



Becoming a Reconciling Community

Those of us who came of age during the GODSPELL era probably remember well the scene in Central Park where Christ and the disciples are acting out the final judgment, separating the sheep from the goats. Christ invites the sheep into one of the museums and sends the goats off to eternal punishment; the door closes, leaving the "goats" looking forlorn and sadly abandoned. Then within seconds the huge door opens a crack, just enough for Jesus' head to appear—and he silently waves the goats in. They come bounding up, eager to rejoin Jesus and the rest of his disciples. This is the Christ I believe in, a God who leaves the 99 to seek out the one sheep who wandered, who throws a feast for the Prodigal Son, and who pays a full day's wages to the ones who worked only the final hours. I celebrate the Jesus who calls the sinner out of the tree and from the tax collector's booth and invites himself to dinner with them **before** they repent of their sin...the Christ who refuses to be bound by purity codes or by rituals that divide and separate rather than build us into one family.

The scriptures used in the Lenten liturgies repeat this challenge to forgiveness and reconciliation in a myriad of ways. During our Conference in Albany, attendees asked CALGM to provide them with practical ideas, methods, and tools for dealing with conflict, for bringing about reconciliation, for mediating when people or groups have become polarized and caught in gridlock. The Board has not forgotten that request, and we are seeking qualified people to help us develop these resources. In the meantime, Lent is a great time for us to look at our own hearts, and ask how well we conform to Christ's ways. The Lenten Eucharistic readings are extremely helpful with this process.

The **Our Father** is central to our life as Catholics. The February 28th reflection in **Living With Christ** (Baylor) in quoting St. Cyprian revealed something new to me: "We do not say 'My Father, who art in heaven,' nor 'Give me this day my daily bread'; nor does each one ask that only his or her own debt should be forgiven....Our prayer is public and common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one." We are ONE, one family, one body in Christ. And when any one of us hurts, is lonely or in pain, is locked out of our gatherings or denied a place at our table, we ALL suffer. Every time we pray this prayer, we recommit ourselves to the work of reconciliation and forgiveness, to the restoration of our one family. We cannot say 'OUR Father' and then judge any brother or sister as unworthy or lacking in grace and goodness; we cannot say 'Give US this day our daily bread' while turning away anyone who approaches us hungry for the Bread of Life, for the faith which nourishes the spirit; nor can we pray 'Forgive US OUR trespasses' and mean only my personal sins—I must come

begging God to forgive everyone's sins—no matter their position in society, their status within the church, the choices they have made, the fears and secrets, the misunderstandings and unresolvable differences that drive wedges between us. Regardless of all that separates us, the mystery of our Catholic faith is that "**Nothing can separate us from the love of God**"—and as painful as it sometimes seems, in that love of God, we ARE one!

So what do we do when confronted with irreconcilable positions, contradictory "truths," divisions in the body? Paula Huston, in her March 2nd reflection in **Give Us This Day** (Liturgical Press) talks about Jesus' admonition that our virtue must surpass that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Love must take precedence over law--Christ tells us that if our brother or sister has anything against us, we are to leave our gift at the altar and first be reconciled with our brother or sister. Huston says, "When we privately indulge in prolonged rage, whether 'justifiable' or not, we're embracing a murderous attitude... Our first priority is to track down our wounded brother, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. Even if we are sure we have done nothing wrong, it is up to us to make the initial move..." That's an important message for us in this ministry of outreach. When our brothers and sisters with homosexual orientations are alienated, angry, offended, feeling falsely accused, condemned and abandoned by their faith communities, it is up to us to seek them out, to leave the safety of our church buildings and parish communities and find them. Christ asks us to reconnect with them, to demonstrate that there IS a place for them at our table, that we want and need them to come home, that our worship community will not be complete without them.

For some of us, this is the easy part; the more difficult part is being reconciled with those who do not understand our ministry, who live in a black and white world, who would prefer that anyone who is "different" from them go elsewhere; many are uncomfortable with a banquet table filled with lepers, sinners, tax collectors, adulterers, those who neglect the purity rituals... These, too, we must reach out to, listen respectfully to their concerns and lovingly share our own stories. By speaking clearly of the grace and beauty, the faith and the spiritual hunger we have come to know in these "misfits" so eager to be part of the community, we begin to build bridges of understanding. By creating a space where diverse viewpoints can be heard and respected, we plant the seeds of reconciliation. The work of reconciliation is not easy—it is painful and in a very real way, it is a participation in the death of Christ. Yet we know that His death leads to resurrection! Our faithfulness to the work of reconciliation will bring the power of Easter to our communities—a power which banishes the blindness and fear that causes so much of the division and polarization in today's world. So we take hope—for Christ has conquered! ALLELUIA! 

Proclaiming Reconciliation

In today's reality, proclamation means an up-to-date website, supplies, an office and travel, in other words, money. If this work is close to your heart, consider making donations or giving memberships in honor of your friends' birthdays and celebrations. See CALGM.org, "Donations" to enhance this pastoral mission. 

What Being on the Board of CALGM Means to Me

Michael A. Zampelli, SJ

There have been plenty of times in the last four years when I would have told you that agreeing to serve on the Board of CALGM was the stupidest decision I ever made. It all began with that first meeting when I was appointed treasurer—a position for which I had absolutely no affinity and even less skill. Performer that I am, I realized that my having once been in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* was not going to help me. I was, frankly, unprepared for the whole experience.

And it has been precisely in my inadequacy that grace has visited me. Whenever I gave a presentation to the rest of the board on our financial situation, I would stay up late trying to figure out what Quickbooks was telling me! Tentatively, I would report: “I *think* this is where we are with the dough.” And the rest of the board would ask questions and thank me profusely for whatever I provided. I never doubted, for one minute, that the folks on the board and among the membership (who were so understanding about my tardiness in cashing checks) deeply appreciated my attempts at muddling through the very many practical details that come with stewarding a non-profit association, even one as small as ours. I felt that I depended upon everyone’s understanding, patience, and affection.

Being on the board has meant understanding that I cannot guarantee perfect outcomes to complicated problems—financial or organizational, social or ecclesial—and that I must rely “on the kindness of strangers” who all too quickly become family seated at the same table. It has meant putting my trust in the power of God’s graciousness rather than in the list of my own competencies. It has meant being broken open by the example of others—people who love their children and their Church fiercely, people who tend to those who labor and are heavily-burdened, people who profess their faith in God by reverencing *everyone’s* full humanity.

At an historical moment—in the Church and in civil societies throughout the world—when the experience of LGBTQ people is becoming more visible and, hence, more contested, being on the CALGM board has provided me with an opportunity to work with all of you for greater understanding and mutual reconciliation. It has provided me with the opportunity to help nourish LGBTQ people and their families in living authentic lives without having to abandon the Catholic faith that nourishes them and facilitates their experience of God. It has provided me with an opportunity to reveal the expansiveness of the Catholic religious tradition, especially at a time when various media would reduce it to propositional statements or political positions. I have been honored to stand with all of you as we attempt to live according to the example of Jesus and communicate ever more clearly the rich complexity of LGBTQ lives yearning for a place at the table.

What has being on the board meant to me? It has meant being *with* and *for* all of you—in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. “For this,” as Shakespeare would have it, “I can no other answer make but thanks, thanks, and ever thanks.”

In Memoriam

Some of you may remember Fr. Howard Hall of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Howard was an active member of NACDLGM before it became CALGM, a board member, and workshop presenter at our conferences. He was a devoted pastor and advocate for justice, while also providing spiritual support for people living with HIV/AIDS and for gay and lesbian people and their families. As a pioneer on behalf of LGBT ministry in the state of Louisiana, he led the beginnings of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Hope ministry which reached out to gay and lesbian Catholics and inactive Catholics for faith sharing, prayer and liturgies. He participated as well in LGBT retreats held at the Jesuit Spirituality Center in Grand Coteau. Unfortunately in latter years his health deteriorated and he died of pancreatic cancer in early February 2012. Our loving God has shown much love for LGBT persons through this dedicated and selfless man and

Welcome A New Board Member

“Jeep”, Diane Ries

I am happy and humbled to be on the board of CALGM! I feel energized to participate in the pastoral care ministry of the association. The balm of unity is working with this loving, like-minded supportive community of Catholics.

I was a wayward cradle Catholic who was folded back into the Church essentially by a pastor who asked me to start an LGBT ministry at his Parish. My initial research led me to the Tampa CALGM conference where my eyes were opened to the tremendous pain of some Gay and Lesbian Catholics. These LBGTQ Catholics were bereft, feeling that these parts of themselves were mutually exclusive in the eyes of the Catholic Church. I was shown that this is where healing needs to happen.

Besides founding that LGBT Ministry, I am part of a team that originated our domestic violence ministry. I work with LGBT youth on Alternative Conflict Resolution skills at St. Luke in the Fields Episcopal Church in Greenwich Village.

I participate on a quarterly basis with the Interparish Collaborative in NYC, that consists of Catholic parish LGBT Ministry leaders.

I have a B.A. in Political Science, and certificates in LGBT issue workshops, I have trained in mediation at John Jay College and have owned my own business for 35 years. That business has taken me throughout the U.S. and overseas, producing shows, workshops, consulting and motivational speaking. I have produced five educational videos. Additionally, my theatre background includes directing, producing, writing and performing monologues and plays. I am one of the original members of the W.O.W. Café, women’s theatre group in NYC I believe I am called to bring love, understanding, acceptance, communications, dignity and authenticity to the church and to the Church. I was asked to join the board while attending another CALGM conference in Albany. Let’s make his/herstory! 

COMING NEXT RECLAIM

Fascinating and intriguing information about
CALGM's other enthusiastic new board member,
Nicholas Coppola
Oceanside Estates, NY

CALGM Ministry 2012-2013: Focus on YOUTH

The CALGM Board gathered in St. Louis February 3rd and 4th for our winter meeting. Besides the excitement of welcoming Jeep and Nicholas, our two new board members, a highlight of our meeting was the selection of a theme for our ministerial efforts over the next two years. With great enthusiasm and a firm sense of commitment, we chose to focus our attention on "***Setting the Table for All Youth: Yours, Mine, Ours.***" Life is especially challenging for today's youth; while adolescence has always been a turbulent time, a time of questioning and rebellion, a time of trying to sort out one's many roles and come to a clear sense of identity, today's youth also face a world of high unemployment, diminishing resources and diminishing opportunities, wars between nations and culture wars and growing incivility at home.

The usual sources of security for young people in many instances are becoming weaker and less reliable. Despite our best efforts, bullying is an all-too common reality in our schools—with recent reports of teachers and principals themselves bullying kids because of the students' race or sexual orientation. We continue to hear of suicides among our young people. Homelessness is a growing problem among our youth—with parents turning their own children out onto the streets. Even our churches are sometimes places where youth feel out of place, unwelcome and unwanted, silenced, viewed as problems rather than as valued and vital voices of God's Spirit in our midst.

CALGM is committed to ***all youth***—recognizing that we are all responsible for future generations. Whether heterosexual or homosexual in orientation, regardless of gender identity, regardless of race, ethnicity, or immigration status, no matter what the structure of their family of origin, ***all of them*** are ***our*** youth, and we are eager to find practical pastoral ways to make room for them at our table, and to provide nourishing food to sustain them on the journey, and to promise them our assistance and companionship on the journey.

We have begun mapping out priority actions and will be searching out and providing resources for pastoral work with young people and their families. Our work will be communicated to you in a variety of ways—watch for information on the website—and will culminate in our 2013 Conference.





**Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry
2013 Conference**

**SETTING THE TABLE
FOR ALL YOUTH:
YOURS, MINE, OURS**



September 12-15, 2013

Hotel Monteleone

**In the French Quarter,
New Orleans, LA**

Room rate: \$119/night

**Register this week for an Early Bird rate: \$195
Saturday Banquet: \$40**



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for Lesbian and Gay Ministry**

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