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Keystone

Vol 2 No 4
May/June 1977

The Stone Rejected by the Builders Has Become the KEYSTONE. (Acts 4:11)

The newsletter of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania

Recently two of our members attended The Gay and Christian Conference at Kirkridge, a Christian retreat and study center in Bangor, Pennsylvania. The following letter represents one outcome of the conference.

May 7, 1977

Ms. Anita Bryant
Miami, Florida

To Ms. Bryant:

Gathered here in Bangor, Pennsylvania, this day are a group of concerned Christians. We are laypersons and clergy, black and white, female and male, Catholic, Protestant, conservative and liberal, representing over a dozen different denominations and seventeen states and Canada. We are married and single, Gay and Straight.

We, too, believe we must "Save our Children." Many of us have children, and all of us are children of God created to love and living in faith that God has set us free from fear through our Saviour, Christ Jesus.

We pray that our children will learn from our faith that their God is a God of justice, love, and peace.

Our grievances with you are specific. As Christian persons who love Jesus and our church, we object to:

- 1) The premeditated use of false and misleading information about Gay people. This classical style of propaganda plays on ignorance and the perpetuation of stereotypes.
- 2) We abhor your use of Holy Scripture, the Word of God, which teaches us of God's love for all, being used as a tool for the continuance of oppression of God's children.
- 3) We object to the use of fear and ignorance as a planned part of your strategy. We believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its teachings and find your methods incompatible with our understanding of Christian teaching.

We shall continue to pray for you and your children, that you may find through this experience, as we already have, that God's love is an ever present strength in times of crisis.

Yours in Christ,

The Gay & Christian Conference
Kirkridge, May 5-7, 1977

Notes from the President

There are so many things happening around it's hard to keep up with them all. However, I will try to share some of them with you...The Gay Switchboard is looking for volunteers, so if you are interested contact them at 717-234-0328 or talk to our Secretary Rich H. or to John B...We all have an interest in the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus and I urge those individuals who are interested to get involved. You can write them at P.O. Box 1505, Harrisburg, PA 17105. They will be sponsoring a Human Rights Day on May 24 here in Harrisburg. This will be an attempt to talk to legislators about legislation which affects gay people. Such as SB 531 which will repeal our antiquated Deviate Sexual Intercourse laws. Do get involved as I will...Sister Kathleen and I attended the retreat given at Kirkridge by Fathers Malcolm Boyd and John McNeill, S.J. It was quite a rewarding experience and Sister and I will both be glad to share our experience with you...Our Easter Collection was not as successful as we would have hoped...Aaron will report the results to you. Because of the poor support we simply will not be able to do many of the things we would have liked to do, such as an advertising campaign this fall. We won't give up and will ask you for support later on... Many of you have received information about the International Dignity Convention on Labor Day weekend in Chicago. If you haven't received info, please let me know and I will get it to you. I would like to have a count as to how many from the chapter would be going. If there is enough interest, maybe we

can get a special airfare rate. Let me know soon, say by June 15...Our retreat with Sister Miriam was another success. Our thanks to Sister for sharing with us...Sometimes we fail to thank those people who work for our chapter. I know I can't remember when anyone said, "Jerry, thanks for giving or not giving." as the case may be. I would like now to thank Barb for her help and Sandy for her generous time. And Aaron for trying to keep the books when it is so hard. And Rich H. for keeping up with the mail. A very important part of the success of our chapter is our newsletter, and there are two very important people who work on this project--John O. and Jan M. Thanks for a job well done. Sr. Kathleen is the living spirit among us and for her we are grateful. Thanks, Sister Kathleen. Paul keeps us singing and organizes the liturgies. You know how thankful we are to Paul. The Priests who come to Dignity are many and so important to us. Thanks to Bob, Junior, John, H.S., W.S., John, Joe, Paul, Jim, Bob. You all are truly representatives of Christ. To all of you who come to Dignity, thanks for whatever. And the last and most important thanks I give to Jeffrey for being my companion and lover often under difficult circumstances. I know the demands that my involvement in Dignity do to the time we share and you have been most understanding...Father McNeill said that if God had his hand on Anita Bryant it would be on her mouth. For gay sake, boycott Florida Orange Juice. It's poison to the spirit...We will be getting the tapes of Father McNeill's talks and also of Father Boyd's...The 7th Annual Gay Pride March will be held in New York City on June 26. It's quite a trip. There will be no march in Philadelphia this year. That ought to make Rizzo happy...Our second anniversary celebration will be coming up on July 17, 1977. A picnic is planned so I hope everyone will plan to be with us...Friday night liturgies in June, July, and August are cancelled. Check the calendar for summer happenings and details...Our Disco Dance after the Passover Sedor was a flop. It seems everyone had something else to do and could not stay long enough to share with each other. For some the bars are still

more important. Thanks, Kathleen, for the Seder Meal anyway...Let me close by saying I love you all so much.

In Dignity,

Jerry B.

Dates to Remember

May 27 (Friday)

Mass/Meeting. Friends' Meeting House, 6th and Herr Streets, Harrisburg, 8 pm.

June 11 (Saturday)

A Consciousness-Raising afternoon. "Male Images: Real or Pressurized"--- to be held at Friends' Meeting House, 6th and Herr Streets, Harrisburg. CR from 2 to 5. Covered dish supper at 5. Mass at 7 pm. For further details, see notice in this newsletter.

June 19 (Sunday)

Cookout at Paul's at 6:30. RSVP to Jerry B. at 232-2027 or Barb G. at 234-7364.

June 16 (Thursday)

Governor's Council on Secual Minorities meeting at 1:30 pm at the Human Relations Commission, Harrisburg, PA.

June 26 (Sunday)

Gay Liberation March in New York City. For details call Jerry B.

July 17 (Sunday)

Second Anniversary Celebration from 11 am until ??? Mass at 5 pm, Pine Grove Furnace State Park. For directions, call Jerry B.

July 31 (Sunday)

Cookout At Jerry's at 6:30 pm. RSVP to Jerry B. at 232-2027 or Barb G. at 234-7364.

August 14

Picnic at Pine Grove State Park from 11 am until ??? Ecumenical Service with MCC at 5 pm.

August 28 (Sunday)

Cookout at Barb and Sandy's at 6:30. RSVP to Jerry B. at 232-2027 or Barb G. at 234-7364.

**MCC meets every Sunday at 8 pm for worship at 1001 N. Spring Street, Apt. I-2, Middletown, PA and on Wednesdays for prayer and a CR group.

PERSPECTIVE

A Question of Morality

I am a Catholic who hasn't been to confession in more than a decade. The only Mass I attended during this period was part of a graduation ceremony. According to the Church when I left it, and perhaps even yet, I am in immediate danger of eternal damnation. But this is one of the least of my worries.

The reason I sent Monsignor K. that letter indicating I was pulling out was a matter of honesty. I did not understand why the commandment about murder could have built-in exceptions that let Vietnam continue, yet the one of adultery was supplemented to cover so much more. While one rule was relaxed, the other was designed to suffocate human sexual nature outside of marriage. While everyone else was talking about turning the altar around, trying to get hip about the Mass in English, wondering which parish used what rite, and replacing the organ with guitars, my soul was crying out for love.

I had been married for seven years. Right from the start, my wife knew I was gay, but she won my total and complete love, without question or compromise. For those seven years, before her death, I was faithful to her. That was when I learned that it is not a question of physiology but of personality. Lust is for the body, while love is for the total individual.

A year and a half after she died, I forgot my lesson. After the most incred-

ible struggles, I could not deny my needs and God-given right for sexual expression. Although I live seven years like the arrow, the three-dollar bill came into circulation after that. And I saw no reason to reject any reasonable offer.

Then, in total innocence, came Joe--an Italian Apollo who needed a friend. A few weeks later I had to admit to him I had that wonderful balance of lust and love which is the basis for initiating a relationship. Rather than get my jaw broken or my ego smashed, I learned he felt the same way.

For almost five years I compromised on every negotiable point knowing (as he did not) that sacrifice is a truer sign of love than anything which can be done in a horizontal position. During that fifth year, the one-way street signs began to come in focus--particularly when we reached a philosophic impasse on the idea of "primary" or "secondary" relationships. I had a lot of self-doubts after we parted, but I knew any black arm band would have been a sham. I don't envy the life he is now leading. There is nothing in his future which will be organic in retrospect. The shoulder he will cry on will be different every time he needs one. No one will worry if he gets caught in the rain; no one will really care. When he is ill, last night's companion will be gone. And what will he do with those memories of Europe or the Caribbean, of picking out the dog, of the projects we worked on together?

What is the real reason for our separation? The Man said gays sleep around. Joe is following the label. He is becoming the stereotype. Society's image of the fruit has become his. By living this role, he is destroying any hope of self-esteem, and promise of quality and substance. The Church, which condemned him in the 60s, has lost a soul and I have lost a friend.

But I've not lost myself. I know that the personality I need must be male. Unlike Cherubino, I don't need to sing "Voi che sapete" because I know what love is. I don't need to hide the fact that I'm gay, because my boss, colleagues, and parents have expressed their concerns that so beautiful a re-

lationship has ended. I don't need to have myself purged from the sins of Sodom or the adultery commandment because this was a pure and faithful love on my part, even if Joe's departure qualified my evaluations.

I was finally attracted to DIGNITY when, on the Donahue show, I heard Father McNeill and Mr. Diedrich agree that one-night stands were symptomatic of the sociology, not the orientation. That hit home. I'm now giving serious thoughts of going to confession, this time face-to-face with the priest. If I do, I will tell him (or her) that I am guilty of being self-righteous: that I have been ten years without Mass or confession, during which time I have been faithful to my ideals and honest to my beliefs. I have not violated any commandments to my knowledge, yet the Church has damned me. I will state that I do not regard it immoral should I fall seriously in love with one of my own sex, because it is the person rather than the gender I embrace and that I will regard any sexual acts between us as a sacred manifestation of genuine love--as one of many possible expressions.

That is really a question of morality, and I know that love is not immoral. Not real love.

--from Dignity/Baltimore
newsletter

Consciousness-Raising Workshop

June 11

Topic

Male Images: Real or Pressurized

A master social worker will speak to the group and guide a discussion of the topic. We urge you to come, join in and share your knowledge and feelings on the topic.

Place — Friends Meeting House,
6th and Herr Streets

Time — 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.

Supper — 5 P.M. to 6:45

Covered dish

Liturgy — 7 P.M.

NOTES FROM PAUL

Well, dear readers, you are the losers! You missed so much this month by not having the time, by not feeling like going, by not wanting so much religion that new persons, new experiences, new insights that could have affected you in a unique way were left alone, untouched, unfelt, unseen, except by a few. The best example of the point is that Sister Miriam, who took the time to prepare a superb afternoon on the sacrament of Reconciliation, had only three people there to share it with. All her effort, time, and work reached out to so few and now, Miriam's Order is leaving this diocese, and possible she may never have the opportunity to share with us again. Do you see what you've lost? Don't you realize that each time you fail to share yourself with your brothers and sisters you are losing a chance for personal growth, losing a chance to be to another person or persons, losing a chance to strengthen our oh-so-weak community?

Social functions are good and an intrinsic part of our Dignity community's life. But we are not just a bunch of friends or acquaintances who throw a party after mass or have picnics in the summer or gorge ourselves at pot luck suppers. Since when did Dignity become an alternative for Overeaters Anonymous? Since when does our chapter revolve around wine, cheese, and disco records? Where are our values, our purpose, our goals? Dignity is first a response to a faith need in gay persons, an apostolate in every sense of that word. Each person associated with Dignity is a new apostle bearing the 'good news,' the gospel, of the gay person's intrinsic worth, of his/her lifestyle, of his/her true unity with and in the creative, redemptive, sustaining love of God. Yes, some of this mission is exercised in social surroundings. But how inadequate that performance will be if one has separated or weakened their bond with the community. How effectual can one be when faced with problems if they will only occasionally partake of the renewing grace of community worship? How can one attempt to answer questions posed to them when they cannot take an afternoon to learn new ideas, or to clarify shaded

areas of thought in oneself, sharing with and growing from other members of the community? Have we become so knowledgeable that we no longer need to learn? Have we become so sanctified that we no longer need the support of communal prayer?

Community, by intrinsic definition, implies an interdependent oneness among a group of individual entities. That is what is so beautiful about community; you take all the separate and unique pieces, and each, bringing that particular uniqueness, forms a whole where each is strengthened, supported, and enriched by the other. When there is discord and dissonance among the pieces, the whole functions in easing and resolving the problem, rather than having the pieces remove themselves, diminishing, destroying the whole and its potential for good.

We realize that this article has been a bit scathing and harsh, decidedly not the general camp ramblings of this author's pen. But it was after this author witnessed the saddened eyes of a generous person, disappointed because there was no one there to receive the gift, and it was after hearing the dismayed voices of ones in need, who remain only partially relieved because there were not enough caring persons around to listen, that we decided to speak out. It is useless for us to encourage you, dear readers, to join with us if you do not wish to see, or at least to discover, what our purpose in Dignity is. And things won't improve until you take the initiative to do something about them. Look at the calendar in this letter and find an opportunity.

"See how these Christians love one another." Can we really love when we are strangers? Can we love when we cannot find the time, or muster the energy, or get enthused, or give a hundred other, equally feeble, excuses? "We will never be gathered exactly like this again," our celebrant said at mass. That moment was unique, so we rejoiced in one another and in God. Can you afford to pass by another 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience again?

Until God brings us together, may he watch over, guide and bless you. Pax,
Paul

SEDER

My dear friends in Dignity,

Seder--what a beautiful celebration for all of us. Seder--the great celebration of the intervention and care of Yahweh for His people, Israel. Deliverance from slavery to freedom!

How well we can all identify with transvering the trail from oppression to freedom. In our public and private lives and with God's interventions and care, we prod our own paths of captivity to freedom. We daily seek God's help to deliver us from our personal enslavements--whether real or imaginary, self-imposed or set upon us from without.

I pray that the Seder celebration which so many of us shared with our Metropolitan Community Church friends will never lose its meaning in our lives through time because "we've all been there."

Sister Kathleen

DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania is for gay and concerned Catholics.

The Officers are: President Jerry B. (phone 232-2027)
Vice-Pres. Barb G.
Secretary Rich H.
Treasurer Aaron S.

If you are interested in joining DIGNITY, please fill out the membership application.

I wish to become a member of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Dues are as follows: \$15.00 Single Membership
\$25.00 Couple Membership
\$25.00 or more Generous Person

Mail to DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 297
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June 4
8:30 A.M. till ...

We need your help to run our stand and to contribute items.

See you at North Street
between 2nd and 3rd.