

*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.*

## The sin of heterosexism?

by Casey Lopata with permission

*This article appeared in the November 2008 edition of Fortunate Families Newsletter*

The election of the first African-American [actually biracial] president generated much media coverage and discussion about the history of racism and steps taken by various people and institutions that served to move the country toward racial equality. One such step was the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1979 Pastoral Letter on Racism, *Brothers and Sisters to Us*.



This election season also saw the passage of Proposition 8 "to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry" in California, and the passage of anti same-sex marriage legislation in Arizona and Florida. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the lobbying efforts of the bishops in these states, supported these initiatives. All this generated discussion of the history of marriage and how it has changed.

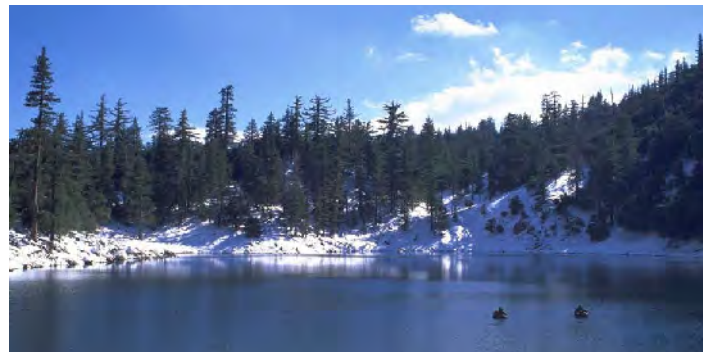
Connecting the dots, news analysts reminded us that it was 1967 before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (*Loving vs. Virginia*) against Virginia's ban on inter-racial marriage, and overturned such laws that were still in effect in 15 other states. Barack Obama's parents were married in 1961. Had they lived in one of these states, rather than in Hawaii, they would not have been able to be married.

Connecting the dots myself, I re-read the Bishops' 1979 pastoral letter on racism, and wondered when the bishops might write a similar pastoral letter related to sexual orientation and heterosexism. When they do, perhaps they could save a lot of time if they used the same document and simply substituted words related to sexual orientation and heterosexism (i.e., the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual) for words related to racism.

What do you think? Below is a key section of the U.S. bishops 1979 pastoral letter with deleted words ~~crossed out~~, and substituted words in *italics*.

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### THE SIN OF ~~RACISM~~ HETEROSEXISM

~~Racism~~ *Heterosexism* is a sin; a sin that divides the human family, blots out the image of God among specific members of that family, and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father.

~~Racism~~ *Heterosexism* is the sin that says some human beings are inherently superior and others essentially inferior because of ~~race~~ *sexual orientation*. It is the sin that makes ~~racial characteristics~~ *sexual orientation* the determining factor for the exercise of human rights. It mocks the words of Jesus: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you." Indeed, ~~racism~~ *heterosexism* is more than a disregard for the words of Jesus; it is a denial of the truth of the dignity of each human being revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation.

In order to find the strength to overcome the evil of ~~racism~~ *heterosexism*, we must look to Christ. In Christ Jesus "there does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freedom, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus." As Pope John Paul II

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has said so clearly, “Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is toward Christ, the Redeemer of [humanity.]” It is in Christ, then, that the Church finds the central cause for its commitment to justice, and to the struggle for the human right and dignity of all persons.

When we give in to our fears of the other because he or she is of a ~~race~~ *sexual orientation* different from ourselves, when we prejudice the motives of others precisely because they are of a different ~~color~~ *sexual orientation*, when we stereotype or ridicule the other because of ~~racial characteristics and heritage~~ *sexual orientation*, we fail to heed the command of the Prophet Amos: “Seek good and not evil, that you may live; then truly will the Lord... be with you as you claim!... Then let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailling stream.”

Today in our country men, women, and children are being denied opportunities for full participation and advancement in our society because of their ~~race~~ *sexual orientation*. The educational, legal, and financial systems, along with other structures and sectors of our society, impede people’s progress and narrow their access because they are ~~black, Hispanic, Native American or Asian~~ *not heterosexual*.

The structures of our society are subtly ~~racist~~ *heterosexist*, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous but nonetheless real. The sin is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. As our recent pastoral letter on moral values states: “The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not ceased, least we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it.”

Do you agree? Or not? Please send your comments to [info@fortunatefamilies.com](mailto:info@fortunatefamilies.com).

*NOTE: Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata are co-founders of Fortunate Families. Casey serves as Newsletter Editor. For more information go to <http://www.fortunatefamilies.com>.* ▼



The **QV** (*Quarterly Voice*) is a publication of DignityUSA. It supplements DignityUSA’s *DATELINE*, a monthly newsletter. **QV** is distributed in hardcopy, as well as in electronic format to persons on the Dignity News-List-Serve.

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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.

**Educating Educators**

By Ann Franczyk. With permission by author and the Editor of Fortunate Families Newsletter. Article appeared in the May 2008 edition of the newsletter.

Always Our Children (AOC), Springfield, MA, a parish based support group for parents and families of LGBT persons, has a mission with three objectives: **support, education and affirmation.**



**Support** is the primary objective of our group that often seems to come naturally, especially for those of us whose

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children’s sexual orientation has been known for some time. Reaching out with compassion, empathy and love to these parents, as the U.S. Bishops’ AOC (*Always Our Children*) document (<http://www.usccb.org/laity/always.shtml>) suggests, helps them deal with fear which often nearly paralyzes them in the initial months of their child’s revelation. Over time, as the Fortunate Families Parents Voice Project Survey (<http://www.fortunatefamilies.com/voiceProject.htm>) suggests, parents are frequently able to embrace and even celebrate their child’s sexual orientation, perceiving their gay child as God’s gift to them. They “come out” often dedicating themselves to speaking out so as to change the world by sharing their families’ stories.

Integrally involved in these parents’ journeys and evolving acceptance is the **education** which enabled that **affirmation** to occur. This is where the matter often becomes thorny. Questions such as “but what does the Church say about homosexuality?” and “how can we fully embrace our child when the Church’s ultimate message is: ‘love the sinner, hate the sin?’” However, over time compassionate persons in parish ministries, using reliable Catholic educational resources and through the never-ending act of active listening, actually find that parents often experience a tremendous amount of spiritual growth and deepen their experience of what it means to be a faithful Catholic. For some, this is a painful break from a well-ordered Church that could always be trusted. For others it is the freedom to exercise conscience. *Parents often become activists.*

Our mission vigorously emphasizes the need for **education, not only among our parents, but among those within our wider Church community.** We are passionate about the need to “**share our stories**” beyond our gathering place. Our group’s educational initiatives include: conversations with pastoral care ministers and 28 parish pastors, religious education directors, religious women, campus ministers, faculty training at our flagship Catholic High School, and most recently a presentation to some 25 diocesan elementary school principals. What follows is a description of that event.

As I faced the audience to read my son Mark’s “coming out” letter, my eyes were blurry. I was overcome that something I dreamt about doing for so long was actually happening. To address Catholic elementary school principals about the needs and lived realities of LGBT students seemed groundbreaking. I read Mark’s letter written shortly after he had turned 16. He bravely wrote: “Please don’t be upset with me. Trust me when I say that my being gay is something I can’t change and don’t want to change. I love you, know that! I’ve been gay for as long as I’ve known and have always loved you and you me. Nothing changes!” The audience listened intently, including the principal of the Catholic elementary school my children had attended and

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who had known them well. Or, so she thought. Mark, it turns out, had been part of that often emotionally confused and pain-filled invisible minority of adolescents dealing with the self revelation that they *were* or *might be* gay.

Jeff Perrotti—Harvard Psychology Department and founder of the Massachusetts Department of Education Safe Schools program for LGBT youth—asked the audience to share their connection to the issue. One educator tearfully spoke lovingly of her family member who had been married and closeted, and who only later in life was able to face his homosexuality. She suggested that the opportunity to speak of her loved one was freeing. Another principal stated that 16 years prior a 13 year old student asked her to help him tell his parents he was gay. She went on to say that professionally it was the most difficult, yet compassionate, thing she had ever done.

We showed a film clip in which elementary school children spoke of their same sex parents. Their testimonies were filled with incredible wisdom, reporting they often had to overcome prejudices and bullying. Only their parents’ embracing love and support allowed them to do this. This is especially poignant in Massachusetts where same sex marriage is legal and where some same sex parents are surprisingly choosing to send their children to Catholic schools.

Two moms read their children’s testimony of growing up gay in Catholic elementary school. One mom’s story was particularly painful. She described many sleepless nights as she and her husband weathered their child’s extremely difficult passage through grade school, being victimized and bullied due to the perception of his “being different.” Following her story, the principal of the school her child attended expressed her sorrow for the pain this family had endured. At the time, she thought the child was perhaps struggling with his sexual orientation, but was concerned that conversation about sexual orientation was simply not a topic about which people spoke. Thank God this young man’s Catholic high school experience was quite different and he is now a successful college student, comfortable with who he is.

Another mom shared her son’s story. He spoke of feeling different, disconnected from his classmates, later realizing that some of the difference was related to his sexuality. As he heard kids regularly attack each other with words such as “fag” or “queer,” he learned that being gay was unacceptable. He is now a doctor of psychology at Harvard and recently married his partner of 10 years, a practicing physician. As a prospective parent he will be looking for a school system that recognizes and values diversity, and where his son or daughter will find respect and appreciation.

Some common themes arose. Several spoke of knowing teachers, students, parents of students, priests and family members who were gay and closeted. These situations were a source of concern and pain. Many felt that valuable years had

been wasted within their own families due to a lack of acceptance of LGBT persons. They admitted to feeling challenged as to how to handle these situations with compassion and sensitivity. What was apparent is the need for further education and discussion.

Some educators spoke of their need to learn how to explain to a well qualified gay person that they were not a candidate for a teaching position if they were living in an intimate relationship with another gay person. Another educator suggested that it seemed perplexing that LGBT teachers suppress their identities out of concern for children’s welfare, when clearly students need to be accepting and respectful of all. Several expressed concern about the welfare of children who may be bullied or ostracized due to having gay parents. One educator expressed her discomfort in having books in the school library about same sex parents despite the fact that children of same sex parents attend their schools.

Most educators expressed their need for further education about LGBT adolescents and how to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment, *especially* within the framework of Catholic teaching. Our discussion briefly became somewhat uncomfortable when a principal, who identified herself as a married Catholic, questioned how she could accept “all of this” in light of Church teaching. That thorny query yet again! Often, when parents of LGBT children share their stories with others, some individuals, particularly those who have rigid views, become uncomfortable as their perceptions and biases become shaken. In response, another principal forthrightly stated that the bottom line is that we can no longer pretend that we do not have LGBT students and children of same sex parents in our schools. She suggested that we ignored this fact too long and we must deal with it.

Overwhelmingly, these caring principals seemed concerned about how to provide for the needs of students, parents and their own LGBT teachers within the framework of Church teaching. The superintendent concluded by saying a Part Two of this discussion would occur, including a moral theologian who would present a balanced view on homosexuality in light of Church teaching. And so we realized, again, that the key to this conversation is education, education, and more education.

We have LGBT students and teachers in our Catholic elementary schools; we have children of same sex parents in our elementary Catholic schools. Our responsibility is to make these environments safe, loving places where the needs of **all** are identified and respected.

As Mary Lynn Murphy, mother of a gay Catholic High School alum, put it:

- Let us celebrate their (our LGBT students) dazzling beauty in all their colors, their personalities and their identities.
- Let us not allow politics, points of view, or platforms to separate us from one another, or from our children.

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- Let our schools be secure places, but more than secure.

Let them be dynamic, egalitarian places where the identities and contributions of all students are valued, where justice prevails in the halls and in the hearts of our students, where diversity is treasured, respected and celebrated.

#### Editor's Notes:

**Ann Hoffman Franczyk**, the proud mother of two children, Mark and Kata, resides in West Springfield, MA, with her husband Chet Franczyk, a practicing pediatrician. A graduate of Boston College (BA), Case Western Reserve (BSN), and U Conn, (MSN and Post Grad) Ann is a Nurse Practitioner in the Division of Noninvasive Cardiology at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. When their son Mark came out in 1998, Ann became active in PFLAG's Safe Schools program and has spoken in numerous venues including high schools, colleges, and community forums. She is active in her parish where she has taught CCD and serves as both a lector and Eucharistic Minister. Ann and Chet met with Springfield Bishop, Timothy McDonnell, in February 2006, and expressed their desire to begin an Always Our Children outreach ministry with parents of GLBT persons. Ann and Chet co-founded Always Our Children Springfield, Massachusetts which has become an active, flourishing ministry dedicated to support, education and affirmation. Even though the organization is a parish-based support group, it is the only ministry of its kind in the Diocese. Therefore it serves as a resource beyond the local parish.

Ann also serves as a member of the Board of Directors, Fortunate Families: Catholic Families with Lesbian Daughters and Gay Sons. She may be contacted at [Annrun76@aol.com](mailto:Annrun76@aol.com).

Ann writes, "Before becoming involved in Catholic ministry to GLBT persons and their families, I was very involved and continue to be involved in PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) activities including the Safe Schools program. I have a particular interest as it appears that this is often when GLBT children and young adults begin to sense that they "don't belong" and often suffer as an invisible minority. We are thrilled to have begun the conversation in our diocesan schools. As medical professionals and the parents of a young gay man, we wanted to make the Bishops' document *Always Our Children* a living document. Although not perfect, it is...the most pastorally written document the Bishops have authored to date."

Ann writes further, "We firmly believe that having conversation with educators is key. Young people are coming out younger and younger so it is vitally important that these educators are aware of their often silent struggles. We hope to continue our work in the schools next year. Our power is in our stories!"

When doing faculty training programs, the presenters feel it important that alums speak of their experiences in the school. In

conjunction with the presentation to the elementary school principals made in February 2008, Ann and Chet's gay son, Mark, provided the following essay as testimony. ▼

## Reflections on my Catholic Grade School Experience

By Mark Franczyk with permission.

In grade school, there's little opportunity to be different.

To stand out is to fail in a game where everyone wants to blend into the crowd. In retrospect, nine years in Catholic school—kindergarten through eighth grade—feel like little more than the frantic clamoring of some fifty-odd polo shirt and plaid skirt clad students in a battle to be the least remarkable.

And why not? What could be easier than being like everyone else? Well, when you know deep down that, *no*, you definitely are not like everyone else—then there's almost nothing worse. And in Catholic grade school, where anything outside the prescribed curriculum was off-limits for discussion, you knew there was no choice but to keep it to yourself.

By the fourth grade, I knew very well that I was not like everyone else. By the fifth grade, I was able to articulate for myself that my difference was that I was gay. I was able to rationalize the situation for myself at the time: I'm 11! I don't need to worry about this for awhile. Nobody's dating in the fifth grade.

But by junior high, half of the class had focused on 'dating' (and I do mean to emphasize 'dating' in quotes). They approached this activity with such rapt attention that I'm confident that 8th grade pre-algebra remains an elusive mystery to many. Perhaps I can thank my being gay on my ability to plot a line graph to this day. But the simple truth was that I was cornered into having to feign interest in these games, expending a lot of energy on lies to remain part of the group, and ultimately feeling like more of an outsider.

And while I can't blame my peers for being who they were—and I did have some very close friendships throughout grade school—I still feel as though I could never trust or confide in the teachers and faculty.

In eighth grade religion class, a classmate made the comment that all gay people should be isolated on an island where they could die so that no one else in world would be infected with AIDS. The comment was not a side remark but was raised in discussion for all to hear. The teacher said nothing. In that room of 25 students, I now know that there were at least two who were gay and two others who had family members who had died of AIDS. In that moment, I resolved that I would not trust these teachers.

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But my experience wasn't miserable. Even though I didn't tell my parents I was gay until I was 16, no matter how trapped and isolated I may have felt at times at school, I was always comfortable at home. But not everyone is so lucky.

The sad irony is that the changes that could make schools more welcoming for gay kids, for the children of gay parents, or for anyone who is slightly outside the cookie-cutter form, are the simplest things.

Talk about it! Ignoring the topic will not make it go away any more than talking about it will make it a problem. There are gay children in your classrooms who are very much aware that it is not being talked about.

*Editor's Notes:*

Mark attended Catholic Grammar school grades K through 8. His grammar school teachers were primarily lay teachers with a few religious women sprinkled in. He graduated from 8th grade in 1996, first in his class and went on to a private non-Catholic high school.

Mark's mother Ann writes, "Mark's high school experience was wonderful. He came out to us in his sophomore year, just after turning 16. There were openly out gay faculty, a GSA (gay-straight alliance) and although pockets of homophobia existed...he was able to thrive, which he did. Thank God. I am quite sure his experience would have been very different if he had attended a Catholic high school." Mark graduated from Columbia University in 2004. He currently lives with his boyfriend of eight years in New York City. ▼

**A Letter to an Archbishop**

*By Timothy J. MacGeorge, Dignity/Washington, with permission*

November 9, 2008

Most Rev. Donald W. Wuerl, S.T.D.  
 c/o Rev. Msgr. John J. Enzler  
 Vicar for Development  
 PO Box 98076  
 Washington, DC 20090-8076

Dear Archbishop Wuerl and Msgr. Enzler,

I am responding to your recent letter for this year's Archbishop's Appeal. As a past contributor, I have been pleased to support those efforts in the Archdiocese of Washington which support the "least among us" by meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the poor, the homeless, the dying, the immigrant, and those whom our society can so easily forget. Though my contributions both to the

archdiocese and my parish of St. Joseph on Capitol Hill have been modest, I have tried to give what I could to support what I know have been, and I pray will continue to be, very worthwhile efforts.

However, I am writing to say that I will not contribute to the Archbishop's Appeal for this year. Newspapers have reported that the bishops of the United States, through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), recently contributed \$200,000 in California toward the successful effort to pass Proposition 8 and make legal once again state-sponsored discrimination against God's gay and lesbian children. What small contribution I would have given to the Archbishop's Appeal will instead be donated to efforts to promote the civil rights of gay and lesbian people throughout our country.

The bishops of California and the USCCB continue to speak about "defending marriage," though they fail to see the illogic of their position. After all, why would those who wish to share in something simultaneously "attack" it? Proposition 8 and other efforts throughout the United States to support same-sex relationships would do nothing to harm or diminish either the civil marriages that all heterosexual men and women may enter, or the sacramental marriages that the Church recognizes between men and women who are baptized. These civil efforts are about the right to civil marriage which allows gay men and women to publicly solemnize their committed relationships and share in the same civil and legal benefits accorded to other civil marriages. Gay and lesbian people forge their relationships in love, according to their God-given nature. Even the Church recognizes that sexual orientation is a given, not a choice; to deny God's gay children the right to fulfill their nature is not only an affront to their human dignity, but it is an affront to God Himself.

This past October 12th marked the 10th anniversary of the brutal slaying of Matthew Shepard on the plains of Wyoming. This twenty-one year old man was murdered because he dared to be true to himself, a young gay man trying to find his way in the world. The world the bishops envision is one in which God's gay and lesbian children would be told once again to deny their God-given selves; a world in which acts of hatred toward gay people would no doubt increase. While I do not believe the bishops would consciously promote physical violence against gay people, their message to gay people that they are somehow "less than" and "not fully human" promotes a violence to the heart and soul that is equally deadly.

The moral emptiness of the bishops' position on this matter, as well as the partisan political actions they have taken, compel me to write and tell you why I choose not to support your appeal this year. Even as I do so, please be assured of my prayers for you and all bishops of the United States, that they may come to see ALL God's children, including those whom God chose to create as gay, as members of their flock, deserving the full rights and dignity of their baptism and their citizenship.

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In Christ's Peace!

Timothy J. MacGeorge  
Washington, DC

P.S. – for more information on Catholic perspectives on the issue of homosexuality, I encourage you to visit the following Web sites:

- Fortunate Families: [www.fortunatefamilies.com](http://www.fortunatefamilies.com)
- DignityUSA: [www.dignityusa.org](http://www.dignityusa.org)
- New Ways Ministry: [www.newwaysministry.org](http://www.newwaysministry.org)
- Soulforce: [www.soulforce.org](http://www.soulforce.org) (interreligious organization devoted to LGBT rights through nonviolent resistance in the spirit of Gandhi and Rev. Martin Luther King) ▼

## BOOK REVIEW

**Queer and Catholic, Amie M. Evans and Trebor Healey, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 350 pp.**

Reviewed by Scott D. Pomfret, Boston, Author of *Since My Last Confession: A Gay Catholic Memoir*  
[www.sincemylastconfession.com](http://www.sincemylastconfession.com)

The powerful new anthology *Queer and Catholic* is a church. Not the staid, scary, rule-bound place in which you took your first sacraments, but the anarchic temple you wish you had grown up in—jammed with sexual outlaws and artists, glorious perversion (and pigmentation), yet also the miraculous transformations, desperate petitioning, “sighing, rocking, sweating, suffering” (as writer Jeff Mann put it in a lusty-but-intellectual BDSM selection called “Binding the God”) and occasional ecstasy that makes the collection peculiarly Catholic.

Forget gaydar. No sixth sense is quite so powerful as the ability of a Catholic to recognize with a rueful laugh a co-religionist at a hundred yards. Queer and Catholic prompts repeated instances of recognition. There’s not a stranger among the writers gathered here, a remarkable fact considering the widely diverse perspectives (Irish, Cubans, Spanish-Caribbean, non-Catholics, Poles, leathermen, radical faeries, etc.) and forms (poetry, memoir, rant, prayer, academic essay, interview and fiction) assembled here by editors Trebor Healey and Amie M. Evans.

What’s to recognize?

- **Shame and Self-Abuse:** “I knew that my soul was doomed to burn in hell for all eternity. I also knew there was no way that I was going to be able to give up jerking off.” (Ernest Posey, “The Erotic Education of Elmer Rosewater”)

- **Hope:** Alistair McCartney illustrates his “very Catholic desire not to observe doctrines but to pervert them” with an alphabetized index of perversions with titles like “Heaven, Restroom In” (asserting that anonymous, passionate and fleeting encounters are available in the men’s room of the Hereafter, but—since the concept of “fleeting” does not square with any notion of eternity—“Perhaps in Heaven all passion is enduring.”)

- **Performance anxiety about confession:** Lizbeth Babcock expresses relief that her being an illegitimate child was “one of those good sins that I could keep on using over time.”

- **Juridical notions of spiritual life:** Editor Healey describes the role of the saints as “attorneys to plead our case” with the Virgin Mary being chief among these celestial advocates.

- **Suffering:** Mann, a non-Catholic interested in transcendence through BDSM, acknowledges that “I could certainly grasp how suffering and endurance might serve as paths toward spiritual and emotional maturity.”

- **Childhood grandiosity:** Editor Evans writes, “I finally understood why God had not come to me [when I called] and finished my homework [for me]: He was saving me for big miracles, for saint-sized miracles. . . . I started a notebook to keep track of my sacrifices and sufferings.”

- **Helpless fury:** Kevin Killian conflates artists and literary figures dead of AIDS “into one unruly figure with a queer complaint against God. Standing on the desert’s edge, a man at the horizon, shaking a fist against an implacable empty sky.”

Healey describes the purpose of the collection as “an effort to assess the full experience, range, catastrophe, blessing or pathology of a Catholic upbringing vis-à-vis our queer selves,” and the editors have wisely sorted these disparate pieces about growing up Catholic into rough categories for easier digestion: sections are entitled, respectively, “Apostates,” “Heretics,” “Nuns,” “Priests,” “Saints,” and “Angels.” Yet one phrase unites this collection and repeats itself like a mantra: *This is my body*. Incarnation—in which gay bodies are rescued from seeming annihilation by doctrine—is the dominant theme.

Thus, boys at school “replace cold prayer with spattered vowels of inarticulate delight,” and puberty transforms a schoolyard crucifix: “This was a muscular, healthy, all-American joe of a Jesus, a Jesus with tits. A Jesus with biceps. Jesus with sweat and a navel and killer abs . . . . Inescapable, human, masculine, naked.” Thomas Burke describes his *schola praeparatoria*, where the Jesuit teacher insisted that Latin class take place in the natatorium where nude swimming was required and “I stood alternately luxuriating in and being embarrassed by my nakedness. . . . I barely weighed one hundred pounds and had bushes of pubic hair and underarm hair of which I was quite proud.” Lying next to the transperson to whom she is married, “an exfoliated man whose eyes are smudged with yesterday’s eyeliner,” Helen Boyd writes, “I’ve always, and inexplicably, felt that all’s well between me and my God.” Gay priest and New York Fire Department chaplain Father Mychal Judge stares at the pretty boys out on a Friday night in Manhattan and exclaims, “Isn’t God wonderful!”

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The strongest expression of the theme is Jane M. Grovijahn's essay "Reclaiming the Power of Incarnation," in which she locates the holy of holies — "my most exquisite God-consciousness"—in her cunt (her word, not mine). "Human physicality is crucial in what and how we know God," Grovijahn writes. "How could I know God without my body?"

Each of the writings in *Queer and Catholic* is thus an exercise in frazzled, sometimes triumphant, remembering, in which we lovingly reassemble the gay bodies the Church told us to cast off, the limbs and parts we were told would lead us to evil. *This is my body*, indeed. By the end of the anthology, we GLBT Catholics find ourselves asking, as editor Evans does, "How come none of the [Commandments] asked that we love ourselves?" ▼

voices of acclaimed religion scholars, theologians, ministers and teachers such as Mark Jordan, Robert E. Goss, Jim Mitulski, Mary Hunt, Mel White, Daniel Helminiak and Troy Perry are raised to cite the influence McNeill's studies—and the example of his personal life—have had on their professional research and lives.

This book appears in coordination with the upcoming release of a video documentary about John McNeill, *Uncommon Jesuit*, produced by Festschrift contributor Brendan Fay.

John McNeill was co-founder of the New York City chapter of DignityUSA, a group for Catholic gays and lesbians. For over thirty-five years, he has been active in a ministry to gay Christians through retreats, workshops, lectures, publications, etc. In 2007, he was the recipient of the Human Rights Campaign Lifetime Achievement Award.

You can order at [Queerbooks.com](http://Queerbooks.com), [TLAVideo.com](http://TLAVideo.com), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or your local bookseller.

McNeill is available for interviews. He can be reached at [jjmcneill@aol.com](mailto:jjmcneill@aol.com) ▼

**RECENT BOOK RELEASES**

**Sex As God Intended: A Reflection on Human Sexuality As Play**

by John J. McNeill  
Lethe Press, Paperback, 268 pages, Retail price: \$20.00  
[www.lethepressbooks.com](http://www.lethepressbooks.com)

Noted biblical scholar, moral theologian, and psycho-therapist **John J. McNeill** (*The Church and the Homosexual*) offers further insight into the portrayal of sex in the Bible and discusses how the original sex positive viewpoints have been twisted by the Church and society over the years. Citing the generally overlooked Biblical book *The Songs of Songs*, McNeill argues that human sexual activity represents a form of "play" that provides a source of pleasure, joy and love. From the beginning, he says, this is what God intended sex to be, not a cause of judgment, oppression, and resentment.

McNeill is a former Jesuit priest who clashed with Church officials over his compassionate and sex-positive teachings about homosexuality. And this current book continues in that tradition with a chapter on the very timely topic of Gay Marriage. McNeill makes the case that gay people gaining the right to marriage equality promises to improve society's ideas about traditional heterosexual marriage; same sex marriage would be good for everybody, if only because it offers a model of relationship as equal partnership. *Sex as God Intended* concisely presents wisdom about sexuality and homosexuality that McNeill has gained over his 83 year life.

New York-based psychotherapist and retreat director Ken Page contributed a Foreword.

This volume also offers a Festschrift celebrating the life and work of John J. McNeill. In a collection of thirteen essays,

**Are You Guys Brothers?**

By Brian McNaught  
available at <http://www.brian-mcnaught.com>  
Paperback (6x9) \$15.95  
Electronic Book \$4.95

*Are You Guys Brothers?*, a question asked of male couples throughout the world, is a timely, candid, and very personal look at intimacy and marriage through the lens of an immensely happy and very successful 32-year relationship.

Brian McNaught and Ray Struble, both Irish Catholic, Midwestern children of seven, met in Boston in their twenties as one was beginning a career as a "gay activist" and the other was entering the world of commercial banking. Their love became the envy of their families and friends, marked by open communication, good humor, patience and spirituality. They would need all four to navigate the mine-filled waters of childhood sexual abuse, alcoholism, intense religious and political opposition, dramatically-disparate incomes, a sexually-open relationship, aging, erectile dysfunction, and an often unsupportive and frequently dysfunctional gay community. Today, they are officially married, and the "gay activist" is now educating his spouse's former Wall Street colleagues on gay issues in offices around the world.

This book is funny, deeply moving, and highly instructive, of particular interest to gay men and women who seek guidance in building and maintaining their relationships, and to

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**Are You Guys Brothers?**  
Continued from page 8

heterosexual men and women worldwide who want to better understand not only gay people but also how to get past the roadblocks to intimacy in their own relationships.

Named “the godfather of gay diversity training” by *The New York Times*, Brian McNaught is an internationally-acclaimed presenter to corporate executives and government officials on the topic of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender workplace issues. His spouse, Ray Struble, was the Managing Director of Global Equity Sales for Lehman Brothers. Brian is a certified sexuality educator and counselor, the author of five other watershed books on sexuality and the creator of six highly-praised educational DVDs that are used in training throughout the world. All of his books have been required reading on college campuses and his DVDs have been shown on PBS television stations throughout the United States. Brian wrote a syndicated column in the gay press for twelve years, co-hosted a radio program, served as the Mayor of Boston’s liaison to the gay community, and currently advises former Surgeon General David Satcher on matters of national sexual health. He graduated from Marquette University with a BA in Journalism in 1970, was a conscientious objector to the war in Vietnam, was fired for being gay by the Catholic newspaper of the Archdiocese of Detroit, and has worked since 1974 as an educator on gay, and more recently, transgender issues.

You can learn more about Brian or reach him at [www.brian-mcnaught.com](http://www.brian-mcnaught.com).

**Spirituality for Our Global Community:  
Beyond Traditional Religion to a World  
at Peace**

by Daniel A. Helminiak  
Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc. (2008)  
Hardbound \$65.00, Paperback \$19.95

In this groundbreaking book, Daniel Helminiak provides a crucial spiritual option—a middle path between modern society’s secular materialism and traditional religion’s other-worldly focus and institutional dogmatism.

Helminiak gives us a compelling vision of a global spirituality that downplays beliefs and emphasizes the essential spiritual dynamics of the common human quest for wholeness, goodness, freedom and community. Spirituality for a Global Community builds on the spiritual facet of our common humanity, stressing wholesome living on planet Earth, and opening onto the range of religions and belief in God.

Daniel Helminiak proposes a “generic” or “naturalistic” spirituality free from religious particularities, a genuinely spiritual vision that cuts across all religions and cultures. He

does so, not by sifting through the religions to find what they have in common, but going much more deeply, by pinpointing humanity’s own built-in requirements for open-ended living. His guide is the late Canadian philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan, called the Thomas Aquinas of the twentieth century, whose analysis of consciousness or “the human spirit” supplies a common basis—open to sane religion and reasonable belief in God, to be sure—that could support a global community of the third millennium. Daniel shows how this “core spirituality” not only informs pious believers and the world’s religions but also pertains to atheists and agnostics, to businesses, government, and secular agencies, and to society overall. In a world of diversity and pluralism, our common humanity offers our best hope for prosperous peace.

Daniel A. Helminiak is professor of psychology at the University of West Georgia. His books include the international bestseller *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*. His personal website is [www.visionsofdaniel.net](http://www.visionsofdaniel.net).

“In search of a sustainable vision of global harmony, Daniel Helminiak offers an honest and careful analysis of the divisiveness of traditional religion as most people know it, and its failure to meet the needs of a global community. He proposes a well-differentiated analysis of our common spirituality, which lies at the core of both religious commitments and secular humanistic pursuits. This book is an important contribution to the current dialogue on human wholeness, and on what constitutes a responsible approach to life in a globalizing world.”—Elena Mustakova-Possardt, University of West Georgia

