

When Jim first asked me to do this, actually he told me it was time and assigned me a date, my first thought was “he has got to be out of his mind, there is no way I can do that. I am the least informed person in Dignity.

Take a look around this room, how many people here do you know have been to Seminary or Divinity School, (is that the same thing?) have come out of a religious order, Convent, Rectory, Monastery, Friary and even currently are in an order? Really it is intimidating as all get out. (I was going to use another phrase here, but Roger does not believe I can get through this without off color language, though Dan did tell me to be myself and not try to be Dignified.)

Anyhow, for those of you here like me, your basic garden variety Catholic, trust me, there are more person’s of the cloth here, past or present, than laity, they just don’t want us to know it. What do I have to say, to offer. As Roger and John so lovingly point out, I know NOTHING about Catholicism. I take great comfort tonight in knowing that “Neither did Jesus, He was a Jew.”

In tonight’s Gospel reading Jesus talks of doing the deeds of the “One who sent me.” Later he speaks that He “came into this world to divide it, to make the sightless see and the seeing blind.” Didn’t quite catch those words huh. They are in the loooooong, very looong form of the gospel reading, I read the short form so you’re just gonna have to trust me here.

At this point it seems obvious Jesus knew he was on a mission, but what was his mission really? It seems that he knows he is the Son of God, he even tells the formerly blind man he is the “Chosen One.” Whoaaaa! That’s a lot of responsibility. Do you think Jesus intended to start a whole new church, a new orthodoxy? Do you think Jesus could fully grasp the implications of what his words and actions would have on humanity for multiple millennia? At least 2 so far, (well actually 1.975 and we need to make it past 12/21/12, but that is another story altogether)

Jesus knows he is the “Chosen One” he is here to divide the world and usher in the light after a period of darkness. Does he intend to start a new Church? Or did he want to reform the Church he was in? What was his mission, his purpose? Roger tells me that Jesus wanted me to realize that I could spit in the dirt and make a mud paste to heal a blind person, that my mission is to accept God in my heart and be of service to my Sisters and Brothers, that this was Jesus purpose.

What, I can spit into dirt and make healing mud, I don't think so.

Jesus was a reformer, he seems frustrated by those in charge. In tonight's Gospel it is the Pharisseees. They are the temple elders, they know the rules, they uphold the law, they pass judgment and their authority comes from God via Moses. They answer to God and God alone, and if you disagree with their interpretation of the rules, of the law, then you are cast out; bodily, as was the person in the gospel reading, and spiritually for they were the priests. Imagine, you are cast out of your community.....No friends, no family, cut off from society.

Does this sound at all familiar? THE BIBLE SAYS.....therefore you are not welcome here, sinner be gone. I am certain that nobody here tonight can relate to that huh?

Why are we here tonight? Why are we holding our service at St. John's in the Village? An Episcopal Church!

Because we broke the rules? Whose Rules? What Rules? We are simply Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Persons wanting to pray and worship as a community.

Would Jesus have told us we did not have a place at His table? In His Church? I think not.

What was Jesus trying to do? Reform? Attempt change from working within the system? Fight the establishment by setting an example?

What was Jesus' mission? ????

In later Gospel readings we will hear Jesus ask his disciples "Who do you think I am?" Simon Peter will answer "You are the Christ, Made of God." In response, Jesus tells Simon Peter "Upon this Rock you shall build my Church." Is this the A-Ha moment? Did Jesus throw his hands up in frustration and defeat and give in or give up.

What more could He do? Jesus performs a miracle, he gives the gift of sight to a man blind from birth and he is called a sinner. He is chastised for working on the Sabbath!

He is denied, he is ostracized and soon he is to die to save some of these very people. Tonight's Gospel foreshadows some of this, Jesus even states it. "Night is coming when no one can work, I am the light of the world." How frustrating must this have been for Him, I can't even begin to imagine.

Finally, acceptance.....the Church as Jesus knew it was not going to change, it was too entrenched, too powerful, too enamored of itself and its rules, its laws and Absolute Authority. Power, Absolute Power, Corruptible Power.

What was Jesus to do? Possibly give rise to a new church for starters.

- A Church that embodies the love of God, the teachings of Christ
- A Church of Love & Service
- A Church of Respect
- A Church for All

Tonight we meet here, why? What happened in Christ's Church that we were cast out, and not only us the LGBT Community, but my Mother and countless women like her because they got divorced, another relative and again countless women like her who chose to terminate a pregnancy or 2 of my closest friends who happened to have children out of wedlock. Oh Puhleeze, Give Me A Break.

Jesus is rumored to have spent his last night on Earth with 12 other men, at least one of them had to register on the far right of the Kinsey Scale, it's statistics folks, and by some accounts there may have been a woman present. A woman whom some claim was a former prostitute and others claim was quite possibly Jesus' wife. I certainly hope that she was there and that all the rumors are true, though I can also see him with John, the one whom Jesus loved, but again that is another story.

I think we are welcome at Christ's table, in Christ's Church.

Where does that leave us today? As a community are we like the formerly blind man? Cast out of the Church as we know it and yet still believing and worshipping nevertheless. It's easy to identify as such, huh? Think about it. We cannot even meet on Church property, we are condemned by Rome and it only seems to be getting worse.

I grew up Catholic, I did 12 years of Catholic School, was confirmed by Bishop O'Leary.....as Francis if you really want to know.....and was a proud pious altar boy. I had blind faith and yet even as a child I was excluded and shunned and shamed by MY Church Elders, because my parents were divorced. Later I realized that I was condemned to Hell for my very essence.....the fiber of my being.

I became very angry with God and at Catholicism in particular, the hypocrisy was ridiculous. I tried many other religions, including Wicca, and Spiritual Practices but they were not satisfying, something was lacking, though I would still love to be a Buddhist Monk. I slowly and, quite honestly, reluctantly found my way back to Catholicism. It started with funerals, and then finding a Church in my neighborhood and having Masses said for some of my family members.

Then I found Dignity, Catholicism for me, with much of the theatrics and pageantry of my childhood memories, but with a community of my own people, Out & Proud, Catholicism with a twist. Though Michael did assure me that the masses do count for St. Peter's tally sheet. Ahhhh.....Sweet Relief.

I was the blind man who was now seeing, or seeing again, as it may be.

Then controversy

- A woman on the altar giving a homily.....horrors
- A transgender person doing a reading.....yikes
- A woman Priest presiding at Pride.....what could possibly be next? Me giving a homily perhaps!

Then I remembered, Rome turned its' back on me, I did not reject Rome. Why am I fighting for the Rules and Laws set by people who interpreted God's words and actions to further their own misguided agenda? Why maintain the status quo?

Is this Christian, is this what Jesus died for? Do I want to be a Pharisee or the blind person? I know I am not Jesus, I much more identify with Mary Magdala, I am not the Christ, but can I embody Christ? In word, in thought, in action?

Where are we as a community? Are we really the blind person, or have we become the Pharisees? Is there room at our table for everybody? Do we welcome with open arms?

I would hope that as a community we see ourselves as David, "the ruddy handsome one with beautiful eyes." He was not esteemed enough in his family's eyes to be invited to the banquet. He was out tending sheep. David had no place at the table and yet he was God's chosen one.

I would hope that we are the Ephesians, we have come out of the darkness and into the light and now we are charged with living in the light.

I would hope that we are the embodiment of Christ, that we are the light, we are his new Church. Where all are welcome!