

At the past meeting of Dignity, which was Dec. 12th, a report of the Gay Religious Liberal Conference was given; according to the report from our members who attended, the conference seemed successful and we hope that good things will spring from it.

A potluck dinner is scheduled for our February meeting - a first and it should be great fun!

Our January meeting will be on Saturday the 23rd. at 7:30 in the evening. The meeting will be held, once again, at St. Brendan's Church, 310 South Van Ness Ave.... in the parish hall beneath the church rectory - see you there.

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When the temperature has gone too high, the doctor attempts to lower it; when it has sunk too low, he attempts to raise it. When a person cannot sleep enough, a prescription is given to make the patient sleep more; when a person sleeps too much, a stimulant is prescribed. It is not a question of which is "best" a hot or cold temperature, or sleepfulness or wakefulness. The "cure" lies in taking a long step in the opposite direction. One of our goals in DIGNITY is to develop an adequate, self-fulfilling, creative personality, in our members. The path to such a personality is a course between too much inhibition and too little. When there is too much, we correct course by ignoring inhibition and practicing more disinhibition.

Here are the FEEDBACK signals which can tell you whether you are off course because of too much or too little inhibition: If you continually get yourself in hot water because of over-confidence; if you habitually "rush in where angels fear to tread"; if you habitually find yourself in trouble because of impulsive, ill-considered actions; if projects backfire on you because you always practice "acting first and asking questions later"; if you can never admit you're wrong; if you are an excessively loud talker and a "blabber-mouth" - you probably have too little inhibition. You need to think more of consequences before acting. You need to stop acting like a bull stud in a china shop, and plan your activities more carefully.

However, the great majority of gay people do not fall in the above category. If you are shy around strangers; if you dread new and strange situations; if you feel inadequate, worry a lot, are anxious, overly-concerned; if you are nervous, and feel self-conscious; if you have difficulty in going to sleep, if you feel ill at ease in social situations; if you hold yourself back and continually take a back seat - then, these are all symptoms showing that you have too much inhibition - you are too careful in everything, you "plan" too much.

Some practical suggestions: 1. Don't wander in advance what you are "going to say." Just open your mouth and say it. Improvise as you go along.

2. Don't plan in great detail. Don't always think before you act. Act - and correct your actions as you go along. This advice may seem radical, yet it is actually the way all mechanisms must work; for example, a torpedo does not "think out" all its errors in advance, and attempt to correct them in advance. It must ACT FIRST - start moving toward the goal - then correct errors which may occur. We cannot think out every move, from the moment of birth we are immersed in action, most of the action must of necessity be spontaneous.

3. Stop criticising yourself. The inhibited person indulges in self-critical analysis continually. After each action, however simple, he says to himself, "I wonder if I should have done that." After he has gotten up courage enough to say something, he immediately says to himself, "Maybe I shouldn't have said that. Maybe the other person will take it the wrong way." You must stop all this tearing yourself apart. Useful and beneficial feedback works subconsciously, spontaneously, and automatically. Conscious self-criticism, self-analysis, and introspection is good and useful - if undertaken perhaps once a year. But as a continual, moment by moment, day by day, sort of second-guessing yourself, is defeating. We spend too much time staring at our own bellybutton.

4. Make a habit of speaking LOUDER than usual. Inhibited people are notoriously soft-spoken as a rule. Raise the volume of your voice. You don't have to shout at people, just consciously practice speaking louder than usual.

5. Let people know when you like them. The inhibited personality is as afraid of expressing "good" feelings as bad ones. If he expresses love, he is afraid it will be judged sentimentality; if he compliments someone he is afraid the other will think him superficial; or suspect an ulterior motive. Totally ignore all these negative feedback signals. Compliment at least three people every day. If you like what someone is doing or wearing, or saying - let him know it. Be direct. "I like that, Joe." And if you are married - say to your lover, "I love you" at least twice a day.

We have so much to give - and we get so much in return.

**NEEDS:** We need more members if we are to serve the gay Catholic community effectively. We want people with vision and a sense of dedication; people who want an intelligent and serious-minded atmosphere within which to meet; people who have the courage to continue what they have begun; people with talent ready to be used for a worthy cause; people who are hungry for friendship, acceptance, comfort -- as well as people who can offer it. .... And we need money. Your annual membership is necessary to finance the costs of making up the newsletter and mailing it, for ads, stationery, post office box rental. There are many things we would like to do but at the moment lack the money. We depend entirely on membership dues and donations. .... We need your time. We need your talents. We need you.

**INFORMATION REQUESTED:** Has anything been done, or is anything being done now in your area by the Church to help the Catholic homosexuals, or is anything being done by Catholic gays to advance their cause? If so, please send us the details. Send all such information to Chairman, DIGNITY, P.O. Box 6161, Los Angeles, California 90055.

**ARE YOU FOR REAL?** We spend much time discussing self-discovery. Man questions his identity. He wants to find out who he really is, if he is a real person. Read the following passage from "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams.

"The Skin Horse had lived longer in the nursery than any of the others. He was so old that his brown coat was bald in patches and showed the seams underneath, and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out to string bead necklaces. He was wise, for he had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away, and he knew that they were only toys, and would never turn into anything else. For nursery magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced like the Skin Horse understand all about it.

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day. ... "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"I suppose you are Real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

"The Boy's Uncle made me Real," he said. "That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him."

So much for the "Velveteen Rabbit." The point is that to become real one must love and open up to love from others. This is natural enough but by no means easy. To open yourself means to let people see you as you really are. You can't be truly loved unless someone really knows you. This means you make yourself vulnerable. You are opening to the possibility of being hurt, rejected. Unless you are willing to take this risk, you will never have love. ... Most of us at sometime were rejected. So we started building walls around ourselves, walls that can make us cold, harsh, unfeeling. We have to knock these walls down. We must be ourselves to know love. We must love another and be loved in return. Then, like the Velveteen Rabbit, we shall be real indeed.