



FEBRUARY 2012, VOLUME 37, ISSUE 10

SERVING LGBT CATHOLICS SINCE 1974

## ***Spirituality, Equality and Justice: Nurtured in a Welcoming Catholic Community***

I suspect that many of us are the rule as opposed to the exception. We were born to Catholic parents, baptized and raised in the Catholic tradition, and may have even attended Catholic schools (I know I did...elementary school through college). We are "cradle Catholics" and proud of it! Yet, how well do we really know our Catholic faith and what the Church teaches?

While it is important to attend Liturgy, it is also very important to continue our faith journey. Our growth in faith did not end once we completed full initiation into the Church (through Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation). We need to continue to explore all that Jesus teaches and all that the Church offers us through Tradition. In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) implores us to "rediscover the faith" through Adult Faith Formation.

This Lent, our Dignity Detroit community will have the opportunity to gather and reflect on just what it means to be "Catholic." On March 2, 16, and 30 from 6pm-8pm everyone is invited and encouraged to gather at Sonja and Sr. Mary Ann's home for a simple soup supper and discussion focusing on the book: *Understanding The Mass: 100 Questions/100 Answers* authored by Mike Aquilina. It is recommended, although not required, that those who join us purchase the book. (If you would like to order it, the best price is through Amazon.com. I would recommend ordering it early so that you have it in time for our first gathering.)

On page 8 of this newsletter you will find an informational flyer with all the details. It would be best if you let me know of your desire to participate before February 26. Additionally, we will need people who are willing to provide a meatless soup, bread, and a simple dessert. You can indicate your assistance on the form within this newsletter or available in the chapel.

The Feast of St. Blase falls on a Friday this year (February 3rd). As we have always done, we will have the traditional blessing of throats on the Sunday closest to the Feast.....Sunday, February 5th.....**NOT ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 29TH AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED.** St. Blase lived in the fourth century. Some say that he came from a rich family and received a Christian education. As a young man, Blase thought about all the sufferings and troubles of the times. He began to realize that only spiritual joys can make a person really happy. He became a priest and then bishop of Sebaste in Armenia which is now modern Turkey. With all his heart, Blase worked to make his people holy and happy. He prayed and preached; he tried to help everyone. When the governor, Licinius, began to persecute the Christians, St. Blase was captured. He was sent to prison to be beheaded. On the way, people crowded the road to see their beloved bishop for the last time. He blessed them all, even the pagans. A poor mother rushed up to him. She begged him to save her child who was choking to death from a fishbone. The saint whispered a prayer and blessed the child. He worked a miracle that saved the child's life. That is why St. Blase is called upon by all who have throat diseases. On his feast day, we have our throats blessed. We ask him to protect us from all sicknesses of the throat. In prison, the saintly bishop converted many pagans. No torture could make him give up his faith in Jesus. He was beheaded in the year 316.

None of us are alone in our journey. We all walk together to support, encourage, and assist each other in our life-long faith formation. This Lent, let us take the next step in rediscovering our great Catholic heritage.

Peace, Claudia

### **Calendar of Events - February 2012**

**5 - 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Rosary Sunday**

**12 - 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament -  
New Time! 5:00-5:30**

**19 - 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**Council Meeting at 4:30**

**22 - Ash Wednesday Mass @ 7pm in Chapel**

**26 - 1st Sunday of Lent**

## On The Fence

On a cold January Thursday evening in downtown Ferndale, Affirmations held a screening of the documentary, "Fences," by their Executive Director, Antonio David Garcia. On their calendar Affirmations billed the event under the title of "Faith and the LGBT Community." A panel discussion with faith leaders to include Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and lay persons Linda Karle-Nelson and Tom Nelson would follow. This was a first of its kind presentation for Affirmations and they weren't sure what kind of a crowd to expect. One of their main gathering rooms was filled to overflowing with an eager, sometimes angry, but spiritually sophisticated gathering of people who had many questions for the panel.

In fact, David Garcia even suggested that his film was only a stimulus for the main event, the discussion itself. One could submit here that Garcia's role as a filmmaker might need some honing, but his premise was solid. Through a series of personal interviews, he questioned many people on the street for an explanation of why some say, "God Hates Fags." Then not only did he seek out the fence upon which young Matthew Shepard had been left to die in Laramie, Wyoming, but Garcia also recorded how fence-straddling some people can be in their religious attitudes towards the GLBT community.

The film was immediately followed by a question and answer discussion, which drew out local religious leaders' views on gays within their particular churches and faith communities. Bishop Gumbleton was at his articulate best in presenting the Catholic Church's all too familiar stand. He quickly added, however, that the primacy of conscience is vital in reconciling ones homosexual practices with ones Catholic faith. The Bishop also stressed the long-term hopefulness that he holds for the Church in the evolving of its present position. Both the Reverend Darlene Franklin of Agape Spirit Life Ministries and the Nelsons, representing Fortunate Families, stressed the importance of taking a strong and powerful stand in affirming that GLBT people are true children of a loving God and are supported by a loving faith community.

David Garcia reminded those in attendance that "the faith community can be both our greatest obstacle and our greatest ally." But equally significant at this point in time is that Affirmations, under Garcia's leadership, is becoming a positive forum for people of faith to express their hopes and their hurts in open and loving dialogues. Garcia stressed that Affirmations wants to promote such discussions at least once each quarter. Judging from this past January's attendance such an effort has struck a sacred chord, and appears to resonate strongly within the GLBT community. The need is there and the time has come for good people of faith to remove themselves from the proverbial fence and take a positive stand.

*(A reflection by Dignity member, Ralph Fader, who was in the audience at this January Affirmations event)*

### **March Madness Raffle**

Our March Madness Raffle is underway. The raffle drawing will take place on Sunday, March 25, 2012. Prizes this year are cash awards of \$500.00, \$250.00 and \$100.00. As always, we are asking everyone, members and non-members alike, to take at least one book of 30 tickets to sell or purchase. Tickets are \$1.00 each. If you sell or purchase all 30 tickets, you need only turn in \$25.00....that's five (5) free tickets or \$5.00 cash. Of course, we will not be upset should you decide to turn in the entire \$30.00. Keep in mind that if you add up the cost of the tickets and the prize fund, the expenses associated with the raffle amount to \$1,200.00 before any tickets are sold.

As we have done in past years, at least one-half of the money raised will be donated to the IHM South African AIDS Ministry Outreach Program. The other half will be deposited in our treasury for future use.

Since the raffles were started in 1987 (24 overall; a raffle was not held in 1994), we have raised almost \$44,000.00! The total for last year's raffle was just over \$1,945.00...our 11<sup>th</sup> best ever. Can we beat last year's amount? Only you can help make this fundraiser a success!

The Leadership team thanks you in advance for your generosity.

**Something to think about during Lent....****The Purpose of Religion**

Religion has various functions at various stages of life. It is a guidepost from early life through to the end. It is a direction, a map. But it is not a guarantee of anything. Religion has corrupted as much as it has saved. Clearly, there must be something more than the religion itself that must be our goal.

In early life, in youth, the function of religion is the formation of conscience. Religion sets the standards that mark the path. Every religion, according to the Universal Code of Ethics adopted at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999, accepts four non-negotiables: not to steal, not to lie, not to murder, and not to exploit another sexually. These are the guidelines of the good life. There is a law above the law, we learn. And that law is the end toward which we tend.

In middle age, religion becomes a social guide. It is a measure of our relationship with others. It creates the standards that measure the quality of the soul as well as the behaviors of the person. It becomes an attitude toward life. Some things are holy, some things are not. It is the ideals to which we cling, even as we drift a bit from the moorings of our early life. All the absolutes begin to be tested. We begin to understand that religion is more a deep-down struggle to believe and to do than simply a way of acting, sterile on paper, full of thorns in the flesh.

Finally, as we grow older, when we begin the last stage of life, it is clear that behaviors and failures are not the stuff of religion much anymore. Now, the ecstasy of life and the surrender to the Mystery become the last of the revelations of religion. Now, everything we learned long ago, gave up to some degree long ago, never left completely long ago, begins to make sense. Begins to become me. Begins my new beginning as a person.

Then, in the later years, religion ceases to be simply a series of rites and rituals, of rules and answers for which I get some kind of eternal points. Religion becomes what it was always meant to be: a search for a relationship with the Spirit who draws us on. Always on. Even to the point where "on" is unclear.

Religion is not a millstone around the neck anymore. It is the warm, soft, strong, hard awareness that yes, it has all been for something worthwhile.

– from *The Gift of Years*, by Joan Chittister (BlueBridge)

In 1966, Pope Paul VI reorganized the Church's practice of public penance in his "Apostolic Constitution on Penance" (*Poenitemini*). The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law incorporated the changes made by Pope Paul. Not long after that, the U.S. bishops applied the canonical requirements to the practice of public penance in our country.

To sum up those requirements, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. In addition, all Catholics 14 years old and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all the Fridays of Lent. Fasting as explained by the U.S. bishops means partaking of only one full meal. Some food (not equaling another full meal) is permitted at breakfast and around midday or in the evening—depending on when a person chooses to eat the main or full meal. Abstinence forbids the use of meat, but not of eggs, milk products or condiments made of animal fat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consomme, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are not forbidden. So it is permissible to use margarine and lard. Even bacon drippings which contain little bits of meat may be poured over lettuce as seasoning.

Each year in publishing the Lenten penance requirements, the U.S. bishops quote the teaching of the Holy Father concerning the seriousness of observing these days of penance. The obligation to do penance is a serious one; the obligation to observe, as a whole or "substantially," the days of penance is also serious. But no one should be scrupulous in this regard; failure to observe individual days of penance is not considered serious. Moral theologians remind us that some people are excused from fasting and/or abstinence because of sickness or other reasons.

In his "Apostolic Constitution on Penance," Pope Paul VI did more than simply reorganize Church law concerning fast and abstinence. He reminded us of the divine law that each of us in our own way do penance. We must all turn from sin and make reparation to God for our sins. We must forgive and show love for one another just as we ask for God's love and forgiveness. The Code of Canon Law and our bishops remind us of other works and means of doing penance: prayer, acts of self-denial, almsgiving and works of personal charity. Attending Mass daily or several times a week, praying the rosary, making the way of the cross, attending the parish evening prayer service, teaching the illiterate to read, reading to the blind, helping at a soup kitchen, visiting the sick and shut-ins and giving an overworked mother a break by baby-sitting—all of these can be even more meaningful and demanding than simply abstaining from meat on Friday.

from *Ask A Franciscan*, *St. Anthony Messenger magazine*

## **Council Elections**

Although Council Elections do not take place until the month of May, there are a couple of things that need to take place in preparation for those elections.

- 1 Candidates for office must be a dues paying member of Dignity Detroit by March 1<sup>st</sup>. If you need to check the status of your membership, please contact Glenn Crane or Frank D'Amore.
- 2 Officers to be elected this year are: President, Treasurer and Community Involvement Chairperson.
- 3 All offices are a two year term and the newly elected Officers will take office on July 1, the beginning of our fiscal year
- 4 The Election Committee members are Carolyn Shalhoub, Paul Schimmick and Frank D'Amore
- 5 Nominations will be accepted March 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>

Please consider taking the next step in your level of involvement with Dignity Detroit. The responsibilities of each office can be found in our Constitution or you can chat with the current office holders. If you do not have a copy of the Constitution, please contact Frank D'Amore and he will provide you a copy.

### **Play Ball!**

Although the 2012 Major League Baseball Season does not officially start until very early April, Spring training does begin mid-February.

Of course that also means that all the "behind the scenes" activity at Comerica Park goes into full gear around March 1<sup>st</sup>. For the last two years, Dignity members have joined the great folks from St. Mark Catholic Church in Warren to staff a concession stand (or two) for ten games each year. Our first year, our share of the funds raised totaled just over \$1,700.00. Last season, when we had more volunteers than St. Mark's did at the majority of the games, our proceeds totaled almost \$2,400.00!!

If we are going to participate again this year, we will need about 15-20 people step forward and join our team! In order to work any of the games, interested individuals must attend one evening of training (several will be offered) at Comerica Park. As we have mentioned in the past at some of our General Membership meetings, although this endeavor is fun, it is also a bit of hard work. You are on your feet about 8-9 hours and smiling the whole time!

We will know our schedule of games assigned to us long before the season begins. Traditionally, the games we have worked have been Friday evening games and a few Sunday afternoon games.

Please give the idea some thought and if you decide to be a teammate of ours, please let Frank D'Amore know by February 15<sup>th</sup> at [frankdamore@dignitydetroit.com](mailto:frankdamore@dignitydetroit.com)

I met Candice on a Florida sidewalk while walking to the beach. She was a young, blonde, attractive woman, and she was hovering close behind me as if she had something to say. She had something to say all right; I haven't been the same since hearing her story.

My Florida congregation, where I once lived, was having a beach baptismal service, something fairly common along the coastline on Sunday mornings. A dozen people were stepping into the water that morning, and at the last minute, Candice wanted to be one of them; thus her lurking presence behind me. Turning to her, I asked, "Can I help you?" She answered, "I think so — if you think I'm not crazy." Admittedly, such an introduction did not instill confidence. I've met more than one spiritual loony-bird in my life, and I have a pretty good instinct for when one is close by. Candice didn't seem "crazy." She appeared timid — wounded — but not crazy.

She said: "Today is my first visit to your church, and I can't say why I showed up except that God wanted me here. See, this is the first time I've been to any church in a long time. When I was 15 I had my long hair cut and donated it to Locks for Love, so a young girl who was having radiation treatments could have a beautiful blonde wig. "I went to church the next Sunday, so happy about what I had done, sporting my new pixie haircut. But the leadership of the church — because of their beliefs — was not very happy. They told me I had forfeited my 'woman's glory' and that I had disgraced myself because of a haircut."

Candice then described what was essentially an exorcism, as the church leaders gathered around her to cast out the devil that prompted her to put the clippers to her head. She resisted and protested but was told that she would go to hell if she did not submit. Her response was, "Well, if I'm going to hell, I might as well get started." She left the church, many of its members being her immediate and extended family, and never returned until 10 stormy, pain-ridden years later, standing on that Florida sidewalk.

Candice then made one of the greatest professions of faith I have ever heard. She said, "I understand today that I can let all that past go. I don't need that church or all their rules, I just need Jesus. I have my swimsuit in the car, and if you still don't think I'm crazy, and if you will wait for me to change, I want to get baptized and start over." I would have waited for her to have driven all the way to New Orleans and back if it had been required. When she did get to the water, I took her by the hand and asked, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ; and do you choose to follow him today into the kingdom of God." By the time she answered with an emphatic "Yes," tears were rolling down both our faces.

I could spend the next decade of my life railing against that backward church that committed such a spiritual crime against Candice, a child with divine intentions. But I'll not do that. They can't hear such words, being so much smarter than God as they are, and besides that, Candice has moved on. She has found peace; a vibrant, healthy faith; spiritual and emotional healing; and a very happy marriage. These joyful things did not magically attach themselves to Candice as she stepped from the water, dripping, smiling and shivering onto a Florida beach, any more than salt water can rinse our souls or wash painful memories away. But there is something powerful — glorious and cleansing — in letting go of all that has harmed us to take hold of the One who simply said, "Come to me and recover your life." You aren't crazy, Candice. You have recovered your life. Now go live it.

*Ronnie McBayer is a syndicated columnist, speaker and author. This is an excerpt from his newly released book "The Jesus Tribe."*

**Dignity Detroit will be observing Ash Wednesday  
with a Mass in the Sacred Heart Chapel at 7 pm**

**What is the relationship of Eucharistic adoration to the Mass?**

The celebration of the Mass is the origin and purpose of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside the Mass. Eucharistic adoration extends Holy Communion in a lasting way even as it prepares the faithful to participate more fully in the celebration of the Mass. It leads us to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to deeper spiritual union with him in the reception of Holy Communion.

**What is the importance of Eucharistic adoration?**

Eucharistic adoration is the respect and worship we give to Jesus, who is truly present to us under the appearance of bread and wine. The Eucharist is a priceless treasure; by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace. As St. Alphonsus Liguori noted, "of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us." [CCC 1418]

**What forms does this adoration take?**

We show our adoration in many ways. The most intimate form of adoration is Holy Communion, when we receive Jesus' body into our own. The most common and ordinary way we adore Jesus is by genuflecting - that is, kneeling briefly on one knee - whenever we pass the tabernacle in a church (see Philippians 2:10). Outside the Mass, the Church gives us further opportunities to worship Jesus. We may visit him at the tabernacle. And we may adore him when the Sacrament is brought out from the tabernacle for public worship. This is commonly called "exposition." [CCC 1378]

**What is exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?**

Exposition is the placement of the sacred host outside the tabernacle for public adoration. This can take many forms. The simplest form is the opening of the tabernacle doors. Another form is the removal of the sacred vessels from the tabernacle for a more prominent and visible placement. The Church also permits a "full" exposition, when the sacred host is clearly visible in a vessel called a "monstrance."

**What is the purpose of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?**

There are three purposes of Eucharistic exposition: (1) to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament; (2) to lead us to a fuller participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, culminating in Holy Communion; and (3) to foster the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and in truth.

**What conditions are necessary for proper exposition of the sacrament?**

The sponsors of this devotion should make sure that a suitable number of worshippers are present during the entire time of exposition. The Church also asks us to light four to six candles around the sacrament, and permits us to use incense. The Blessed Sacrament may never be left exposed without at least one worshipper present.

**What are the fruits of Eucharistic adoration?**

People who observe Eucharistic adoration experience a deeper devotion to Jesus, and this manifests itself in countless ways. The primary fruits are repentance and conversion which lead to increased charity - that is, the love of Christ alive in his people. The adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist also leads to greater reverence at Mass, a deeper desire for personal holiness, and a stronger sense of union with the parish and the whole Church. Ever since the early centuries of Christianity, the Church has linked Eucharistic devotion to service to the poor. More recently, the practice has led to an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

**How long have Christians practiced Eucharistic adoration?**

Christians have adored the Eucharist as long as the Church has celebrated the Eucharist - that is, from the time of the Apostles. The earliest texts that speak of the Mass are probably older than some of the New Testament books. In every generation since the generation of the Apostles, the Church Fathers wrote about Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist. In the second, third, and fourth centuries, Christians in lands as far-flung as Italy, Egypt, North Africa, and Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) testify to the special care given to the Eucharist that was reserved for the sick and homebound.

**What is proper etiquette during Eucharistic adoration?**

When we are not taking part in vocal prayers and hymns with other adorers, we should be praying silently. Whenever we pass before the place where the sacred host is reserved, we should genuflect. We should observe the modest dress and decorum that are appropriate to very solemn occasions. We should avoid any actions that might disturb or distract others or draw attention to ourselves rather than Jesus.

**How should we pray during Eucharistic adoration?**

There are many ways to pray. We may meditate silently by gazing on the sacred host. We may silently speak to Jesus from our mind and heart. We may also rely on devotions and prayers from Catholic tradition, such as the reading of Scripture, recitation of the rosary, or the litanies.

*From the Diocese of Pittsburgh website*

Dignity Detroit meets every Sunday evening at 6:00 pm

Sacred Heart Chapel at Marygrove College

8425 W. McNichols @ Wyoming

Contact us at:

Postal Mail: P.O. Box 558, Royal Oak, MI 48068-0558

Voice-mail: 313-278-4786

E-mail: [dignitydetroit74@yahoo.com](mailto:dignitydetroit74@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.dignitydetroit.org](http://www.dignitydetroit.org)

We are a 501 ( c ) 3 organization

**Dignity Detroit meetings:**

***Our meetings are open to all***

**Council -**

Third Sunday every month @ 4:30 pm

**General Membership -**

Third Sunday of January, April, July and October,  
immediately after Mass

**DignityUSA:**

**P.O. Box 376**

**Medford, MA 02155-0376**

**Phone: 800-877-8797**

**E-mail: [info@dignityusa.org](mailto:info@dignityusa.org)**

**Dignity Detroit offers community out-reach for our less fortunate brothers & sisters at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit**

**Our volunteer participation needs your help on the 2nd and 4th Friday each month between 3:30 - 6:00.**



**Please see George K. or Denise S. if you can help. Thank You!!!**



Our annual hygiene drive this year will benefit the Community Health Awareness Group (C-HAG). It is a non-profit, community based organization that addresses current health issues and concerns of the African-American community and promotes the reduction of transmission of HIV through education, counseling testing, etc.

As has been the practice, we request donations of personal-sized items such as shampoo, deodorant, dental care, women's hygiene products, and so forth.

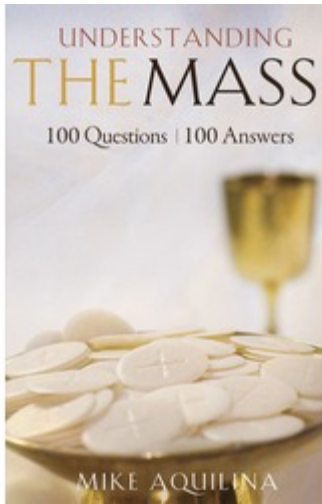
Thank you very much for your support of this very important ministry! Please see Denise if you have any questions.

**Why Do Catholics...?** (Spiritual Formation and Discussion—Lent, 2012)

Have you ever wondered ...

- why Catholics believe in the Real Presence instead of saying that the bread and wine are just symbols?
- why the church uses unleavened bread?
- why we pray to Mary and the saints?
- what the gesture is that we make right before the Gospel and why we do it?
- what is a pontifical mass?
- how the Lenten readings relate to your everyday life?

Get the answers to these questions and many more! Join your friends for a soup supper and interesting and lively discussions this Lent!!!



**When:** Fridays, March 2, 16, 30 from 6pm-8pm **Where:** Sonja and Sr. Mary Ann's home (24071 Oneida Oak Park, MI 48237)

We will be referencing the book, *Understanding the Mass: 100 Questions, 100 Answers*. (available at Amazon.com)

**It is recommended, but not required, that you purchase the book.**

**If you plan on joining us and/or can provide a pot of soup please return the form below to Claudia or Sonja before February 26.**

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**Why Do Catholics...?** (Spiritual Formation and Discussion—Lent, 2012) **Fridays, March 2, 16, 30 from 6pm-8pm**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to provide:

\_\_\_\_ a pot of soup (meatless...remember, it's Lent)

\_\_\_\_ bread or rolls

\_\_\_\_ a simple dessert

**Sonja will contact you to confirm and work out details!**