formation program, they have offered a four-part series of workshops in various locales throughout the State. These courses are intended to help parents “inoculate” their children against culture, and help prepare anti-marriage activists to stand “with” children by promoting anti-gay discrimination and ignorance. Their logic is that permitting same-gender marriage would bolster families that do not include both a mother and a father, thus potentially increasing the number of “non-traditional” families. Said families presumably harm children by depriving them of a mother or a father.

Our adversaries are not concerned with the harm done to children of same-gender couples because of an exclusivist definition of civil marriage, children who will grow up to be or love LGBT persons, or children who may be driven to suicide by anti-gay prejudice and discrimination. The entire project is offensive, being only a sophisticated, Catholic update of Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children campaign from the 1970s. That campaign successfully mobilized anti-gay prejudice to repeal a gay rights measure in Miami.

CCG’s Bill May and John W. Galton, former president of Campion College, taught the first course, entitled “Regaining the Offense on Marriage.” Clearly they recognize that they have been losing the temporary ground they gained with the narrow (52%) passage of Proposition 8 in 2008. Polls show that the majority of Californians and the majority of California Catholics now support marriage equality, and resent the interference of Catholic, Mormon and Evangelical leaders in the electoral process. Ironically, the course addressed “the secular role of the laity in the mission of the Church, what it means to be an authentic Catholic advocate for marriage, and how principles of Catholic social teaching and a Trinitarian insight into the nature of the human person can lead to arguments and tactics for promoting marriage and the family in secular society.”

The second workshop, led by Galton, dealt with “how the Holy Spirit guides us in our lay vocation to evangelize culture.” It was entitled, “The Holy Spirit: Fire and Light of the Apostolate.” Part three was a May-led “Practical Tools Workshop,” offering “hands-on training in speaking techniques, responding to common arguments from opponents, redirecting discussions to create more favorable terms for supporting marriage, and identifying other like-minded people to join the Stand with Children leadership team.” Galton taught the concluding session, “Created for Love,” a retreat which considered “Trinitarian love as the source and meaning of the person, marriage, family, and a civilization of love.”

Churches and other Catholic communities and institutions that offered these or similar anti-gay courses included St. Mary Margaret, Oakland; St. Mary’s, Escondido; St. Paul Newman Center, Fresno; Sisters of the Holy Family, Fremont; John Paul the Great Catholic University, San Diego; Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sacramento; Holy Innocents Parish School, Long Beach; St. Mel, Norco; Christ the King, Bakersfield; Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland; St. Joseph, Modesto; St. Isidore, Danville; and St. David of Wales, Richmond.

Marilyn, All the Rage

By Susan Casslan

Since I first heard comedian Marilyn Pittman perform years ago, I've seen our right to marry or even exist, wax and wane through pundits, elections and various people in the White House. And through it all, Pittman has offered a tremendous gift—the ability to make us laugh. For gay people, this is serious medicine.

My friend Richard Purcell, a Franciscan priest, calls comedians “shamans,” and he came to this conclusion while living on the Tohono O’odham (Papago) Indian reservation where he worked as a pastor. He says that the Tohono O’odham (Papago) are a joyful people who “will have a very sacred dance with a clown who farts.”

Richard’s words made me think of Pittman. I’ve always appreciated people like her—those brave LGBTs who come out on a public level. Pittman is not only a comedian; she has a great radio program called *Out in the Bay* which also deals with gay issues. Even in a tolerant place like San Francisco, the program is a much needed resource and lifeline for so many.

Thus it was with shocking sadness that I learned of a tragedy in Marilyn’s personal life. In 1997 her father shot and killed her mother and then killed himself. Pittman was understandably devastated. But as Richard described, she is a shaman—a sacred clown. So eventually she picked up the pieces of this horror and wove them into the other stories of her life.

“That’s how it is,” Fr. Richard explained. “It all flows together.”

In her one-woman play *It’s All the Rage*, Pittman tells her parents’ tale, and how they came to die. She tells her own story, too—her relationship with them and how she was emotionally shattered by the loss. She opens her soul, and we say “yeah, that’s us too.” The details may be different, but nobody escapes this planet without coming face to face with the horror of our own mortality and that of those we cherish.

Pittman got two standing ovations on opening night, so that might give you a hint of what it’s worth. Light family entertainment? No. But if you want to delve deeply into the human soul and share some good laughs along the way, be sure to see it.

Marilyn Pittman's show runs in San Francisco through Dec. 5th at the Marsh Theater.

First Transgender Judge

Rev. Victoria Kolakowski has won the November runoff for Alameda County Superior Court judge, making her the first out transgender judge in the country. According to the Alameda County registrar of voters, she received 162,082 votes (51%) to her opponent John Creighton’s 152,546 votes (48%). Kolakowski has 21 years of legal experience as a private attorney, corporate attorney, and administrative law judge. Creighton is a prosecutor (Alameda County Deputy D.A.).

It has been a long journey. Kolakowski was originally not allowed to take the bar exam in Louisiana on the grounds that she was “not of sound mind.” She had identified herself as transgender in the application. She appealed the decision to the Louisiana State Court, which voted unanimously to allow her to take the exam. “To go from that point of suspicions about whether I was mentally stable to a majority of people saying I am qualified to be a judge is a very positive statement,” she said.

Safer Parishes in Profile: St. Francis of Assisi

<http://www.stfrancisparish.com>

Located at 1066 26th Street in Midtown Sacramento, St. Francis of Assisi parish is a dynamic, lay-empowered and empowering parish with a strong commitment to peace and justice. Their mission statement is impressive:

We are a Catholic Christian Community building the reign of God. We value vibrant liturgy and personal prayer as a way to worship God and celebrate life. We are an inclusive community respecting the dignity of all persons and supporting the journey of each person. We respond to the command of Jesus to love by welcoming all, evangelizing, supporting spiritual growth, and being Eucharist to each other. Challenged by the Holy Spirit, we reach beyond ourselves to care for our neighbors, the poor, the marginalized, and those alienated by our Catholic Church. We aspire to be witnesses and prophets advocating for justice in the world and in the church.

At St. Francis you will find a diversity of activities, including a monthly interfaith-themed potluck group, contemplative prayer group, Taizé, Tai Chi, homeless ministry, parish council and social justice group. The pastor is Anthony Garibaldi, OFM, and the Pastoral Associate is Peggy Chambers, OMC. 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 kara4peace@aol.com.

It Gets Better Links

Gradually we are seeing (and attempting to produce) Catholic-oriented It Gets Better videos. Help support this movement by sharing these videos, and posting comments. Dignity SF’s Emmanuel has posted an excellent video at:

“It Gets Better”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x45NKUsOjC0>

Fr. James Martin, S.J. has posted a couple of videos:

“A Prayer when I Feel Hated”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jr-51MOLYDc>

“It Gets Better”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYW3YQe0Dao>

Advent Series MHR

<http://www.mhr.org/Inserts/AdventVespersSpeakers2010.pdf>

On Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m., Most Holy Redeemer parish in the Castro SF will offer an Advent Series featuring vespers, and a Feast Day mass December 8th presided by Fr. Steven Meriwether. Speakers will include Rev. Dr. Jay Johnson of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion (December 1st); Rev. Jeff Bert, Associate Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco (December 15th); and Kaya Oakes of the lay preaching team at Newman Hall—Holy Spirit parish in Berkeley (December 22nd). Johnson is the author of *Dancing with God: Anglican Christianity and the Practice of Hope*. Bert spent several years studying for the priesthood, and has served MCC churches in St. Louis, Atlanta, and Tampa. Oakes teaches writing at UC Berkeley, and is the author of *Slanted and Enchanted*, and *Telegraph*.

Interfaith World AIDS Day Service Santa Monica

St. Monica's church located at 725 California Ave. in Santa Monica will host an interfaith service of healing and remembrance for those affected by AIDS on December 1st from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. For more information go to the St. Monica GLO Facebook page.

Pink Smoke Bay Area December 5 & 9

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOJYIK4kefA>
www.brownpapertickets.com/event/137660
www.sophiaintrinity.org

Call to Action, Women of Magdala, and Sophia in Trinity invite you to Bay Area screenings of Jules Hart's award-winning documentary about the priestly ordination of Roman Catholic women. The film will be shown at the Orinda Theater December 5th at 3:00 p.m., and at the Balboa in SF December 9th at 7:00 p.m. The San Francisco screening will be followed by Q & A with Film Director Jules Hart and Rev. Victoria Rue, Roman Catholic Woman Priest, featured in the film. Tickets are \$10 and available through pinksmokesf@gmail.com or brown paper tickets. Sophia in Trinity Catholic Community gathers for mass at Trinity Episcopal SF at 10:30 a.m. on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays.

CFFE Courthouse Vigil SF December 6

Marriage Equality USA, California Faith for Equality, and the American Foundation for Equal Rights invite us to join them at the Browning Courthouse SF (95 7th Street at Mission) December 6th beginning at 7:30 a.m. for what Rev. Roland Stringfellow of the Coalition of Welcoming Congregations has described as a "Sunrise Service" in advance of the appellate review of Walker. "Together we will share the fellowship of courage, hope and strength and send up a cheer for equality and support for the parties, organizations and attorneys involved in this important moment in our movement's history. Don't miss this opportunity to be a witness on the side of love." Free strong coffee will be provided. Extended family and friends and couples are encouraged to bring copies of their marriage licenses, photos from their weddings or anything that might help illustrate the importance of marriage equality and/or our experiences of getting married. Oral arguments in the appellate review of Judge Walker's ruling that overturned Prop 8 are scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to noon. There will be no seating available in the courtroom but we can all

gather in the overflow rooms which will broadcast the proceedings. The Coalition of Welcoming Congregations serves as the Bay Area hub of California Faith for Equality.

Day of Reflection Berkeley December 11

Watching and waiting are the customary clothes we wear in the LGBTQ community as we wonder if the political and religious communities will ever fully celebrate us for who we are. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood of Christ at Sonnino House in Berkeley (2800 Milvia) have invited us to a Day of Reflection in which we will dust off our Advent apparel, and put on the active wear of Christ. In putting on hope we dress ourselves in Christ. The retreat will be presented by Frs. David Matz and Joe Nassal, and will run from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Call 510-665-7858 to reserve a space. Donations will be accepted. Fr. Matz is a Missionary of the Precious Blood of the Kansas City Province. He advocates for and creates safe spaces for dialogue between the LGBT communities and the secular and religious communities. Fr. Nassal is the author of eight books including *The Conspiracy of Compassion*, *Rest Stops for the Soul*, *Premeditated Mercy*, *Moments of Truth*, and *Stations of the Crib*.

Symphony L.A. Cathedral December 19

Hyun Sang Joo will conduct the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra and the Our Lady of Angels Cathedral Choir as they present a Christmas concert at the L.A. cathedral Sunday, December 19th at 7:30 p.m. They will be performing selections from Handel's *Messiah*, the Gloria from Gounod's *Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile*, and Rutter's "Angel's Carol." See Facebook for more details. Readers may also be interested in a performance by the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra at the cathedral 7:00 p.m. January 21.

MLGC 25th Anniversary Mass February 5

The 25th Anniversary of the Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics will be celebrated with a mass at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Hollywood February 5th at 6:00 p.m. Other events may also be in the works for parishes across the L.A. Archdiocese. Cardinal Mahoney, who founded the ministry, will retire on or before his 75th birthday on February 27th.

L.A. Congress

<http://lgbtcatholics.net/resources/flyers/>

It's not too soon to start thinking about the upcoming Religious Education Congress in Los Angeles. MLGC will again be sponsoring a ministry of hospitality featuring a booth in the Exhibit Hall; wine and cheese receptions on Friday, March 19th and Saturday, March 20th from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.; and a drop-in Hospitality Suite at the Hilton (Rooms 9305 and 9307) on Saturday from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. A Guide featuring recommended courses and liturgies is available on the MLGC website.

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).