

Dignity/New York  
39th Anniversary Liturgy

GOD DESIRES JUSTICE  
James Osbourn and Patricia Russell

GOD WANTS US to live justly, in COMMON, with others, to live justly and in love. The readings mention various lands- Egypt, Macedonia, Archaia- but really these represent the entire world and everyone living therein. It is a vast space and held in common

IN DIGNITY we come to Eucharist-our common space. We share a meal. Here we hear God's voice calling us to act with love & justice.

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER I wanted a car, which my parents were not so keen for me to have. This angered me. At this time my grandfather, whom I loved, died. My mother had gone to care for him. My father came in to inform me. I acted like sometimes a teenager would and said this is not my concern. Looking at me my father said he was taking the train for Virginia.

Shortly after his departure, realizing what I had done, I searched the house for money and headed south to join my family. There in Stryder's funeral home in Shepherdstown were all the family, kin and neighbors. I went to my father and kneeling placed my head in his lap, and cried. He just stroked my head, running his hand through my hair. THIS WAS FOR ME A POWERFUL EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LOVE.

Dignity's expulsion from St. Francis Xavier Church was not a loving act. The parish was forced by the archdiocese to expel us or risk the loss of funding to its school. That last evening a thousand people exited the church holding lighted candles. Outside the demonstrators stood with signs denouncing our presence in the church. Saying nothing, we walked silently through the streets to The Center and held our service. A day later, at a bar near the PATH entrance on Christopher St., a small group sat around discussing what to do next. The Cardinal, John O'Connor, had been interviewed by the media on the expulsion and he responded all were welcome to come to the church. We thought why not go to his church.

THUS WAS BORN THE CATHEDRAL PROJECT.

(here read from "Dignity/New York 25 years of Faith & Activism", the account by Charles Frederick) After months of witness within the cathedral and forced out by the police & court order, we celebrated each first Sunday of the month Eucharist under The Atlas. For three years we continued in this. One Easter Sunday as we celebrated we looked up and saw the closed off street filled with people and at communion many of these came up to receive.

ZUCCOTTI PARK is a spontaneous response to injustice. It disturbs the powerful. Public spaces throughout the world have borne witness to injustice- Tiananmen Square Beijing, the fall of the wall Berlin, Tahrir Square Cairo. ( here read from The New York Times, "In Protest The Power of Place" Sunday, Oct. 10, 2011)

Of course there have been public protests in America that have been affective vehicles for change- the civil rights movement in the sixties, the anti-war protest of the seventies and the AIDS activism of the eighties are some of the more recent

WILL ZUCCOTTI PARK CHANGE THIS?

Will we continue in this protest, today, tomorrow? Will we stand against the policies that impoverishes the many for the benefit of the of the few?

from Dignity/New York 25 Years of Faith & Activism, "Beginning in 1987, on the first Sunday of each month, gay and lesbian Catholics and their supporters composed a peaceful, but militant witness, resisting the oppression of our community by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. We entered St. Patrick's Cathedral; we prayed the Mass amidst the congregation gathered. When the Cardinal spoke his homily we stood silently in prayer and sacramental presence. When we were expelled by the police enforced court order, we celebrated our Mass on the street. When we were arrested there as well, we fought in the courts of law against the corruption of law.

We were women, we were men, we were gay and lesbian, we were straight, we were white, black and latino. We were People Living with AIDS. We were a sign of faith, justice and God's love of all humanity. We were the Cathedral Project." (from chapter by Charles Frederick)

In Protest, The Power of Place, "Living in Europe for the past few years I often came across parks and squares in Barcelona and Madrid, Athens and Milan, Paris and Rome, occupied by tent communities of protesters. Public protest and assembly are part of the European social compact. Maybe the difference in America has something to do with our longstanding obsessions with automobiles and autonomy, with our predilection for isolationism, or our preference just for watching, more than participating."

(from an article by Michael Kimmelman New York Times Sunday Review October 16, 2011)

Thank you James for sharing your reflections on Justice and challenging us to live in a way in alignment with the Gospel. Dignity New York has heard the call of God for the last 39 years.

We as a community are moving forward. We have found God in so many ways among our brothers and sisters and that finding of God continues to transform our community in new and wonderful ways.

The challenge for us today is to be open to being Eucharist for each other. Our challenges will give us opportunities to Forgive. Our model is James' father. Begin Eucharist for each other will enable us to forgive as individuals and as a community.

Our challenges will give us an opportunity to hear the Spirit's call to live our Christian life in a deeper and more authentic way. Our model is Easter Sunday Eucharist. In ways that only the spirit can lead us, we will be surprised by others sharing at our table if we are open to sharing with each other, to being Eucharist for each other.

Our challenges will ask us to look to the future while building on the accomplishments of the past. Our Dignity history is filled with people who have worshiped with us and now fill our city and our gay community with myriads of social justice services for the poor and the outcast. We must look to the future needs and be open to the Spirit's call. Our Zuccotti park is not far. The occasions of injustice are all around us. We are called to see these and act in a just way. Will we hear the call to open the eyes of the blind, unbind the oppresses, speak for injustices in our church, in our community and in our world? Each year we celebrate our anniversary. This year, our 39th. It could be all about cake and champagne or it could be a challenge to live in a way that we take to heart the words of the Gospel...to love God and to love our neighbor.