

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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Homophobia, Sexism and the Roots of Bullying

By Susan Casslan (with permission)

Excerpted from her blog

<http://susancasslan.com/home.php>

Suzanne Pharr, in her classic work *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* (1988), tries to imagine a world without homophobia and comes up with these and other images:

- People will be able to love anyone, no matter the gender.
- Affection won't be centered on sex.
- Isolation will be broken down, especially for those who do not typically have sex.
- There will be less violence as men will not feel they have to prove their manhood.

Michael Kimmel also explores the intersection of homophobia and sexism. In *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (2008), he describes what he calls "The Guy Code." He feels that from early on, boys and men learn a code of behavior which includes such things as "boys don't cry; nice guys finish last; and he who dies with the most toys wins." Under these guidelines, kindness and compassion are not an option.

Kimmel doesn't suggest that all or even most men believe in The Guy Code. But they are still affected by it. More than anything, men worry about what other men think.

In a Frontline interview on PBS, Kimmel explains that one of the biggest fears men have is being perceived as gay. This is because homosexuality is associated with being weak or a passive receptacle. There is also a fear that homosexuality inverts the gender order. One of the most common questions straight people ask gay couples is, "Who is the guy and who is the girl?" With a straight couple the gender inequality is clear. Men have more power in society (although this doesn't always translate into more power for individual men).

In gay relationships, the power imbalance is neutralized. Some men may view this as a threat to what they have been raised to see as their own entitlement. It's very similar to what happens to white men when they see minorities or women breaking through the glass ceiling.

Kimmel notes a growing acceptance of gay people in society, but he also sees a tremendous backlash. In times of dramatic change, many will cling to the rock of what feels familiar. Anti-gay backlash often reveals itself through religious fundamentalism, anti-gay jokes, hate crimes or hate speech on right wing radio. Kimmel definitely sees it in the behavior of boys and young men when they bully.

"Exclusion and escape have been the dominant methods American men used to keep their fears of humiliation at bay," Kimmel notes, but "neither exclusion nor escape has ever brought us the relief we sought."

"Peace of mind, relief from gender struggle will come only from the politics of inclusion, not exclusion, from standing for equality and justice and not running away."

Lesbians Make Better Parents

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-3153v1>

<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;109/2/341>

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-3153v1>

A 1994 study by Dr. Melanie Gold, et al, demonstrated conclusively that “the kids are alright”:

There are no data to suggest that children who have gay or lesbian parents are different in any aspects of psychological, social, and sexual development from children in heterosexual families. There has been fear that children raised in gay or lesbian households will grow up to be homosexual, develop improper sex-role behavior or sexual conflicts, and may be sexually abused. There has been concern that children raised by gay or lesbian parents will be stigmatized and have conflicts with their peer group, thus threatening their psychological health, self-esteem, and social relationships. These fears and concerns have not been substantiated by research.

Another report issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in 2002 [which became the basis of a policy statement in favor of same-gender adoption] concluded:

The weight of evidence gathered during several decades using diverse samples and methodologies is persuasive in demonstrating that there is no systematic difference between gay and non-gay parents in emotional health, parenting skills, and attitudes toward parenting. No data have pointed to any risk to children as a result of growing up in a family with 1 or more gay parents.

Now the bombshell: The kids are not just alright, they are *superior!* The results of a 25-year study announced in the AAP journal last summer found:

The 17-year-old daughters and sons of lesbian mothers were rated significantly higher in social, school/academic, and total competence and significantly lower in social problems, rule-breaking, aggressive, and externalizing problem behavior than their age-matched counterparts in Achenbach’s normative sample of American youth.

In other words, lesbians on average make better parents than heterosexuals. This was true across the board, regardless of whether offspring were conceived by means of known, as-yet-unknown, or permanently unknown donors, and regardless of whether the mothers were still together or had separated.

Sadly the scientific evidence does not seem to have been considered when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly The Inquisition) issued “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons” in 2003 :

As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development.

FAP Video Project

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/family-videos>

The Family Acceptance Project (FAP) has posted the first in a series of 8 short documentary videos examining “the journey from struggle to support of ethnically and religiously diverse families with LGBT children.” The series is designed to communicate examples of the accepting and rejecting behaviors discussed in the FAP literature, based on scientific studies. The FAP research shows for the first time how family accepting and rejecting behaviors affect an LGBT young person’s health and mental health, including risk for suicide, substance abuse, HIV, and self-esteem. The FAP will use the videos to educate and support diverse families with LGBT children, as well as to train health and mental health providers and to help providers understand the critical role of families in supporting their LGBT children.

25 Things You Can Do to Make Yours a “Safer” Parish

1. Include LGBT concerns in the prayers of the people.
2. Involve LGBT people as Eucharistic ministers, lectors, ushers, parish council, etc.
3. Invite LGBT people to mass.
4. Invite LGBT people to brunch after mass.
5. Refer to LGBT people in a positive way in casual conversation with fellow parishioners.
6. Remember LGBT concerns in your private and/or family prayers.
7. Educate yourself about LGBT issues.
8. Join or find ways to support and connect with pro-LGBT Catholic groups such as Catholics for Marriage Equality, Catholics for Equality, Fortunate Families, Call to Action, New Ways Ministries, Dignity USA, and the Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry.
9. Start an unofficial LGBT-affirming network and/or social group.
10. Start an official LGBT-affirming ministry.
11. Share your concerns with your pastor.
12. Arrange to speak to the parish council.
13. Build alliances with members of religious orders.
14. Encourage the peace and justice group to address LGBT issues.
15. Forward *Communion* to your friends and allies.
16. Sponsor or promote an LGBT and allied retreat.
17. Make Catholic-oriented It Gets Better videos.
18. Arrange a movie night around an LGBT-themed film (such as Prayers for Bobby).
19. Host a book discussion around an LGBT-themed book, or a novel with a significant LGBT character and/or relationship.
20. Display works by an LGBT artist.
21. Display images and make liturgical reference to saints such as Sebastian, Joan of Arc, Cosmas and Damien, Perpetua and Felicitas, etc.
22. Sit with your same-gender partner during mass, and express affection as openly as heterosexual couples.
23. Sit with an LGBT person or same-gender couple during mass.
24. Fully include the children of LGBT parents.
25. Ask an LGBT person to be your child’s godparent.

Letter to Transfiguration Parish Council

By Billy Bradford

My name is Billy Bradford and I live here in Castro Valley with my son Desmond. He's a Junior at Castro Valley High. I've lived in this community for many years. I coached baseball for 8 years down at Marshall School, and was involved with the PTA at Marshall and Creekside. I'm a coordinator for the Days of Diversity program at CVHS. I also volunteer at the Center for the Arts (that's where I met Sunita).

I like to help who I can and where I can, with whatever is needed.

Since 2008 I've also volunteered with various national LGBT equality groups. I've spent time with Tim Stier and the Women of Magdala protesting outside the Oakland Cathedral, in fact I was there last Sunday. I'm a member of Catholics for Equality, Catholics United, and Catholics for Marriage Equality. And I'm gay.

On my corner near Center and Edwards, right down the street, there are 3 gay couples in a two block radius. One couple is married. The other two can't get married because it's illegal. One couple has an adopted child.

And it's like that all over Castro Valley, the Bay Area and the United States. Gay people and gay families live here. *We are part of your community.*

Recently there has been a heartbreaking number of LGBT youth suicides. These young people are despondent because they are bullied in school, they are denied love by their parents, and they are demonized by their churches.

In response, there has been a large media outreach program called "It Gets Better." Thousands of people have issued statements and made videos to tell our young gay people to please, please do NOT take your own life, this may seem like a dark time to you as a young gay person—but it gets better. And it does.

But even while good and loving people are reaching out to these kids with affirming love, many churches are telling them it cannot get better. They tell them they are sinners, they are broken, they are not worthy, they are perverted, and they must live a life of celibacy. They can't have legally recognized relationships and they shouldn't have children of their own.

I have had these very words spoken to me, in churches right here in Castro Valley, at meetings just like this one.

I'm sure you've heard of the Manhattan Declaration. I'm quoting: "We acknowledge that there are those who are disposed towards homosexual conduct and relationships, just as there are those who are disposed towards other forms of immoral conduct." But I'm not "immoral." I'm just gay, and I was born this way.

It also says: “No one has a civil right to have a non-marital relationship treated as a marriage.” And yet marriage has been recognized as a civil right in 6 States and 11 countries, including all of Canada.

Your Bishop and the Father of Prop 8 Salvatore Cordileone—who is coming here for your 50th Anniversary—says that same-gender marriage is a “plot by the evil one.” No, it’s not. The fact that people like me want to get married is not a Satanic Plot.

Spokesperson for the Minnesota bishops Father Michael Becker said that gay and lesbian couples cannot feel love for each other and that it’s just about sex which is “essentially one person using another.” He says allowing gay people to marry “harms the dignity of marriage in general.”

I communicated with Father Becker myself and he reiterated that position. He said my love does not count.

Bishops in the Catholic Church of Ireland have attacked a civil partnerships bill for “undermining” marriage. The Bishops said “Same-sex relationships, by their very nature, cannot be considered equal to marriage or almost equal to marriage.” So no marriages, and no civil unions.

They don’t even want us to ride in the *back* of the bus.

The word “transfiguration” means a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. This, of course, happened to Jesus.

What I am asking of Transfiguration Church is to be the voice for change. Be the future of LGBT equality that we all know is coming, but be the future now. Talk about LGBT issues. Remind your parishioners that we are ALL children of God, regardless of our differences. Ask them to put aside their fear and animosity toward gay people. Speak out, take a stand. Write a letter to the editor of the *Castro Valley Forum*; the *Daily Review*; the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Your silence means that the anti-gay voices become the only voice of the Catholic Church and I know very well that there are compassionate Catholics sitting in your pews and preaching from the pulpit of this very church who disagree with the voices of intolerance. Please, YOU be the Catholic Church of love, dignity, and equality.

I volunteer often at the local theatre, with and for students of theatrical arts. There are many, many gay kids there. I work with parents who have gay kids. What do we tell them? What does this church say to them? That they can entertain us, and we love them, but I’m sorry, they cannot reach the kingdom of heaven because they are gay?

I can’t and won’t tell them that. I will tell them the truth, and I will speak out for them.

I will work to make it better.

The Legacy of Vatican II

The pre-Christian, Greek concept of Logos was taken into Judaism and Christianity by early philosophers and visionaries, such as Philo of Alexandria and St. John the Evangelist. It was useful for bridging diverse perspectives. In his Apology, for example, Justin Martyr used Logos to show that the logic of Christ was evident in Greco-Roman and Jewish antecedents.

What emerged in the Catholic tradition over time was a top-down approach that located reliable truth in a theoretically-celibate male hierarchy. Authorized tradition trumped scientific investigation, Plato bested Aristotle, and Galileo was condemned. Inherited rules became inflexible, trumping reason and the wisdom of human experience. We lived with that legacy until Vatican II “opened the windows of the church” (John XXIII), and we became worldly in the best sense, and more egalitarian.

Yet the current pope has sought to build on only the most traditional elements of the Council’s legacy. In the name of a “new evangelization,” he seeks to reverse the gains of Vatican II, and re-install the top-down approach of the good old days (for the hierarchy), when the job of ordinary Catholics was to “pay, pray, and obey.”

It is rare today to hear a bishop stray from Vatican talking points, and some have become, in essence, spokesmen for the regime of papal theology. Reflecting Benedict’s splendor (inherited from John Paul II), mitred careerists call for an imposition of the letter of church teaching as defined by Benedict as the basis for contemporary social norms and legal definitions, heedless of the consequences for society’s most vulnerable and the church as the people of God. They have the Logos under lock and key, as it were. If you *can* handle the truth—you probably can’t—they will measure it out.

The traditional church Benedict would restore has a definite, absolute and unchanging position on just about everything, until it changes its mind, an uncomfortable moment that is smoothed as much as possible by citations of precedent and evocations of continuity: *as the church has always taught*.

Following Jesus

By Joe Nassal

Verna Dozier was an African-American theologian, educator and author who died last September at the age of 88. For more than 45 years she had been a member of St. Mark’s Episcopal church in Washington, D.C., where she often preached.

In her book *The Dream of God*, Dozier writes: “Ministry is being about God’s business. Ministry is participating in God’s dream of a good creation, and Jesus is the model. Do you want to follow Jesus? Or are you content just to worship him, and postpone for just a little while longer the fulfillment of the dream of God?”

This is the obstacle many of us in the church experience: We admire Jesus, we worship him, but we don’t necessarily follow his teaching. And it’s rather easy to see why: Jesus was nailed to a

cross for how he lived and how he loved. So we venerate the cross, admire the courage it took for Jesus to go to the cross, but are reluctant to follow him because the risks are too great.

Laurence Boldt reminds us that the word “courage” literally means “with heart.” So in truth, when we say it takes courage to follow Jesus, we mean it takes love. As Boldt writes:

It takes great heart—great courage—to believe in humanity in the face of what seems like overwhelming problems. It takes courage to say, like Martin Luther King, Jr., ‘I have a dream’—to affirm against all evidence to the contrary that one day we shall overcome our fear, doubt, hatred, violence, and pettiness. It takes courage to commit yourself to building bridges between the world that could be and the world that is—the courage to say that you believe the world will one day be a better place and that today you are ready to do your part to make it so.

We live in an age where we are much more comfortable adoring Christ than following Christ. Adoration and veneration of the Blessed Sacrament have become very popular devotions. These are, of course, holy and helpful spiritual practices because they encourage us to go inside the temple of our hearts to touch the Blessed Sacrament that dwells inside each of us: the real presence, the image of God.

Eucharistic adoration as a centering exercise, an activity of contemplation, is most beneficial. But then it must lead us out into the world to become that living, breathing sanctuary of the spirit, a reconciling person, a compassionate presence. Adoring the Christ is a vertical proposition. But following Christ is a horizontal activity. The cross goes both ways, all directions, and where the vertical and horizontal meet, is in the center, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is the place where courage is born.

Isaiah reminds us that our call is found in the very mysteries of life. The God who calls us to be servant “formed me... from the womb.” This call stretches back to the very beginning, to our origin, to that moment when we were conceived. From this original call we are to go to the very ends of the earth. “It is too little, God says, for you to be my servant. I will make you a light to the nations.”

That light was sparked at the very beginning of life. We don’t have to wait around hoping the cell phone will vibrate and the call we’ve been waiting for all of our lives comes through. The call is already within us, whispered in the womb. This might give us comfort, and yes, courage, to live the call in those times when we find it difficult. The call comes from God. Not from our parents, our family, our religious community, our church, our mentor, our guru, or our friends. The call to follow comes from God.

That call, Paul says, is to be holy. Paul could not be more succinct. He, the one who for awhile followed a different path, following the rules of his religion so faithfully that he persecuted anyone who strayed from that path, is “called to be an apostle” and “called to be holy” by God. The question is Do I want to be holy? Do I want to be whole? Or do I simply want to point to others we consider holy—like Martin Luther King—and say, “I could never be or do that,” and so resign ourselves to being admirers rather than followers.

Certainly John the Baptist recognized holiness when he saw it. When Jesus came toward him he shouted out, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” At first John admits, I did not know him.” But then he “saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him.” So, John thought, this must be the guy.

John shouts, “Behold!” It is an invitation to look, to see, to stand or to kneel in awe of the divine Presence coming into our midst. We are to *behold* the presence of Christ. Too often in our institution simply tells us, *behave!* Our Scripture tells us, *Behold!* But then we are to *become* the present of Christ in our world today. We are to move from worship to work, from believing and beholding to becoming and living; from adoring to following Christ.

This is the ultimate challenge of discipleship. As Margaret Silf eloquently writes in her book, *Compass Points*:

Following the rules only makes us obedient.
Following the Christ light makes us whole.
Following the rules can make us intolerant and self-righteous.
Following the Christ light makes us compassionate.

As people of faith, we have a choice: Do I follow Jesus or do I only follow the rules? As an institution, we seem to be focusing more on following the rules rather than following Christ. If we follow the rules, we might be orthodox but not necessarily holy. Don’t misunderstand me. Jesus was not adverse to rules. He had a whole set of rules in Matthew’s gospel, chapters 5-7. They are outlined quite clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. Rules like, “Love your enemies; Pray for those who persecute you; Turn the other cheek.” It just seems we tend to be selective with which rules we keep or focus on as a church.

Our challenge, our call, is to be followers of Christ who behold the light and then become a light for others in our world. As Margaret Silf writes, “What will my epitaph say? ‘She kept the rules, and here she lies,’ or ‘She followed the dream, and God knows where she is now?’ Martin Luther King, Jr. followed and lived the dream. Verna Dozier followed and lived the dream. Follow the dream, the Christ light, the call to be holy and whole, and God knows where we’ll end up. But my guess is we will be around a table in the company of many other dreamers.

New Encyclical on Social Media

<http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/atheologies/4100>

Elizabeth Drescher has written an excellent article for Religion Dispatches in response to the Pope’s new encyclical, “Truth, Proclamation and the Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age.” Her appraisal of the encyclical and of the new media is generally positive. Her book *Tweet if You Love Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Age* will be published this spring.

Is NOM a “Hate” Group?

<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2010/winter/the-hard-liners>

<http://www.fortunatefamilies.com/Newsletters/Jan2011Newsletter.pdf>

The National Organization for Marriage was organized in 2007 by Catholic columnist Maggie Gallagher and Princeton Prof. Robert George—a co-author of the Manhattan Declaration. In 2008 NOM cut its teeth on the Yes on 8 campaign, in close coordination with Catholics for the Common Good, the Knights of Columbus, and the California bishops including then-San Diego Bp. Salvatore Cordileone. After a series of deceptive television ads, Prop 8 passed with just 52% of the vote.

In the January issue of *Communion* we stated that NOM had been designated a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). That was incorrect. The SPLC has made a distinction between anti-gay and hate groups. 13 of 18 identified anti-gay groups are about to be listed as hate groups; NOM is not among them. It is among the 18 anti-gay groups. According to the article by Evelyn Schlatter in the current SPLC *Intelligence Report*, viewing homosexuality as “unbiblical” is not sufficient to earn the hate designation.

Links to Saint Videos

Thérèse of the Child Jesus (October 1)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kaRFIEImhI>

Sebastian (January 20)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Mt2_Bhqkdy&feature=related

Agatha (February 5)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43jCGbbAsdc>

Paul Miki and Companions (February 6)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAZvKx6fCcM>

Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZMztXe0EkQ&feature=related>

Valentine (February 14)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmslhmZy-so&feature=related>

Perpetua and Felicitas (March 7)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDUBHCFQ0Hg>

Cordileone Chairs Committee

Now that Kurtz is vice president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Oakland Bp. Salvatore Cordileone has been appointed to take Kurtz’s place as chair of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage. “Marriage and the family are the essential coordinates for society,” he said. “How well we as a society protect and promote marriage and the family is the measure of how well we stand for the inviolable dignity and good of every individual in our society, without exception. The consequences for our future—*especially that of our nation’s children*—cannot be greater and must not be ignored.”

The committee—soon to be a permanent subcommittee—also includes Donald Cardinal Wuerl of Washington, Bp. William Lori of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Bp. Gabino Zavala, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles. It was established with the support of the Knights of Columbus in October 2008.

Safer Parishes in Profile: St. Martin of Tours

<http://www.stmartin.org>

<http://www.stmartin.org/Emmaus.htm>

Located at 200 O'Connor Drive in San Jose, St. Martin of Tours is committed to sharing "our talents and ourselves in Liturgy, Service and Witness, through an openness with the Holy Spirit, in order to bring about the kingdom of God on earth." The parish motto is "people ministering to people." Ministries include organizing for peace, and against torture; promoting fair trade products; food box program; cloak drive; transitional housing meals; Just Faith; tutoring program; speakers series; prayer shawl ministry; and convalescent home ministry. The parish also hosts the Diocesan-sponsored Emmaus mass (LGBT), celebrated Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. 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 wmcullan@ses.gtu.edu and kara4peace@aol.com.

Courage Founder Dead at 92

Fr. John F. Harvey, an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales for 73 years and the founder of Courage, died December 27th in Maryland. He was 92. He started Courage in 1980 and was its Executive Director until three years ago. Courage promotes adherence to the authorized letter of church teaching through "The Twelve Steps of Courage," which are exactly the same as those of Alcoholics Anonymous, except that the word "alcohol" in the first step has been replaced with "homosexuality."

The Courage website features links to other ex-gay related sites, including Exodus International and NARTH (National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality). It also promotes events such as Sports Camp XII, scheduled for May 26-29 at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, near Philadelphia. Sports Camp is billed as "an exhilarating, experiential weekend for men desiring to learn how to play team sports." "Once again, the Lions, Dolphins, Colts and Rams will face each other in softball, football, basketball and volleyball in the annual epic battle for the coveted Harvey Cup."

12 Steps to Crazy

Bp. Michael Sheridan has decided to bring Courage and its 12 Steps to the Diocese of Colorado Springs. To join the group you would first have to complete a private interview with one of the facilitators Rev. Mark Zacker of Corpus Christi, or Rev. Larry Brennan of St. Peter's—also director of priest formation for the Diocese.

Equally Blessed has responded with a press release in which Frank DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, states: "The notion that homosexuality is an illness similar to alcoholism or addiction to narcotics finds no support in psychological literature. But you don't need an advanced degree to understand that the fruits of lifelong, committed, monogamous relationships are quite different than the damage and heartache done by chemical dependencies."

Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of Dignity USA, adds: “We appreciate the bishop’s pastoral intentions, but this 12-step initiative points out a contradiction at the core of church teaching. Catholics are taught that heterosexual celibacy is an act of heroic sacrifice accomplished through special grace, while homosexual celibacy is simply mandatory—part of the hand that God dealt you. Perhaps unwittingly, the church has made God the author of human prejudice. And that’s not very good theology.”

Letters from Rosa, Casey

Happy New Year!

As you see, it takes me awhile sometimes to respond. I apologize. I was stunned by seeing myself quoted (CME Statement to LGBT/Catholic Youth). What an honor! Thank you. I so appreciated the work we did at the strategic planning meeting and I hope that there will be another opportunity to gather.

I am saving all the newsletters you have sent and any future ones you send to me. And, if I come across anything of interest, I will keep you in mind.

My family and I are waiting to hear the next announcement concerning the Proposition 8 court case. But, in the meantime, life goes on and at this time it is centered around Malena, my granddaughter. She was an angel in Las Posadas on Olvera Street on Christmas Eve. We were so proud of her!

May God bless you always and hold close in loving abrazos.

In Mary's immaculate and fearless heart,

Rosa G. Manriquez, IHM

Thanks for your gracious affirmation of the Fortunate Families newsletter. That means a lot coming from someone who puts out an excellent newsletter!

The SPLC Intelligence Report on hate groups was confusing. The headline says “18 Anti-Gay Groups and Their Propaganda.” But their preface to the listing says: “Of the 18 groups profiled below, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) will be listing 13 next year as hate groups...those are each marked with an asterisk.” NOM was one of the five groups NOT marked with an asterisk.

I didn't notice that when I read their Report and was planning to list all 18. But a right-wing publication (can't remember which) reporting on the Report spotted the asterisk and what it meant and accused the SPLC of being deceptive. Anyway, I went back to the Report and sorted out the 13 that were not marked with an asterisk.

The bottom line is this: NOM is one of the “18 Anti-Gay Groups” but not one of the 13 “hate groups.” The difference may be due to the SPLC's disclaimer that, “Viewing homosexuality as unbiblical does not qualify organizations for listing as hate groups.”

Casey

Dolan's Letter to Congress

Abp. Dolan mailed a letter to Congress January 14 in which he outlined the “principles and priorities” of the public policy efforts of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Dolan had the following to say concerning marriage:

In close connection with our defense of all human life and particularly the most vulnerable among us, we stand firm in our support for marriage which is and can only be a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of one man and one woman. There is good reason why the law has always recognized this, and why it should continue to do so. In a manner unlike any other relationship, marriage makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society, especially through the procreation and education of children. Children need, deserve and yearn for a mother and a father. All human societies in every era of history, differing greatly among themselves in many other ways, have understood this simple wisdom. No other kinds of personal relationships can be justly made equivalent or analogous to the commitment of a husband and a wife in marriage, because no other relationship can connect children to the two people who brought them into the world. For this reason, we will continue to vigorously support the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and strongly oppose legislative or executive measures that seek to redefine or erode the meaning of marriage. We suggest Congressional oversight of executive actions that have the effect of undermining DOMA, such as the expansion of spousal benefits to two persons of the same sex, and the weak defense of DOMA in court against constitutional challenge.

Welcoming Catholics Online Course

Prof. Bernie Schlager of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at Pacific School of Religion will offer an online course this semester entitled “The LGBT Welcoming Movement in American Catholicism” (HS 8241 01). This historical survey of attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual liberation movements in contemporary American Roman Catholicism will focus on LGBT affirming movements, individual leaders and local parishes. Significant attention will also be given to anti-gay movements within American Catholicism.

MLGC Retreat Los Angeles February 5

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=193060674043764>

The Anniversary Mass scheduled at Blessed Sacrament has been re-scheduled. Come instead to the Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics Spiritual Day of Retreat at St. Camilus Center for Pastoral Care, 1911 Zonal Ave. in Los Angeles, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The event is free, though participants are asked to bring something for a potluck.

Day of Dialogue Danville February 13

www.sandamiano.org

The Day of Dialogue retreat for LGBT Catholics is offered quarterly at the San Damiano Retreat House, run by the Franciscan friars, in Danville. The next Day of Dialogue will take place February 13th from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Come for an afternoon of shared stories of faith and community. Family members and friends are welcome. The San Damiano Retreat Center is located at 710 Highland Drive (ph. 925-837-9141).

Valentine's Day Action February 14

<http://equalityevents.ning.com/events/san-francisco-valentines-day>

The Coalition of Welcoming Congregations (and Get Equal) will co-sponsor Marriage Equality USA's Request Marriage action at 12:00 noon on Monday, February 14 at San Francisco City Hall. This hour-long event will begin with words from elected officials, community leaders, choirs singing, straight allies and same-sex couples seeking to marry. There will also be a civil disobedience action as several couples and clergy will be asked to leave the clerk's office and they will refuse. Your participation in the civil disobedience is optional (and would clearly entail a commitment of longer than an hour). Marriage Equality USA will coordinate legal assistance for those who choose to be arrested.

Pax et Bonum SF February 19

www.brownpapertickets.com/event/154142

Dignity San Francisco will honor Vincent Jang, Nicole Sotelo, and Dan Choi at its annual Pax et Bonum Awards/Dinner (a.k.a. the Dignity Prom) on Saturday, February 19. Purchase your tickets by February 12. Previous honorees include Sr. Eileen DeLong; Jose Sarria; Dianne Feinstein; Fr. Jim Schexnayder; Cleve Jones; Roberta Achtenberg; Sr. Jeannine Gramick; Fr. Louis Vitale; Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin; and Gavin Newsom.

L.A. Congress March 17-20

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

At the upcoming Religious Education Congress in Los Angeles, MLGC will again sponsor 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.

Day of Reflection Berkeley April 9

Save the date! Sonnino House in Berkeley will host another LGBT Day of Reflection with Joe Nassal and David Matz April 9. More details next month...

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).