

# 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

March 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**

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## **The Progressive Catholic Voice**

### **Editorial Team**

Michael Bayly  
(Coordinating Editor)

*The Progressive Catholic Voice*  
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We are asking our readers to join us in signing this letter, which was forwarded to us by peace and justice activists Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and Stephen Kobasa. The letter will then be sent to the Pope prior to his scheduled visit to the US in April 2008. The deadline for signatures is March 16, 2008.
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**The Progressive  
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Call to Action  
Minnesota

[Network of Spiritual  
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Anthony Signorelli  
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## 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 appreciate your support of the Catholic family in your column of February 14. We wholeheartedly agree with you on the importance of strong families for society and for the church. We agree that family cohesion is difficult in our society, and we are painfully aware, as you are, of the disadvantages children suffer when they are not well parented or when they lack the resources of a successful and loving home.

We believe with you that when the partners are bonded in mutual love, the human reality of marriage signifies God's loving presence in the world. You recommend family dinners, Sunday Mass, "patience, open communication, respect, and prayer times together" as the spiritual practices of Catholic family life to make this sacramental love grow. We appreciate this reminder of how to live family life more fully.

There is something disturbing about the picture you draw of the Catholic family, however. By privileging the model of family comprised of one man and one woman with their children, you deny the value of all the other forms of loving family life we see and value in our church and in our society. This would be one of the areas in which you might want to listen to the laity whose life you are describing.

We don't dispute that the family model you describe can be a good one. In your column of February 21, you write lovingly of your birth family which was based on this model. Some of us grew up in the kind of Catholic home you describe and some of us have created families on that model ourselves. It would be quite narrow of us, though, to think this was the only model for a good family life. And how can we determine it is the best one without much more discussion about what kind of people we want families to produce?

We are very aware that Catholic families in 2008 are not cookie-cutter copies of that model. The diversity of family models is increasing according to the *Handbook of Contemporary Families*, edited by Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong (Sage Publications, Inc., 2004). But we don't need sociologists to point it out. In our own families, neighborhoods and parishes we see beautiful, loving families with two fathers or two mothers who have dinner together, pray together and grow steadily in grace. There are families in which one parent, against the odds, creates a successful loving unit. There are loving families of two partners without children. We do not want any family to be excluded from the definition of Catholic family. We think the various forms of family enrich Catholic life and prevent a stunting parochialism.

Of all the forms of family, perhaps the single-parent Catholic family needs inclusion and your encouragement most of all. You point out the well known odds against them. You list the well known disadvantages of children who are poorly parented or who lack the resources for thriving. You seem to be exhorting the Catholic laity that it is unwise to choose single parenting. In our experience few people choose that status. They are single parents because their spouses have died or walked out. They are trying, sometimes failing, to bring up their children successfully. They need help and encouragement, not statistics on the probability of their failure.

The quotation you give from Pope John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio* does not exclude different models of family. It refers to the spirit of love that can inform any model. "Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God's love for humanity..." Isn't it true that all the various forms of Catholic family life actually existing in the archdiocese have this mission?

In the *Growing Up Catholic* feature of this issue you will find a reminiscence by Mary Lynn Murphy entitled "Beard Avenue." It's told from the point of view of her childhood, and is about life in a Catholic neighborhood of South Minneapolis in the 1950s. In this child's view, a family is a mom and dad and several kids. Life is an idyllic round of games, coming home to eat and sleep, protected by the love of family and neighbors, all within sight of the church spire down the block. It is innocent and free. Imagining a perfect Catholic family is possible from this point of view.

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[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](#)

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[Nonviolent Peaceforce](#)

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Fast forward fifty years to the Beard Avenues of today. We can no longer see them from a child's point of view. From a more mature perspective, we might perceive the pain and problems within the families on the block, the infinite complexities of family dynamics, and the surprising diversity of family models within the Catholic parish. How much richer and more real, though also more difficult, is the sacramental life from the point of view of adulthood! To offer pastoral care at all, it is necessary to see the families as they actually are. Then the parish can welcome them and design support systems that respect their needs.

We hope you will consider our perspective and begin to extend pastoral concern to all Catholic families under your care.

Sincerely yours,

The Editorial Team of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*:

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

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## ***The Progressive Catholic Voice Gets Slapped***

*The editorial team responds to recent criticism of the focus and tone of The Progressive Catholic Voice.*

Sister Jeanne Wingenter, SSND, has forthrightly and honestly written to us in disapproval of our tone in *The Progressive Catholic Voice* and withdraws her endorsement of us. We are grateful to her for telling us what she thinks. We take the criticism seriously because we respect Sister Jeanne's work for social justice and we value highly the work of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We are sorry to lose her good opinion.

One of her criticisms is our focus on GLBT issues. Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (CPCSM) and Catholic Rainbow Parents (CRP) are the parent organizations of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*. When we began publication we intended to broaden our scope to write about all injustices in the Archdiocese. We still intend to do that, but we believe that injustice to GLBT people is among the most glaring of injustices in the Roman Catholic institution. How can we be faithful Catholics and remain silent while our church calls some people's sexual identity "disordered"? It is at the core of who they are. We stick by our commitment to the full inclusion of partnered GLBT people.

But in her second criticism Sister Jeanne touches a nerve. She says we are not dialoguing with Archbishop Nienstedt so much as we are "continually bashing everything he says." We defend ourselves by saying that if he is to be our leader, we have a right to question him and to hold him accountable for the statements he makes in public. But she is right; we have let our animosity show.

We admit that we were prepared to be in opposition to Archbishop Nienstedt from the moment of his appointment as Archbishop of St Paul and Minneapolis. Our opposition stemmed from our belief that he authored the letter signed by all the bishops of Minnesota, dated April, 2004, and posted on the Archdiocesan website. It supported an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution to prevent not only civil marriage for same-gender partners, but "any legal equivalent" to marriage. We believe he spearheaded the campaign to instruct all Catholics to support that amendment. His attempt to influence Minnesota law to deprive same-gender partners of constitutional equality struck us as mean-spirited, unworthy of a pastor. We worked hard to defeat his campaign and we were overjoyed that the constitutional amendment did not get on the ballot in 2006.

When he became Coadjutor in 2007, we had no opportunity to make a human connection with Archbishop Nienstedt. To feel respect and allegiance we would have had to mend the breach created by his actions between 2004 and 2006. That did not happen. He has not responded to any invitations from us to talk.

In the fall of 2007, when CPCSM sponsored an event with a Catholic father and his partnered lesbian daughter, Archbishop Nienstedt took the opportunity to emphasize the church's teaching on homosexuality in his column in *The Catholic Spirit*. The timing, the language, and the breadth of his condemnation of same-gender partnering, as well as his condemnation of people who support same-gender partners, seemed punitive to us. We called our response to his column an attempt at dialogue, but it was in reality a strong rejection of the church's teaching on homosexuality. Dialogue on this subject would be difficult for us, but we want to be open to it.

Our problems in developing a relationship with the Archbishop are multiple. We come out of a democratic culture in which respect is earned by leaders; the Archbishop comes out of a culture in which he expects unquestioning respect due to his office. We believe there can be unity of spirit while there is diversity in forms of practice; he believes unity of spirit comes from uniformity in practice. We want change in the church's teachings and structures; he does not, and even if he did, he sees himself and us as bound in obedience to Rome. We seem to see the gospel imperatives differently. We certainly have different concepts of authority. We should obviously stop badgering him, as Sister Jeanne so strongly suggests, but how can we transcend these differences to help make the archdiocese effective in its mission in the world? Is real dialogue possible? And what are the channels available within the church structure for dialogue to take place?

We would appreciate advice from Sister Jeanne, and anyone else who has thoughts on the question. How can we relate to the Archbishop, ask questions of him and, yes, offer criticism to him? We welcome your opinions. Go to our website and send them to us at [progressivecatholicvoice.org](http://progressivecatholicvoice.org).

Sincerely yours,

The Editorial Team of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*

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## Why I Stay

By Mary Beckfeld

*In a letter to her family, Mary Beckfeld explains why she loves the Catholic Church enough to stay.*

To my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren:

Some of you repeatedly ask: "Mom, why do you stay in a church that discriminates against you?" I know I haven't answered you satisfactorily, but in this letter I am going to attempt to do just that.

I stay because this is the church of my parents, my grandparents, and my ancestors. This is the church that fed and nourished me as a young child. The Jesus stories, the sacramental preparations, partaking in the sacraments, even the liturgies that exclude me as a woman, have formed and made me who I am today.

As an adult, I have come to appreciate that the church that Jesus came to establish is bigger than the one I was raised in, and much more inclusive than what I was led to believe. I have come to accept the fact that if my life is fully dedicated to the God who loves me, I must first recognize God in everyone I encounter: family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers on the street. I must also recognize God's wonderful work in all of creation. I accept that if I fail to see God in all of creation, I fail to see God. This is a powerful concept for me, the former throw away queen.

I love the church. I stay because I have found a community within the church where I am always welcome and always loved. This community is comprised of my friends in the diaconate program, the CSJ community, and those involved with [CPCSM](#), [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#), and *The Progressive Catholic Voice*.

I despise and resent what some in positions of authority are doing to the church. Yet I stay because this church is my history, my story. In particular, I have been shaped by my experiences in the diaconate program. If I left, I would be leaving a part of myself that was formed by my ancestors. I stay because the church of Jesus Christ is who I am – warts and all.

I stay because the sacraments and all they represent mean so much to me. I stay because the gift of faith is my strength in times of sorrow, struggle, and loneliness. I stay because this church is still home – warts and all.

Hopefully, this letter answers some of your questions and will help strengthen your resolve to stay in a church that is not always welcoming. I encourage you to find a community within the church, as I have done; a community where you feel welcomed and loved.

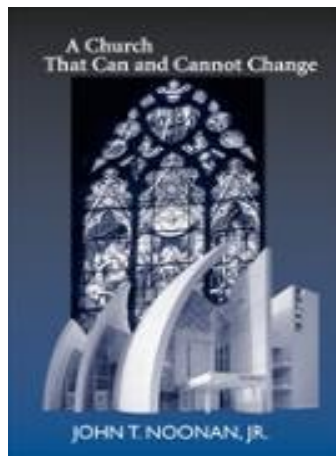
Love you all as God loves you!

Mom

**Mary Beckfeld** is a founding member of the [Catholic Rainbow Parents](#) and of the editorial team of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#).

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**A Review of John T. Noonan, Jr.'s  
*A Church That Can and Cannot Change:  
The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching*  
(University of Notre Dame Press, 2005)**

**By William Coughlin Hunt**

For more than a century one of the things that has marked progressive Catholics is a critical historical consciousness that pays due attention to the development of church teaching over time. Few Catholic thinkers since John Henry Newman (1801-1890) have made a greater contribution to the understanding of the history of moral ideas than John T. Noonan, Jr., author of seminal works on usury (the charging of interest on money loans), contraception, abortion, bribes, religious liberty, and divorce and remarriage.

In [A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching](#), Noonan has attempted to tie them all together by articulating a coherent approach to the problem of doctrinal development in the Roman Catholic Church. He addresses three issues where church teaching has reversed itself definitively (slavery, usury, and religious liberty) and one that is still in progress (divorce).

With regard to slavery, Noonan declares: "I cannot present in a single book all the evidence that has now been gathered as to the participation by Catholics in the perpetuation of slavery as an institution." (p. 37) Gregory the Great (bishop of Rome from 590 to 604) not only owned slaves but also bought and sold them and defended the practice in ecclesiastical law. With notable exceptions (such as in 1256 when the commune of Bologna bought and liberated all the slaves within the jurisdiction of the city and diocese), church lawyers and theologians defended this practice throughout the Middle Ages. "On June 18, 1452, Pope Nicholas V granted Alfonso V, king of Portugal, the right to make war on Saracens, pagans, and infidels; to occupy their dominions; and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery." (p.62)

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men [sic] are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than [to] those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a dishonor to the Creator.

Contrast Noonan's sobering comment: "The Council's action was the first categorical condemnation by the Church of an institution that the Church had lived with for over nineteen hundred years." (p. 120) In 1992 *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* condemned slavery as a violation of the seventh commandment (n. 2,414), and in his 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* Roman Bishop Karol Wojtyla (throne name John Paul II) declared slavery to be intrinsically evil. However, the question remains: How did such a major reversal in church teaching come about?

Next Noonan addresses the history of biblical and church teaching on the unnatural sin of usury, making profit from a loan. Right up through the eighteenth century usury was seen as unnatural reproduction, an intrinsic evil. The condemnation was based on a saying of the Lord himself (Luke 6.35) and affirmed by three ecumenical councils. "[T]he flat prohibition of profit on a loan appeared to be an essential precept of the Catholic Church. It was an injunction based on nature itself because for money to reproduce itself was unnatural." (p. 135)

Contrast this to the decrees of the Second Vatican Council or the directives of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in which there is no mention of any such sin, and to the operations of the Vatican Bank. Once again, what happened?

In subsequent chapters Noonan deals with freedom of conscience and freedom of religion that as late as 1832 a Roman Bishop declared to be an "absurd and erroneous teaching" and a "crazy fantasy" (*deliramentum*), and the teaching on the absolute indissolubility of marriage that is coming under increasing question because of inconsistent decisions by Vatican tribunals.

In the last section of his book, "The Test of the Teaching," Noonan puts forth a synthesis to explain these and other developments of church teaching. Argument from analogy, a sense of vital balance, logic, and experience, "understood broadly to include empathy, identification with the experience of the other," (p.220) are the tools that lead to development. However, the criterion for judging development of doctrine is the rule of faith guided by love of God and neighbor. Noonan closes with a quote from Augustine. "If it seems to anyone that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, in such a way that by that understanding he does not build up that double love of God and of neighbor, he has not yet understood them." (p. 222) The same goes for doctrinal development.

**William Coughlin Hunt, STD**, is a former President of the [Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities \(CPCSM\) Board](#).

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## The Myth of 'Conversion Therapy' and the Pseudo-Science of NARTH

### PART II – THE "EX-EX-GAY"

By Michael Bayly

INTRODUCTION

In the February 2008 issue of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#), Michael Bayly shared the contributions made by John C. Gonsiorek to the CPCSM-sponsored event, "The Myth of 'Conversion Therapy' and the Pseudo-Science of NARTH."

Dr. Gonsiorek was one of two speakers at this program, which took place at the House of the Beloved Disciple in Minneapolis on Tuesday, January 29, and was prompted, in part, by recent efforts on the part of the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis to promote the ideology and "scientific findings" of the National Association for Research and Treatment of Homosexuality (NARTH). The other speaker invited to share his perspective on this issue was [Jeffry G. Ford](#), MA, a licensed psychologist and psychotherapist.

Highlights of John Gonsiorek's presentation comprised Part I of the two-part *Progressive Catholic Voice* series, "The Myth of 'Conversion Therapy' and the Pseudo Science of NARTH."

Following is Part II, comprised of highlights of Jeff Ford's presentation at the House of the Beloved Disciple on January 29.

### **An expert for both sides of the issue**

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Jeffry Ford's story is that he was formerly the executive director of OUTPOST, an "ex-gay" ministry located in Minneapolis. For ten years, Jeff claimed to be a "former homosexual," and was a national speaker for Exodus International, the governing board and communication hub for most ex-gay ministries.

Today, however, Jeff identifies as a gay man and is a nationally known consultant and speaker on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) issues. Jeff dedicates his time and energy to challenging the unethical and dangerous use of pseudo-scientific theories associated with the ex-gay movement, a movement that includes NARTH. In particular, he addresses the complexities involved with the anti-gay theory and practice known both as "reparative therapy" and "sexual conversion therapy," which purports to prevent and cure homosexuality.

The story of Jeff's journey away from the world of "ex-gay" ministry is featured with those of other "ex-gays" in a publication entitled, ["Finally Free,"](#) compiled by the Washington, DC-based [Human Rights Campaign](#).

### **Learning how to pass**

Growing up in a religious home, Jeff responded to his growing awareness that he was attracted to other males by rationalizing that "something had gone wrong" inside of him. He felt shame and a sense of "badness," and struggled to keep secret his homosexual feelings. Yet his mother could tell that something was going on inside of him. Accordingly, she would have "little talks" with him that invariably started with: "Jeffry, do you know what it is to be a queer?" She also attempted to "butch" him up and would give him examples of what was wrong about being effeminate and queer. She even sent him to a wrangling camp on a ranch in Arizona. Looking back on this experience, Jeff says with a wry smile: "It just didn't work."

Nevertheless, by high school, Jeff had "learned how to pass" – learned how to date girls and keep his true desires "under wraps." In his junior year of high school he became involved with evangelical Christianity, and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. In this rigid, fundamentalist form of Christianity, Jeff found a way to hope and believe that "something" was going to take his homosexuality away; that somehow God, through Jeff's personal acceptance of Jesus, was going to heal him and set him free.

He began to sublimate, repress, and deny the homosexual feelings he was experiencing. Despite some " dalliances" involving other men – encounters that he never talked about and felt "incredibly shameful about," Jeff married at the age of twenty. Yet when neither his evangelical Christian faith nor his heterosexual marriage made his homosexual desires disappear, Jeff sought counseling. The Christian counselor he saw at Bethel College was in his own way, says Jeff, compassionate and caring. In retrospect, however, Jeff can also say that this counselor was misguided in his understanding about homosexuality.

He asked Jeff to undergo "aversion therapy" – a form of electric shock "reparative therapy." Jeff ended up doing forty sessions of this humiliating type of therapy that left painful scorch marks on his forearms. Even after realizing that this type of therapy had failed to take away his homosexual desires, Jeff continued to pursue anything he could do so as not to be gay.

### **The two biggest lies**

At one point during his presentation, Jeff shared the DVD documentary [Abomination: Homosexuality and the](#)

The various testimonies contained in this DVD – from former ex-gays and psychologists – attest to the fact that the ex-gay movement pushes what former ex-gay [Daniel Gonzales](#) describes as the two biggest lies that drive people into any form of therapy to either change or repress their sexual orientation and/or its expression. These lies are that: 1) a person cannot live their life as a gay person and be a good Christian, and 2) being gay is not a viable or fulfilling way to live one's life.

One Catholic ex-gay featured in the documentary notes that often after “conversion therapy” fails, many “faith-based” therapists will say that the only choice you have left is celibacy. They realize that the success rate of changing homosexuals to heterosexuals is “very, very poor.” So they try to take a new approach by saying, “Well, if you can't change, then be celibate.”

To be sure, the lives of ex-gays all seem to be dominated by hopelessness, guilt, internalized shame, and feelings of defectiveness. More than one commentator in the film noted that the sense of worthlessness that ex-gay ministries foster compels many gay people to take unsafe sexual risks. As one former ex-gay noted: “If you serve a mean God, you become sort of mean also.”

One psychologist in the film offered the following insight: “The repression of sexual desire actually makes the idea of acting them out more titillating, makes a person more likely to think sexual thoughts. For those struggling to suppress their homosexual feelings, this repression actually leads to an increase in the acting out of unsafe sexual behaviors – behaviors that might not occur if they were more accepting of their homosexuality.”

One young man interviewed confirmed this, saying that: “I never really dated anyone – male or female – until I made the choice to accept my sexuality.” That acceptance allowed him to start dating, an experience that he describes as “fantastic.” “I was no longer meeting men in dark places having anonymous sex,” he said, “but actually having a relationship for the first time.”

### **Breaking free**

Of course, for some gay people, getting to the point of having a relationship requires breaking free from an ex-gay ministry of one form or another. Breaking free, however, can be a very protracted and painful experience as it is often within these ministries that many gay people have their family, friends, and their sense of faith and community. Yet despite the pain of being ostracized by family and friends, the vast majority do indeed break free. As one former ex-gay declares: “I'd rather be hated for what I am than loved for what I'm not.”

Yet what of those who claim that conversion therapy has worked for them? According to Jeff Ford, ninety-six percent of such people fall into the first two of three categories, the first of which is comprised of people who, despite claimed success, still struggle with homosexual feelings and/or behaviors. The second category is comprised of those who are single and celibate. Only four percent of those who claim that “reparative” or “conversion” therapy has been successful now consider themselves to be heterosexual. Interestingly, almost all of these people work in the ex-gay counseling field. It would seem that for reparative therapy to be successful, one must quit one's job and become an ex-gay minister and/or therapist and dedicate one's life to it.

Jeff noted that in the ex-gay world, the expression of same-sex attraction is never talked about as an act of love. It's only ever understood and talked about as an incarnation of evil. Furthermore, if you accept the “lie” about the normalcy of homosexuality, then you forfeit your place in heaven.

Jeff's questioning of this dogma against his inner sense and experience of being loved and accepted by God as a gay man was an experience of “deep grace and forgiveness.” It was a liberating experience for him.

Says Jeff: “The ex-gay movement tends to blame the parents and/or supposed experiences of childhood abuse for changing the direction of one's natural (i.e., heterosexual) sexual orientation. If your unmet needs can be met in ‘healthy’ ways, i.e., in non-erotic same-sex friendships and relationships, then not only will your unmet needs be met, but your heterosexuality will bloom and blossom. That's the hope and that's what they promise. And some people will do almost anything to believe this – from years and years of counseling to prayers and exorcisms.

“The problem,” continues Jeff, “comes when people do all these things and yet continue to experience same-sex attractions. They feel like a failure, yet you're not supposed to talk about such feelings of failure publicly – only in private with your counselor. There's a lot of restraint on your personal freedom. The extent of this

restraint depends on which ex-gay ministry you're involved with. Some of them demand that you don't listen to certain types of music, read certain types of books. You can't be left alone with another person of the same gender. It's very cult-like, very controlling."

### **Accurate answers, powerful insight**

Jeff certainly has a powerful story to share, and he did so eloquently at the House of the Beloved Disciple on January 29. Without doubt, much of this power comes from the fact that Jeff speaks from experience. After all, he studied and practiced reparative therapies for years. Such personal and professional experience, says Jeff, allows him to offer "accurate answers and powerful insight" into the workings and ideological underpinnings of the ex-gay movement.

Also, unlike many so-called "experts" in the pseudo-science of conversion and reparative therapies, Jeff's writings have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Most recently his article, "Healing Homosexuals: A Psychologist's Journey Through the Ex-Gay Movement and the Pseudo-Science of Reparative Therapy," was published in *The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* (Haworth Press, Volume 5, No. 3/4, 2001). It was simultaneously published in the book, [Sexual Conversion Therapy](#).

Jeff also maintains a comprehensive web site entitled [Reparative Therapy: A Pseudo Science](#), that contains a wealth of information, resources, and a detailed account of his "journey through reparative therapy."

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

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## **More on the Statute of Limitations for Sex Abuse Victims**

### **Letter to the Editor**

*Mary Hasbrouck, CSJ, writes to the editor of [The Progressive Catholic Voice](#) in response to Paula Ruddy's January 2008 article highlighting the Roman Catholic Church's efforts to deny victims of child sex abuse the right to sue for damages after the age of 24.*

To the Editor:

I am dismayed and deeply saddened, though not terribly surprised, that the Catholic Church pays big dollars to lobby against a hearing and vote of HF 1239. (See [Paula Ruddy's article](#) in the January 2008 issue.)

I am also disappointed and somewhat surprised that it is Representative Joe Mullery, chair of the Public Safety and Civil Law Committee, that keeps it off the agenda.

My surprise is that Representative Mullery engages himself in legislation that incorporates anti-trafficking and protection measures for victims of sexual trafficking. In my mind, there are more similarities than differences between sexual abuse of children and sexual trafficking of women and children, material for another article.

The question HF 1239 asks to be deliberated is: "Can all abuse victims know by the age of 24 that the problems they will have in their lives have been caused by the abuse"?

Too frequently the answers given do not answer the question. We hear how destructive lawyers are as they prey once again on victims, all the while accumulating wealth. How fair is it that a Church or school system continues to experience a financial hemorrhage or a growing negative image? These answers do not respond to the question.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson of the Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia served as co-chair on the Australian National Committee for Professional Standards. This committee was responsible for coordinating the response of the Catholic Church in Australia to revelations of sexual abuse. In his book, [Confronting Power](#)

[and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus](#), Bishop Robinson discloses that as a young person he had been sexually abused. His abuser was not a family member, a priest or religious, nor a relative. He belonged to the 5% of cases where the offender was a complete stranger. Bishop Robinson acknowledges that neither his age at the time of the abuse nor its duration was as serious as much of the abuse encountered by those whose stories he knows. And yet, it was some half century after it happened that he was able to take his history down out of the attic, look at it, name it, and get the needed help of counselors to become conscious of the long lasting effects sexual abuse had on him.

Sexual abuse of children is abhorrent! It is imperative that response to victims be compassionate and understanding. What do they feel and where are they coming from?

How much time is enough time for the abused to deal with its many effects, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual? This is an area where we should honestly attempt to walk in the shoes of those who have been sexually abused as children. HF 1239 deserves an honest hearing and vote!

Mary Hasbrouck

*(Note: Bishop Robinson's book has yet to be published in the U.S. It can, however, be purchased online [here.](#))*

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## Growing Up Catholic

### "Beard Avenue"

By Mary Lynn Murphy

Life on Beard Avenue in the 1950s was a world of its own. Unlike today, there were no "helicopter" parents or "soccer" moms in South Minneapolis. No present day child-centered schedules (home to daycare, daycare to school, school to sports, sports to lessons, lessons to home -- for TV and fast food, and then off to bed). No, life in the 50s was more like "Lord of the Flies"... but in a good way.

Though moms were at home, their hordes of children, in unsupervised clusters, swarmed through neighborhoods, garages, parks, creek beds, and forests. Bullies reigned and dog packs proliferated. Baseball teams blossomed on every block, nine kids to a line-up with bodies to spare. At precisely 8 a.m. summer mornings, life exploded ... as kids, dogs and cats blasted outside, screen doors banging. Kids half-dressed and disheveled, headed for anywhere ... returning for lunch, and six hours later, called in for supper and a chance to see dads.

Inside, moms worked till they dropped. Any given block could count at least 50 kids, compliments of Catholic teaching and obedient mindsets. House work was endless: clothes washing and line-drying, mangling and ironing, sewing and darning, shopping and cooking (fresh foods only), and round-the-clock infant care ... breast feeding, burping, changing, and bathing. One or no car, party-line telephones, dads off to work, moms chatting with moms, over back stoops.

Outside was kid country ... before television (at least on Beard Avenue) or video games, before cell phones or ipods, before air conditioning or swimming pools. It was the open range of ideas and imagination ... ramshackle club houses with secret rules and nonsensical pass words ... elaborate variety shows staged in rotating back yards. There were hand-fashioned go-carts and roller skate derbies (with roller skate keys around our necks). There were way-too-tall bicycles and way-too-short pogo sticks, cardboard houses and tree-fort mansions slapped up in canopied, stooped over elms. There were non-stop rounds of hopscotch, jump-rope, marbles and Jax, and all-day marathons of trading card mania. And look out! ... Tribal warfare combusted on very short notice, pea shooters and sling shots always "at ready". One painful "ping" off the back of the skull, and all hell broke loose. Before it was over, moms in the melee, slapping and scolding us all the way home, amid threats of a beating "when your father finds out"!

No mention of "good touch" or "bad touch," there were fist fights and dog bites and unlimited cat litters. "My

dog can lick your dog!" was a rallying cry. "My cat can lick all dogs!" was my personal cry. And one day she did... Kung Fu "kitty", slashing and spinning, twirling and hissing, protecting her newborns, five dogs in retreat... Good old "kitty".

On the hottest of days, with moms and packed lunches, we all trooped down to the Minnehaha Creek. In single file, we marched to the tree-littered dam, where barbed wire crisscrossed the narrows of the pot-bellied pond. Like an experienced bomb squad, our mothers crept in cautiously, on tennis-shoed feet, through murky waters, to pull back each rusted wire, remnants of farm borders from days not long past. When all seemed secure, we slithered right in, "ooing and ahing" in utter relief from 90-degree temperatures and the blinding humidity of Minnesota summer.

As twilight descended, day's last precious hours were by far the best. Games of "Mumbly-Peg" for the knife-friendly hard guys, and "Kick the Can" for the rabble. Scattering like buck shot, we zigged and we zagged, racing for cover, behind trees and bushes, homed in on the soup can, and victory for our team ... "all-eee-all-eee-all-come free"!

At 9 p.m. sharp, a chorus of whistles and hollers rose up from front stoops, summoning all tired troopers and canine comrades to a silent march home. Once there, we lined up oldest to youngest, outside of the bathroom, tooth brushes in hand, before prayers and bed, and the last glorious kisses from exhausted moms and preoccupied dads. Then off we did sail, too tired to dream, cats at the shoulder, dogs at the knee, under the covers, snug as can be. What could be better than life in the 50's, Beard Avenue, South Minneapolis.

*Mary Lynn Murphy is the president of the Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (CPCSM), the convener of the Catholic Rainbow Parents, and a founding member of The Progressive Catholic Voice editorial team.*

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## In Good Conscience

### An Open Letter to Pope Benedict XVI About the War in Iraq

From: [Stephen Kobasa](mailto:skobasa@snet.net) <skobasa@snet.net> (and [Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton](#))

Date: February 16, 2008 2:28:06 PM EST

To: Recipient List Suppressed

Subject: Invitation to sign a letter to the Pope

*In advance of Pope Benedict's scheduled April visit to the United States, the letter below is being circulated for signatures. If you would like your name added, please send it to me by **March 16th** -- at [stephen.kobasa@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.kobasa@gmail.com) -- in the form that you would like it to appear. Include whatever other forms of identification you deem appropriate, e.g., organization, vocation, position. Also feel free to circulate it to others who might be interested with the instruction to reply to me at [stephen.kobasa@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.kobasa@gmail.com) by March 16.*

*In peace,  
Stephen*

To His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI

Most Holy Father:

In your own words, "today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war'." Yet, during your upcoming visit to the United States, you are planning to meet with President George W. Bush, whose empty justifications for the violence in Iraq lead to increasing numbers of dead, injured and displaced people. Iraqi civilians still endure the "continual slaughter" which you described in your 2007 Easter Sunday address.

Shortly before the U.S. invaded Iraq, you rightly declared that "there were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war." You've also called attention to the terrible new technologies which cause indiscriminate destruction. Five years later, how much more reason you have to call for an immediate end to this war, and to refuse to meet with the President of the United States until that is accomplished.

If you kneel in grief and outrage before the cross of the tortured Christ, can you offer your blessing to a head of government who excuses the most terrible abuses of human minds and bodies as "legal"? If meet with him you must, then meet as a prophet should - issuing a warning and an invitation to repentance. Courtesy cannot be used as an evasion of our biblical faith. Ezekiel was repeatedly reminded of his responsibility to admonish those doing evil if he desired to escape sharing in the responsibility for their sins. Shouldn't any of us who recognize the horror of what is happening in Iraq be condemned if we are silent?

You are scheduled to be in Washington, D.C. on the anniversary of your birth. We feel sure that you will be thinking of the countless children of Iraq who never reached their fifth birthday. In 2005 alone, 122,000 Iraqi children under age five died. There are many, both within the Church and outside of it, who long for your voice to speak for those innocent dead and - face to face with those whose policies denied all respect for their lives - demand that the killing stop.

We are, in faithful hope,

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Archdiocese of Detroit  
Kathy Boylan, Dorothy Day Catholic Worker  
Stephen Vincent Kobasa  
Kathy Kelly  
Marie Dennis, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
The Editorial Team, *The Progressive Catholic Voice*

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## Upcoming Events – March 2008

### **Lenten Prayer – Seeing With New Eyes**

**When:** Fridays, March 7 and 14. 5:50-6:15 p.m.

**Where:** Carondelet Center (1890 Randolph Ave., St. Paul).

On the Fridays of Lent, you are invited to reclaim the traditional days of Christian prayer. Join us for a brief time of contemporary prayer, reflection, and song. Each prayer service will feature a different speaker reflecting on a particular aspect of the Lenten story. This series is sponsored by Wisdom Ways, the Sisters of St. Joseph Justice Commission, and Campus Ministry at the College of St. Catherine. All are welcome!

### **Theology for Today**

#### ***The Danger of Conversation with Jesus***

**When:** 6:30-8:30 p.m., Tuesdays, March 11, 18, and 25, 2008.

**Where:** Carondelet Center (1890 Randolph Ave., St. Paul).

The Lenten gospel readings explore the faith journeys of the Samaritan woman (John 4), the man born blind (John 9), Mary and Martha at their brother's tomb (John 11), and the Easter story -- including Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus at the empty tomb. In this short Lenten course, participants will read the

scriptures closely and critically, and reflect together on how faith comes to be and grows.

Sponsored by Wisdom Ways, this series will be facilitated by Joan Mitchell, CSJ, MTS, Harvard Divinity School, PhD Luther Seminary.

**Cost:** \$60

**To register:** Phone 651-696-2788 or e-mail [wisdomways@csjstpaul.org](mailto:wisdomways@csjstpaul.org).

## **Dignity Twin Cities Liturgy**

**When:** 7:30 p.m., Friday, March 14 and Friday, March 28, 2008.

**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 the both church and society.

For directions, click [here](#).

## **Anti-War Protest**

**When:** 1:00 p.m., Saturday, March 15, 2008

**Where:** Corner of Hennepin and Lagoon Aves in Uptown, Minneapolis.

The Year 5 Committee to End the War, a coalition of local justice and peace groups, invites you to march from Hennepin and Lagoon Avenues to Loring Park, where there will be a closing rally.

The Year 5 Committee to End the War notes that: "The month of March 2008 marks the fifth anniversary of the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have lost their lives, been injured or displaced as a result of the war and the ensuing damage to their country. Nearly 4,000 U.S. military personnel have died. Billions of dollars have been spent. The reasons given for the war have long ago been exposed as lies and deceptions.

"The majority of people in Iraq want U.S. troops out of their country, and the majority of U.S. citizens want the troops brought home. During the month of March, events will be held across the country and around the world to speak out against the war.

"On Saturday, March 15, join a massive anti-war demonstration to mark the fifth anniversary of the war with a call for an end to the war and occupation."

For more information, call 612-379-3899.

## ***Looking Ahead . . .***

### **Call to Action Minnesota's Spring Conference "Rethinking Hierarchy: Becoming a Community of Conversation"**

#### **Featuring Richard Gaillardetz**

**When:** Saturday, April 19, 2008

**Where:** St. Stephen Lutheran Church

**Speaker:** Richard R. Gaillardetz, PhD

Dr. Richard R. Gaillardetz currently holds the Margaret and Thomas Murray and James J. Bacik Endowed Chair in Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo in Toledo, Ohio. After receiving both an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in Systematic Theology, Dr. Gaillardetz taught from 1991 to 2001 as an associate professor at the University of St. Thomas Graduate School of Theology in Houston, Texas. He has published numerous articles and authored six books, including [The Church in the Making: Rediscovering Vatican II](#).

Dr. Gaillardetz was a Catholic delegate on the U.S. Catholic—Methodist dialogue, 2000-2005. He was recently elected (2006-8) to the Board of Directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America. He is a past recipient of the Sophia Award (2000), offered annually by the faculty of the Washington Theological Union in Washington D.C. in recognition of a theologian's contributions to the life of the church. He has received numerous awards from the Catholic Press Association for articles he has written and is a popular speaker at theological and pastoral conferences. He is married to Diana Gaillardetz and they are the parents of four young boys: David, Andrew, Brian and Gregory.

**Morning Session:** Renewing the Baptismal Priesthood.

**Afternoon Session:** Rethinking Hierarchy: Building a Community of Holy Conversation.

**Cost:** \$45 Individuals  
\$80 Couples

Lunch is included in the cost. If the cost is an obstacle for you, please call Judy at 612-927-6825 or Sharon at 651-457-3249.

**Click here for [downloadable brochure \(.pdf\)](#) for this conference.**

## ***The 2nd Annual Prayer Breakfast for Hope and Justice***

**“Here Comes Everybody!”**

Keynote Address:

**“Democratizing Catholicism in Challenging Times”**

by

**Robert McClory**

**9:00 a.m – 12:00 noon, Saturday May 3, 2008**

**The Metropolitan Ballroom  
5418 Wayzata Boulevard,  
Golden Valley, MN)**

**Maps:** click [here](#)

**Directions** from **West Metro**, click [here](#).

**Directions** from **East Metro**, click [here](#).

Join with us as we explore and articulate our vision of the Catholic Church as a communion of all people, everywhere, in whom the Spirit of love is moving.

The keynote speaker at this year's Prayer Breakfast for Hope and Justice is *National Catholic Reporter* award-winning journalist and author Robert McClory.

McClory's life in the church has equipped him with great knowledge and insight on how it works, while his love of justice leads him to critique many of its inner workings. He is known and respected for his writings on church history – especially as it relates to the role of the laity.

Many assume that the Catholic Church has always functioned with a top-down leadership model. Yet, as McClory will explain on May 3, there have been long periods where lay people were consulted and had strong, leading voices. He will also explain why a decentralized and democratized church is just around the corner; is, in fact, inevitable. He will also join attendees in discussing how we can best embody, individually and communally, this democratization of our church.

Copies of McClory's latest book, [As It Was In the Beginning: The Coming Democratization of the Catholic Church](#), will be available for purchase at this event.

**Cost:** \$20. Registration information to follow in the April issue of *The Progressive Catholic Voice*.

***This event is sponsored by Call to Action MN, the Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (CPCSM), the Catholic Rainbow Parents, Pax Christi Twin Cities, and the Progressive Catholic Voice.***

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**Recommended Online Articles**

["Dutch Proposal Stirs Controversy,"](#) by Robert McClory, *National Catholic Reporter*, February 22, 2008.

["The Dutch Plan: Will Innovation Save the Church?"](#) by Robert McClory, *National Catholic Reporter*, December 14, 2007.

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Daniel Gonzales	<a href="http://youtube.com/watch?v=PDn7cEgxvtg">http://youtube.com/watch?v=PDn7cEgxvtg</a>
Sexual Conversion Therapy	<a href="http://jgford.homestead.com/SexualConversionTherapy.html">http://jgford.homestead.com/SexualConversionTherapy.html</a>
Reparative Therapy: A Pseudo Science	<a href="http://jgford.homestead.com/">http://jgford.homestead.com/</a>
Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (CPCSM)	<a href="http://www.cpcsm.org/">http://www.cpcsm.org/</a>
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Paula Ruddy's article	<a href="http://www.progressivecatholicvoice.org/enewsletters/index_Jan08.html#ArchdioceseBlocks">http://www.progressivecatholicvoice.org/enewsletters/index_Jan08.html#ArchdioceseBlocks</a>
Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church : Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus here	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/Confronting-Power-Sex-Catholic-Church/dp/0814618650/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&amp;s=bo...">http://www.amazon.com/Confronting-Power-Sex-Catholic-Church/dp/0814618650/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&amp;s=bo...</a>
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stephen.kobasa@gmail.com	<a href="mailto:stephen.kobasa@gmail.com">mailto:stephen.kobasa@gmail.com</a>
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The Church in the Making: Rediscovering Vatican II downloadable brochure (.pdf)	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/Church-Making-Orientalium-Ecclesiarum-Rediscovering/dp/0809142767/ref=sr_1_2?i...">http://www.amazon.com/Church-Making-Orientalium-Ecclesiarum-Rediscovering/dp/0809142767/ref=sr_1_2?i...</a>
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As It Was In the Beginning: The Coming Democratization of the Catholic Church	<a href="http://www.amazon.com/As-Was-Beginning-Democratization-Catholic/dp/0824524195/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=U...">http://www.amazon.com/As-Was-Beginning-Democratization-Catholic/dp/0824524195/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=U...</a>
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"Dutch Proposal Stirs Controversy,"	<a href="http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2008a/022208/022208n.htm">http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2008a/022208/022208n.htm</a>