

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations, genders and gender identities—especially gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons—in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support.

MISOGYNY AND HOMOPHOBIA

Introduction to “Misogyny and Homophobia” Issue

By Leo N. Egashira, Publications Committee Chair

Dear Readers;

When I thought about compiling a *QV* on the theme of “Misogyny and Homophobia” last year, I was planning to solicit first-person submissions from those most affected by the conjoined evils of misogyny and homophobia—the 20% of our membership that is female. As I was bouncing off ideas from board members, I was shocked and floored by what Linda Pieczynski reported had been said during the Women’s Caucus at the DignityUSA 40th Anniversary Convention in San Francisco in July 2009. It was made clear that “...women’s voices will fall on deaf ears of misogynist men in Dignity. Misogynist men will only listen to arguments made by males they respect.” So, I had to change tactics and solicit strong male voices to accompany the women’s voices. Fortunately, two of our GLBT Catholic movement’s most universally respected men have spoken out strongly against misogyny in the Church, linking it to the Church’s homophobia. In this issue of the *QV*, Fr. John McNeill writes a theological and societal overview of how misogyny (or “femininaphobia,” as he calls it) leads to homophobia. Convention keynote speaker Richard Rodriguez’s plenary speech posits the struggle for gay rights in the larger context of the struggle for women’s rights. A transcribed excerpt of his speech is printed herein.



Leo Egashira

To a person, your 14-member DignityUSA Board of Directors unequivocally supports what President Mark Matson stated in his DignityUSA Convention 2009 speech: “We have long held that there is no sound theological basis for the exclusion of queer folk. There is also no sound theological basis for the exclusion of women from the full sacramental life of the Church. The seedbed for homophobia is misogyny. We must challenge it at every opportunity. If we want women to come and to stay, we must make room for them at the altar, at the pulpit, and in our language. Although we have largely freed ourselves from limiting dogmas on human sexuality, we continue to deprive ourselves of abundant access to the feminine dimensions of the Divine. We will not reach the Promised Land

This issue:

- Introduction to “Misogyny and Homophobia” Issue – 1
- Misogyny and Homophobia – 2
- LGBT Goals Not Attainable Without Feminism – 6
- Excerpt of Richard Rodriguez’s Plenary Speech Addressing Misogyny and Homophobia – 7
- Misogynist? Homophobic? We’ve Got the Church for You! – 8
- Not Fractured, Not Broken: A Woman Priest’s Perspective – 9
- *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*, by Suzanne Pharr, reviewed by Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues – 11
- A Reasoned Response to Daniel Helminiak’s Well-Reasoned Article – 13
- DignityUSA: Catholic or Not? – 14
- Bishop: ‘Schneiders’ Analysis Inspiring, Challenging’ – 15
- Update on Katie, Transgender 3rd Grader in Omaha – 16



until we change that fact. I agree with Richard Rodriguez when he said, ‘We must ally ourselves against the persecution of women, particularly that done in the name of God.’”

It is no secret that the explicit intent of this issue is to make obvious and transparently clear the inextricable link between misogyny and homophobia. They are two sides of the same coin. Without the eradication of misogyny, the eradication of homophobia will come to naught. While our primary focus and identity is that of a GLBT Catholic advocacy organization, the creation of a just church for all genders and all orientations, requires a broader, more holistic approach and *modus operandi*.

Reaction to the 4th Quarter 2009 *QV*

The previous issue of *QV*, which had several articles on what it means to be “(Roman) Catholic,” with one article questioning DignityUSA’s identification as a Catholic organization, generated much discussion and soul-searching among the DignityUSA membership throughout the country, as well as among our progressive Catholic allies. Among the many com-

Continued on page 2

**Introduction to “Misogyny and Homophobia” Issue
Continued from page 1**

ments received were two thoughtful essays, which are printed in this issue. Ironically, both are from Wisconsin: “K.S.” is a priest, who will remain unnamed given his all-too-real fear of hierarchical sanction or retaliation. Jim Green and Bill Diederich are 30-year Integrity-Dignity/Madison members who are strong supporters of DignityUSA’s current leadership team and the direction we are taking.

This issue also contains other, compelling and timely articles reflective of the ferment among progressive Catholic laity. We present them for your discernment and discussion.

Your comments on this QV’s theme, “Misogyny and Homophobia,” or on a previous QV theme or article, are always welcome. Please send them to me at Legashira@yahoo.com; they will be discussed by the National Board and may be published in a future issue of QV. Thank you for your support of DignityUSA and its work, as well as your interest in our publications. ▼

Misogyny and Homophobia

By John J. McNeill

There was and continues to be a profound connection between misogyny and homophobia in our culture. Misogyny is defined as a fear and hatred of women. It manifests itself psychologically in the repression of everything in the psyche that is traditionally connected with the feminine. Among other things, this includes all emotions, feelings of compassion, all spiritual feelings, all dependency, and all need of community. In the future I would prefer to refer to misogyny with the word “feminaphobia.”



John J. McNeill

Over sixty years ago, G. Rattrey Taylor in his classic book *Sex in History* (New York: Vanguard Press 1954, Chap. 4, pp.72ff.) attempted to expose some of the culturally conditioned attitudes on sexuality. He found a universal phenomenon in cultures based on a patriarchal principle. These cultures with few exceptions tend to combine a strongly subordinationist view of women with a repression and horror of male homosexual practices. The institution in today’s culture which continues to hold on to the clearest expression of that form of patriarchy, including its homophobia, is the Roman Catholic Church.

In contrast, those cultures based on a matriarchal principle are inclined to combine an enhancement of the status of women with a relative tolerance for male homosexual practices. Taylor concludes that the tradition of the Christian West has been fundamentally based on patriarchal culture. This may help to explain certain striking anomalies from an ethical viewpoint in that tradition.

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Begun in 1969 in San Diego, CA under the leadership of Fr. Patrick Nidorf, OSA, first as a counseling group and then a support group in Los Angeles, DignityUSA has been a national organization since 1973 uniting GLBT Catholics, their families and friends.

DignityUSA is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose national office is located in the Greater Boston area, with chapters located throughout the United States.

Members gather at local chapters, periodic regional meetings and biennial national conventions.

The QV encourages the exchange of opinions, book reviews, reflections, background information, resource materials and essays and articles by established speakers and professionals touching on spirituality, human sexuality and its expression, and the mission of DignityUSA. Of special interest are personal experiences and what has worked well in areas of pastoral ministry, human and social justice issues, leadership, chapter and faith community building.

Opinions expressed in reflections, reviews, letters, etc., are those of their authors and not necessarily those of DignityUSA.

One of the most remarkable of these anomalies is the almost complete disregard of lesbianism in western Christian tradition. Although the Holiness code in the Old Testament, for example, explicitly condemns under penalty of death male homosexual practices and female bestiality, no mention is made of female lesbian practices. (This should not be surprising when we recall that King David had reputedly a harem of nearly a thousand women.) Apart from a disputed reference to unnatural female acts by Paul in Romans 1:26, there is no other reference to female lesbian activity in Scripture and scarcely any at all in all the other documents of Christian tradition.

There is a marked tendency in all the sources of Christian tradition to condemn sodomy in terms of a man “playing the role of a woman” with another man or using another man “like a

Misogyny and Homophobia
Continued from page 2

woman.” This has led to the cultural tradition of respecting the man who plays the active role of penetration in male homosexual activity and despising the man who plays the passive role of receiver. This tradition is still strong, especially in Latino culture. As Bailey remarked, this has been looked upon in tradition not so much as a violation of human nature but rather as a degradation of the male as such.

If there is a certain message in the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is the belief of that time in the absolute respect that should be shown to males and the relative lack of concern for the female.

A perfect example of that are Lot’s words to the mob threatening to attack his male guests:

Please my friends be not so depraved. I have two daughters who never had intercourse with a man. Let me bring them out to you that you may do with them what you will, only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof (Gen 19:7-8).

Every Jewish male in Old Testament times would thank God that he was not created a woman in his morning prayers.

For a man to assume the passive coital function was a perversion intolerable for a society organized according to the theory of the essential subordination of women to men, a society which particularly valued male aggressiveness and dominance. It is my impression that this attitude is still strongly present in certain sectors of Muslim society. Consequently, as Bailey remarks, a man who “acted like a woman” in a sexual act was treated as one who betrayed not only himself but his whole sex, dragging his fellow men down with him in his voluntary disgrace.

Bailey concludes with this statement:

It might perhaps be well for us frankly to face the fact that rationalization of sexual prejudices, animated by false notions of sexual privileges, have played no inconsiderable part in forming the tradition we have inherited and probably controls opinion and policy today in the matter of homosexuality to a greater extent than is commonly realized.

More recently a strong light has been cast on the historical connection of feminophobia and homosexuality by Richard Tarnas in his brilliant study of the evolution of western culture: *Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books 1991). Tarnas’s basic insight is that the period of the past three thousand years in the development of philosophy, science, religion, and culture has been an exclusively male phenomenon

Continued on page 4

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Misogyny and Homophobia
Continued from page 3

from start to finish. It is my belief that the historical dialectical process that led to the development of the masculine archetype with the repression of the feminine represents the working out of the *anima/animus mundi*. Its past thesis was the development of the masculine archetype which, for some mysterious reason, had to be accomplished first. Its present and future antithesis will be the working out of a feminine archetype, which will not contradict or repress the masculine, but eventually will result in the synthesis of an androgynous fulfillment of all humans, male and female.

I suspect that the historical process given to first of all working out of the masculine archetype creating the separated and independent human individual had to do with the greater power and closeness to life and nature of the feminine. If the feminine archetype had been worked out first, the masculine development, which is much more fragile, could never have occurred or taken place except with extreme difficulty. At this point in the dialectic we can no more simply return to the maternal matrix, than an adult could find fulfillment by returning to the mother's womb.

The "man" of the Western tradition has been a questing hero, a Promethean biological and metaphysical rebel who has constantly sought freedom and progress for himself, and who has thus constantly striven to differentiate himself from and obtain control over the matrix out of which he emerged. This Promethean hero has been present in both men and women. The evolution of the Western mind has been driven by a heroic impulse to forge an autonomous, conscious, rational self by separating it from the primordial unity with nature. The result of that process has been the transcendent self, the independent individual ego, the self-determining human being in its existential uniqueness, separateness and freedom.

The balancing feminine moment has to do with building a loving spiritual community and achieving a deep passionate relationship of personal love with each other and the divine, a relationship built not on any submersion of our ego and identity into any collectivity or matrix, but built instead on a relationship and a community freely entered into by free, autonomous, independent, and self-determining individuals.

Why, Tarnas asks, has the pervasive masculinity of Western intellectual and spiritual tradition become so apparent to us over the past thirty years, when it remained invisible and unconscious in almost every previous generation? It is only through the feminist movement in the last thirty years that we have become conscious of how exclusively masculine, for example, our common prayers and liturgies were. Hegel once made the observation: "The owl of Minerva spreads her wings only at the falling of dusk." Every civilization is unconscious of itself, until it reaches its dying stages; it is only then that it becomes fully conscious of what it is all about. True wisdom and insight can only be reached at the end point. The three thousand year masculine tradition of Western civilization is reaching its apogee; it has been pressed to its one-sided extreme in the consciousness of the late modern mind.

The evolution of the Western mind has been founded on the repression of the feminine, "on the repression of undifferentiated unitary consciousness, of the participation mystique with nature, a progressive denial of the *anima mundi*, of the soul of the world, of the community of being, of mystery and ambiguity, of imagination, emotion, instinct, body sexuality, nature and women." (Tarnas: p. 442).

Today men and women face the existential crisis of being solitary and mortal conscious egos thrown into an ultimately meaningless and unknowable universe, an environment that is increasingly artificial, mechanistic, fragmented, soulless, and self-destructive. The evolution of the masculine archetype has reached an impasse. If we continue in this one-sided dialectic, the human race faces the real possibility of self-destruction through nuclear warfare or widespread environmental collapse. Human beings are feeling progressively isolated and alienated from their communities, from nature, and from each other.

Tarnas believes that the resolution of this crisis is already occurring in the tremendous emergence of the feminine archetype in our culture. He sees this phenomenon as visible in the rise of feminism, the growing empowerment of women, and the widespread opening up to feminine values by both men and women. He finds further evidence of this in the widespread urge to reconnect with the body, the emotions, the unconscious, the imagination, and intuition.

The deepest passion of the Western mind has been to reunite with the ground of its being. The driving impulse of the West's consciousness has been its dialectical quest not only to realize itself, to forge its own autonomy, but also, to recover its connection with the whole; to come to terms with the great feminine principle in life; to differentiate itself from but then to rediscover and reunite with the feminine, with the mystery of life, of nature, of soul. And that reunion can now occur on a new and profoundly different level from that of the primordial unconscious unity for the long evolution of human consciousness and prepared it to be capable at last of embracing the ground and matrix of its own being freely and consciously. The *telos*, the inner direction and goal, of the Western mind has been to reconnect with the cosmic in a mature participation mystique, to surrender itself feely and consciously, in the embrace of a larger unity that preserves human autonomy while also transcending human alienation. (Tarnas: pp. 443-444).

Tarnas concludes his great work with the statement that the restless inner development and incessantly masculine ordering of reality characteristic of the Western mind has been gradually leading toward a reconciliation with the lost feminine unity, toward a profound and many leveled marriage of the masculine and the feminine, a triumphant and healing reunion. "Our time is struggling to bring forth something new in human history. We seem to be witnessing, suffering the birth labor of a new reality, a new form of human existence, a 'child' that would be the fruit of this great archetypal marriage, and that would bear within itself all its antecedents in a new form."

Continued on page 5

Misogyny and Homophobia
Continued from page 4

This stupendous Western project should be seen as a necessary and noble part of a great dialectic and not just rejected as an imperialist-chauvinistic plot. Not only has this tradition achieved the fundamental differentiation and autonomy of the human which alone could allow the possibility of such a larger synthesis, it has also painstakingly prepared the way for its own self-transcendence. Moreover, this tradition possesses resources, left behind and cut off by its own Promethean advance, that we have scarcely begun to integrate and that, paradoxically, only the opening to the feminine will enable us to integrate. Each perspective, masculine and feminine, is here both affirmed and transcended, recognized as part of a larger whole; for each polarity requires the other for its fulfillment. And their synthesis leads to something beyond itself: It brings an unexpected opening to a larger reality that cannot be grasped before it arrives; because this new reality is itself a creative act (Tarnas: p. 445).

The Role of the LGBT Community in the Great Dialectic

Although, to my astonishment, Tarnas makes no mention of it, parallel to the emergence of woman's liberation over the past fifty years has been the emergence of a positive gay identity on all levels — social, political, cultural, and spiritual — all over the world. Jacque Perotti, the founder of the Catholic gay group David and Jonathon in French speaking Europe, speaks of this same era as a “declic, a special moment in history, a revelation of the slow emergence of a positive homosexual identity from the heart of the world. After so many ages of rejection, destruction and intimidation, a wind of freedom has begun to blow.”

This emergence of a positive gay identity has accelerated in the past few years to a remarkable extent. I believe it has a teleological purpose in the development of the *anima-animus mundi*. This presence of a visible gay and lesbian world community, for the first time in the past three thousand years, is an integral part of that dialectic and is another aspect of the recovery of the feminine or, what I prefer to call, the balancing of the masculine and feminine in a new synthesis in the human personality

Clearly the dominant dialectic of the masculine archetype in the past with its repression of the feminine has also included the repression of the homosexual. As G. Rattrey Taylor pointed out, the patriarchal cultures combine a subordinationist view of women with a strong repression of male homosexual practices. The rise of the feminist liberation movement in recent years gives gay people a reason to hope that GLBT people will be fully accepted in the future human community. At the heart of all homophobia is feminaphobia and the repression of the feminine. Gay men are seen as a threat to patriarchy because they are frequently in touch with and act in accord with the feminine dimension of themselves. It is clear that feminine and gay liberation are so intimately linked that gays should give full support to women's liberation and vice versa.

No dialectical process can succeed unless it carries within itself the seed of synthesis. That seed of synthesis is to be found in the gay community. The synthesis can only succeed through the emergence of a visible group that can live out fully both its masculine and feminine dimensions without the need to repress either. We need a group that will model the ideal goal of humanity's present evolution, people who can keep their masculine and feminine dimension in good equilibrium and bring forth a balanced synthesis of the two.

This, I believe, is the providential role of the GLBT political and spiritual groups that have come into being over the past fifty years. We who are gay and lesbian need a vision and must be clear about what are the special gifts we bring to this moment in history and the central role we must play in bringing about the fullness of life for all humans. That role is being played out in a special way in the gay setting of a new paradigm for human marriage, replacing the now destructive patriarchal paradigm. In gay marriage both partners relate to each other as equals. Neither party is under pressure to repress a whole dimension of his or her humanity — the feminine for men, the masculine for women. Both parties can relate to each other as full human beings. Seen in this light, gay marriage is a gift from God which can rescue all marriages from their present proclivity to failure.

(A fuller analysis of the masculine – feminine dialectic can be found in my book: *Freedom, Glorious Freedom* in a new edition just released by Lethe Press and available in paperback from Amazon.com for \$18.00.) There is a magnificent new preface by Catholic lesbian Rebecca Mertz.)

John J. McNeill, a renowned, author, theologian, psychotherapist, and gay activist, has ministered as priest and psychotherapist to lesbians and gays for over 39 years. He helped found Dignity/New York to provide a safe and loving community within the Catholic Church for gay people. He has given retreats for lesbians and gays at Kirkridge, an ecumenical retreat center in Bangor, Pennsylvania, for over 33 years.

John has written four books on gay spirituality: The Church and the Homosexual; Taking a Chance on God; Freedom, Glorious Freedom, and Sex as God Intended: A Reflection on Human Sexuality as Play. He published an autobiography, Both Feet Planted Firmly in Midair: My Spiritual Journey, on his spiritual journey as a gay priest.

In 1997, John was honored with DignityUSA's first ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

In January 2009, John released "An Open Letter to Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Levada, Cardinal George, and all Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in the World on the Issue of Homosexuality" reprinted with permission in DignityUSA's QV: Quarterly Voice 1st Quarter 2009. (<http://www.dignityusa.org/qv/qv-1stquarter-2009>).

New Ways Ministry honored John during its 2009 Bridge Building Award luncheon in October 2009.

For more information about and from John McNeill, please visit www.johnjmcneill.com.

LGBT Goals Not Attainable Without Feminism

By Linda Pieczynski, DignityUSA Director-at-Large

Being a straight woman on the DignityUSA board has been an interesting experience in ways I had not expected when I accepted Vice President Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues' invitation to join. As many of you know, I had just finished a long stint on the Call To Action National Board, having been president for a number of years. One of Call To Action's primary goals has been advocating the full acceptance of women in all roles in the Roman Catholic Church. I spent my 40s reading everything I could about feminist theology and realized that it explained the nagging sense that something was very wrong with the way the Church treated women. Shortly after my epiphany on women's issues, I met (current Board Member) Terry Mischel and (current Executive Director) Marianne Duddy-Burke through my work with Call To Action. I started attending workshops at the annual conference that dealt with LGBT issues and this began my awakening to the concerns of that community. When I finished my term on the board with Call To Action, joining the DignityUSA board seemed like a natural progression. But, I wasn't prepared for what I encountered.



Linda Pieczynski

I was surprised to find out that such a large percentage of members were male and so few female since women seem to dominate all of the other Catholic progressive groups. I heard tales of resistance to inclusive language, a demand for orthodoxy in the liturgy, and a resistance to women presiders. I discovered that a number of members just want the Roman Catholic Church to accept their sexual orientation but leave the rest of church tradition alone, including letting women remain where they are. "How could this be?" I wondered, when it's not possible for LGBT persons to gain full acceptance in the Church until women do, as well. Our issues are truly "joined at the hip." No wonder Dignity had trouble attracting women in large numbers. They didn't feel supported in their efforts to be recognized as fully human.

At the July 2009 DignityUSA 40th Anniversary Convention in San Francisco, I gained some insight into why this sentiment exists in DignityUSA. I chaired a caucus and one of the women said, "We don't need each other the way heterosexuals do." I thought that was very insightful. My husband and I have to engage in constant compromise and negotiation in order for our relationship to work. I learn about him from a non-female perspective and he has to learn about me from a non-male perspective. I think it's like learning a second language. In order to have a successful marriage, he has to accept and embrace my feminist ways, and he does on a very deep level. Being the father of female children also enters into this socialization process. It's hard to be dogmatic about what the church teaches when your daughters ask you why they can't do what the boys can. On a very visceral level, fathers of girls become advocates for their rights. (We have three girls.) I'm generalizing, of course; there are plenty of straight men who believe in the division of the sexes into certain roles and many gay men

who fully support women's rights in the Church. However, I do believe this explains some of the disconnect that some members have regarding the rights of gays and women in the Church. It reminds me of when I was a young assistant state's attorney. The rape and child abuse laws were pretty awful until women began getting into the legislature. When that happened, laws regarding sexual abuse and child abuse were drastically overhauled.

The Church will never accept LGBT persons until it accepts women, because of the fear of the feminine. When I hear the Vatican talk about gays being intrinsically disordered, I recall when it described women as being misbegotten males. The Church no longer speaks about women this way (though it still treats us as if we were), so we are farther down the road of acceptance than LGBT persons. But the path is blocked by the Church's teaching on sex and gender. Until that changes, none of us will be accepted by the Church as fully human.

Bernard Cooke, the great Eucharistic theologian, once told me that it is heresy to teach that women cannot represent Christ because Christ was not male. He asked me, "Who is the body of Christ? What does the Church teach?" Of course, the answer was that we are the body of Christ, male and female, gay and straight. "In that case, to say that only a male can represent Christ, is heresy, isn't it?" Bernie said. This was so helpful in understanding why the Church's teaching is wrong when it comes to women and ordination. All of us are the body of Christ. The body of Christ doesn't recognize division anymore than the eye can despise the arm. We are all in this together. It is a fantasy to think that the Church will embrace gay men as full members before it accepts women. To work for the full inclusion of LGBT persons, one must work for the full acceptance of women because that is the path that will lead to just treatment of our community. We must help the Church change the way it views gender. Only then will sexual orientation be addressed justly.

Linda Pieczynski, has been a member of Call To Action (CTA) since 1991. She served as National President (1994 – 2000) and continues to serve as spokesperson from time to time on certain issues. She has been a member of DignityUSA since 1996 and has served on its National Board as a Director at Large since November 2007. She is a graduate, Summa Cum Laude, of the College of Law, DePaul University. Linda and her husband Alan, married for 37 years, are the parents of three daughters—Sarah, Jenna and Jessica.

In her professional career, Linda has served as Deputy Chief, Criminal Division, State's Attorney Office, DuPage County, Illinois (1977-1984); as a private Attorney at Law (1984-present). She taught classes on Issues in Child Abuse and Neglect for Educators at National-Louis University. She teaches Legal Aspect of Code Administration to building inspectors all over the United States for the International Code Council.

Linda is the author of several publications including: Keeping Our Children Safe, which appeared in Church Magazine, Fall 2003 and A Guide for preventing Sexual Abuse, available as a brochure from the National Pastoral Life Center, New York, NY. She is writing a series of books for building code inspectors.

Continued on page 7

LGBT Goals Not Attainable Without Feminism
Continued from page 6

When asked about her experience and role in the Church Reform Movement and what attracted her to involvement in GLBT issues and DignityUSA, Linda replied: "When I found out my niece is gay, I felt like my whole reform movement life had been preparing me to be there for her. I think DignityUSA has led the way for the church reform movement...I've been very attracted to this bold response to the injustice of the church. I think Call To Action and DignityUSA are the type of organizations of truly Christian people who believe in the gospel message of love. These groups have existed throughout history to be leaders at a time of great social change. The movement we are a part of is far bigger than the Catholic church and I am just so grateful that I have been and continue to be a part of this, as it has enriched my life and certainly rubbed off on my daughters. They have grown into women of great integrity. I think a big contributing factor is because they have been exposed to the morals and values of CTA and DignityUSA and their members." ▼

Excerpt of Richard Rodriguez's Plenary Speech Addressing Misogyny and Homophobia

DignityUSA Convention, San Francisco, July 4, 2009
 Transcribed by Leo N. Egashira

The accusation against the feminist in the 19th Century was that she was unnatural. I am unnatural. I think to myself now that I live in the century, in the decade at least, of Anne Dunham, Barack Obama's mother. Everyone goes on and on about Barack Obama; it is Anne Dunham I think about. She married Kenya, daughter of Kansas. And then, their marriage failed. He was brave in marrying Kansas, but the moment the marriage fails, he goes back to the known world—he goes back to Kenya. She doesn't go back to Kansas; she comes to Indonesia. She marries Indonesia. Barack Obama said in an interview in Time Magazine that his mother was reckless. I want to be reckless. I want to marry Indonesia and Kenya.



Richard Rodriguez

The story of our time right now is a sexual story, and it is not simply a gay story. It is a story of women living without men. The majority of American women now live without men. Without men, 40% of women now are raising children—40%. It is even higher in England, even higher in Scandinavia. It was telling when Mark Phelps, the swimmer, was winning medal number six or seven or whatever it was, always his eyes looking for his mother. And did we even bother to notice that no one spoke of the father?

What has changed the dynamic of the gay marriage debate in America, I believe, is not my relationship to Jim, but the fact that so many people who are gay who want to be married now have children, and grandparents and parents who will come stand alongside them. So that the old argument that the church makes—Mormon and Catholic—about family becomes sudden-

ly very treacherous, because as a New Jersey gay politician remarked, "It is precisely because I am a father as well as a lover, then I need to be married. Because when my lover's children go to the emergency room, I have to go and be able to identify myself as their parent. That's why I have to be married, precisely because of family values." And if I see Ellen Degeneres' mother in the audience one more time

Already in America, it is so clear that women are on the move, everywhere in this country. They now are the majority population in American colleges. What does that mean? Where is Junior? I was at an Ohio small college during Diversity Week. They always invite me for Diversity Week. Anyway, on this day, an alumnus had given several million dollars to the college to allow students to spend some portion of the year in a foreign climate. The expectation was not that you would go to Paris or London. The expectation was that you would go to Cambodia and in groups. You would go to Cambodia, or Laos, or Bolivia and you would do some project together with townspeople and classmates. The day that I was there to give my speech, the students were coming back from various places in the world. One group from Laos, and I thought to myself, "Well, here they come; 20 students, most of them women. There were two males—alpha males; one was the quarterback of the football team; the other was the student body president, but there were 18 women. I thought to myself the way I think to myself, "That's interesting." Then Bolivia came up. 19 women out of 20.

There is a sexual crisis going on right now in America, I believe a deflation of male energies and confidence due precisely to female ascendance. And we, as gay men, should recognize that the ascent of our gay sisters is our ascent. You understand? I was watching the riots from Tehran two weekends ago, and the image that will stay with me is not that girl dying in the streets; she will haunt me. But this woman in black, fully robed, carrying a rock in her hand, rock-throwing against the police with a group of men, who of course, as men have the freedom of T-shirts and bright colors. And when the men withdrew, that is, when they pulled back because the soldiers were coming close, you know what she screamed out at them? "Cowards!"

I tell you, there is a link now. If you look at the morning paper and you look at its entirety, on one side of Thursday's edition of the New York Times, there is the news from New Delhi that the Delhi High Court has decriminalized homosexuality. Hooray, hurrah! On the other side of the page, there is news that The Vatican will begin to crack down on religious orders of women. These are related stories. And we'd better see the relationship. We see our relationship to Delhi clearly enough. But, we'd better see our relationship to those women in the convents and those women who are living singly outside the convents. Even more troubling to Archbishop Levada (now a cardinal) who moved from San Francisco from one failure in San Francisco to guilt...that's G-I-L-T. Archbishop Levada is behind this recent maneuver. Be careful of it and realize that we have a stake in the persecution of these nuns.

It is not enough to celebrate gay freedom in South Africa without acknowledging the sexual defilement of women in East

Excerpt of Richard Rodriguez's Plenary Speech Addressing Misogyny and Homophobia
Continued from page 7

Africa. It is not enough to say that women now outnumber men in American colleges without also acknowledging that little girls are being sprayed with acid on their way to school in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

I'm suspicious of a group that calls itself Dignity, because so much of my life has been humiliation and I found my wisdom in humiliation. And so much of the world is humiliated. Sometimes I think it's enough to walk straight, to stand up straight. But, if gay liberation has any future, not in America, but in the world, it will align itself to the persecution of women, particularly in the name of religion. Purdah. Stand three steps behind him. Unclean!

Richard Rodriguez is a journalist and a literary essayist. With the publication of Brown: The Last Discovery of America, he completed an autobiographical trilogy concerned with class, ethnicity, and race in the United States.

As a journalist, he writes for a number of magazines and newspapers around the world, including the Roman Catholic TABLET in London, for which he writes a monthly column. For a number of years he has been an editor with New America Media in San Francisco. He is probably best known to American audiences for his television essays on PBS for the "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" which have been honored by a Peabody award. In 1993 he was awarded the Frankel Medal (now renamed the National Humanities Medal)—the highest award the federal government makes to celebrate work done in the humanities.

In a November 25, 2008, interview with Jeanne Carstensen of Salon.com (www.salon.com), Richard spoke about his work on a book about the monotheistic "desert religions"—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—being male religions. "Their perception is that God is a male god and Allah is a male god. If the male is allowed to hold onto the power of God, then I think we are in terrible shape."

Monotheistic religions feel threatened by the rise of feminism and the insistence, in many communities, that women take a bigger role in the church. At the same time that women are claiming more responsibility for their religious life, they are also moving out of traditional roles as wife and mother. What we represent as gays in America is an alternative to the traditional male-structured society.

Ever since Sept. 11, 2001, "when havoc descended in the name of the desert God," Rodriguez has been trying to understand the strands of darkness that run through these religions. "When I heard that prayer being spoken at the moment the planes hit the World Trade Centers, I realized how much darkness there is in religion compared to how much light there is. I am very much concerned with whether or not these religions can be feminized."

Rodriguez received a B.A. from Stanford University, an M.A. from Columbia University, was a Ph.D. candidate in English Renaissance literature at the University of California, Berkeley, and attended the Warburg Institute in London on a Fulbright fellowship.

Misogynist? Homophobic? We've Got the Church for You!

By Jamie L Manson

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On Friday, Oct. 16 the most e-mailed article on *The New York Times* Web site was the story of Pat Bond's fight to receive financial support for the terminally ill son that she conceived with a Franciscan priest over 20 years ago.

Four days later, the eighth most e-mailed *Times* article told of the Pope's new initiative to welcome larger numbers of Anglican priests and seminarians, regardless of marital status, into the Roman Catholic clergy.

The Pontiff is putting this plan into practice in an attempt to offer a spiritual home to those who have either left or are considering leaving the Anglican Communion because of their opposition to the ordination of women and openly-gay priests as well as the blessing of same-sex unions.

Ms. Bond, who was impregnated and abandoned by a Catholic priest, cannot get funding for her son's brain cancer treatments. The priest receives little disciplining from his superiors. She is told by the Franciscan order, who never encouraged the priest to leave the ministry, that they have already gone "far beyond what the law would require," in their financial support. They also reminded her that, by speaking publicly, she is in jeopardy of paying a penalty because she is in violation of a confidentiality agreement that she signed years ago.

Married Anglican priests and seminarians are provided with their own sacred structure, called "personal ordinariates," to enhance their spiritual care and guidance. They earned this special privilege by being vociferously misogynist and homophobic.

A woman is punished by Catholic superiors for her relationship with a priest, while married Anglican priests who are anti-woman and anti-gay are welcomed more fully into the Catholic clerical fold.

This week the Catholic church seems to have reached another low point in its perennial war on sex. However, in this latest twist of events, one form of sexual activity has been legitimized: married sex between male Anglican priests and their spouses who have reached qualifying levels of misogyny and homophobia.

Ironically, it was Gene Robinson—whose courageous assent to the bishop's seat in the Episcopal church first elicited the Anglican firestorm and threat of schism over the ordination of out gays and lesbians—who first showed me that the relationship

Continued on page 9

Misogynist? Homophobic? We've Got the Church for You!
Continued from page 8

between misogyny and homophobia runs deep. Several years ago I heard him offer a lecture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. At one point in his talk, he addressed his sorrow at the lack of support that some gay men have for women in their own fight for fair and equal treatment in the church. He asked the audience, "When will we gay men realize that the reason the church hates us is because they hated women first? The hatred of gay men is rooted in the original hatred of women and the feminine."

These new developments at the Vatican might be slightly more digestible if studies proved that the Catholic church is being led by a primarily heterosexual, celibate clergy. Unfortunately, they prove the contrary.

According to the *Times* article on Ms. Bond, "A landmark study in 1990 by the scholar A. W. Richard Sipe, a former Benedictine, found that 20 percent of Catholic priests were involved in continuing sexual relationships with women, and an additional 8 percent to 10 percent had occasional heterosexual relationships."

Fr. Donald Cozzens, an author, psychologist, and former Catholic seminary president, estimates in his book, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, that 50 percent of Roman Catholic priests have a homosexual orientation. He adds, "Beyond these estimates, of course, are priests who remain confused about their orientation and men who have so successfully denied their orientation, that in spite of predominately same-sex erotic fantasies, they insist that they are heterosexual."

Given these statistics, one must wonder if these latest conflicts over sexuality are just further evidence of church authorities' conflicts over their own sexual desires and activities. Is this latest move yet another desperate attempt to maintain a closed, closeted, clerical, "old boys network," where no man is threatened with the possibility of having to speak openly and honestly about sexuality, desire, and relationships of integrity?

Some church leaders might have us believe that the lesbian and gay issue is the only real sexuality "crisis" facing the church. But it is important to remember that this is but one petition in an increasingly long prayer list: contraception, abortion, pedophilia, sexual abuse, and perhaps the most egregiously overlooked sexual issue, the mistreatment and exclusion of women.

The intensity of alarm over same-sex relations and their polarizing, if not schismatic, power may be evidence that the root cause of all of this concern is deeper than homosexuality. The cause of this controversy may very well be rooted in the church's struggle with sexuality itself—a struggle that, allegorically at least, was born in the Genesis narrative of Adam and Eve.

While many have interpreted the Adam and Eve story as a chronicle of birth, life and death, a closer reading also reveals

that it is an account of the beginning of our shame towards our sexuality. Before taking the fruit, the man and the woman are said to be naked and unashamed. After realizing their nakedness, they hide from God, mistakenly convinced that God, too, will be embarrassed by their exposed genitals. When God realizes that they are hiding because they are ashamed of their nakedness, God is angry and, with a heavy heart, makes Adam and Eve clothes and expels them from the garden. Shame was not the response that God wanted us to have to our nakedness and our sexuality.

In its treatment of Pat Bond and its overtures to conservative Anglican priests, the church has exacerbated the culture of shame that has long compelled Catholics to hide from their sexualities. Unfortunately for misogynist and homophobic church authorities, most Western Catholic and mainline Protestants have come to understand another great biblical truth: by their fruits you shall know them.

In its latest moves, the church has only further alienated itself from those who are seeking healthy, life-giving, and honest expressions of their sexuality rather than the harmful, secretive affairs that estrange us from ourselves, from one another, and from God. The new generations of Catholics will not have inherited the church's reign of sexual guilt that marked those who grew up Catholic 40 or more years ago. Until the church authorities begin to deal with our human, God-given sexuality in ways that propel us towards growth and greater wholeness, the relevance of the Vatican's teaching authority will only continue to dwindle within the generations to come.

Jamie Manson received her master of divinity degree from Yale Divinity School. She currently serves as director of Social Justice Ministries at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, working primarily with New York City's homeless and poor populations. She is a member of the national board of the Women's Ordination Conference. ▼

Not Fractured, Not Broken: A Woman Priest's Perspective

By Victoria Rue, Ph.D.

In June 2007 at Judson Memorial Church, Dignity/New York celebrated its 35th anniversary. I was invited to be the liturgical celebrant. It was a joyous occasion for me because I was returning "home" to the community who had called me forth as a lesbian priest in 1988. How was Dignity/New York home for me?



Victoria Rue

In 1988 I had been a student at Union Theological Seminary and was invited by Charles Frederick and his Dignity co-conspirators to preside at a Eucharist along with a brave gay priest on the sidewalk opposite St. Patrick's Cathedral. I stood in the lobby of a building near St. Patrick's. Over my thick winter

Continued on page 10

Not Fractured, Not Broken: A Woman Priest's Perspective
Continued from page 9

coat, members of Dignity put an alb over my head, then a stole, then a bright red chasuble. Once dressed, my wonderful co-presider, an out gay priest, arrived. Surrounded by Dignity members, we walked out into the brilliant morning sunlight. I think I've never been so cold as on that January day standing on the sidewalk across from St. Patrick's Cathedral. A cloth covered board, which served as an altar, was held at each end by Dignity members. There were some 300 people spilling out onto 5th Avenue. We were women, men, gay and lesbian, straight, white, black, and latino, including people living with HIV/AIDS.

You see, we understood our 5th Ave. Eucharist to be a liberating act ...God's table... where everyone is welcomed and fed. I remember giving the bread and wine to passers by. We invited everyone into our Mass. We refused to exclude as we had been excluded.

Cardinal Ratzinger's now infamous "Halloween Letter" had just come out. Homosexuality is intrinsically morally disordered? We refused the indictment of the Halloween Letter. We answered it in this Mass of liberation. Afterwards, in-Spirited, we lay down in the middle of 5th Ave. to be arrested. Thus we yoked civil disobedience to ecclesial disobedience. The media reported and the word went out. We called ourselves "The Cathedral Project." Once a month for the next 5 months I joined the Cathedral Project Mass across from St. Patrick's. Dignity/New York remained prophetic on 5th Ave. for the next 3 years.

Fast forward now to the Dignity Eucharist in June 2007. There were several feminist elements I had added to their usual celebration: inclusive language, gestural prayer without words, the community speaking the words of consecration. Additionally, I asked that we enact the mystical body of Christ after the consecration. The gestural action was to turn to the person on your right and left, take their hands, look directly at the person, and say: "This is my body. This is my blood." The other person would then respond to you with the same words. This is how I understand Eucharist — the visceral awareness of being part of the mystical body of Christ, joined one to another as a Christian community, humanity itself, in fact, all of life.

I had requested that words of sacrifice and atonement be deleted from the liturgy. For me, the Eucharist is not based on blood violently spilt but rather on celebrating the daily life of compassion and good works that our brother Jesus enacted in the world. Thus the moment of breaking the bread, "the fracture," the breaking of Jesus' body, was/is not a gesture that I make when I preside at Eucharist.

The scene shifts now to that June Mass. It was prior to communion. I picked up one of the two loaves and began breaking it into pieces for communion. One of the Eucharistic ministers standing near me, stepped up next to me. I assumed he was going to assist me. Instead, he exhaled a labored sigh, and said, "here, you do it like this." He picked up the other loaf, held it aloft, broke it in two, then placed the two halves into the

basket and stepped back. I stood there for a few seconds, taking in what had just occurred, and then continued preparing for communion. But the actions of this gay man, perhaps a former priest, spoke volumes. The moment is an opportunity to contemplate both misogyny and power. In this case, not only was there a woman "at the altar," traditionally a male-only sphere, but she was also a lesbian handling "the holy male body." These facts alone could be disturbing to someone. But perhaps there is more. A woman priest could disrupt and de-center a gay hermeneutic of transubstantiation. Within that perspective, the bread becomes a holy male body, is received in the hands, consumed, swallowed; wine becomes holy male blood, swallowed. Jesus eaten. What role can a woman have, let alone a lesbian, in such a homoerotic act of desire?

Perhaps this gay man who fractured the holy male body saw me as actually "in drag." For him, perhaps I would simply duplicate the male perspective of "doing the Mass" [though I question who is really in drag in the male Mass]. As a lesbian priest, perhaps for him, I was already anatomically "not doing it correctly." Perhaps for him, I was erasing a key moment in the Mass, the breaking apart of the beloved's body. Thus, he had to teach me, better yet, do it for me. As a woman and as a lesbian, I feel this is a very limited way of viewing the Eucharist.

In writing this piece for *QV*, I celebrate anew the prophets of Dignity who called this lesbian out to be priest, and invited her back for their 35th anniversary. At the same time, writing this piece affords the opportunity to challenge and perhaps be prophetic myself. For I am calling Dignity out, calling you to look deeply into our Catholic tradition and question who is being left out, whose voices are not heard? How would our Catholic tradition be different in its theology, liturgy, and community if women, if lesbians, if all were celebrated: our voices, our history, our bodies, our visions?

The opportunity that women bring to the Eucharist is to "open wide the windows." Perhaps in Eucharistic theology we need to step away from our roots in Judaism. Perhaps the eating of the lamb sacrificed to God by the high priest does not resonate with everyone around the table. As marginalized and abused women know, stories celebrating salvic violence and death lead to more violence and death.

Let me offer my own perspective as a woman and a lesbian priest. For me, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus that walked the earth. I do not break Jesus' body, I do not fracture it. I celebrate the life and good works of our brother Jesus. It is this that I try to emulate in my own life, and encourage others to do so through the communal sharing of the Eucharist. Thus, for me, the focus of Eucharist is two fold: eating and drinking the liberating life of our brother Jesus and becoming the mystical body of Christ.

Let me extend the image of "fracture" in another way. In this society, the solidarity among gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people is sometimes fractured/broken by a heterosexist culture. But we are not broken. In this society, we

Continued on page 11

Not Fractured, Not Broken: A Woman Priest's Perspective
Continued from page 10

also know that we too internalize those pressures and fall prey to fracturing/breaking apart our own self worth. We also know that each year more and more LGBT people and our allies awaken to the beauty of all sexualities and understand the importance of everyone's human rights. As Catholic LGBT people, we are aware that those who attempt to fracture, break, or separate us from the larger community are often closeted homosexual priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes. But we are not broken. We understand our sexualities to be gifts, expressing our beauty, and dare I say, the very beauty of God. It is not our blood violently spilled that we celebrate. It is the everyday beauty of our bodies in the world loving one another and doing good in our myriad ways. This is the body of Christ.

"May God bless you and keep you. May She be gracious to you. May She lift up the light of her countenance upon you. And may our God, give you peace."

Victoria Rue, M.Div., Ph.D. is a feminist theologian, author, writer/director/teacher of theatre, college professor, and an ordained womanpriest in the Roman Catholic tradition since July 2005. Her academic awards include a M. Div. (Masters of Divinity), Union Theological Seminary, New York City, NY, 1988 and a Ph.D., Theology & the Arts, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, 1994. She offers courses in both Women's Studies and Comparative Religious Studies at San Jose State University, San Jose, CA.

Victoria's book Acting Religious: Theater as Pedagogy in Religious Studies was published in 2005 by Pilgrim Press.

For more information please refer to Victoria's website <http://www.victoriarue.com>.

system, and how it affects my life and our society. In 1997 she wrote an addendum to the book in which she addresses how things have changed (but not necessarily advanced) since the first publication of the book. In this addendum, Pharr adds information on the impact of sexism and homophobia on transgender individuals and a very provocative analysis on the tactics of the religious right in opposition to the advancement of LGBT rights.

Suzanne Pharr brings to her work the perspective of a feminist activist, especially in the battered women's movement in Arkansas, where she founded the Women's Project. She has continued that work, as well as being a national speaker, facilitator, and workshop leader on issues of oppression, homophobia, sexism, and the liberation of all people who find themselves marginalized and not living to their full potential because of the economic, social, and political systems imposed upon us.

In her book, she approaches the understanding of the issue of homophobia by leading us to a better understanding of how our society has enforced rigid sexual gender roles, and has made one of them (male) superior to the other (female). Patriarchy, she says, is the ideology, and sexism is the system that holds it in place.

"Who do gender roles serve? Men and the women who seek power from them. Who suffers from gender roles? Women most completely and men in part. How are gender roles maintained? By the weapons of sexism: economics, violence, homophobia," (page 8). Pharr analyzes these weapons in detail and takes the reader through an analysis that connect the dots, with sound arguments and very clear examples. She makes indisputable arguments.

She starts with economics, stating that economics is not only at the root of sexism, but also the driving force keeping all oppressions in place. Our society's patriarchal pyramid is clear—few at the top and many at the bottom supporting them. "A very complex, intricate system of institutionalized oppressions is necessary to maintain the status quo, so that the vast majority will not demand their fair share of wealth and resources and bring the system down," (page 11). In a nation where women still do not make an hourly wage equal to their male counterparts, and where the glass ceiling for women is still only cracked but not broken, we can easily see that economics is indeed a way of maintaining a world where women are treated as inferior to men. What if everything were equal: earning power, educational and training opportunities, work advancement, etc.? Would this not upset the patriarchal pyramid? What would be the consequence of such a reality? Some of you may be thinking that this is not a reality any more and that many things have changed to benefit women in the last 20 years. I agree that some things have changed; but I, like Suzanne Pharr, think that many things have stayed the same or changed for the worse. Think Catholic Church, for starters.

Continued on page 12

BOOK REVIEW

Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, by Suzanne Pharr

Chardon Press, 1988

Reviewed by Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues, Dignity/Boston, Vice-President, DignityUSA

I met Suzanne Pharr in 1989, shortly after she had published her groundbreaking book, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*. The GLBT faculty and staff at Simmons College, where I worked, invited her as a speaker. I was transfixed by this unassuming yet very powerful speaker who opened my eyes about the connection between all oppressions, and very specifically between sexism and homophobia. I read her book and I have to say that even now, 20 years later, I have not forgotten what I learned and how it changed the way I look at the world of heterosexual privilege and its patriarchal



Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues

Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, by Suzanne Pharr
Continued from page 11

The next weapon Pharr talks about is violence, something that many LGBT persons have experienced and continue to experience. The author makes a very good argument about how violence – and even the mere threat of violence – keeps women in a very narrowly defined place and role. “Men, physically and emotionally abuse women because they can, because they live in a world that gives them permission. Male violence is fed by their sense of their right to dominate and control, and their sense of superiority over a group of people that because of gender they consider inferior to them,” (page 14). Sexism is perpetuated, she says, because women are taught that they need to be attached to a man for protection and economic security as a way to survive in the world. Our internalized sexism is a powerful and insidious way of allowing those messages to continually shape the way women live. The label of “lesbian,” used as an insult and sometimes with the threat of violence, is a way of keeping women in the rigid sexual and gender role that perpetuates patriarchy.

Homophobia, joined with heterosexism, is the other weapon that Pharr describes in detail. We have lived and continue to live in a world that assumes that everyone is, and should be, heterosexual. “Heterosexism is the systemic display of homophobia in the institutions of society,” (page 16). The “one man, one woman” arguments that we have heard in the past few years come to mind. Pharr contends that the taunting of children as they approach puberty with name calling (“queer,” “faggot,” “dyke,” “pervert”) brings a price of what being an “outsider” will be like as children become ostracized and made to feel ashamed for who they are or how they behave – for stepping out of line from the expectation of heterosexuality. “A lesbian is perceived as a threat to the nuclear family, to male dominance and control, to the very heart of sexism,” (page 18). Of course, this is a threat to all women, not only lesbians, because heterosexual women who “step out of line,” those who dare confront this system of inequality are often labeled as “lesbians” as a way of saying that they are not real women.

Men, especially gay men, are not immune to the impact of homophobia as a weapon of sexism. Gay men are perceived as being out of line as well, as a threat to the system which is fed by male dominance and control of those who are inferior – like women and children. “When we see the fierce homophobia expressed toward gay men, we can begin to understand the ways sexism also affects males through imposing rigid, dehumanizing gender roles in them,” (page 18).

Pharr makes a very compelling analysis to help us understand how, because of the existence of a sexist system and culture, no one is really free and able to be themselves without being perceived as a threat to that system. The goal is to keep the status quo at all costs, and to use economics, violence, and homophobia to keep it so. They are so connected. Her book establishes that we cannot successfully address one “ism” without the others. The chapter, “The Common Elements of Oppression,” begins with a very powerful statement: “It is virtually impossible to view one oppression, such as sexism or homophobia, in isolation because they are all connected: sexism,

racism, homophobia, classism, able-ism, anti-Semitism, ageism. They are linked by a common origin – economic power and control – and by common methods of limiting, controlling, and destroying lives. There is no hierarchy of oppressions. Each is terrible and destructive. To eliminate one oppression successfully, a movement has to include work to eliminate them all, or else success will always be limited and incomplete,” (page 53). The analysis that she makes to support this point is extremely thorough as she helps us understand issues like “assimilation and tokenism,” “isolation,” “internalized oppression and horizontal hostility,” “stereotyping and distortion,” “invisibility,” “blaming the victim,” “myth of scarcity,” and “lack of prior claim.”

Without pulling any punches, Pharr challenges our belief that we can perhaps fight for the right of some without understanding and standing up for the rights of all who are disenfranchised in our society. I want to say that the same is true for us at all levels in DignityUSA. To think that we can advance the place that LGBT Catholics have at the table of Jesus without calling forth the sins of sexism, racism, pedophilia, and economic injustice within our Catholic tradition is naïve and even unjust. Our movement is not just “add gay and stir.” It is about creating a church where all injustices are questioned and all wrongs are set right. If this looks daunting and big, it is because such is exactly true: it is daunting and big. But we cannot be complacent any longer and continue business as usual. If we do, we will leave many sisters and brothers behind. Then, what kind of church would we build?

In his address at DignityUSA’s 40th Anniversary Convention in July 2009, Mark Matson, DignityUSA President, challenged us to work towards the elimination of misogyny and sexism in our national organization and chapters, and to incorporate the struggle of women in the church as a central part of our ministry. At the Executive Board meeting in October 2009, the Board expanded our mission statement to read: “DignityUSA works for respect and justice for people of all genders and gender identities—especially gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons—in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support.” This is our call and our responsibility as members of the Body of Christ.

What I have written above about Suzanne Pharr’s book does not do it justice. You must read it for yourself. I don’t think you will be disappointed. Hopefully, if only for a moment, you will see the world through her eyes; and in seeing all the connections, you will be moved to action. Your way of looking at our world and DignityUSA’s vision, goals, and strategic plan will never be the same. I know mine hasn’t been.

(Ed. Note: Homophobia, A Weapon of Sexism, is downloadable from Suzanne Pharr’s website.
<http://suzannepharr.org/2008/01/30/download-homophobia-a-weapon-of-sexism/>)



RESPONSES TO HELMINIAK

The following two articles are responses to Daniel Helminiak's article DignityUSA: Roman Catholic? LGBT-focused? in the QV: Quarterly Voice, 4th Quarter 2009.

A Reasoned Response to Daniel Helminiak's Well-Reasoned Article

By K.S. from Wisconsin

I write in response to Daniel Helminiak's very honest and well-reasoned article in the 4th Quarter 2009 issue of *QV: Quarterly Voice*. I write as a member of DignityUSA and a functioning Roman Catholic priest (not an easy position). I offer some additional perspectives. I say nothing about the Eucharist at the convention; I was not there due to health problems.

One of the central concerns of Dignity has been recognized access to Eucharist as LGBT people, which marks us as Roman Catholics. Especially since the 1980s, official leadership in the Roman Catholic Church has sought, in many direct and indirect ways, to exclude us from Communion. This has inevitably led some Dignity chapters to seek out presiders among resigned priests, married priests, and women priests, all duly ordained and in episcopal succession. A further step has been to seek out presiders among Anglican and Protestant clergy, particularly in chapters of ecumenical membership. And finally, some chapters have occasional lay presiders for Eucharist, seen as flowing from Baptism and with some theological support (Schillebeeckx, for instance). It can be argued that necessity knows no law in matters of church discipline. In the process we have also made alliances with many welcoming groups and partners whose aims we share to some extent, especially on church reform and women's issues. No one can fault the desire for Eucharist; it is our right by Baptism. Fasting from Eucharist would be even more destructive.

But I would like to put forward another point of view on the goal of changing official Roman Catholic teaching on sexuality. I heartily support advocating such change, and I support all media efforts of our leaders to publicize our position on sexuality among Roman Catholics and the general population of the United States. We are steadily gaining an established place in the general religious culture of our country. There are welcoming congregations all over the country: parishes, colleges, universities, religious communities, and I hope there will be more. It is also true that Roman Catholics routinely ignore Roman Catholic sexual teaching in significant ways, especially on contraception. As some Catholic parents have told me: "If you rule out contraception, condoms, and abortion, you aren't in the ball park of family life." But all of that may be irrelevant to official change in the teaching of the Catholic Church. Let me explain.

The roots of our present impasse are to be found in the teaching on papal infallibility in the 19th century. It arose mainly as a reaction to the revolts throughout Europe that removed

royal rights to governance, including papal control of parts of Italy. So the bishops responded with a decree in the only direction they had, that of spiritual authority, perhaps seeing papal infallibility as more of a symbol than a practical teaching tool. But there were hidden consequences. From then on all teaching of the magisterium, by and large, would have to agree with what was taught before, or the teaching authority of the Church would suffer irreparable harm. One can draw a straight line from Pius XI down to Benedict on issues of sexuality and men-women relationships. The issue is not whether the magisterium of the Catholic Church can change. The issue is that it cannot change. And no matter how many people are hurt by teaching on homosexuality, on the use of condoms, on birth control, etc., that is apparently of no consequence. The teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church is more important than anything else, for it keeps in office all the people who are part of this teaching.

But one can argue that Roman Catholic magisterial teaching has changed. John Paul apologized for the condemnation of Galileo—centuries later. Another way it can change is that certain teachings are just left behind and not mentioned anymore—as was the case with purgatory for a number of years. Or efforts can be made to modify or reformulate a teaching to adapt it to changing times. I also think the magisterium ought to give more attention to the distinction between doctrinal truth, which exists at the highest level (such as the Incarnation), and the secondary level of moral truth, which has never yielded the same level of certainty. Moral truth resides in an evolving construct of the understanding of human nature, and within the development of human history and society. I admire greatly the social and societal ethics of the Roman Catholic Church for its ability, ever since Leo XIII, to continue to adapt to new realities and questions, to modify former teachings, and to respond to new questions. I admire not at all the teaching on personal ethics of the Roman Catholic Church. Its adherence to a rigid and wooden construct of natural law, in the name of what has been taught before, has left it singularly unable to respond to contemporary issues in an adequate way.

I believe that in our age, Roman Catholic teaching on homosexuality has gone way too far, and has claimed too much certitude. How does one retreat from a statement that homosexuality is intrinsically disordered? I know of no instance in the history of the Church where a whole class of people, possibly amounting to millions, have been classified as morally deficient. If they had simply said that homosexuals have special moral difficulties because of original sin, we might have been able to live with it. But how does one retreat from a statement that homosexuality is intrinsically or objectively disordered? It is even more foolish to say that homosexuals harm children they are raising. On the slight evidence given, it would be just as true to say that heterosexuals harm children they are raising. When magisterial teaching makes pronouncements on matters that are subject to empirical verification, it has crossed the line of credibility. But I tend to the opinion that Roman Catholic teaching has gone so far, and with such certitude, that it represents a point of no return—unless you are talking centuries later.

Continued on page 14

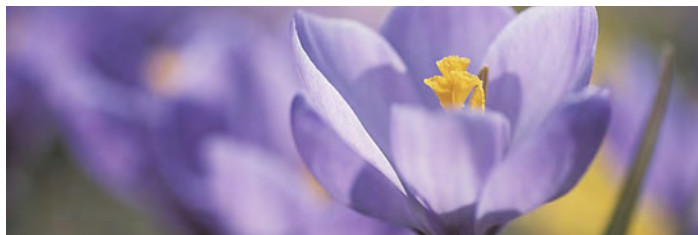
A Reasoned Response to Daniel Helminiak's Well-Reasoned Article
Continued from page 13

As I said, I support efforts in the media to promote a new sexual ethic. It will gradually make a more comfortable place for us. But we need to realize that even if we convinced 90% of American Catholics of our case, that would have no influence on the magisterium. It is a self sustaining system in which all authority goes to the top, and all teaching needs to agree with what has been said before. And the enforcement of doctrinal uniformity among the hierarchy is of a scope and comprehensiveness never seen before. It is sad for any organized religion to get itself into that position. But it may well be what has happened.

And it makes me pessimistic about a direct goal of changing this teaching.

A new factor is that, here and there throughout the United States, there are independent Catholic dioceses, congregations, and groups forming, with their own clergy and bishops, with increasing communication and networking, and, as far as I know, open to GLBT people without discrimination. There is also the very small but growing number of women Catholic priests. This leads to the issue of what it means to be Roman Catholic. In my acquaintance with these groups thus far, they are remarkably Roman Catholic in their thinking, in their concepts and practice of ecclesiology (the "Here comes everyone" brand), and in their general constructs of liturgy. Where they differ is in their refusal of Roman Catholic authority in some significant matters. While many call themselves independent Catholics, they are quite Roman Catholic. Unless one makes the essence of being Roman Catholic our total submission to Roman authority, and then as GLBT people we have no case. Is this development of independent Catholic congregations just a small splinter group that will eventually die out, or is it here to stay as a growing percentage of Catholics in the United States? This bears watching, and alliances are not out of order.

I consider myself Roman Catholic to the core. I live and breathe from scripture and liturgy and spirituality as handed down in the Roman Catholic tradition. And I minister in that tradition. But I have little use for the current authority structure and personnel of the Roman Catholic Church; it is a prisoner of its own system. I try to live spiritually and to minister to people as free of that authority as possible. That is not always easy. I continue to be a member of DignityUSA and to preside for the liturgies of Dignity when requested. And I continue to foster relationships with independent Catholic ministers and congregations. Most of all, I keep watching an evolving situation, realizing that there are new realities I could not have dreamed of even 20 years ago. And more will come. ▼



DignityUSA: Catholic or Not?

Jim Green and Bill Diederich (30 year Dignity members) respond.

For most of us, our "Catholic" identity comes as a result of our baptism and religious upbringing. We claim the right to call ourselves Roman Catholics even if we have serious reservations about the present leadership and teaching in the Roman Catholic Church. You see, it is our souls that are Catholic, at a much deeper level than current disputes over teaching or the accidents of how we worship God.

We have attended all of the last 15 of DignityUSA's biennial conventions. We have experienced the Spirit alive in our Dignity family, especially in the way we choose to celebrate the Eucharist.

Were it not for Dignity, Bill and I would probably have abandoned any semblance of "Catholic" identity. In other words, it is Dignity that has kept us within the Roman Catholic Church, despite all its attempts to exclude us. Just look at what the institution has done: it has tried to deny the priority of an informed conscience; it continues to exclude women from their rightful place in the Church; it denies the place of committed loving relationships among GLBT people; it claims a monopoly on revealed truth; it has abandoned many of the documents of Vatican II in favor of a narrow cultish return to a pre-Vatican II status; it seems to have abandoned its own soul. Would Jesus recognize his Church in the hierarchy of today? Yet among so many faithful believers we find a breadth of faith and practice that breathes the inclusiveness of charity. They are the Church, and we are the Church.

We are no longer willing to sell out on the compassion, understanding, inclusive and unconditional love that we find in our worshipping communities. We are no longer willing to trade this in for a formalized form of worship that no longer feeds our spiritual needs. The time for our being in the spiritual wilderness is over!

We see our Dignity family as a home where the Spirit is at work in our lives, where we are fed in our GLBT humanity and beyond. We find the decisions of our Dignity leadership very much attuned to the work of God's Spirit among us. We support and applaud them. Our church is the people of God, and all are and continue to be welcome.

We have written our pastors, bishops, cardinals, and even the pope. We hear back, "objectively disordered" and "intrinsically evil." We used to have many priests who were exceptionally pastoral, bishops who communicated collegially with their priests, and even the occasional archbishop or cardinal who would show the compassion and love of Jesus. Now these are the exceptions. And the newer priests are more interested in the security of absolutism and the letter of the law rather than the compassion and outreach of Jesus.

Continued on page 15

DignityUSA: Catholic or Not?
Continued from page 14

DignityUSA, Call To Action, and other ecumenical faith communities who practice the inclusive love of Christ as reflected in the scriptures and the beautiful social justice teachings of Vatican II, reflect a deep Catholic spirit that is not found in official leadership in the Catholic Church.

We honor and respect all those who have felt abandoned by the institutional church. Know that you are not alone. We love you, and we embrace you as extended members of our Dignity family.

With our love and support, in and with Dignity,

Jim & Bill



Bishop: ‘Schneiders’ Analysis Inspiring, Challenging’

Natural tension between religious, who live as prophets, and hierarchical leadership

Jan. 11, 2010

By Bishop Kevin Dowling

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As a religious, who happens to be called to ministry and service as a bishop in the church and world, I have reflected with attention on the five articles of Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Sandra Schneiders, my sister in religious life. I want to express my gratitude and appreciation for her courageous, faith-filled and insightful analysis and reflection upon crucial issues which are at the heart of the prophetic call and mission of religious in the church and world of today.



Bishop Kevin Dowling

She raises difficult questions and shares her viewpoint with what I believe is integrity and honesty, and whether one agrees with her or not, the essential invitation in what she has written is to reflect prayerfully and in a discerning spirit upon what God may be saying to each of us who reads her reflections.

Even if we disagree with her, we still need to ask with honesty: what value, what gospel value, is she trying to express in what she writes? Even if one has a different opinion to hers, one can try to understand her articulation of what she believes is in accord with the gospel of Jesus. Perhaps I can then grow in my own calling – and that, in the end, is what really matters.

The wide range of comments, some harsh and even vitriolic, some articulating a similar perspective, some expressing the struggle and pain of searching people, are in themselves important to consider. That there can be such a difference of opinion and approach is, on the one hand, a mirror of the

complex world and society in which we live and of the pilgrim church and its members immersed in that reality.

On the other hand, such difference and even division requires deeper analysis because I think it goes to the heart of the question: just what is our fundamental faith-vision of God, who is this “God” for me/us, and as a consequence what kind of church should we be in any era of our historical journey with Jesus, our leader and mentor?

For me, Sister Schneiders has articulated a comprehensive, inspiring and very challenging vision of the essentially prophetic nature of the calling and mission of the religious life, incarnated as it must be in the complex socio-economic, cultural and political reality of modern times. She has also clearly demonstrated its fundamental difference to that other calling and ministry within the church, hierarchical leadership and service.

I deliberately use those two words “leadership” and “service” because that is what I believe should be the experience or feeling of any person who encounters a bishop like me, or the hierarchy as a whole. My own experience of my life and ministry as a bishop for the past 19 years has led me ever more deeply to the realization and profound belief that people need to hear Jesus’ words in my human words, that people need and should only experience in me and all I do the presence of a loving, compassionate God who is deeply one with them in their total context of life, sometimes/often a “mess”, and who walks with them so that they may gradually find that his desire for them is true, viz. that they may have “life, and life in abundance” (cf. John 10:10).

This is Jesus’ challenge to me as a bishop, I believe. In this I, personally, cannot find any place or reason for the use of power and control over people on my part, for a presumption that I have all the answers to extremely complex human realities and experiences which absolutely degrade the dignity of people made in God’s image, and especially the poorest and most vulnerable “little ones” of the diverse societies which make up our church and world.

For me there can be no place for domination and power in such a reality which I know so well from my own context of the appalling poverty and misery of so many in dreadful shack settlements. Domination and power would only reflect a very different vision to the God whom I believe Jesus revealed (the God articulated so well by Sister Schneiders), and to the values of the gospel which should be the fundamental and only norm for me in my calling and mission as a bishop.

I believe hierarchical leadership and service today, as always, should be characterised by a humble, trusting, and searching relationship with all the People of God, empowering and affirming the gifts of the Spirit in every person and, together with all the People of God, ministering with a passion to transform the degrading reality of the “little ones” of our world.

Continued on page 16

Bishop: 'Schneiders' Analysis Inspiring, Challenging'
Continued from page 15

There will naturally be tension in different forms/ways between religious who are striving to live their prophetic calling in very diverse socio-economic-cultural contexts—and hierarchical leadership and service which should invite, encourage and promote coordination, subsidiarity and collaboration between all the different callings in the church, including that of religious and of the lay faithful.

All the key principles of Catholic social teaching (or doctrine) are equally applicable and relevant to the internal life of the church community and how it functions in practice, as for the reality and life “out there” in the socio-political world as it is.

I think it is a mistake to think that different expressions of life and ministry (in all aspects) between religious and hierarchical leadership and service can or should be controlled and brought into uniformity which is deemed orthodox by those who have authority in the church, viz. the hierarchy. That would be to potentially stifle the Spirit and the workings of the Spirit.

After all, most of the differences and divisions being discussed in these articles are not about defined doctrine as such, but about “opinions” or “understandings” concerning pastoral policies, the vision, theology and ecclesiology of Vatican II, ethical and moral approaches to complex questions and so forth. There can be legitimate and different “opinions” at the level of the Vatican dicasteries, conferences of bishops, individual bishops, communities of religious and lay faithful. And there can be such a thing in the church as loyal dissent.

Tensions and differences should be expected among thinking Catholics, therefore, but they should be managed by people who follow, not the route of power and control, but the way of discernment in the Spirit. Then all those concerned will consciously allow God to be God, and be open to recognizing the “fruits” and that “by their fruits you will know them”. This calls for a respectful encounter between religious and hierarchy, with a conscious commitment to listening to what is deeper than the words, to what God may be saying through the other.

And in the end, the vital importance of conscience needs to be addressed with reverence. I believe one can do no better than reflect on the words of the then Father Ratzinger in his capacity as theological adviser to the Second Vatican Council:

“Over the Pope as expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one’s own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even the official Church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism”.

(Joseph Ratzinger in: Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Vol. V., pg. 134 (Ed) H. Vorgrimler, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967).

Redemptorist Bishop Kevin Dowling is the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Rustenburg, South Africa.

Editor’s Note: Bishop Kevin Dowling’s article was prompted by and in response to “Religious Life as Prophetic Life Form, a five-part essay by Immaculate Heart of Mary Sr. Sandra Schneiders, IHM, which appeared at NCR Online January 4-8, 2010 at <http://ncronline.org/news/women/religious-life-prophetic-life-form>. Sr. Schneiders is Professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, CA.

In 1998, Bishop Dowling set up a health clinic in Freedom Park, one of the massive shack settlements in his diocese of Rustenburg, South Africa. He saw countless young women—many driven to prostitution by poverty—die of AIDS. He knew that condoms could have prevented most of those deaths. In 2001, he became the first African bishop to call on the Roman Catholic Church to consider lifting its absolute ban on condom use. He argued that they should be accepted as a tool for protecting millions of vulnerable lives against AIDS rather than denounced as a form of birth control. In 2008, Bishop Dowling oversaw nine clinics that treat nearly 1,000 adults and children with lifesaving antiretroviral drugs. When asked by a journalist where his views diverged from the pope’s, Dowling replied that he didn’t believe he had the right to impose on the people he served the particular official positions of the church in terms of condom use to prevent the transmission of a deadly virus. ▼

Update on Katie, Transgender 3rd Grader in Omaha

(Original stories published in the 4th Quarter 2009 QV, pp.12-14, <http://www.dignityusa.org/sites/default/files/pdf/qv/2009-4Q-QV.pdf>)

December 13, 2009

Leo,

I thought you’d appreciate that Kate has boycotted her 3rd grade musical because the songs contain the phrase “you can be whatever you want to be because we live in the land that’s free.” She told me that she can’t sing those “because it’s not true—you know, gays and lesbians and all.” She told me, “I wouldn’t mind singing it if they said ‘we’re not there yet, but we’re trying,’ but the songs say that it’s already true—and it’s not.” She told the principal that she thought she should sit out of the musical.

God love her vision and strength!

Take care and God bless,
 Joni ▼