

DIGNITY

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RESPONSIBILITY: AN EDITORIAL

A good many gay Catholics cry in the dark. Outside a closely guarded circle of friends, no one sees them as they are; no one hears them. Torturous guilt. Fear and apprehension. Their minds pound with tension. Whose fault? No one person or institution bears all the blame. But from the gay Catholic point of view, we single out two objects upon which to cast blame and within which to awaken a sense of responsibility.

The Holy Roman Catholic Church has cried, too, but cried anathemas. As a teaching body it has refused to study homosexuality. As a giver of counsel it has failed to understand homosexuals. As a channel of blessing it has offered total condemnation. As a leader in social reform it has failed to take one step toward the homosexual. It has claimed concern but done nothing. So much for the ages past. Now finally the hand of Christ is prodding some bishops, theologians, priests and laymen from behind their protective walls thrown up in fear and ignorance. Light and strength are given. They begin to see. They begin to do. An awareness of injustice stirs in them. The hand of Christ is held out, but still so many try to restrain it, hold it back from reaching too far. Why? Why is the Church afraid to exercise its leadership? Why won't it direct its efforts to correct the social injustices inflicted on gays by its loving Christians?

There are injustices: police brutality, entrapment, employment and housing discrimination, even laws. It is not enough now to speak of morality, to urge us to carry our crosses. We are Christians, free sons of God who stand proud in the strength of Christ's resurrection with all that makes us what we are. And we beg his Church to call out from the rooftops for justice and understanding, to brave the opposition of an unloving straight world and refashion social thinking with its mighty magisterium.

The Church has to be blamed for much of our suffering. Nonetheless, sincere Catholic gays turn to that same Church, hoping desperately to find the face of Christ, to hear his voice, to feel his hand. (What further proof is needed for the strength of his faith?) The Church must share blame and so has responsibility to undo the resultant social injustices.

The Catholic gay is ready enough to add his voice to the thunderous cry of blame hurled at the Church. Yet he must share a good part of it. What has he done to alleviate his condition? Too many are content to live gay with a tortured conscience, without the sacraments. They would rather walk away from it all and curse. No fight for their heritage. No courage to stand up for justice. So much easier to whore it up and lose self in frantic sex. Many gay Catholics have not faced up to their own homosexuality, have not accepted it, have no pride in it. Their own lethargy, their own cowardice, their preferred insatiable search for sex have allowed injustices to multiply and become established.

It is time now to come out of the closets, to quit running, to take a stand and fight, to give time and talent where possible. It is time to become informed. It is time to be proud. Yes, the Church bears much blame for the plight of gays. But so does the gay himself. And if the Church has a responsibility to correct injustices, so much the more does the gay himself have the responsibility to speak up and work for acceptance.

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MAY MEETING: Forty-three signed in. The Spiritual Development Committee initiated a new practice -- inspirational reading opened the meeting, prayer closed it. Treasurer Dennis reported \$222.30 in the bank. Gabe reported for the Social Involvement Committee, Joe for Membership (89), Armand for Spiritual Development, and Bob F. on meeting with Fr. Von der Ahe. New membership fees were approved. Christopher Street West parade for June 27 was discussed. At coffee break Armand met with new members and guests to explain purposes of Dignity. After coffee break four discussion groups were formed. Each participant drew a slip of paper on which was typed an incomplete statement (e.g., If I were the archbishop of Los Angeles, I would ...; What bugs me most about gays is ...). Each completed and discussed his statement. At 10:15 we ended another intensely rewarding evening.

JUNE MEETING: On Sat., June 19, we shall meet in the offices of ONE, Inc. (2256 Venice Blvd., 2nd floor) at 7:30 p.m. After the business meeting, we shall again break up into discussion groups.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: At the April meeting members voted to raise annual dues and to establish types of membership. The following was approved at the May meeting -- students, \$5.00; regular, \$10.00 (lovers, \$15.00); institutional, business and professional, \$15.00; contributing, \$25.00. Contributing members will receive all future literature published by Dignity at no cost. Effective July 1, 1971.

QUICKIES: Mailing Committee established with Bill as chairman. It will handle mailing of Newsletter and other publications. We need a few volunteer committee members. ... If you can recommend a priest to add to our list of confessors, give us his name and the name, address and tel. no. of the church. What to look for? A priest who wants to nourish our union with the living God and who can understand us as individual human beings. ... Need transportation to meetings? Let us know. ... Change of address or tel. no.? Inform us. ... Scrawled on a man's restroom wall: "The government gave me a medal for killing many men, and a dishonorable discharge for loving one." A good example of hetero distorted values. ... Your response to our newsletter is encouraging. We would appreciate hearing from more of you, pro or con. If you know of others who would be interested in our newsletter, pass it on. ... In answer to many inquiries as to whether a Fr. David Johnson in Torrance and a Fr. Rob in Wyandotte, Mich (P.O. Long Beach, Ca.) are Roman Catholic priests, the answer is "No."

IN THE NEWS: An article in the San Francisco Examiner (May 5, 1971, p.40) states that the Archdiocesan Commission on Social Justice supports the California Human Rights Commission in its urging of the Board of Supervisors to conduct a hearing on the claim of employment discrimination made by the Society for Individual Rights (homosexual) and to amend the Nondiscrimination Ordinance in Employment. The Reverend E. J. Boyle, chairman of the Archdiocesan Commission wrote to Supervisor President Dianne Feinstein and urged her Board to "conduct hearings on this subject and then to proceed to corrective legislation." The Commission is also urging California legislators to remove from the State Code "all laws dealing with private sexual acts between consenting adults."

FROM A SERMON: The Church of St. John the Evangelist (Episcopalian) in Boston has openly accepted a gay group, the Homophile Union of Boston. In a sermon to the congregation on Sun., June 28, 1970, the Rev. Joseph Upson said: "The time of passively accepting minority groups is over. If this parish is to do anything concrete for the world, then it must, in the words of the gospel, launch out into the deep, take a chance, avoid the false position of saying we are concerned but not doing anything about it. Like black people, homosexuals are ceasing to cower in the corner; they are beginning to demand equal rights. And interestingly, they are turning to the Church as an ally, asking the Church to be a pioneer in the movement for equality."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- June 13 Society of David Benefit Event at 8:00 p.m. Feature artist: pianist Jerrald, playing works of Bach, Chopin, Debussy and his own compositions. Donation \$2.00 at 173 N. Mansfield Ave., 2 blocks west of Highland, 3 houses south of Beverly in Los Angeles.
- June 20 Gay Happening (coordinated by Gay Fellowship) from 10:00 a.m. to dusk, to be held in the area of the Greek Theatre of Griffith Park, Los Angeles, a kick-off for Gay Pride Week. Bring kites, banners, bells, incense, musical instruments or whatever. Needed: folk singers, instrumentalists, poets, artisans to do their thing. Bring food and blankets, enough to share if you want your friendliness to be catching. A chance for all gay groups to mingle.
- June 26, 27 Art Show opens at ONE, Inc. (2256 Venice, L.A.), 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on June 26. Continues on June 27, 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 M.
- June 27 L.A. CHRISTOPHER ST. WEST PARADE at 7:00 p.m. on Hollywood Blvd., beginning at McCadden. This annual event is meant to demonstrate to the heterosexual world our solidarity, our pride, our variety, our determination to be accepted for what we are. We may not feel at home with some types of homosexuals, but in this one event it is important that we unite and show our strength in numbers, that we are all working for one cause -- our acceptance by society. We need more volunteers for the parade. Please call an officer of Dignity or write soon.
- June 27 Parade Dance after parade until 2:00 a.m. at Rodger Young Center (935 W. Washington Blvd., L.A. (Next to freeways in downtown L.A.)). \$2.50 in advance, \$3.00 at door. Write to: Christopher St. West/Dance, P.O. Box 17669, Los Angeles, Cal. 90017.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS: On Wed., May 26 Bob Fournier was invited to talk to Assistant Prof. Barry Dank's class in Sociology of Homosexual Behavior at Cal State, Long Beach, on the Catholic homosexual. On Sun., June 6 Bob Fournier and a few members of Dignity have been invited to discuss the purposes of Dignity at the Gay Fellowship meeting. If you know of any groups, gay or straight, who would welcome a gay speaker, let Bob Fournier know or any officer of Dignity. We are anxious to acquaint all with Dignity and to speak up for the cause of homosexual equality and justice.

PSYCHOLOGIST: Betty Berzon has worked with groups for many years. Recently she has begun to work with gays. If you would like to join one of her week-end or Sunday groups, call 654-2420. Address: 8560 Hollywood Blvd., L.A., Ca. 90069.

Theodore Lindauer, M.D. is a child psychiatrist on the faculty of University of California, Irvine (medical school). He has long had an intense interest in homosexuality and has had many homosexuals as patients. While in Boston (1968-1970) he helped found the Homophile Union of Boston and served as their psychiatrist consultant. If anyone is interested in private therapy, his University no. is 714/633-9393, x 601; his home no. is 714/673-3686.

TESTS OF MATURITY: (1) Inability to compromise. A child says: "If you won't let me pitch, I'll take my ball and go home." The immature adult will not compromise, even when ethically correct to do so, even when it could be a proof of his love. (2) Physical and mental cruelty. Through words or actions children can be horribly cruel to their companions. Immature adults inflict the same kind of mental cruelty when they delight in making a fool of another, joke about his looks, clothes, manner of speech or abilities. (3) Revenge-taking. Interfere with a child's selfish desires and he strikes back in any way he can to hurt. Immature adults lash out in the same way.-- spiteful silences, refusal to show interest, withholding marital privileges, bringing up the past. "You'll suffer for what you did to me." (4) Dependence on feelings. A child wants to live according to the whims of feeling. So do immature adults. They will not subject feelings to reason, faith, principle. Such a person is a slave to his own feelings.

IN THE NEWS: In its no. 60 issue on p. 27, The Advocate reported that "A resolution adopted by the recent White House Conference on Youth ... called for the legalization of gay marriages. Another resolution favoring the adoption of children by gay married couples was defeated."

APPEAL TO PRIESTS: We appeal to our priest members and all priests to write on behalf of homosexuals. Write articles for newspapers and magazines, religious or secular. Be particularly attentive to opportunities for writing letters to the editor of newspapers and magazines. If the gay cause is going to move ahead, those who have the necessary education, training, and talent should use it.