

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

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Reflections on the Fiftieth Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood

By John J. McNeill

It has been extremely painful for me over the past four decades to watch the Church I love self-destruct. I entered the Jesuit order in 1948 after serving in the U.S. Army combat infantry in WWII and spending the last six months of the war as a prisoner of war in Germany. I pronounced my vows as a Jesuit in 1950. I was ordained to the priesthood at Fordham University by Cardinal Spellman in 1959, making this year the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination. I had fifty wonderful years of Jesuit ministry, teaching philosophy and theology at Lemoyne College in Syracuse, NY and later as professor of moral theology at Woodstock seminary in New York City.



John J. McNeill

Over all that time I was aware of being a gay man. As long as I lived in a loving community, I was able to be faithful to my vows. I had hoped to repress any need I had for sexual human companionship. While doing graduate studies at Louvain University, Louvain, Belgium, my experience of loneliness led me to act out my sexual needs and seek human sexual companionship.

This failure on my part led me close to suicide. But at a critical moment while in prayer I received a consoling message from God that I should trust him. All the pain, shame and guilt I was undergoing God would make use of in a new ministry to which God would lead me. From that day to the present, my primary prayer has been: *In te Dominum speravi. Non confundar in aeternam!* (In you, Oh Lord, I place all my hope. I will not be let down for all eternity!)

Shortly after returning from Europe to teach at LeMoyne College, I began a research program into homosexuality from theological, scriptural and psychological perspectives. After two years I published the results of my research in a series of articles in *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* entitled "The Christian Male Homosexual." These articles received an excellent reception. My fellow Woodstock faculty member, Avery Dulles (later Cardinal Dulles), recommended that I major them into a book.

On New Years Eve of 1966, I met my lifetime partner Charles Chiarelli at a gay bar in Toronto called the Saint Charles bar. I could not have had a lifetime ministry to GLBT people if it had not been for my first-hand experience of the goodness and joy of a loving gay relationship with Charlie for the past 43 years. Charlie and I returned to Toronto to be legally married in September, 2008.

In 1972, together with Bob Carter, S.J. and other priests and lay men, I helped found the New York City chapter of Dignity, a support group for gay and lesbian Catholics whose objective was to bring the message of God's love and acceptance to Catholic gays and lesbians.

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In 1976, after years of review and censorship of my manuscript *The Church and the Homosexual*, I finally received an “*imprimi potest*” (permission to publish) from Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupé after he personally read the manuscript and I proceeded to publication. It was the first book to pose a direct challenge to church teaching on homosexuality, arguing that gay people were created that way by God and that their love relations could be good and even holy relations. That was a euphoric moment.

The book’s appearance received headlines in the *New York Times*. I was invited to be the featured interview on the *Today Show*, which was Tom Brokaw’s first day as host. For almost one year I traveled the country, appearing on innumerable television and radio talk shows, helping to found Dignity chapters, and giving lectures and workshops on the Theology of Homosexuality. I began a series of retreats on the theme “Experiencing God’s Love” for lesbian and gay Christians at Kirkridge Retreat Center, Bangor, PA. Retreats to a packed house every time twice a year for the next 25 years.

But my euphoria was short lived. Toward the end of that year, I was invited by the theology faculty at Xavier University in Cincinnati to give a workshop on the theology of homosexuality. When I arrived at the airport I was surrounded by reporters who wanted to know my response to a press release from Archbishop Bernadin decrying my invitation, accusing me of misleading the public into thinking that the Church had changed or was about to change its teaching on homosexuality. That night the lecture hall was surrounded by conservative Catholics praying the rosary and accusing me of defending sodomy.

A few months later the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to silence me and forbid me to speak or write on the issue of homosexuality. I obeyed that order for nine years, until my dismissal from the Jesuits. The Congregation claimed that they were acting as a response to a request from the American bishops and quoted the press release of Archbishop Bernadin. Coincidentally, right at this time Bernadin was accused of sexual impropriety with a young man who later withdrew the accusation.

Several years later, Pedro Arrupé was deposed as Jesuit Superior General by Pope John Paul II and an inquisitor Fr. Dezza was made Superior General by papal fiat. One of the reasons given for that action was Arrupé’s approval of my publication of *The Church and the Homosexual*.

For those nine years I was able to continue my ministry of retreats and psychotherapy, but could not speak or write for the media. In that period, the Vatican became more and more homophobic. They classified homosexual orientation as an “objective disorder” and on one occasion justified gay bashing. They continued to condemn all gay sexual activity as seriously sinful! They led the political opposition to gay rights and gay marriage throughout the world. They ordered adoption agencies to close rather than allow gay couples to adopt. Most recently, they closed seminaries and the priesthood to anyone with a homosexual orientation.

Even after the sexual abuse crisis they refused to allow a married priesthood and denied ordination to all women. The result is a rapid disappearance of celibate priests and a new upsurge of lay ministry.

I continued to pray for divine guidance concerning the order to silence in the public media. The AIDS crisis was in full swing. I felt I could no longer remain silent in good conscience. In 1986 the Vatican gave me an order I could not obey in good

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Chapter Leaders' Conference Call, October 6, 2009

The next chapter leaders' conference call will be held on Tuesday, **October 6, 2009 at 9 p.m. EDT**. All chapter leaders will be notified through the chapter leader e-mail group. If you are a chapter leader, please send Lewis Tanner, secretary@dignityusa.org, an e-mail to receive details for the call.

DignityUSA Board Meeting, October 16-18, 2009

The national Board will gather in Minneapolis, Friday evening through Sunday noon, **October 16 – 18, 2009**. We welcome members to come see the board in action while we are in Minneapolis. Please send Lewis Tanner an e-mail (secretary@dignityusa.org) if you would like location details and an agenda of the meeting

Happy Anniversary & Congratulations to:

Greater Lansing (MI) - 21 years
 New Brunswick (NJ) - 25 years
 New Mexico - 25 years
 Indianapolis (IN) - 28 years
 Toledo (OH) - 32 years
 Buffalo (NY) - 33 years
 Pittsburgh (PA) - 35 years
 Twin Cities (MN) - 35 years
 Seattle (WA) - 36 years
 New York (NY) - 37 years
 Washington (DC) 37 years
 Los Angeles (CA) - 40 years

Chapters-in-Formation
 Orlando (FL)
 Palm Beach (FL)

Reflections on the Fiftieth Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood
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conscience: I was ordered to give up all ministry to LGBT people. When I informed Jesuit Superior General Hans Kolvenbach of that decision, he flew to New York and met me at Fordham University. He told me that if I continued in my gay ministry he was under orders from the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger to dismiss me from the Jesuits. He also told me how much he admired my ministry and gave me his blessing.

A few months later I published an article calling for full acceptance of LGBT people in all the Christian churches in *The Christian Century*. Superior General Kolvenbach turned over the process of my expulsion to Cardinal Hamer, head of the Congregation of Religious. The final decree of my dismissal from the Jesuits was issued on April 13, 1987.

That decree paradoxically freed me to fully enter once again into the ministry Father Arrupé had assigned me to. From then to the present day, I continue to give retreats and lectures to LGBT Christians. I also was freed to publish once again. In 1988 I published *Taking A Chance On God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians, and their Lovers, Families and Friends*. In 1995 I published *Freedom, Glorious Freedom: The Spiritual Journey to the Fullness of Life for Gays, Lesbians, and Everybody Else*. In 1998 I published my autobiography *Both Feet Firmly Planted in Midair: My Spiritual Journey*.

Finally in 2008 I published *Sex As God Intended: A Reflection On Human Sexuality As Play*. This book includes a festschrift of 13 essays celebrating my life and work. (A synopsis of these publications and reviews can be found on my web page; www.johnjmcneill.com).

I remain an ordained priest and exiled member of the Roman Catholic faith, I pray daily to the Holy Spirit for a transformation of the Catholic Church into an agent of the Holy Spirit listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying through the people of God. I see the DignityUSA organization as one of the primary instruments of the Holy Spirit leading the way to that transformation. I will continue to do whatever I can to support Dignity's God-given mission.

DignityUSA Endorses National Equality March, October 10-11, 2009

DignityUSA endorses the National Equality March, Saturday & Sunday, October 10-11, 2009, in Washington, D.C., and will participate fully in all activities. As the nation's foremost organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender Catholics and our allies, we call on members and friends to support this March, and the principles for which it stands. Civil rights for our community is a hallmark of justice, and as Catholics, members of the largest denomination in the U.S., we believe we have a particular responsibility to witness to our belief in justice for all people in the places where public policy is made, as well as in our Church. We urge those who are able to be present to march with Dignity in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 10-11, and for those unable to be there to March for Justice in another way: by getting involved in a civil rights campaign in your home state, by volunteering for an organization seeking justice for anyone currently marginalized in our country, by donating to an organization that works for equality, by sharing your own experiences of discrimination, and by praying for those who will gather in our nation's capital.

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CHAPTER NEWS**Dignity/Honolulu
Solidarity Sunday Liturgy
Sunday, October 4**

Join Dignity/Honolulu at their Eucharistic Liturgy on Sunday, October 4, 2009, 7:30 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 539 Kapahulu Ave, Honolulu for their annual commemoration of Solidarity Sunday, a campaign to end violence (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) directed towards gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. The homilist will be Rev. Danette Poole.

A copy of the Solidarity pledge and prayer, as well as rainbow ribbons, will be distributed at the liturgy.

Dignity/Honolulu will also do a parish visitation on October 4, 2009, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace during the 10:30 a.m. Mass.

For further information about the chapter and these events call 808-352-7558.

More information on Solidarity Sunday will be found on page 6.

**Dignity/New Brunswick
to Celebrate 25th
Anniversary October
10th**

Dignity/New Brunswick (NJ) will celebrate its 25th Anniversary on Saturday, October 10, 2009 at The Friends Meeting House, 109 Nichol Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

The Liturgy will start at 6:00 p.m.. A potluck dinner will follow the Mass.

Contact Michael Kellison, Secretary dignitynb@earthlink.net.

Details at their website <http://home.earthlink.net~dignitynb>

*DignityUSA Endorses National Equality March, October 10-11, 2009
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Stay with DignityUSA

DignityUSA has a block of rooms reserved for Friday and Saturday nights, October 9 & 10, 2009, at the Comfort Inn Pentagon, 2480 South Glebe Road, Arlington, VA. Rates are \$109 plus tax per night for Singles/Doubles, and \$119 plus tax for Triples/Quads. Make reservations by calling 703-682-5500, and mention DignityUSA. Cut-off date is Tuesday, October 6, and rooms are limited, so please call soon.

The Comfort Inn Pentagon offers:

- Complimentary shuttle to Reagan National Airport and the Pentagon Metro station
- Complimentary deluxe continental breakfast
- Free wireless Internet and local calls

Pray with Dignity

The two local chapters in the area will be sponsoring regular liturgies and perhaps special events that weekend. Visitors are welcomed and encouraged to attend chapter liturgies:

Saturday, October 10, 6:30 p.m

Dignity/Northern Virginia Liturgy
Immanuel Church on the Hill
Quaker and Seminary Roads
Alexandria, VA.
Contact: (703) 912-1662

Transportation Information: Members of Dignity/NoVA will provide transportation from the Virginia Square Station (orange line) or the King Street Station (blue or yellow lines). Please call 703-912-1662 and leave a message no later than 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. We need to know how many people are in your party, which Metro station you will be using, and a cell phone where you can be reached to confirm arrangements.

Sunday, October 11, 6:00 p.m.

Dignity/Washington Liturgy
St. Margaret's Church (Episcopal)
1820 Connecticut Avenue, NW
(½ mile NW of Dupont Circle)
Contact: (202) 546-2235, <http://www.dignitywashington.org>

Train and Campaign with Dignity: Catholics for Equality

DignityUSA will offer a training session on Mobilizing Pro-LGBT Catholics for Civil Rights Initiatives on Saturday, October 10, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. at the Dignity/Washington Center, 721 8th Street, SE in Washington, DC. This session is for any Catholic interested in supporting equal rights from employment to marriage, and for campaign workers who want to learn how to reach out to progressive Catholics. The session is free, and pre-registration is encouraged. To sign up, please send an email to Info@DignityUSA.org.

If you are a Dignity member who would like to help enroll Catholics interested in supporting civil equality for LGBT people, please email ExecDir@DignityUSA.org. You will be sent some quick talking points, and a sheet you can use to collect contact information from people you meet throughout the weekend. Thanks for your help!

TRANSITIONS

In MEMORIAM

Fr. Tom Beckman. Dignity/San Diego hosted a celebration of his life Sunday, September 20, 2009

BIRTHS

ADOPTIONS

MARRIAGES

David Van Tassel and Rick Jung (Metro New Jersey), married, Sept. 3, 2009, in Burlington, VT.

HOLY UNIONS

WEDDING/UNION ANNIVERSARIES

Please send DignityUSA member name(s) of the affected person(s) and event to Operations Manager Peggy Burns by email to info@dignityusa.org or by phone 800-877-8797.

For example, in events such as births and adoptions, the name(s) of parent(s) and child or children, or number of girls or boys, and chapter affiliation or city and state. In events such as marriage or holy union, the names of the couple and chapter affiliation or city and state.



DignityUSA at Call To Action, November 6-8, 2009

Join DignityUSA members at the CTA National Conference in Milwaukee, WI November 6 - 8, 2009.

Visit the DignityUSA booth in the exhibit hall; come out for the reception Friday night and the LGBT caucus during the noon hour on Saturday.

For more information on the CTA Conference venue, programs and schedules, visit: <http://www.cta-usa.org/conference/>

DignityUSA's Winter Fling Auction

DignityUSA's first on-line auction in June 2009 was such a great success we decided to do another. The second on-line auction is scheduled for the first part of December 2009 in time for Christmas. What we need are items to auction similar to those donated for the last on-line and live auction: gift baskets, books, art work, travel packages, restaurant gift cards, etc. The auction will be set up so that the bidder will pay shipping cost along with the winning bid so donor will not need to deal with that cost. We can also limit bidding on certain items to DignityUSA members only. So if you want to donate a vacation home stay you can be sure only a Dignity member will win that bid. We have some items but more are needed to make this a worthwhile effort.

To help inspire donations we have decided to share the proceeds with local chapters. Individuals and chapters may make a donation and designate which chapter, if any, will share in the bidding results. DignityUSA will split the proceeds with that chapter. This way everyone will benefit.

Do you know of a travel firm, airline or vacation plan that may be willing to make a donation? Those types of items do very well on auction accounts.

Send your item descriptions and images thereof to Jack Frielingsdorf at frielys@gmail.com. If you have questions or suggestions send them along as well.

Let's see if we can't beat the first on-line auction results.

Opting-out of receiving hard-copy QVs

The *QV*: *Quarterly Voice of DignityUSA* is mailed as a 12-page (occasionally more) hard-copy journal to the paid membership of DignityUSA four times a year. Most *QV* articles are timeless and many members have commented that some issues are re-read two or three times or passed along to other people. However, several environmentally- and cost-conscious DignityUSA members have requested to receive only electronic copies of the *QV* via the DignityUSA website. Your thoughtfulness and concern are greatly appreciated.

If you wish to opt-out of receiving a mailed hard-copy version of *QV*: *Quarterly Voice* and access or read the electronic edition only on-line, please contact our Operations Manager, Peggy Burns, info@dignityusa.org, indicating "QV opt-out" in the Subject heading. Thank you.



October 11, 2009

15th Annual Solidarity Sunday and National Coming Out Day, October 11, 2009

Solidarity Sunday is normally held every year on the Sunday before October 11 (National Coming Out Day). This year it will coincide with National Coming Out Day.

Solidarity Sunday is a faith-based anti-violence initiative.

Because we understood that, contrary to popular belief, most Catholics are appalled by anti-gay attacks, DignityUSA initiated Solidarity Sunday in 1995 as a way of making our opposition to anti-gay violence visible.

Solidarity Sunday is dedicated to the memory of the many who lost their lives through violence because of who they were or who they were perceived to be. May their deaths not have been in vain. Let us work together to end verbal and physical violence against anyone, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders!



Solidarity Pledge

I pledge:

I will work for civil and human rights for all people, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender. **Civil rights are not special rights.**

I will seek to stop jokes and unkind language about anyone, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender when spoken in my presence. **Words that hurt and bigotry are not funny.**

I will speak out against any slander, debasement, lies or dehumanization of anyone, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgender, including when spoken by political or religious leaders. **Violent speech leads to physical violence.**

I will work to stop physical violence against anyone, including violence against gays, lesbians, bisexuals or the transgender. **Violence against any person is violence against all people.**



National Coming Out Day
October 11, 2009

National Coming Out Day was founded by Robert Eichberg and Jean O'Leary on October 11, 1988 in celebration of the first gay march on Washington D.C. a year earlier.

The purpose of the march and of National Coming Out Day is to promote government and public awareness of gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgender rights and to celebrate homosexuality.

National Coming Out Day is a time to publicly display gay pride. Many choose this day to come out to their parents, friends, co-workers and themselves.

Solidarity Interfaith Prayer

Please substitute for the word "God" the most appropriate to your faith tradition.

God, You are the Creator and Lover of all.
You wish us to live in solidarity with each other and to rejoice in our diversity.

We pray that all Your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight children may experience justice, enjoy peace and spread Your love throughout the world.

We pray in the name of God, who welcomes *all* to a holy circle of friendship. Amen.

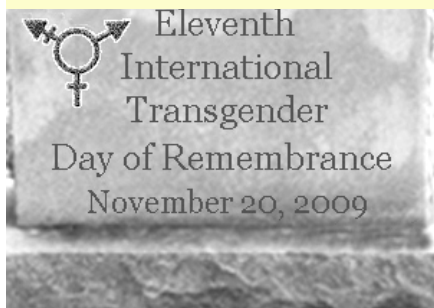
DignityUSA National Board Transitions as of October 1, 2009

Thanks to Fundraising Committee Chair Marty Grochala, Treasurer Chris Lawrence, and Past President Sam Sinnett for their exemplary service on the national Board.

We welcome At-large member Alice Knowles, who will head DignityUSA's Technology Committee, and new Treasurer Greg Potosnak who begin two-year terms to September 30, 2011.



11th International Transgender Day of Remembrance November 20, 2009



For more details also see:
<http://www.transgenderdor.org/?P=62>

DignityUSA's Transgender Day of Remembrance

By Fredrikka Joy Maxwell, a DignityUSA member from Nashville, Tennessee

Do you know that more than 434 transgender people have been killed around the world so far this year, and those are just the ones we know about? That's according to the website Transgenderdor.org which keeps track of such statistics.

All those people will be memorialized at the Transgender Day of Remembrance on or about November 20, 2009.

The November date was chosen to memorialize Rita Hester, whose November 28, 1998, murder in Boston sparked the Remembering Our Dead web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil, which gave rise to the trans day of remembrance.

Because of the violent nature of Hester's death—her assailant stabbed her in the chest 20 times and failed to steal valuable jewelry or anything else of value in her apartment—trans people came to see her death as a hate crime.

Matthew Shepard's violent death was still fresh in the GLBT community's mind when Hester was violently murdered. Shepard's death caused an outpouring of empathy. But Hester's death showed the media still very disrespectful as it reported her death. This disrespect touched off angry demonstrations at the Boston Herald and the Bay Window.

The news media still hasn't learned the proper way to report the deaths of trans-people and is still fixated on genitals. It seems their default setting is to refer to people by their birth gender even if a person wasn't presenting or hadn't lived as that gender for years. So the media disrespect and the ongoing hate crime deaths of trans people still leaves a smoldering outrage.

Aware of this situation, what can Dignity Chapters and friends and allies of trans people do to successfully pull off a day of remembrance? Many things.

For example, my TG support group in Nashville, the Tennessee Vals, usually hires a venue—often one of the local Unitarian Universalist churches or the local GLBT cultural center—and holds a candlelight memorial service where the names of local victims and those on the Remembering Our Dead list are read by group members. The event usually features music and poetry, speechmaking and is often followed by a brief reception where coffee, punch, and cookies are served, and people socialize a bit before going out into the night.

My friend, Dionne Stallworth, a trans activist and leader in Philadelphia, PA says this year her community is going to break the event in two and hold a round table discussion on trans issues about midweek and later that same week will hold the actual memorial.

Trans personality Ethan St. Pierre, out Boston way, has a few suggestions too. "You are only limited by your imagination in determining the form and scope of your day of remembrance," said St. Pierre. He suggested candlelight vigils, performances, political rallies, and read-ins. He even suggest you can do art and photo displays.

Recognizing that putting on a day of remembrance is pretty much like other major events St. Pierre also suggested:

- Get a working group, reach out to all potential participants, decide on the form of the event, handle the logistical details, get the media involved, do promotion, and run the event. He also encourages those holding the event to lay the groundwork for the future.

Couples Ministry

Calling all couples!

DignityUSA would like to recognize all couples at their anniversary. Whether you had a ceremony, civil or religious or none at all, please let us know the following:

- name of the couple;
- number of years together;
- anniversary date (please submit only one date);
- address, city, state, zip code;
- name of chapter.

If you did have a ceremony, there is a form on the website if you wish to submit it:

<http://www.dignityusa.org/book/export/html/253>

Copies of QV: Quarterly Voice Available to Chapters

Limited hard-copy versions of our quarterly publication, QV: Quarterly Voice are available to chapters from our national office.

Perhaps you are in a membership drive, a community public relations drive or outreach, raising the chapter's profile or hosting a special event for the GLBT or greater community. Hard-copies of our QV: Quarterly Voice publication are excellent resource materials for telling our story or addressing certain themes.

Please contact our Operations Manager, Peggy Burns, info@dignityusa.org or by phone 800-877-8797 or 202-861-0017 or by FAX 781-397-0584 to arrange for shipment of this professional quality resource.

Amendments to Bylaws Receive Overwhelming Support

In an open election held during July and August 2009, DignityUSA members and chapters overwhelmingly approved two amendments to DignityUSA Bylaws as shown below. They are officially being integrated into the document.

Bylaws Amendment #1

The board had considered the possibility that there may not be a candidate for President or Vice President at the time of the scheduled elections and what the Board of Directors might do in such a situation. If a slate does not step forward to run for election, we would not have a President or Vice President elected as outlined in our Bylaws. There was no clear process for filling the officer positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer who take office on October 1 every two years as required by DignityUSA's governing documents.

In the current Bylaws, Article IV Governance, Section 10. Board of Directors, subsection B. Term of Office, the fifth and final paragraph reads:

"Members of the Board may resign or be recalled as provided for in the Bylaws. In the case of a vacancy of a Member-elected Director, the Board of Directors, by a two-thirds vote, may appoint a Regular Member to complete the remainder of the term of that Officer or Director and shall be considered as Member-elected for the purposes of determining that the number of Board-elected Directors is less than the number of Member-elected Directors. In the case of a vacancy of the office of President, the Vice-President shall automatically assume the office of President."

AMENDED TO READ:

"Members of the Board may resign or be recalled as provided for in the Bylaws. In the case of a vacancy of the office of President, the Vice President shall automatically assume the office of President if the office of Vice President is not vacant. The current President and Vice President shall remain in office, even if term limited, until their successors are properly elected according to these Bylaws or until they resign or are recalled.

If the offices of the President and Vice President are vacant, the Board of Directors, by a two-thirds vote, may appoint a Regular Member to complete the remainder of the term of President. In the case of a vacancy of a Member-elected Officer or Director for whatever reason, including the unavailability of anyone to run for election to any of these positions, the Board of Directors, by a two-thirds vote, may appoint a Regular Member to complete the remainder of the term of that Officer or Director. Such an Officer or Director shall be considered as Member-elected for the purposes of determining that the number of Board-elected Directors is less than the number of Member-elected Directors.

Bylaws Amendment #2

Our Bylaws had no provision for what to do if the gender parity requirement for President and Vice President cannot be fulfilled in time for an election to occur.

In the current Bylaws, Article IV Governance, Section 10. Board of Directors, subsection A reads in part:

"The Directors shall be:

1. President and Vice President, elected as a slate with gender parity by the Regular Members and Chartered Chapters in a national election."

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AMENDED TO READ:

“The Directors shall be

1. President and Vice President, elected as a slate with gender parity by the Regular Members and Chartered Chapters in a national election. In the event there is only one nominee for President and that nominee for President can find no one who is available to run for Vice President who also meets the gender parity requirement, the Board of Directors, by a two-thirds vote, may allow the President nominee to run with no Vice President nominee to fill the slate, in order to allow the national election to take place in a timely manner. This vacant Vice President position will be filled with gender parity by the Board of Directors according to Sub-Section B of this Article IV by December 31 of the election year in question, which is within three (3) months of this nominee starting his/her term of office as President on October 1 of that same year.”

U.S. House of Representatives Honors Catholic Women Religious

H. Res. 441

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,
September 22, 2009.

Whereas the social, cultural, and political contributions of Catholic sisters have played a vital role in shaping life in the United States;

Whereas such women have joined in unique forms of intentional communitarian life dedicated to prayer and service since the very beginnings of our Nation's history, fearlessly and often sacrificially committing their personal lives to teaching, healing, and social action;

Whereas the first Catholic sisters to live and work in the United States were nine Ursuline Sisters, who journeyed from France to New Orleans in 1727;

Whereas at least nine sisters from the United States have been martyred since 1980 while working for social justice and human rights overseas;

Whereas Maura Clark, MM, Ita Ford, MM, and Dorothy Kazel, OSU were martyred in El Salvador in 1980;

Whereas Joel Kolmer, ASC, Shirley Kolmer, ASC, Kathleen McGuire, ASC, Agnes Mueller, ASC, and Barbara Ann Muttra, ASC were martyred in Liberia in 1992;

Whereas Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN was martyred in Brazil in 2005;

Whereas Catholic sisters established the Nation's largest private school system and founded more than 110 United States colleg-

es and universities, educating millions of young people in the United States;

Whereas there were approximately 32,000 Catholic sisters in the United States who taught 400,000 children in 2,000 parochial schools by 1880, and there were 180,000 Catholic sisters who taught nearly 4,500,000 children by 1965;

Whereas today, there are approximately 59,000 Catholic sisters in the United States;

Whereas Catholic sisters participated in the opening of the West, traveling vast distances to minister in remote locations, setting up schools and hospitals, and working among native populations on distant reservations;

Whereas more than 600 sisters from 21 different religious communities nursed both Union and Confederate soldiers alike during the Civil War;

Whereas Catholic sisters cared for afflicted populations during the epidemics of cholera, typhoid, yellow fever, smallpox, tuberculosis, and influenza during the 19th and early 20th centuries;

Whereas Catholic sisters built and established hospitals, orphanages, and charitable institutions that have served millions of people, managing organizations long before similar positions were open to women;

Whereas approximately one in six hospital patients in the United States were treated in a Catholic facility;

Whereas Catholic sisters have been among the first to stand with the underprivileged, to work and educate among the poor and underserved, and to facilitate leadership through opportunity and example;

Whereas Catholic sisters continue to provide shelter, food, and basic human needs to the economically or socially disadvantaged and advocate relentlessly for the fair and equal treatment of all persons;

Whereas Catholic sisters work for the eradication of poverty and racism and for the promotion of nonviolence, equality, and democracy in principle and in action;

Whereas the humanitarian work of Catholic sisters with communities in crisis and refuge throughout the world positions them as activists and diplomats of peace and justice for the some of the most at risk populations; and

Whereas the Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Traveling Exhibit is sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in association with Cincinnati Museum Center and will open on May 16, 2009, in Cincinnati, Ohio:

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U.S. House of Representatives Honors Catholic Women Religious
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Now, therefore, be it *Resolved*,

That the House of Representatives-

(1) honors and commends Catholic sisters for their humble service and courageous sacrifice throughout the history of this Nation; and

(2) supports the goals of the Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America Traveling Exhibit, a project sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in association with Cincinnati Museum Center and established to recognize the historical contributions of Catholic sisters in the United States.

Attest:
Clerk.

H. RES. 441

Title: Honoring the historical contributions of Catholic sisters in the United States.

Sponsor: Rep Kaptur, Marcy [OH-9] (introduced 5/14/2009)

Cosponsors (67)

Latest Major Action: 9/22/2009 Passed/agreed to in House.

Status: On motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, as amended Agreed to by the Yeas and Nays: (2/3 required): 412 - 0 (Roll no. 720).

BOOK REVIEW

A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church: Memoirs of a Catholic Archbishop

by Rembert G. Weakland, OSB, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (June 15, 2009) 450pp List \$28.00
Reviewed by John J. McNeill

On rare occasions in my long life (I just turned 84 on September 2, 2009) I have had what I like to call "The disciples of Emmaus experience," ("Were not our hearts burning within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us." Luke 24: 32). I had that experience over the past several days as I read Archbishop Weakland's memoirs. These memoirs threw an extraordinary critical analytical light on the status of the Roman Catholic Church which I love and are a source of renewed hope for transformation and restoration of the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Weakland begins his memoirs with an account of the penitential service he held May 31, 2002, in the Cathedral in Milwaukee at the time of his resignation from his role as archbishop after twenty five years:

I was about to face the faithful of the Catholic Church of Milwaukee to make a necessary public apology impelled by my concept of church as a community of loving, sustaining, forgiving believers.

The Archbishop recounts what happened leading to his resignation. Although he was aware that his sexual orientation was homosexual, as long as he had lived as a monk in St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, from 1945 until 1977, Weakland had no problem repressing his need for sexual companionship. However, his election as Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order required that he make his primary residence in Rome for the next eight years. Because he had felt it was his responsibility to make a pastoral visit to every Benedictine monastery and convent in the world, he spent most of those eight years traveling. During that time he became aware of a painfully growing human loneliness. After his appointment as Archbishop, he continued his pastoral travels trying to visit every parish, religious house and convent in his diocese. The deaths of his mother and his friend Pope Paul VI removed two of his primary supports. The subsequent election of John Paul II, who was non-supportive if not outright hostile, further isolated him.

Around 1979 the Archbishop sought the companionship of Paul Marcoux, a young man in his thirties who shared his interests in theology and sacred music. Weakland wrote love letters to Marcoux which expressed genuine affection for the young man, but broke off the relationship because it was incompatible with his vows and his responsibility as Archbishop. As a result, Paul proceeded to blackmail the Archbishop. After lengthy consultation, Weakland agreed to pay a quarter of a million dollars from a diocesan fund to quiet him. Later, Paul demanded another million. When Weakland refused, Paul released the love letters to the press and went on television accusing Weakland of "date rape" allegedly occurring twenty-two years before. At this point in time the media was in full pursuit of priest pedophiles and negligent bishops. They assumed this was another example of the same and condemned the Archbishop. As a result, Weakland was forced to resign in disgrace—in the public's eye—from his role as Archbishop after twenty-five years.

However, this disgrace and resignation was the beginning of a new spiritual journey which Archbishop Weakland likens to a pilgrimage. So he set his memoirs in the context of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and named his memoir, *A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church*. "The idea of pilgrimage means that perfection in this life is never achieved, only striven for, where the good and the bad grow up together until the final judgment." (p. 253)

Weakland describes this most recent stage of his spiritual journey in these words:

It took time (for me) to understand...that there is a hole, a deep void, an unfulfilled yearning that all humans possess...and into that emptiness and loneliness no other person can really reach...That void comes from a yearning for the transcendent and will be filled with nothing else. Human love can only be an image, a sign, of the fulfillment that comes from the Divine. I vowed to accept this spiritual restlessness, working

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around it, not expecting it to go away, but eager to use it to relate more compassionately to others who deeply feel the same void.

Weakland explicitly rejects recent Vatican teaching on homosexuality:

I had rejected as unhelpful, even as harmful, the statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1986 that this orientation made me “objectively disordered.” Since this orientation was not voluntarily acquired, such language was insignificant to me. Either God created me that way or permitted forces beyond my control to make me that way, so I felt no diminution of God’s love. I do not see myself as a person defined by my sexuality. (p.18)

The Archbishop talks about a “theology of contempt” aimed at homosexuals similar to the anti-Semitic theology of contempt in the early Church. This theology made it laudatory to commit acts of violence, originally against Jews, today against homosexuals. “To say that homosexuals must be treated with respect even though they are objectively disordered is demeaning, a new form of double-talk.” (p. 24)

Archbishop Weakland then proceeds in a biography of 423 pages to recount his lifetime pilgrimage. That story makes us aware that we are dealing with an extraordinarily gifted and talented gay person. He was born in the town of Patton in the coal mining district of southwestern Pennsylvania, one of six-children. His father, a marine veteran, died when Weakland was five years old. He describes his spiritual life as a constant seeking for the father figure that had been there so briefly. His mother, despite extreme poverty and hardship, kept the family together. Her background as a school-teacher gave all the Weakland children a deep respect and desire for education.

Weakland showed a remarkable talent for music from his earliest childhood. He became a masterful pianist and organist. Music was to remain a central feature of his life; in the beauty of music he found his preferred way to encounter the transcendent. “I seemed to flow quickly and imperceptibly from an aesthetic experience to a religious one.... I really felt that God was present to me in and through the music.” (p. 38) That love of music culminated in his receiving a doctorate in music at Columbia University. The topic of his thesis was the Ambrosian chant from the Middle Ages.

In 1940, Weakland entered the Benedictine prep school connected to the Benedictine monastery St. Vincent Archabbey, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania and spent the next six years as a scholastic preparing to join the Order of St. Benedict. He speaks of that period as the time he was “thirsting for knowledge” and developing his extraordinary intellectual skills. He became skilled in Latin and Greek and proficient in German and French. His skill in languages would be extremely helpful to him years later when as Abbot Primate he traveled to Benedic-

tine establishments, over 700 in all, on every continent and dozens of countries, and was able to communicate in most cases to the monks and nuns in their native tongues.

At this time, he was also introduced to Catholic social teachings in encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum*. While reflecting on the social dimension of the Gospels, he began to form the ideas that marked his political thinking for years to come. Reflecting on the war going on in the world, WWII, he learned to fear those who claimed so much authority over the lives of others and who were accountable to no one. In an 1985 article in *America*, writing about the growing tensions between the Church in the United States and Roman officials, he wrote:

I grew up with just as great a fear of Fascism as I had of Communism. Hitler and Mussolini were diabolical figures to me; examples of how single individuals with uncontrolled power over other human beings could cruelly dehumanize people sacred in the eyes of God, and could justify that abuse for the sake of an ideology. I guess I grew up with a fear of absolute power, unfettered and uncontrolled, held by some people over others.... I know that this fear also affects my attitude toward church authorities and religious obedience. (pp. 43-44)

Obviously Archbishop Weakland thought that the Vatican was moving in a pro-fascist direction under Pope John Paul. A fear I think was confirmed by Pope John Paul’s rejection of the Jesuits as his confidants and replacing them with Opus Dei.

This was a period of great fervor and development for Weakland, but it had its dark side. As he put it: “Although successful in my studies, I cannot say the same about acquiring a deeper understanding of myself, psychological or sexual. I lived very much in my head, and my only emotional outlet was my music. Looking back, I was almost certainly oblivious about my sexual development and makeup.” (p. 44) This failure to provide for psychological development would prove to be Weakland’s Achilles heel that would much later lead him into trouble.

In September 1946 Weakland entered the novitiate of St. Vincent’s Archabbey and took the name of Rembert. He took to monastic life like a duck to water. Among the many things he admired about Benedictine monastic life, the primary thing was St. Benedict’s understanding of authority and governance. “Throughout history Benedictine communities prided themselves on their autonomy and independence, expressed by the free election of their abbots and their vow of stability in a given community. The monastic tradition was the source of my positive attitude toward the concept of subsidiarity in the Catholic Church, which emphasizes the importance of decentralization.” (p. 65) He believed that the Abbot should make compassion the essence of his authority and rule the monastery as the loving Father of a family, consulting widely and basing every decision on what was the true good of the individual monk.

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In 1948, the abbot sent Rembert off to Saint Anselmo, the Benedictine college in Rome, to complete his theological and musical education. He received a superb education in theology. He spent two summers continuing his study of music; the first with the monks of Solesmes in France and the second at Ottenkolleg in Germany. In 1951, at age 24, he was ordained a priest at Sacro Speco, the mountain cave behind the abbey of Subiaco in which St. Benedict had spent two years of solitude.

Returning from Rome, Rembert spent the years 1952 to 1957 in New York City studying music at Juilliard and serving as a parish priest at St. Malachi's parish on 45th Street off Broadway called The Catholic Actors Chapel. He would later call these years the happiest years of his life. "My stay there was my 'second novitiate'; the first introduced me to Benedictine life, this second one just to life. I came to learn about the best and the worst of the human condition as it played itself out in the heart of a great metropolis like New York City." (p.77) In 1956, he spent a sabbatical year in Milan where he pursued his studies of Ambrosian Chant. While there, he first met Monsignor Montini, the future Pope Paul VI. His greatest success during this period was to revive and produce the early thirteenth century musical, *Play of Daniel*, which was a great success.

In 1957 he returned to St. Vincent Archabbey, after nearly a decade of studies. This was a time when the abbey was in great turmoil. The community elected the 38-year-old Rembert to be Abbot of the community. He held that position very successfully until 1963. Rembert became Abbot during the second Vatican council. It was his responsibility to lead his monastery and later the whole Benedictine order in Pope John's program of *aggiornamento* — bringing the Church into the modern world. "The council had a marked effect on me as a member of the Church and how I saw my place as leader of a monastic community." He hoped the council would move the Church out of the paralyzing stance of seeing itself under siege...to a more open and confident posture.

Sometime during the council, I realized that I had a narrow and restricting understanding of the Spirit's action. How presumptuous it was to think that any earthly body could control God's actions—God's Spirit working in church and world. Discernment became a new word in my vocabulary. God's Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ promised at Pentecost, blows where it will and is always out ahead of us building the Kingdom. We are but instruments of that Spirit. This was a freeing realization. (p. 105)

In 1968, at the age of 40, Rembert was elected Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order in Rome and held that post for the next six years. During those years Rembert describes a growing friendship with Pope Paul VI but simultaneously the development of a serious conflict with traditionalist Cardinals of the Curia, especially Cardinal Antoniutti. Their conflict was primarily over the autonomy and independence of the Benedic-

tine monasteries from central authority. The conflict was also over the role of women in the Church. After visiting the convents of Benedictine nuns all over the world, Rembert felt the need to facilitate the way women could use their gifts in the Church. "I had no idea how important it would become and how much opposition it would generate from Cardinal Antoniutti and many members of the curia." For example, after Rembert organized a summer program for Benedictine nuns at St. Anselmo, Cardinal Antoniutti canceled the program saying the nuns had no need of further formation. Rembert went directly to Pope Paul VI who ordered Antoniutti to allow the educational project to continue. (This same curial opposition to nuns continues today with the appointment of papal inquisitors to rein in the American sisters.)

Following this meeting, Rembert wrote in his notes "The Congregation of Religious wants a primate who will carry out its orders and take the blame if things go wrong. Such a procedure will be out of the question if their decisions go against my judgment. I am afraid they will have to execute them themselves."

I was particularly impressed by Rembert's reflections on his meeting with the major superiors of religious orders, especially Pedro Arrupé, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who had assigned me to a ministry to LGBT Catholics and gave me permission to publish my book, *The Church and the Homosexual* in 1976:

Arrupé resembled perfectly what I imagined St. Ignatius would have looked like. He laughed easily and made us all feel at home. For the next two years I found myself working closely with him. I counted that relationship as one of my great blessings during my years as primate. As I came to know him better and better, I realized he was the most saintly person I had ever encountered — free of all bias, truly compassionate, deeply prayerful, trusting of others, and intellectually very sharp. Perhaps his experiences in Japan during the war, his presence at Hiroshima with the dropping of the atom bomb in August 1945, and his many years as a superior contributed to making such a holy and yet totally human personality. If from all the people I have known in my life in the Church, I had to select only one for sainthood, it would be Pedro Arrupé. (p. 152)

(This was the same superior Pope John Paul II at a later date deposed as Superior General of the Jesuits because of his liberal views, substituting an octogenarian famous for his conservative stance. Among Arrupé's liberal views was the fact that he granted me permission to publish my book *The Church and the Homosexual*.)

The Benedictine Abbots requested that as their Primate Rembert should have a first-hand acquaintance with life in the monasteries around the world in order to meet the needs of the monks. Over the next six years Rembert traveled all over the

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world making 598 visits to Benedictine monasteries and convents in practically every country in the world. As a result he became one of the best known and respected leaders in the Catholic Church throughout the world.

My travels brought me into contact with many sensitive and remarkable women, and I prized my friendship with them. Their presence was en-livening for me; for the first time I realized how unbalanced my life and circle of friends had become since graduate school, rich with so many different men and women. All of this made me more aware of the lack of the feminine dimension on the Roman scene and especially in the offices of the curia. My travels brought me into contact with women who had a depth of human and spiritual understanding that I had never encountered before. (p.199)

Reflecting on his vow of celibacy now that he was aware of his homosexual orientation, he wrote these words: “Only now in my mid-forties could I come to terms with my basic orientation, admit it to myself, and then rethink what this meant to me. I never doubted my vocation or the significance of the vows I took; but now I had to see them in a new light, namely, not as the evidence of sin or evil, but as a new way of living the gospel of love that Jesus Christ preached. I wanted to be a person who lived by love not fear.” (p.199)

During one of his last visits with Pope Paul VI, the Pope told Rembert he was in trouble again with some cardinals of the curia. When Rembert asked why, the Pope responded, “You are very American, you know, you always say exactly what you think, and we are not used to that over here. But you have the complete confidence of the pope so why worry about a little cardinal?” (p. 214)

In 1977, Pope Paul VI appointed the fifty-year-old Rembert Archbishop of Milwaukee. Accepting that position, Rembert spent the next twenty-five years as Archbishop until his resignation in 2002. Following the same process he had followed as Abbot Primate, he began a process of visiting every parish and convent in his diocese, meeting every priest and nun personally. As a result he was respected and loved by a majority of the priests and sisters. “If we really believe in the action of the Holy Spirit, received in baptism, working in and through all the members, my vision of the church had to be a vision in which everyone shared and to which everyone contributed.” (p. 250)

For the next twenty-five years there was a constant battle between Archbishop Weakland’s efforts to carry out the reforms of Vatican II and bring about the enculturation of the American Catholic Church. His opponents in the Vatican curia and a fifth column at home of reactionary Catholics — such as Opus Dei and Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) who spied on him, recording every meeting he held, or sermon he gave — sent distorted reports to their allies in the curia. This fifth col-

umn was led by a polish monsignor who had many friends in the Vatican. These reports ended up on the papal desk. Every time Archbishop Weakland reported to Rome, he was called in by a series of curia officials who brought in their dossiers of reports demanding that the Archbishop defend himself.

The most notable event occurred with the nomination of Father Skiba as Archbishop Weakland’s auxiliary. The appointment was approved in Rome, but when the Pope was informed that Father Skiba held the theological position that there was no biblical basis to deny ordination to woman, the pope canceled the ordination. The archbishop flew to Rome with Skiba to plead his cause and, finally, the pope withdrew his objections. Commenting on that process Weakland wrote:

The process was impersonal, demeaning, unjust, and, most of all, lacking in any human sensitivity or concern for the life and reputation of Father Skiba. Moreover, the event confirmed a growing tendency in Rome to give credence to a powerful network of unofficial complaints that were influencing papal decisions. (p. 247)

“...Many curial officials had a pervasive negative feeling — almost a disdain — toward the Church in the United States. Americans were considered intellectually inferior, without an appreciation for the arts: we were pragmatic and superficial, traditionless and without any reverence for historical treasures.” (p. 211)

Recognizing his intellectual gifts and skills as a leader, the American National Bishops asked Archbishop Weakland to chair the committee that would draw up a document on the economy, seeking ways to implement gospel social values within the capitalism of the American economy. Weakland spent five years of incredible efforts from 1981 to 1986 to accomplish that project. He spends the whole of Chapter 12 of his memoirs outlining the extensive consultations on every level that went into writing the encyclical, as well as the enormous political effort on the part of the wealthy to try to offset what they perceived as the “socialist” bent of the encyclical. (The same critique now being leveled against Obama’s healthcare reform.) The final draft of the letter carried the title *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*. At the same time, he collaborated with Cardinal Bernadin in producing the American bishops’ letter on peace and nuclear warfare. In my mind these two encyclicals were the most important contributions of the American bishops in the history of the Catholic Church in America.

The letter on the economy seemed to be the last straw for Pope John Paul. He totally disagreed, if not with the content, then with the process of widespread consultation that went into the writing of the letters on peace and the economy, seeing that process as a democratization of authority and a serious threat to his exercise of centralized autocratic leadership. He secretly appointed an apostolic visitor to question how Archbishop

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Weakland governed his diocese. One of the issues raised was Weakland's outreach to homosexual Catholics:

On the issue of homosexuality, they wanted to discuss the group called "Dignity" and the fact that this group was attending a Sunday evening Mass in one of the churches. I smiled that I was being criticized because people were attending Mass on Sunday. (p. 322) (Shortly after, the Vatican issued an order forbidding any Catholic organization to allow Dignity to meet on its premises.)

Discussing the great exodus of heterosexuals from the priesthood, Archbishop Weakland made the following observation:

When the great exodus came, fewer priests with a homosexual orientation left the priesthood. Thus, the proportion of gays in the priesthood became larger than that found in the general male population, creating in some places signs of a visible gay clerical culture. As experience has shown, large numbers of gays exhibit deeply spiritual sensitivities that have made them effective priests. Moreover — I give here a personal opinion — many gay clergy were key players in keeping the Catholic Church in the United States alive and vital in that difficult period of transition. They carried the burden of overwork while they confronted the challenges stemming from the dramatic changes that the Church was undergoing. For all this—I am sure—they will receive no praise, only the admonition to remain closeted. (p. 339)

Weakland frequently urged the Vatican to consider the possibility of ordaining married men to no avail.

Another neuralgic point was the Archbishop's effort to reach out to the women in the Church. He held hearings throughout the diocese to give women a voice. As a pastor, he invited those women who had had an abortion to talk to him about their experience. Of course he was falsely reported to Rome as lax on the abortion issue.

The Archbishop writes a lengthy and enlightening discussion of his strenuous efforts to deal with the clergy abuse crisis (pp. 347-365, 409-414). He reflects on his own learning process, his successes and failures in dealing with pedophiles and the misrepresentation of his efforts in the media. He also discusses how frequently his efforts to deal with priest pedophiles were hamstrung by the Vatican which refused to allow American bishops the right to dismiss pedophiles from the priesthood.

In his last correspondence with the Vatican, Archbishop Weakland made this extraordinarily accurate prophetic statement about the Catholic Church in America:

I feel that this is an important moment for the church in the United States.... I expect that the moment will

be lost in arguing over unimportant matters and that the future does not look bright. I fear, most of all, the vitality of the church in the United States—that I now see diminishing—will disappear (as it did in the Dutch church) and give place to a greater indifferentism and personalism, so that the church will be more and more marginalized in American culture. (p. 386)

Toward the close of his memoirs, Archbishop Weakland does a critical assessment of the pontificate of John Paul II. He ended a lengthy assessment with these words:

He (John Paul II) did not read the signs of the times, namely, the openings of Vatican II toward more participatory government on all levels of church life.... Discerning the action of the Spirit in the whole Church was not on his agenda. This failure was probably the most important lost opportunity in the post-conciliar period. (pp. 407-408)

In the epilogue of the book called "Final Reflections," Archbishop Weakland recalls a sermon he gave in 2007 at a retreat for priests of the Milwaukee diocese five years after his resignation. He had spent those five years primarily in contemplative prayer and reflection, while he wrote his memoirs. One thing stood out most clearly for him from his eighty year pilgrimage:

I believe that God uses humans, with all our foibles and warts, to bring about a kingdom of mutual love and service. I believe that we are a communion of saints, but also, in the here and now, a communion of sinners. When the organizational structure does not serve or facilitate these relationships but instead becomes an end in itself, it needs to be reformed, not abandoned.

In his homily to the priests, he addressed the question -- what had he learned over 80 years?

I believe the Catholic Church I loved and had served for many years was in denial.... I realized that the Church had to do more dying before it could fulfill the mission given it by Christ. I was distressed that Church leaders, myself included, tended to blame everyone but themselves for the crisis in which the Church finds itself — the dearth of vocations to priesthood and the religious life, the rise of secularism in countries once Christian, the shifting of many in countries once Catholic to other Christian groups, the deaf ear given to the Church's teachings on moral issues by many practicing Catholics, and the inability to deal adequately and in a gospel fashion with problems like sexual abuse.

We are, Weakland wrote, "...in a lifelong spiritual search to become more Christ-like through dying and rising to a new life. We had to die to our old selves as church and as individuals in that church. Our conversion is a slow, life-long process."

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To what should the Church be dying today? Weakland answers that from his own experience:

The first and most serious fault the Church should die to in our day is its arrogance. Arrogance is defined as 'overbearing pride evidenced by a superior manner toward inferiors'. I tended to be too arrogant, too cocky, too dismissive of other points of view. Along with arrogance goes a claim of perfectionism. The Church is not as the Vatican claimed a perfect society, but a 'society of struggling sinners.' We tend to confuse the ideal with the reality; we like to give the world the appearance of being the perfect model. In this, we deny the sinful reality that lies beneath and in our day has become ever more visible. Priests and bishops are also sinful and need the same kinds of spiritual supports as the laity.

The Church must also die to its pretense at omniscience, which led bishops and priests to think the faithful are so ignorant that we must give them all the answers, that they really want to be led and not take responsibility for their own spiritual life. (pp. 421-422)

The sum of these failings has led to what Archbishop Weakland calls "the neo-Pelagianism of our American culture, i.e. the belief that we can solve any problem with our own ingenuity and skill." (p. 422)

All the great spiritual leaders of the past recognized the spiritual need of a fundamental experience of our powerlessness on the human level to experience redemption. This experience of powerlessness is at the center of all twelve-step spiritual programs to escape addiction. We must Let go! Let God! A striking example of that redemptive process was revealed in the life of Ted Kennedy.

If we can undertake this spiritual transformation, then the recent disgrace of the Catholic Church can become a moment of redemption and transformation and a sign of hope. "Our dying does not of itself create new life, but the wearing away that comes from our dying to our corroding attitudes and actions permit the image of Jesus Christ to shine through. If this is true of us personally, will it not be true of the Church as well?"

A final reflection on this remarkable autobiography: I am struck by how all the special qualities Archbishop Weakland manifested during his long career were connected, even if unconsciously, to his homosexual orientation. Close to a century ago Karl Jung wrote these words about his homosexual clients:

If we take the concept of homosexuality out of its narrow psychopathological setting and give it a wider context, we can see that it has positive aspects as well....This orientation gives the homosexual a great capacity for friendship, which often creates ties of astonishing tenderness between men, and may even rescue friendship between the sexes from its present limbo of the impossible.

He may have good taste and an aesthetic sense which are fostered by the presence of a feminine streak.

Then, he may be supremely gifted as a teacher because of his almost feminine insight and tact.

He is likely to have a feeling for history, and to be conservative in the best sense and cherish the values of the past.

Often he is endowed with a wealth of religious feelings which help him to bring the *ecclesia spiritualis* into reality, and a spirituality which makes him responsive to revelation. (The Collected Works, vol.9, pp. 86-87)

In an extraordinary way, Archbishop Weakland's life manifested every special gift that Jung attributes to the male with a homosexual orientation, especially the final gift of "bringing the *ecclesia spiritualis* into reality".

Another remarkable gay spiritual leader in the Catholic church, Matthew Kelty of Gethsemane Abbey, beloved guest master and confessor to Thomas Merton, wrote this about the special capacity of gay men for a contemplative life style:

Sometimes I wish I were more like others. I am aware of a difference; some insight into things, some capacity for the poetic and the spiritual which sets me off from the others. Nor do I hesitate to say that this has some relationship to homosexuality... people of my kind are often so placed, as I have worked it out, that they are more closely related to the 'anima' than is usual....What such people yearn for is solace in their solitude, and an understanding of their fate, their destiny....The man with a strong anima will always experience some inadequacy until he comes to terms with his inner spirit and establishes communion — no small achievement.... Perhaps a healthy culture will enable those so gifted by God or nature (i.e. homosexuals) to realize their call and respond to it in fruitful ways. (Flute Solo: Reflections of a Trappist Hermit p. 45)

I want to express my deepest gratitude to God and to Archbishop Rembert Weakland, my gay brother in Christ, for the hope-inducing gift of his remarkable memoirs.

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HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

