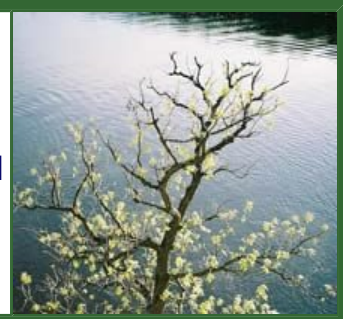


The Progressive Catholic Voice

An independent and grassroots forum for reflection, dialogue, and the exchange of ideas within the Catholic community of Minnesota and beyond

July 2008



Dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, who heard and responded to God's call to "repair my Church," and, in so doing, emulated the justice-making and compassion of our brother Jesus.

The Progressive Catholic Voice
can now be easily [downloaded](#) (.pdf) and printed!

In this issue . . .

- [A Special Appeal to Our Readers](#)
- [Dialoguing with the Bishop](#)
In this installment of our regular feature, the editorial team of *The Progressive Catholic Voice* consider what Pope Benedict XVI and Archbishop John Nienstedt may or may not mean when they talk about "the evils of relativism."
- [Reflections on Gay Pride 2008](#)
By Mary Lynn Murpy and Michael Bayly
- [To the Tune of a Welcoming God: A Review of David Weiss' New Book](#)
David Weiss' new book invites the Christian Church to sing a new song with regard to its LGBT members.
- [The Catholic Understanding of Faithful Dissent \(Part 2\)](#)
Michael Bayly continues his sharing of highlights from author Robert McClory's keynote address at the second annual Prayer Breakfast for Hope and Justice, held May 3rd in the Twin Cities.
- [Parish Life – St Mary's of Mapleton \(Part 2: Aftermath\)](#)
The second in a series of excerpts from Charles Pilon's book, *Waiting for Mozart*, depicting members of the fictional parish of St. Mary's caught in conflict.
- [A Request for Support](#)
The National Coalition of American Nuns and parishioners from Saint Cronan's Parish in St. Louis, MO, are asking for a show of support for Sr. Louise Lears, who was recently placed under interdict by Archbishop Raymond Burke. Supporters are being asked to add their signature to, and/or make a donation for, an ad in the *National Catholic Reporter* (August 22, 2008 issue). The deadline for your signature and donation is August 5, 2008.
- [Upcoming Events - July 2008](#)
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 - [To Send Your Questions, Comments, Events, or Articles for Publication](#)
 - [To Make An Online Donation](#) **[NEW]**
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[\[Back to Top\]](#)

The Progressive Catholic Voice

Previous Issues

[October 2007](#)

[November 2007](#)

[Special Issue:
Nov. 21, 2007](#)

[December 2007](#)

[January 2008](#)

[February 2008](#)

[March 2008](#)

[April 2008](#)

[Special Issue:
April 22, 2008](#)

[May 2008](#)

[June 2008](#)

A Special Appeal to Our Readers

Friends,

This is our 10th issue of *The Progressive Catholic Voice* (PCV) monthly online journal, and we want to take this opportunity to do two things.

First, we thank the many people who have contacted us to tell us how much they've appreciated the articles and perspective of the PCV. We seem to be realizing one of the core components of our mission, articulated last October in our inaugural issue: to develop and unify the progressive Catholic voice of the local church.

Second, we appeal to you for financial assistance. Up until now, *The Progressive Catholic Voice* has been funded by the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#), an independent, grassroots organization that receives no financial support from the Archdiocese. CPCSM continues to fund the PCV, but the organization's funds are seriously depleted. Both CPCSM and *The Progressive Catholic Voice* are volunteer organizations, with the exception of Michael Bayly who serves as both executive coordinator of CPCSM and coordinating editor of the PCV. Michael holds two Master's Degrees and makes a whopping one thousand dollars a month!

We are beginning to develop a cadre of small donors as our publication and events become known. But many funding organizations tend to be shy of those who speak critically of the Archdiocese, despite the fact that our work is well researched, thoughtfully written, and respectful. Though we will continue to apply for grants from various funding organizations with little success, we have to rely on individual givers. And that's where you come in.

If you've appreciated and been encouraged and inspired by the material we've published these past nine months, then we ask you to consider making a financial contribution to help keep *The Progressive Catholic Voice* afloat.

Donation checks can be made out to "CPCSM" and mailed to: CPCSM, c/o The House of the Beloved Disciple, 2913 13th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Or -- as a new feature of *The Progressive Catholic Voice* -- you may prefer to make a secure online contribution with a credit card through the popular and well respected PayPal service, by clicking on the following "DONATE" button:



(Please Note: Although "Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities" (the non-profit corporation and fiscal agent through which the Progressive Catholic Voice accepts contributions) appears at the top of the donation page that you will see after clicking on this button, your contribution will go directly into CPCSM's Progressive Catholic Voice Account.)

It may be helpful to know that the Minnesota Tax Code now provides a 50% income deduction for charitable contributions over \$500.

We also welcome any suggestions you might have for other funding sources.

Yours sincerely,

The Editorial Team

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

The Progressive Catholic Voice

Editorial Team

Michael Bayly
(Coordinating Editor)

Mary Beckfeld

Susan Kramp

David McCaffrey
(Technical
Coordinator)

Mary Lynn Murphy

Rick Notch

Theresa O'Brien,
CSJ

Paula Ruddy

The Progressive Catholic Voice's Endorsing Organizations (To Date)

Call to Action
Minnesota

[Network of Spiritual Progressives \(Minnesota Chapter\)](#)

[The Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#)

[Catholic Rainbow Parents](#)

[Dignity Twin Cities](#)

[Inclusive Catholics](#)

[CORPUS](#)

[Anthony Signorelli and Call to Liberty](#)

Recommended Links

[The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church](#)

[Future Church](#)

[Call to Action](#)

[The Catholic Action Network for Social Justice](#)

[Progressive Catholic Reflections](#)

[Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual \(WATER\)](#)

[Roman Catholic Womenpriests](#)

[New Ways Ministry](#)

[Fortunate Families](#)

[Richard Sipe: Priests, Celibacy, and Sexuality](#)

[National Catholic Reporter](#)

[America: The National Catholic Weekly](#)

[Commonweal](#)

[U.S. Catholic](#)

Dialoguing with the Archbishop

By the Editorial Team

Archbishop John C. Nienstedt writes a column in [The Catholic Spirit](#) entitled "In God's Good Time." We take his public statements as an opportunity to discuss his views with him.

Dear Archbishop Nienstedt:

We have noticed that you and Pope Benedict XVI frequently caution us against the evils of relativism and individualism which, you say, are disastrously characteristic of US culture. Would you please tell us what you mean?

Of course, relativism and individualism can be carried to extremes, as can their opposites, absolutism and communalism. Maybe by adding an "-ism" you mean to lump these notions with other extreme ideas. If we were extreme cognitive relativists, we would accept anything anyone said as true for them. Or if it is moral relativism you are talking about, at the extreme we would accept everyone's judgment of their own behavior as morally good. There is surely enough contention about right and wrong, true and false, among US citizens to allay the fear of too much tolerance of each other's beliefs or actions.

As for the extreme of individualism, that would mean we see ourselves as entirely independent and self-sufficient. All we need to disabuse ourselves of that idea is for an electrical grid to go down or the price of gas to inch higher. We are probably more dependent on our various communal systems than the people of many other nations of the world. There aren't many Thoreaus carving out independent existences in the wilderness.

If you are not talking about the extremes, perhaps you are talking about an emphasis on one pole of the duality rather than an emphasis on the other pole. In the US, we might emphasize individual liberty while the Vatican emphasizes communal unity. In the US, we stand on principle for freedom of thought and speech as well as for having good reasons to restrict people's liberty. At the other pole, the Vatican emphasizes conformity in thought and speech and uniformity in action. You could be warning us not to let the emphasis in the US go to extremes. We could respectfully return the warning.

Both questions, how humans know truth and how societies should be organized, are philosophical questions with at least twenty-five centuries of debate on record. We are not competent to survey the fields, but we are pretty sure that we humans haven't arrived at absolute truth about either question to date.

You may not be talking about the philosophical notions of relativism or individualism at all. Rather, in cautioning against them, you are conveying this positive pastoral message to us:

"Do not worry about how to live. You can be certain that in following the Roman Catholic hierarchy you are on the path of truth and goodness. Jesus has said that His Spirit is with us in our institutionalized tradition so that we will not err in doctrine or in moral teaching. Adhere to the teachings of the Roman Catechism and commit fully to life in a Roman Catholic parish. Be so committed to and immersed in a Catholic way of thinking that you subordinate your individuality to the community. In this way you will model the Christian gospel of love and evangelize the world you interact with. This is the way of holiness."

Do we get the message that you want to convey?

This vision has an appeal, and we believe you are trying to protect and lead us. We also believe with you that individuals, families, and whole communities can live happy, holy lives believing that the Spirit guides them through the Roman Catholic institution. For many people, that lifestyle may appear to be the only way to live a holy life. In the maelstrom of cultural, ideological, political, and religious differences in our own nation, let alone in the whole world, it is not easy for an individual to know the truth and to choose the good at each step of the path. Conforming one's judgment of truth and goodness to the judgment of the Church leaders seems a secure choice.

But for many of us, another way of being holy, Christian, Catholics in the world at large is also possible. It is both individualistic and communal, and it recognizes that our knowledge is relative to our time in history.

In this vision, the individual cannot abdicate the responsibility to make judgments for himself or herself. This

[The Catholic Worker](#)

[Karl Rahner Society](#)

[Nonviolent
Peaceforce](#)

[Soulforce](#)

[Tikkun](#)

[WomanWell](#)

responsibility goes with the inalienable freedom of spirit rooted in the Gospel message.

But we do not believe we stand alone as individuals. We have multiple communities within which to test our thinking and judging. We have our primary relationships, family and friends, to develop a sound self and draw us out of our egotism. We have in our Roman Catholic tradition, a Eucharistic community to keep the memory of who we are as Christians alive among us. It is not just the parish we belong to, and not just the current bishop and pope, but the whole community of believers from the early Church onward. Our thinking and judging is guided by that tradition.

We learn from the Christian churches that do not report to Rome as well as from the other religions of the world. We have our own secular liberal democratic tradition to learn from with its core values of liberty and equality. We have neighbors who have been formed in other cultures. In this age of global communication, when people can google any question to thinkers ancient and contemporary, we are connected to deep and broad communities of inquiry.

Since each of us has been formed differently by our interactions with all these traditions, wherever two or three of us are gathered we are a community of individuals with a rich experience who can help each other develop in all our human dimensions. Our faith is that we are as individuals empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in communication with the world as co-creators of the Kingdom of God.

We have no empirical evidence, but we suspect that most contemporary US Catholics form their convictions and make their moral judgments in reliance on what they have learned from broader communities than just the Catholic Church. Can we be sure that we have absolute truth? No. Depending on how much responsibility we take for inquiring, we can only get as close as humans have currently come to it. It is relative truth, relative to our time, our cultural programming, and our finite minds.

The formation of our consciences in this multiplicity of communities leads us to question some truths held by the Roman Catholic Church. We think this is an advantage for the growth of the institution. An inbred conformity does not lead to growth and renewal. This judgment may be presumptuous of us, but in reading your column in the [June 19th issue of *The Catholic Spirit*](#) about going to Rome to receive the pallium, we think we see into the mind of a man whose interior life has been formed entirely by his life in the Church and its culture. We have no doubt that you are a conscientious, kind, and holy man. Because your lifestyle of immersion in Catholic culture has worked for you, you may think it is the best way for all Catholics.

We ask you, as the archdiocesan leader, to recognize other cultural ways of being Catholic. We and others like us whose interior lives have been formed through interactions with the pluralism of the US culture in the twenty-first century have the same goal of holiness as you.

The pallium symbolizes unity, you say. From our point of view, unless unity is actually experienced among members of the Archdiocese, no piece of cloth can symbolize it. To accept your leadership and work together, we need your acknowledgment that our progressive Catholicism is a benefit to the Church. It would serve our Church's mission as a sacrament of true unity in Christ to respect each other and work together.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Team of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*:

Michael Bayly
Mary Beckfeld
Susan Kramp
David McCaffrey
Mary Lynn Murphy
Rick Notch
Theresa O'Brien, CSJ
Paula Ruddy

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Reflections on Gay Pride 2008

By Mary Lynn Murphy and Michael Bayly



Michael Bayly, CPCSM's Executive Coordinator, and other LGBT Catholics lead the Inclusive Catholics contingent in the 2008 LGBT Pride Parade down Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis.

A Mom's Report from Pride

By Mary Lynn Murphy



Mary Lynn Murphy, co-founder of the Catholic Rainbow Parents, chats with visitors to the CPCSM LGBT Pride booth in Loring Park on Saturday, June 28, 2008.

Hello, all! My son and I both worked the Pride Festival last weekend, at separate booths, amid record setting crowds. Busy as we were, we barely crossed paths, but I was very conscious of myself as

“mother” all weekend. (Hmmm, moms and the Pride Festival. An unlikely combination -- until recent years!)

This year, so much of the steady stream of visitors to our [CPCSM](#) booth were young people, seeking solace. They were often sad/angry/disgusted with the recent developments at St. Joan of Arc Church and with other matters, and deliberately engaged us. They studied our framed photo of the [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#) and commented freely:

“Wow, parents who would go out on a limb like this for their kids!”

“If I ever come out to my parents, I would love to see them in a group like this.”

“I think my mom is ready to move beyond the support of PFLAG to a more active group like yours. Do you accept new members?”

“I’m from a small town. Nothing like Rainbow Parents could EVER happen there. That’s why I live here.”

“Do you know of a TRULY affirming church I can attend on Sundays, or does that even exist these days?”

“I NEVER go to church anymore. I don’t feel welcome there.”

At one point, a brooding and impatient young woman waited in the hot sun as her companion approached us. Hurrying her friend, she suspiciously eyed the “Catholic” part of our title, refusing to take refuge in the cool of our tent. She kept her distance, with no response to our welcoming smiles.

Emotions ran high as one young lesbian woman described estrangement from parents, and a gay cousin’s suicide that was unacknowledged by family. The pain and the commentary, the encouragement and the gratitude, the hopelessness and hopefulness, spilled out on the day.

Taking a break from the booth, I crossed the wooden bridge over Loring pond. Departing the bridge, I spied a slim, fair haired boy, a mid-teen, I surmised. (The guessing game at Pride is often part of the fun!) The boy walked gracefully in a very brief gossamer costume, itself an artistic stand out from others I saw. His detachable wings were luminescent and pink. Flesh colored slippers adorned his feet. His expression was inscrutable . . . was it peaceful? Intentional? He seemed to relish this transparent moment. Though I wanted to greet him, as strangers often do in the friendliness of Pride, I couldn’t ruin the mood, or disrupt the moment that looked . . . happy. Among 150,000 supportive people, how could he not be? So I smiled, and he smiled back, and “mother” moved on, reassured for the boy.

Lost in thought, I almost stumbled into a park bench where two elderly men were seated together. They were elegantly turned out in linen shirts and casual slacks, one leaning on his cane, the other petting his dog. (Dogs! Pride is a dog lover’s paradise!) As the poochie snoozed, the men quietly held hands, enjoying the breeze, surveying a crowd that seemed to meet their approval.

Next stop – sun glasses, purchased from a tanned and toned fellow wearing very few clothes and a welcoming smile. I had to laugh as he inventoried my personal style . . . white collared shirt with Obama button, three-quarter sleeves, tailored navy pants, simple leather purse, and sensible thick soled running shoes. As he bagged up my purchase, he warmly suggested: “May I hug you and thank you for coming today? We love people like you here at Pride.” So we hugged and laughed – at the sweet oddity of our incongruous selves!

Back at the booth, the parade finally over, our tired and thirsty crew relaxed in the shade, before the post-parade onslaught of nonstop visitors “Here is our website. Don’t forget your literature. Yes, certainly your mother could call me; here is my number. Thank you for stopping. Everyone is welcome.”

Euphoric is the only way to describe two Rainbow Parents who were first time visitors to Pride this year. A scene like Pride is UNHEARD OF in their conservative hometown. They marched the parade route in outspoken wonder, as the “Inclusive Catholics” banner flew overhead. “I can’t even believe this! I never imagined thousands of faces, cheering us on – every step of the way!”

By late afternoon, I threw in the towel, dragging my weary bones up the VERY STEEP steps, across the I-94 footbridge, and down the VERY STEEP steps on the other side. As I approached the Hennepin/ I-94 intersection, I laughed out loud to see two riotous boys of about 16. Wearing the skimpiest of bathing suits and rainbow necklaces, holding hands and running top speed, they charged from stop light to stop light, across 4 lanes of traffic, laughing their heads off for all eyes to see.

Cars honked, people waved, all in good fun. Reaching the far side, the two boys continued to run, still hand in hand, down the hill to the sculpture garden, toward the evening coolness of the darkening shade. I

couldn't help smiling as I passed them by, thinking . . . THAT could never have happened just one generation earlier. Two beautiful boys could not run with abandon, out in the sunlight, touching and laughing, as millions of straight kids do every day.

So . . . despite the church hassles, the occasional misery and heartbreak of this journey, there is progress to savor, and honest joy in this life, for our kids and for ourselves. And there is that unexpected energy that comes from unique lives, courageously lived. We are grateful for that.

Yes, it was another fine year at Pride, and I'll be seeing you all again next year. Love, Mom.

Mary Lynn Murphy is the president of the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#), the coordinator of [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#), and a co-founder of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#).

A Catholic Presence at Pride By Michael Bayly



Michael Bayly is flanked by two other faithful volunteers at CPCSM's Pride Booth in Loring Park.

Friends, let me tell you it's quite something to sit at a booth marked "Catholic" at a Gay Pride festival!

For a substantial part of the past two days I've been helping staff the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#) booth at the Twin Cities LGBT Pride Festival in Loring Park, situated on the edge of downtown Minneapolis. The CPCSM booth also served as "home base" for [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#) and [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#) online journal.

As you can see from the photo above, we had a large banner that read, "Inclusive Catholics: Welcoming and Affirming Catholic Parishes and Communities." Our booth was situated in a prime spot in Loring Park, a kind of "town square" location. We really couldn't be missed! As a result, we had a lot of visitors and experienced a range of responses.

Many folks did a double take when they first saw our banner.

"Inclusive Catholics? Is that even possible any more?" asked one passerby.

"Gay friendly?" inquired another. "You guys *can't* be Catholic!"

In light of the Church's treatment of its LGBT members, another visitor asked: "Shouldn't it read, 'Abusive Catholics'?" He was only half joking, and I thought to myself: Yeah, he's got a point.

One visibly irate visitor scoffed: “You can’t tell me there’s inclusive Catholic parishes after what the archbishop [just did to St. Joan of Arc \[Church\]](#).”

A young gay man also cited the [recent controversy](#) concerning St. Joan of Arc Church, noting that it was “the last place where I felt accepted, and now that’s not the case. It sucks.”

“Welcoming parishes are getting fewer and further between,” sighed another passerby, while one woman lamented: “I’m just so angry that the Church is going so backwards”; a view echoed by another passerby who declared: “The Church is moving forward into the twelfth century!”

“Over the centuries the Church has constructed a self-serving mythology,” one man said. “The Church is more concerned about maintaining this mythology than actually helping people. As long as they’ve got a group of people who buy into this mythology without thinking or questioning, then they’re happy to let the rest of us walk out the door.”

A man in his sixties declared: “I’ve been pissed off with the Catholic Church for 45 years.” When I asked him to explain why, he simply replied: “It’s just not user-friendly.”

Another man shared with me how a lot of his friends weren’t Catholic anymore. “And I can see why,” he said. “The situation is bad and it’s only getting worse. I’m really unhappy with the new archbishop. He’s so out of it.”

“He’s misinterpreting God,” another visitor said of Archbishop Nienstedt.

Yet another visitor to our booth remarked: “The archbishop has shot himself in the foot, big time, by alienating not just gays and lesbians, but women and anyone who isn’t Catholic in the same way he is.”

One man shared his nickname for Archbishop Nienstedt: “I call him ‘Dr. No,’” he said with a chuckle. Elaborating, he said, “How can you spend your life saying ‘No!’ ‘No!’ ‘No!’? What a wasted life.”

In sharing her views of those who comprise the Roman Catholic hierarchy, one elderly woman leaned toward me and said with utter conviction: “If Christ were here, he would throw them out of the Temple!”

One young man confessed: “I grew up Catholic but left because of its treatment of gays.” He looked sadly at our “Inclusive Catholics” banner and said: “It would be nice to see change. Then I’d come back.”

So many eyed our banner with sad, weary smiles. “I’ve been there,” their look seemed to say, “but I just couldn’t take the spiritual and psychological abuse anymore.”

Yet although some can no longer stay, many nevertheless expressed support for the efforts of [CPCSM](#), [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#), and *The Progressive Catholic Voice* online journal to help the Church develop a more informed, compassionate, and inclusive theology of human sexuality.

“You’re doing a wonderful service of witness to a Church leadership that has lost its way,” one transgender individual told us.

“The Church is a living Church,” an elderly man reminded us. “And only the people can make it change.”

Another passerby paused, looked at our “Inclusive Catholics” banner and beamed: “It just makes me happy to see those two words together! Thank you for being here.”

Michael Bayly is a cofounder and editor of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#) and the executive coordinator of the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#).

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

To the Tune of a Welcoming God **A Review of David Weiss' New Book**

By Michael Bayly

David Weiss' new book invites the Christian Church to sing a new song with regards to its lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender members.

David Weiss' recently released book, *To the Tune of a Welcoming God*, is a heartfelt compilation of great beauty and honesty. It's a book that inspires and challenges through its unwavering focus on God's loving and welcoming embrace. Without doubt, the world and the church hunger for such a focus, especially in relation to the many complex and potentially divisive issues of human sexuality. Thankfully, Weiss's book is a veritable feast – one that both nourishes and delights.

Weiss is a member of [St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church](#) and a steering committee member of the church's Wingspan Ministry of "pastoral care, education, advocacy, and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people." Wingspan Ministry published Weiss' book of essays and hymn texts last month.

In a media release, Wingspan Ministry notes that its partnership with Weiss is aimed at "foster[ing] change in the ELCA [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America] policy concerning rostering of GLBT clergy and laity and performing services of blessing of relationship for GLBT couples." The group wants to see that change happen at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to be held in Minneapolis.

"For David," the media release continues, "the partnership is an opportunity to carry his decade-long work as a thoughtful and eloquent Ally to a new level. [His] writings, which range from short essays and texts of public talks to hymn texts, are all 'occasional' in the same sense that most of Luther's writings were occasional. That is, they were all written in response to specific events, invitations, and occasions. As such, and because each piece will carry a couple sentence description of its original context, the writings retain a certain intimacy and liveliness to them."

In his book's introduction, Weiss notes: "I am, by vocation, a public theologian and poet, gifted with prophetic passion alongside a measure of pastoral sensitivity. I am committed to write accessibly to the 'saints in the church at large,' but am equally determined to do so with full theological integrity. This book brings to the discussion of welcome a balance of heart and mind, theological integrity and spiritual passion, that is all too rare in a text aimed at a general readership."

According to Wingspan, *To the Tune of a Welcoming God* " puts lyric prose on the divisive question of whether and how the church might welcome the GLBT Christians at its doorstep, and the ones already in its pews. Teachers, students, pastors and laypersons, whether gay or straight, will find these short texts worthy of long reflection and conversation. For those whose own hearts and minds have already been captivated by the tune of a welcoming God, these readings will help put clear words and images to the music already at play in their lives. At times whimsical, sobering, challenging, surprising, insightful, and subversive, *To the Tune of a Welcoming God* invites the church to sing a new song."

Following is an excerpt from *To the Tune of a Welcoming God*. This particular excerpt is from Weiss' essay, "The Body as Burning Bush," and focuses on the coming out experience as an act of holiness.

Coming Out is seldom simple or easy. And it usually is a life-long process, because the closet keeps chasing after you as societal assumptions try to erase you again and again. The moment of coming out will need to occur again and again. So to move beyond Coming Out is not to put it behind you; it's simply to add another act to the repertoire of holiness in your life, what I'm calling the act of Keeping Faith.

When I say that Coming Out is an act of holiness, I am making a blunt theological statement. I am saying that in addition to whatever *human* presence you choose for your coming out, there is also – and most fundamentally – a *divine* presence. Whether you come out to friend or family, to pastor or teacher, you come out foremost to God, because you dare to stand naked in the garden without shame.

Keeping faith, then, is about relating to others in a way that honors the divine presence at your coming out. It is about sexual ethics, and it has less to do with rules than with relationships. Keeping rules is not a holy act, keeping faith with your name and the name of God and the name of those around you — that is a holy act.

Sin is real. Whether you explain it by reference to a biblical fall or see it as the evolutionary baggage of our climb upward from a more brutal past, there is simply no use in denying that from the moment of our birth – or even before – we are exposed to forces that bend us into habits that are hurtful. We carry in ourselves, straight or gay, sexually active or celibate,

transgendered or bisexual, the weight of distorted impulses and hungers that we are taught to meet with a taste for intimacy that is rarely intimate and more often oppressive. Whether you employ the word “sin” or not, there can be little argument that our best intentions seldom find the shortest line between two points.

Keeping faith, then, is about recognizing the potential for misuse of our sexual selves – but more importantly about recognizing the potential for moments of incarnation through our sexual selves. And I say “more importantly” not to be naïvely optimistic about this, but because this other side, this potential for incarnation, has been all but lost to us in our faith tradition. We have heard, explicitly and implicitly and through the subtlety of a silence that can deafen, that our sexual bodies can betray us. But we have too rarely heard that they can course with the gracious presence of God. And in the absence of that message, the best we have been able to hope for is a sexuality that is obedient to rules – while dwelling in bodies that hunger for grace. So the “more importantly” deserves the spotlight right now: *keeping faith is about learning what you need to know so that sexuality can blossom in intimacy and incarnation rather than wither in alienation and hurt.*

David Weiss

Excerpted from *To the Tune of a Welcoming God: Lyrical Reflections on Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Wideness of God’s Welcome* (Wingspan Ministry, 2008).

To purchase this book, visit www.davidweiss.com.

Michael Bayly is a cofounder and editor of *The Progressive Catholic Voice* and the executive coordinator of the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#).

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

The Catholic Understanding of Faithful Dissent (Part 2)

By Michael J. Bayly

In Part 1 of “A Catholic Understanding of Faithful Dissent,” I noted how Catholic journalist and author Robert McClory, in his keynote address at the May 3rd Prayer Breakfast for Hope and Justice, spoke powerfully and eloquently on how the Catholic tradition develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. Early in his talk, McClory highlighted the Second Vatican Council document *Dei Verbum*, which, he says, reminds us that this development of tradition occurs “through the intimate understanding of spiritual things [that believers] experience.” In this way, *Dei Verbum* states, the Church “constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth.”



Robert McClory

McClory maintains that this “foundational teaching” of the Church should remind us that Vatican II clearly teaches that “we’re not there yet. We don’t know everything. The Church is growing. It is moving and developing.” Furthermore, this understanding of the developing nature of the Church and of Catholic tradition refutes the idea that to be good Catholic means, first of all, unquestioning obedience to those who have been placed over us and who declare that they have the truth and that we don’t. McClory is adamant that “this understanding of what it means to be a ‘good Catholic’ is wrong.”

Yet he also acknowledges that it’s an idea, a belief that’s held by many – including the vast majority of Catholic bishops, Archbishop John Nienstedt of the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis among them. At one point during his address, McClory talked about a phone conversation he had with Nienstedt in 2004, when Nienstedt was the newly appointed bishop of New Ulm, Minnesota. McClory was writing a story for the *National Catholic Reporter* on Nienstedt’s denouncing of the theological views of his predecessor, the late Bishop Raymond Lucker, and his urging of Catholics not to read Lucker’s book, *Revelation and the Catholic Church: Vatican II in the Twenty-First Century*, “as though it reflects Catholic thinking.”

“As a whole,” wrote Nienstedt on the New Ulm diocese’s website, the book, “challenges the church’s own understanding of herself as being authoritatively charged under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to teach in

the name of Jesus on matters of faith and morals.”

When he spoke to Nienstedt by phone for his *National Catholic Reporter* story, McClory was reminded by the bishop of the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*, of how, according to Nienstedt, when the pope or bishops speak on matters of faith and morals, even when not speaking infallibly, the faithful are to accept that teaching and adhere to it with internal and external religious assent of soul.

For Nienstedt, said McClory at the May 3rd prayer breakfast, “dissent from *any* authoritative teaching of the Church places one theologically in opposition to the Church and puts one at risk of losing eternal life. One must accept *everything* the Church teaches authoritatively. *Everything*.”

“When I was talking to then-Bishop Nienstedt in 2004, I reminded him that some of the most well-known and respected theologians in the Church today don’t say that everything that is taught by the Church is always and everywhere to be accepted on the face of it. I reminded him, for instance, that Francis Sullivan in his definitive work, [Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church](#), says that in some instances, respectful dissent is quite appropriate.

According to McClory, Nienstedt responded: “Well, that’s not true. Sullivan agrees exactly with what I say.”

Not having Sullivan’s book on hand during his interview of Nienstedt, McClory noted how he and the bishop moved on to another subject. At this year’s May 3rd prayer breakfast, however, McClory *did* have on hand the quotes from Sullivan’s book that support the notion of faithful dissent.

Accordingly, McClory shared how Sullivan in *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* writes that:

It would be inconsistent for the magisterium to propose a moral norm as a requirement of the natural law . . . and not offer convincing reasons that would appeal to the intelligence of those to whom this teaching is directed. . . . It would be a mistake to rely too heavily on merely formal authority in proposing it for acceptance by thinking people.

In other words, says McClory, “the Church cannot simply say: ‘We’ve got all the answers now. Just listen and be obedient.’”

Declared McClory: “The reasons we hear for some of the Vatican’s propositions put before us are ludicrous.” Elaborating, McClory noted: “We are told, for instance, that contraception is contrary to the natural law and that everybody with a thinking mind knows that. Yet a lot of people that I think have thinking minds don’t know it. It’s not that they haven’t heard the teaching of the Church. They’ve heard it, thought through it, and they disagree.”

Are such Catholics lacking in obedience to the magisterium? Not according to Sullivan, who writes:

If, in a particular instance, Catholics have offered their religious submission of mind and will to the authority of the magisterium by making an honest and sustained effort to achieve internal assent to its teaching, and still find that doubts about its truths remain so strong in their minds that they cannot actually give their sincere intellectual assent to it, I do not see how one could judge such non-assent to involve any lack of obedience to the magisterium.

McClory noted how the term “submission of mind” used by Sullivan refers to the our offering of religious respect, our willingness to hear the teaching of the Church with an open mind. He also shared how Francis Sullivan, the author of *Magisterium*, was professor of ecclesiology at the Gregorian University from 1956 until 1992, serving as dean from 1964 to 1970. William Levada, the current Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, received his doctorate under Sullivan in 1971. Indeed, Sullivan has taught ecclesial doctrine to many, many bishops, said McClory. Including John Nienstedt. “Did Nienstedt not read Sullivan’s book? Was he absent the day Sullivan discussed faithful dissent?” McClory mused wryly.

Referring to the above quotes from Sullivan, McClory declared: “This is Catholic doctrine which, as far as I know, has never been challenged by anyone except extreme right-wingers. We need to know these types of authentic Catholic teachings if we are to deal with bishops who are tyrannical, with bishops who say, “No! No! No!” to everything. People need to say: “That’s wrong! I’m sorry, your excellency, but you are wrong.”

The teachings of Fr. Richard McCormick, a famous Jesuit and an expert in moral theology, were also highlighted by McClory during his May 3 keynote address in the Twin Cities.

McCormick is well known for articulating the criteria for responsible or faithful dissent from a given Church teaching. This criteria holds that:

- We must make a sincere attempt to understand the teaching in question.
- We must consider the reasons for and against the teaching, remembering at all times the importance that *Dei Verbum* places on the experiences of the believer.
- We must be willing to identify and confront our own biases and prejudices. In other words, we must be open to a serious examination of our conscience.
- We must hold respect for the general trustworthiness of the Church.

“If one can follow those criteria with a good conscience,” says McClory, “no one can tell you you’re disobedient or try to kick you out of the Church.”

McClory then offered advice for the prayer breakfast attendees, those who, in other words, find themselves under a new archdiocesan administration that is obviously more authoritarian than they’ve experienced before.

“There a lot of things you can do,” said McClory. “You can ‘dissent in place,’ meaning you stay where we are in your parish and/or archdiocese. This takes real guts and the strong leadership of a core group of people who say, ‘I will dissent in place’ – either publicly or privately, a core of people who are grounded in the documents of Vatican II and who know what theologians say about faithful dissent, a core group not easily intimidated by a triumphalistic archbishop or pastor.”

Letter writing, to the archbishop personally or to the editor of the archdiocesan newspaper and secular papers, boycotting of the Archbishop’s Appeal, picketing, public demonstrations, the hosting of alternative prayer services and educational events – all are legitimate actions that can be taken in any diocese that operates in a totalitarian way, said McClory. “We can also insist in dialogue,” he said. “If nothing else, a grudging respect can be developed between the archdiocese and those who are faithfully dissenting.”

“We also need gutsy members of the laity and gutsy priests – priests who are willing, despite concerns about their career, pension, or parishes to take a stand,” McClory declared, reminding the prayer breakfast audience that “Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston left office in 2004 only after a group of 85 priests wrote a statement saying, ‘You need to leave.’ The Vatican heard that, because it was the priests to whom it’s more inclined to listen.”

McClory listed other steps that can be taken by Catholics so as to counter an authoritarian regime: organize a lay synod; find a parish that is supportive and in which one can be spiritually nurtured; form a network of small faith communities that may or may not be connected to a parish; form an alternative, intentional Eucharistic community – similar to what is happening in the Netherlands and elsewhere. There are a great number of such communities emerging throughout the U.S., notes McClory. “In these communities, the Eucharist is always essential and fundamental but it is not necessary for a priest to preside,” he said.

Of course for many, such communities are cause for scandal. There have even been calls for the excommunication of those involved in such communities. Yet in supporting intentional Eucharistic communities, McClory shared thoughts on Eucharist and community by the great Vatican II theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, OP.

Schillebeeckx’s extensive research shows that in the first thousand years of the Catholic Church there was an intimate and unbreakable union between Eucharist and community. Reflecting on this union, McClory noted how “Eucharist comes out of the community. It does not come from any other source.”

For instance, the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), declares that: “Only someone who has been called by a particular community (the people and its leaders) to be its pastor and leader authentically receives *ordinatio*. It is an appointment or incorporation of a particular fellow Christian as minister to a community and indicates him as its leader. An absolute *ordinatio* . . . is null and void.” By this last sentence, the Council of Chalcedon is saying that it is not an authentic ordination when a bishop ordains a priest who has not been called forth from and by a specific community.

In light of this ancient Catholic belief and practice, Schillebeeckx writes: “The essential connection between community and ministry . . . shows that the difference between the power of ordination and the power of jurisdiction was not only unknown [in the early Church] but inconceivable in ecclesial terms.” Thus Cyprian of Carthage (250 CE) declared: “No bishop is to be imposed on the people whom they do not want.” And Leo I (435 CE) decreed: “He who is to preside over all must be chosen by all.”

Schillebeeckx also notes that “for the early Church the community itself is the active subject of the ‘we offer the bread and chalice.’” Furthermore, “all the local community with its clergy chooses its own bishop, and the person who is called must in principle accept the choice by the community of his own free will, e.g. Ambrose and Augustine.”

Of course, the division between the power of ordination and the power of jurisdiction meant the opening of the door to absolute ordinations, says Schillebeeckx. “For although the ordained person might not be assigned a Christian community, he had all priestly power in his own person,” he writes. “This view opens up the way to practices which would have been unthinkable to earlier Christians.”

Schillebeeckx cites a number of examples of such practices, including the private mass and any notion that sees the priest as “the one set apart from the people.” Such a notion implies that “priestly celibacy is the only adequate expression of this essential separateness.” Therefore, “to give permission to the priest to marry would be equivalent to blurring the distinction between layperson and priest.”

Observes McClory: “All of us in the second millennium grew up with the notion that somehow the priest is invested with spiritual powers that he holds independently from the community.” Clearly, such an understanding is at odds with the first thousand years of Church teaching and practice.

That such discrepancy has caused problems and tension in the Church is undeniable. And it is “against the background of the existing church order,” writes Schillebeeckx, that “new and perhaps urgently necessary alternative possibilities can be envisaged only through the medium of what must be called illegality. From the history of the church it seems there is a way in which Christians can develop a practice in the church from below, from the grassroots, which for a time may compete with the official practice, but which in its Christian opposition and illegality can eventually become the dominant practice and finally be sanctioned by the official church.”

Schillebeeckx is not suggesting we return to the practices of the early Church. Those times and their cultural and social milieus are beyond our reach. There is no going back. Yet what he is suggesting is that the “urgently necessary alternative possibilities” that many in the Church are not only longing for and envisioning but beginning to embody, should draw upon the early Church’s understanding of Eucharist and community, and reinterpret and embody this understanding in our current age.

All of this “may or may not happen here” in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, says McClory. What he would say is that we are in for a “rocky time” with Archbishop Nienstedt. “Yet you may also be in for something of what Schillebeeckx was talking about,” McClory said. “It all depends on how you handle this difficult situation. Who knows what can happen, particularly when an entire group of people, not just one group, not just those for example, in favor of women’s ordination, or those in favor of a new approach to homosexuality, or married priests, get together and begin to function as a power without being afraid to go forth.”

“In this way,” concluded McClory, “Minnesota is similar to Holland. People in both places are more focused on moving forward than being moved back. So many people in the Catholic Church in Holland told me: ‘Things are going on here. We are not going to be shut down.’”

The thunderous applause from those in attendance at the May 3rd Prayer Breakfast of Hope and Justice indicated that such a conviction is shared by many in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

Michael Bayly is a cofounder and editor of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#) and the executive coordinator of the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\)](#).

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Parish Life: St. Mary’s of Mapleton
Scenes of Church People Caught in Conflict

Selected from [Waiting for Mozart](#) by Charles Pilon

(To learn more about [Waiting for Mozart](#) or to purchase this book, visit Charles' [website](#).)

Second in a Four-Part Series

Editor's Note: In the May 2008 issue of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*, [William Coughlin Hunt reviewed *Waiting for Mozart*](#), a novel by local writer, Charles Pilon. Topical and entertaining, *Waiting for Mozart* explores current conflicts within Roman Catholicism by focusing on a fictitious parish, St. Mary's, and, in particular, the escalating conflict between Joseph Burns, the long-time pastor, and members of his parish council headed by Jim Jensen.

Following is the second installment of a four-part series featuring excerpts from Charles Pilon's novel. Each installment will begin with a brief introduction, followed by a scene from *Waiting for Mozart* depicting the members of St. Mary's in conflict. Each installment will conclude with a retrospective reflection, also written by Charles, by one of the characters involved in the scene just highlighted.

Introduction

If you are a member of a parish, on its staff or its parish council, you will recognize the characters in this story. You may find yourself there, too.

Father Joseph Burns is the pastor at St. Mary's in Mapleton, Minnesota, a first ring suburb of St. Paul. It is late 1989, twenty-five years after the Second Vatican Council, and Father Joe has been finding himself under increasing pressure as the years have passed. He has coaxed and at times steamrolled his parishioners into creating a new kind of Catholic parish envisioned by Vatican II. He has a lay staff and an active parish council.

Together, through good times and bad, they have implemented many of the changes called for by Vatican II. Somehow, however, he has created a monster. Or so he believes. Parishioners have the idea that their baptism makes them the Church – that they are the People of God.

In the previous scene we learned that the pastor had asked the parish council to prepare a report on how St. Mary's staff salaries and wages compare to those in comparable parishes. Members of the council had collected and studied the available data, and then worked for six months on compiling a report. Yet at the parish council meeting when this report had been scheduled to be presented, the pastor arbitrarily refused to consider or even receive the report. It's a waste of time, he said. "There. Is. No. Money." This indignity was the last straw for the council; and their fury becomes the last straw for the pastor, putting him over the edge.

In the aftermath of this volcanic meeting, lay members of the council – Jim, Ted, Sheila, Bob, and Megan – discuss their understanding of what it means to be church and their concerns about their pastor.

Scene Two: Aftermath

(Excerpted from Chapter 4 of *Waiting for Mozart*)

"It's a circle," Jim repeated, shaping it with his hands. "The Church, first of all, is the people—a circle of people, a community."

"Okay, a circle, a circle. We get it," Ted barked. "It's a circle, but damn it, you can't build anything unless you've got your priest with you." He got up to make more coffee. "What do you think? Should I do both?" He held up two decanters. There was no reply.

"Put them both on, Ted," Sheila said finally.

"We're about done here," said Jim. "We don't need that much."

Ted shrugged. "I'll do one."

"I'm with you on this, Jim." Megan Roberts tapped the papers in front of her, straightening them for her

folder. She leaned her slender body forward, arms folded on the table, her thin face intent. “Friends, we don’t have to put up with this every meeting. I consented to serve on this council because I believe some changes are needed, like sharing responsibility and broadening how decisions are made in the parish, but this priest consistently and arbitrarily decides what will come to the table and what will not.”

“We’re lucky to have the man,” Ted asserted again, retaking his chair. “True, he doesn’t always say things the way you’d like, but we’ve got to stop beating up on him.” A project manager for forty years at Kroenig Construction, the family firm that built the parish church in 1916, Ted had a one-step-at-a-time approach to life—something he attributed to his work in construction. He liked things step-by-step in church, too. The pastor was a good man, he maintained, and the parish should build on that.

“I don’t get it, Ted,” Megan shot back. “You couldn’t put your buildings up this way, could you? If you ran your projects the way Joe runs this church, you’d be out of business.”

“This is different.”

“No, Ted, it’s not,” Jim snapped, mussing his hair. “We make too many excuses for this guy. There are better ways to do things in the Church today.”

“I know that,” said Ted. “But why in the name of God do you have to start talking like that, Jim? So bitter and sharp? It always starts the war.”

Megan searched the table and then looked at Ted. “Can you imagine someone asking for a report on something that’s important for our parish and for our staff and then refusing to even look at it? That’s nuts—insane!” She twisted the silver and turquoise bracelet on her wrist.

“That’s enough, Megan,” Ted scolded, a razor’s edge on his voice. “I don’t want anyone suggesting the pastor is mentally ill.”

“What would you call it, Ted?” Megan asked rhetorically and continued. “I’m no psychiatrist, but this man seems unhinged to me. All that twitching, tapping and pacing. He’s barely able to manage himself, much less successfully pastor a church. We should take steps now to get a change.”

Jim looked at the clock on the wall above the refrigerator. “The bottom line is this, Ted: There’ll be no peace at St. Mary’s while Joe Burns is the pastor.”

“That’s bunk,” Ted replied.

“It’s hard to learn how to do old things in new ways,” Bob Talbot noted thoughtfully.

“Joe’s been slow to develop the skills a person needs today to lead other people. He likes the idea of change but has a hard time getting it done in ways that work.”

“Ted?” With delicate fingers, Sheila Martinson felt her pearl necklace, waiting for the man to look at her. “No matter how difficult it may be, Ted, a leader today has to move beyond simply understanding new ways of doing things. You’ve got to be able to get the package off the shelf into somebody’s hands. Unfortunately, in the ten years I’ve been a member of this parish, Joe has never been good at doing the stuff that makes the ideas work.”

“I don’t care what any of you say. We’re lucky to have this man, given the shortage of priests,” Ted protested. “Yeah, Joe’s got some problems managing things, but everyone’s got problems. Most parishioners are willing to excuse the things he does as a matter of style or simply a shortcoming, and this council should, too. Maybe he shouldn’t act the way he does sometimes, but nobody’s perfect. Let’s get off his back and give him some support.”

Pressing a finger to her lips, Megan tried to slow the anger coursing through her body. She began deliberately.

“The worst part of all this is that it’s bigger than just this parish alone and this one priest.” She raised her voice slightly. “I’ve heard it even from patients at my clinic: Priests act like feudal lords – lords of the manor,

one fellow called them. People can't stand the arrogance of these men—and Joe Burns is the worst, at least in my experience." She fingered the pin on her lapel. "That's it. That's where I stand. It's time to do something."

"Then find another parish," Ted demanded.

"I won't do that."

"There are thousands of Catholics who agree with me," Ted contested. "Sure, the Church needs some change. But it's happening. For twenty years Joe has been talking with us about Vatican II. We've learned a lot and done well. This is a fine, new kind of Catholic parish."

Megan placed her hands flat on the table and waited, fingers spread. "Here's my point. I will not leave the Catholic Church again, the way I had to when I divorced. It's our church, Ted. They've taught us that. This kind of priest either has to make some personal changes or make way for somebody else. I don't believe priests like this will survive. They can't. We can't let them."

Ted took a deep breath, bringing himself under control, and looked straight at Megan, noting her simple beauty, as he had often done before—blonde hair, wispy all around and tied up loosely in back, eyes blue—pretty actually.

"Megan, let me be clear about this. I won't be part of any move or meeting that is out to get rid of the pastor. That's wrong. We both want the same thing for St. Mary's and that's what counts."

Megan met his gaze. "I don't know about that, Ted. I believe that what you want and what I want are totally different. And how we get there is a problem, too. I'm not turning back this time."

A Reflection by Ted Kroenig Some Years Later

I didn't always go along with Father Joe a hundred percent. When he first became our pastor, right away, he wanted to change the way boys and girls made their First Communion. And, as a matter of fact, I fought him on it. I spoke up at a meeting we had where a lot of folks like myself were pretty upset.

He said he wanted the kids, the First Communicants, to sit for the Mass in a pew reserved for the whole family, parents and brothers and sisters of the First Communicant—all together instead of having all the First Communion kids sit together in front. It was a big change he was asking for. He said that First Communion and every Mass, in fact, is a family deal and that we shouldn't be having these cute little kids, all lined up by height, girls first then boys, coming into church as a procession of children seven or eight years old. I always loved that procession.

The first year he wanted this, one of my grandchildren was making First Communion. All my grandkids had done it the way it had been done for years, probably forever, everybody lined up, you know, pretty. And here this new pastor, a guy I liked otherwise, decides he's going to have the procession into the church made up of families.

Why, it seemed like you wouldn't even be able to tell who the First Communicant was. On top of it, the girls didn't have to wear the white dresses and veils and the boys weren't required to have the white suit. So you'd have, maybe, four kids there in the group with the parents and you wouldn't even know who was making First Communion. You had to know which one was seven years old or looked like it anyway. So I fought it at the meeting and made my opinion known, along with a lot of other long-time parishioners.

Turns out, the pastor was right and you never heard much more about it after that. It made better sense once you saw what he was saying about the Mass being a meal and a family affair and all. It was best for the family to be together and not have the First Communion kids separated into a group by themselves. I could see it, once you listened to him enough. I learned a lot from that, just by listening to the pastor and learning. More people should have done that. I supported him on everything after that.

Some people were pretty hard on Father Joe, calling him a brute and all. There was no reason to. Things could easily get out of control when you let others be in charge in a church, anyone besides the priest. I was sure of it. And I know it was supposed to be different after Vatican II. Sure! Go ahead! Give it to a parish council of people who aren't ordained priests—laymen. See what you've got! These people should

have remembered: in the Church you've got the hand of God in everything, of course, and then there's the priest with all the gaps in a man's life. Things were moving ahead in the Church—oddly at times—but they were moving and changing plenty.

Charles Pilon lives with his wife Ana in Roseville, Minnesota, where they raised their three children. Chuck was ordained a Catholic priest in 1962 and left the priesthood in 1970. He did not leave the Church, however, and has remained an active member from the people's side of the altar.

To learn more about *Waiting for Mozart* or to purchase this book, visit Charles Pilon's [website](#).

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

A Request for Support From the National Coalition of American Nuns

Support Sister Louise Lears, SC, Placed under Interdict by Archbishop Raymond Burke

Add your name to a full-page ad in the *National Catholic Reporter*

Sponsored by the [National Coalition of American Nuns](#)*

[Click here to sign the NCR signature ad for Sr. Louise Lears and to make a donation.](#)

Sister Louise Lears, SC, has been placed under interdict by Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis for her support of the ordination of two women to the Roman Catholic priesthood in November of 2007. NCAN is sponsoring a full-page ad in [National Catholic Reporter](#). Instructions to add your name to the ad are below.

Signatures will be appended to the text below:

Bread, Not Stones

Which of you, if your children ask for bread, will give them stones?

--Matthew 7:9

On June 26, 2008, Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke removed Sister Louise Lears, SC, from the Pastoral Team of Saint Cronan Parish and placed her under an interdict, which prohibits the reception of the Sacraments. In late December 2007, the Archbishop delivered to Sister Louise a formal summons, accusing her of four canon law violations--all connected to her support of the ordination of two women to the Roman Catholic Priesthood in November 2007 in St. Louis.

Throughout the process of investigation, Sister Louise and St. Cronan's parish community asked the Archbishop for opportunities to communicate personally with him. Instead of engaging Sister Louise in dialogue, the Archbishop acted in a legal manner. Instead of a pastoral approach, the Archbishop chose an adversarial process. Instead of using this situation as an opportunity for creative growth, the Archbishop retreated to outdated methods of control. Sister Louise and the community of St. Cronan's asked for bread, so that they and the church could be nourished and grow. They received stones.

Together with the people of Saint Cronan's and the National Coalition of American Nuns, we, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with Sister Louise Lears as a woman of integrity and courage. We stand with all men and women who seek a church that values gender equality in every aspect of life and ministry, including priestly ordination. We stand with all who feel oppressed by patriarchal and imperial structures in the Church, rather than the loving and compassionate model the Gospel reflects.

It is difficult to imagine that Peter would place Paul under interdict for advocating the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the faith community. It is difficult to imagine Jesus harshly punishing a faithful disciple for disagreeing with him. It is difficult to imagine how the Christian faith could develop without the

voices of faithful dissent. It is difficult to imagine a Gospel-based faith community that stifles freedom of conscience.

We pray for Church leaders. We ask that they provide, not stones, but the bread of life for Sister Louise, for St. Cronan's community, and for all of us who seek nourishment.

For **background** on the case, click on the links below:

<http://www.stcronan.org/site/louiselearsdecree.html>

<http://www.ncronline.org>

http://www.archstl.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=523&Itemid=1

Signature submission deadline: **August 5, 2008**.

Ad appearance: **August 22, 2008** issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Signatures will be listed alphabetically by state.

National Coalition of American Nuns - requests **donations to help pay for the ad**

Suggested donations:

\$25 for individuals,

\$50 for organizations

(more if you can; less if you can't)

Two ways to sign the NCR ad and send donations:

1. Internet: [Click here to sign ad and donate by credit card](#) or go to www.ncan.us

OR

2. Postal mail: To sign, email ncan.nuns@yahoo.com with

Your Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone number

E-mail address

AND

To donate, send check, payable to **National Coalition of American Nuns**, to:

National Coalition of American Nuns

12434 Klinger

Detroit, MI 48212-2764

A donation is **not necessary** to include your name in the ad.

Donation acknowledgement sent **only upon request**. Make request at ncan.nuns@yahoo.com

Donations, beyond costs, will be **given to Sister Louise Lears**.

* Founded in 1969, the National Coalition of American Nuns is a Roman Catholic organization of women religious dedicated to studying, working and speaking out on issues of human rights and justice in Church and society.

Thanks for your support!

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Upcoming Events – July 2008

Dignity Twin Cities Liturgy

When: Friday, July 11 and Friday, July 25, 2008
7:30 pm

Where: [Prospect Park United Methodist Church](#)
22 Orlin Ave. SE
Minneapolis

[Dignity Twin Cities](#) meets every second and fourth Friday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at United Methodist Church. Celebrating its 33rd anniversary this year, Dignity Twin Cities is one of 70+ Dignity chapters across the nation. Dignity encourages and helps LGBT people experience dignity through the integration of their spirituality and their sexuality. The organization envisions and works for a time when LGBT Catholics are affirmed as beloved persons of God and, as such, can participate fully in all aspects of life within both the church and society.

For directions, click [here](#).

July Meeting of Spiritual Progressives

When: 7:00 p.m., Monday, July 14, 2008. (Come at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and fellowship.)

Where: [Plymouth Church](#)
1900 Nicolett Avenue
(One block north of Franklin Avenue)
Minneapolis, MN
(Enter the door under the canopy off the rear parking lot and go downstairs to the Jackman Room.)

Demi Miller will be the featured speaker this month and will be giving a presentation on his trip to Rwanda, sharing an overview of the social/political situation there. Through his slide show, a glimpse of the reconciliation efforts taking place in Rwanda will be shared, as well as possible role that the MN Network of Spiritual Progressives may be able to play in this important process.

For more information, visit the [website](#) of the Minnesota chapter of the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

[James Alison](#)

British Theologian and Author to Give Two Lectures

When: July 18 and 19, 2008

Friday, July 18 at 8:00 pm
“Rethinking the Atonement Theory of Salvation”

Saturday, July 19 at 9:00 am
“Speaking the Truth in Love: How to be Catholic and GLBT”

Where: [St. John's Abbey](#), Collegeville, MN
(Chapter House of the Petters' Pavilion on the east end of the [Abbey Church](#)).
(See [Google Maps](#) for Directions.)

Both events are free and open to the public.

Accommodations: Some rooms are available for lodging at the Abbey Guesthouse. (\$50 single, \$70 double, cost includes breakfast).
Contact: Bob Pierson OSB, Guestmaster, to reserve a room at rpieron@csbsju.edu or call 320-363-3929.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender (GLBT) Reading Series With Performances This Month By Jacqueline White and Doug Federhart

When: 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, July 23, 2008

Where: [Intermedia Arts](#)
2822 Lyndale Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN

This event is free and open to the public.

The GLBT Reading Series, a component of the larger Carol Connolly Reading Series, is presented by Intermedia Arts of Minneapolis, MN, and is hosted by curators Andra Jenkins and John Medeiros. The Carol Connolly Reading Series celebrates the rich diversity of voices that make up the Twin Cities community of writers, readers, and their audiences, offering public readings by both emerging and established local writers and poets. Funds for this activity are provided by the COMPAS Community Art Program through a grant from the McKnight Foundation.

Jacqueline White has worked as an advocate for queer youth in schools, as an editor for *The Utne Reader*, and as a writing teacher at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. Her memoir-in-progress, *My Transgender Husband: A Love Story*, received a 2008 Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Doug Federhart was first bitten by the "writing bug" when he was in the second grade. Since that time, Doug has been practicing the craft, working in numerous genres, including poetry, short stories, theological articles and papers, newsletter and magazine pieces, creative nonfiction, and most recently, a novel. His published work has appeared over the years in *Evergreen Chronicles*, *The James White Review*, and an anthology entitled *The Gay Nineties*, (Crossing Press, 1991, edited by Phil Willkie and Greg Baysans). In the late 80s, Doug spent three years as a managing editor for *Evergreen Chronicles*. A past participant in the SASE Writer-to-Writer mentorship program, he worked with Barrie Jean Borich on a creative nonfiction piece. Most recently, he has had short essays about recovery published in *Phoenix* newspaper, and he continues plugging away at his interminably-in-progress novel, *Criminals*. He lives in South Minneapolis with his longtime partner, Stuart Holland, and by day works as a spiritual director and teacher/minister.

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

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[\[Back to Top\]](#)