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A MODERN PARABLE

In those days there dwelt a certain bishop in a far away country on a street called Straight. On one side of him lived a pagan, on the other a priest and a Christian family. Now it so happened that one day two Christian men moved into the house across the street. They worked on their house and cared for the yard until it surpassed in beauty the others in the neighborhood. The two men went about their business each day with calm and exceeding great joy. On some occasions they were even seen to be holding hands.

Now the pagan observed all this and grew to respect those men. His heart stirred within him, and he gave praise to the Christian God. But others, too, were watching. One day the bishop stood before their house and in a loud voice proclaimed to all that such men lived in terrible sin. Their lives were evil and the wrath of God would visit them. The priest came running from his house to add, "Amen. Amen." And the Christian family came out to throw filth of every sort at the house.

With sorrowing hearts the two men separated, each to a different house. Their faces lost their glow. Their eyes glanced about in fear. The bishop, the priest, and the Christian family returned each to their own seclusion.

Now the pagan watched all this. He saw love between two people destroyed by those who had always talked of love. He saw two lives made heavy with misery. He saw the house slowly go to ruin. Bewildered, he retired deeper into his own seclusion on the street called Straight. And his heart no longer gave praise to the Christian God.

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LOVE: AN EDITORIAL

St. John tells us that God is love. His very act of being is an act of love. Since God made us in his image, each act of love on our part is a snaring of God's love -- something beautiful, sacred, divine.

As a testimony of his love the Father sent among men his Son. Through him we were to see the love of God and know how to love. The Scriptures make it clear that God, and therefore, Christ, loves all men. But the Son of God had taken human form and so possessed also a human way of loving. It was human for him to single out a few for special marks of love. He cried before the tomb of Lazarus to such an extent that those around him took it as proof of a very personal love. Throughout his public life Christ must have done many things to show an even more personal love for John, the apostle. John is referred to simply as the loved one.

He showed some favor to certain women, such as Martha and Mary (who, by the way, were the sisters of Lazarus). But no relationship with a woman was ever established that approached that of Christ with John.

Throughout its history the Church has insisted that Christ did not exercise the power of sex that was rightfully his. Some taught that sex was the result of original sin, tainted. It was beneath the dignity of the sinless Christ. Some taught that since there was no need for children, there was no need for sex. Still others taught that Christ voluntarily sublimated his sex drive for a greater apostolate. Whatever the reason, safeguarding the divinity of Christ was basic. And all hinted that sex was not in keeping with holiness.

There are some today, however, who feel that not all has been said on the subject of Christ and life with or without sex. They claim that since Christ was human, he did have a desire for sex. Since we have no evidence of a close friendship with any woman in Christ's life, there are some who claim that his recognized deep friendship with John was a homosexual relationship. These people, of course, see nothing wrong with homosexuality. Their claim is an effort to show the full human nature of Christ and the full use of human love.

To the Church this is blasphemous -- ONLY because in the eyes of the Church homosexuality is evil. Yet the Church has emphasized so much Christ's life as sexless that it gives the decided impression sex is in itself a no-no for those who want to be close to God rather than a means of entering into God's love in a way designed by him. IF -- in the eyes of God -- homosexuality is perfectly natural, then there could be nothing wrong with such a relationship between Christ and John. Then, if Christ did not wish to bring children into the world because of his position but wished to show a human love employing sex as its fullest expression, a homosexual relationship with John would be in order.

However, neither side has any proof as to what kind of love Christ had. Both sides draw their own conclusions from their own stated premises. One side emphasizes his divinity, the other his humanity. The morality of homosexuality is the key issue.

Whatever the case, we know that Jesus gave evidence of a strong personal love. He may have had some limitations because of his mission. But he gave us the example of a very deep friendship with someone of the same sex.

We are not of the Godhead, however. We were born into this world with a human nature, carefully designed by God, good in all its parts. Sex is an essential part of that human nature. Its use is the fullest expression of human love, involving the totality of the individual. The homosexual is a human being. He was born with his own individual human nature. As he matures, he finds that his sex drive is toward those of the same sex. He has many kinds of love, as do other humans. And he has the same desire to give himself totally to another human being. His desire, though, is directed to those of his own sex.

So, with this God-given nature and its God-given desires, he proceeds to give his love in a way that is natural to him. And he seeks in return the same kind of love. A touch of the hand electrifies him. The softness of another's lips on his, the warmth of another's body against his stirs within him a desire to give of himself the best. As the relationship develops, as the love increases, each experiences that powerful human urge to give himself completely to another. And the two become lovers.

If each one is God-oriented, they should ask: How does this relationship affect my relationship with God? If it is a genuine love, both will experience a greater awareness of God in their lives. They will realize that their love is a sharing in the very life of God, that their intimate acts of love made possible by the creation of God are actually the pulse of God's life, that in each act of love their redemption is being wrought by Christ present within them -- the Christ who taught them how to love: to give themselves completely to each other.

Yes, God is love. And we share that love in many ways. But the most fully human is the total giving of one's very self to another, effectively symbolized in the conjoining of two bodies. When that proceeds from love, it is not lust. It is divine love operative. And two homosexual lovers become new epiphanies -- the manifestation of God's love to the world.

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IN THE NEWS: The American Library Association held its 90th annual convention in Dallas, Texas, June 20-27. It adopted an anti-discrimination resolution, proposed by a gay task force: "The American Library Association recognizes that there exist minorities which are not ethnic in nature, but which suffer oppression. The Association recommends that libraries and members strenuously combat discrimination in services to, and employment of, individuals from all minority groups, whether the distinguishing characteristic of the minority be ethnic, sexual, religious, or of any other kind."

QUICKIES: Bob Fournier, accompanied by a few of the Board members from DIGNITY, spoke at the board meeting of the L.A. Association of Laymen on Aug. 4. ... If you wish any personal items put in the Newsletter's "Bulletin Board" (such as wanted to buy, to sell, etc.), have material in no later than the 5th of each month. ... Picnic on July 11 was a great success. About 40 attended. ... Why not give a membership in DIGNITY as a gift for birthdays, Christmas, etc.? ... If you wish to make a tax deductible donation to DIGNITY, consult us for details on how to do it. ... Congratulations to those who passed out DIGNITY info at parade: Armand & Jim, Maurice, Bill, and Dick. Also to those who rode in car: Joe, Dennis & Greg, Ken, Jerry, and Andy. Thanks to Gabe for use of his car and to Pat for painting the signs. ... Letters have been sent to the editors of the San Francisco Monitor, Marriage magazine and Catholic World in reply to recent articles. ... Pray that the 25 members of DIGNITY who are going to Valerme will make a good retreat. ... "Great trials seem to be necessary preparations for great duties."

BULLETIN BOARD: Two lovers will share 2-story Los Feliz Hills home -- complete view of city, music room (piano, organ, tape and stereo), dining room, wet bar, sun deck terrace overlooking city, 3 bedrooms and den. \$100.00 a month. Call 663-5139. ... Wanted to rent: 2 bedroom or 1 bedroom + den in Spanish style apt. building. Maximum - \$150.00. If you have seen a vacancy sign at such a building, please call 469-3898.

THOUGHTS ON WORDS: A priest member of DIGNITY submitted these thoughts on the meaning of words. "The languages that have been used to articulate the Mosaic concept of sex as a device invented by God solely for the amplification of the tribe (for which reason, he logically allowed polygamy) are consequently rigged against the concept of sex as communication and rapport among human beings. The antithetical words, 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' provide the foundation of a hostile vocabulary because they carry the implication of a moral propriety or impropriety. From there, the stacked semantic deck grows. Those who believe in and make use of physical rapport with members of their own sex are therefore 'queer.' They are unreal creatures -- not human at all -- 'fairies,' in fact. And the catalog of pejorative terms goes on and on. In order to deal with sex as it relates to gender with any degree of rationality, and objectivity, it is necessary first to detect and to demolish this semantic trap!"

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- August 13 - 15 Retreat at Valyermo.
- August 18 7:30 p.m. Board meeting at home of Armand and Jim in Long Beach.
- August 21 7:30 p.m. monthly meeting of DIGNITY at ONE, Inc. (2256 Venice Bl., 2nd floor). Guests welcome. Program: discussion groups.
- August 22 Mission tour: San Diego and San Luis Rey. Assemble 9:00 a.m. at John and Jerry's. Bring picnic lunch. Get further information at meeting.
- August 28 7:30 p.m. Richard Strauss night at Armand and Jim's. See them at the meeting for further information.
- September 12 Spiritual Development Committee at home of Jim F., 7:30 p.m.

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UNITED FARM WORKERS: They need food donations and pickets to support the strike at San Ysidro. If you wish to give food items, bring them to August 21 meeting and give them to Ken or Rod, or bring them directly to the collection point -- 1741 South Harvard, Los Angeles. If you want more information, call 735-4548.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES: The June issue of Catholic World carried an article by Joseph A. McCaffrey "Homosexuality in the Seventies." The July issue carried a second article by the same author, "Homosexuality, Aquinas, and the Church." Both articles were excellent. In the first article the author speaks of a cultural storm. "In this context, the term 'cultural storm' means that the refusal of society to accept homosexuality as anything other than a vicious legal, moral, and psychological perversion is under challenge. The challenge is basic: it asserts that homosexuality, like sexuality in general, is vital, human, and good, and in no way entails any legal, moral, or psychological perversion. This assertion, probably the most important contribution of the well-populated gay world, is supported by a rising number of social scientists who have made studies on homosexuals." He goes on to state that "the reasons for condemning homosexuality stem from ignorance and misunderstanding." For those who claim that homosexuality will destroy society the author writes: "The judgments of society on both the morality and legality of homosexuality are often inadequate or naive; for example, the common allegation that homosexuality leads to both personal and societal corruption cannot sustain any systematic correlative analysis." As for the Church's thinking in the matter, he says: "Religion, after all, has not exactly been the paragon of systematic, cogent, and unbiased thought concerning homosexuality." In the July issue he goes even further: "No answer at present, which purports to defend the Church's position, is solidly based. In fact, it is precisely at the juncture of sound reasons that Church theorizing collapses. ... It appears that the Church has fallen into a vicious, destructive battle against the orgasm (the felt physical pleasure), placing all important attitudes, motivations, and mutuality of giving at a secondary level of importance, if that." Some moralists argue that homosexuality is wrong because it goes against the conscience of mankind. The author states: "The problem with the argument is that it overlooks differences in individual men. It ignores or all but destroys the fact of differentiation both in the personality of any individual and also his circumstances. Its ultimate appeal to conscience is premised on the similarity of consciences which is, in total terms, a highly improbably and suspect assumption." He states that those who claim homosexuality is a "gross sin against nature" are themselves committing "crimes against reason." Should we be proud? "This emergence of homosexuals is an encouraging development because it is a move based upon self-pride and integrity of the personality."