



## NACDLGM

*National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries*

*November 2004*

### Highlights

#### NACDLGM's New Executive Committee

Tom Ferrarese - President

Laura Newport - Vice President of Committees

Mary Avery - Vice President of Conferences

David Simmons - Treasurer

Susanne Cassidy - Secretary

### Feature

#### The NACDLGM Conference Inspired Hope in my Spirit

*by Kent Carle, St Louis, MO*

While attending the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual NACDLGM Conference in Richmond, VA, I experienced many different feelings and emotions. When first asked by Sister Marge O’Gorman if I would like to attend, I thought to myself, “a conference that’s Catholic and gay, how is this possible?” I wasn’t sure what to expect. However, since I know the nature of the group I attend here in St. Louis, I felt that it would not be a conference to convince me I had to “change,” but I wasn’t sure what the opposite side would look like.

The fifteen hour drive from St. Louis to Richmond, was, at times, rough, but at the same time we got to laugh, talk and enjoy each other’s company. One thing we know for sure--when we attend next year in San Jose, California, we will fly and not drive!

NACDLGM offered so many excellent sessions and speakers that it is difficult to sum up what I received, but I believe the greatest thing I came away with is the realization that there are many faithful Catholics in this country who believe that we

truly are “Gifted and Called for a Purpose in God’s Design,” as the main theme of the conference, taken from the U.S. Bishops’ letter *Always Our Children*, put it.

What I learned in Richmond, and am continuing to integrate, is to let go of the “shame” of being gay and love myself, to see myself as gifted to myself and others, and to recognize that this is who I am and where I am supposed to be. This has been very, very hard for me, but I believe I am making strides.

In one session I attended, I was so impressed by a 75- year-old priest who helps to preside at 14 masses on the weekend, along with three other priests, in his parish of 3,000 people. But on top of all this, he is reaching out to the gay and lesbian community. One of the things he does is speak with youth at the Catholic high schools in his area. I believe we need more of this kind of energy and commitment to the community, and I found this very encouraging.

The first plenary speaker, Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt, couldn’t have been a better choice to wake us up, relax us, help us meditate, and kick the conference off to a great start. Rosalie stated that her passion was for justice and for life itself. I have to agree with Rosalie’s statement that in our culture we don’t affirm each other enough. Rosalie defines spirituality as that voice inside of us that calls us to be greater



than we are, which is another reminder that as gay and lesbian persons we can continue to be better people. When we don't love ourselves, Rosalie stated, we internalize the values of oppression. We must allow ourselves to be our own unique selves, and not dough stamped out by society's cookie cutters.



Another plenary speaker, Monsignor John Strykowski, spoke on friendship. He looked at five characteristics of friendship.

1. A sign of true friendship is to be in an atmosphere of peace, serenity, and tranquility. Jesus said, "I call you friends," and thus revealed himself completely, which leads to peace. In addition, peace comes from giving and receiving forgiveness.
2. Friendship provides a secure home for the heart. Because friendship is a relationship of unconditional love, there is security, and therefore no barriers to freedom.
3. Friends are there for one another. They keep the confidences of one another. Friends guard the secrets, anxieties, hopes and joys of the soul. Friends can be about problems, failures, conflicts, or anxieties. Since true friendship is a lifelong experience, we challenge one another and grow in virtue.
4. Friends share one another's burdens, as in Galatians 6:2. We all have burdens of disillusionment, disappointments, setbacks, poor health, etc. The ultimate test of the fidelity of friends is that that they don't abandon one another when times are hard.
5. True friendship is fruitful for one another and for the church. Whenever someone makes a step forward in Christ, it benefits all the community. Some may never see it, but it is good for the entire church as well. If the church is a place where friendships are nourished, then our ministries are places where friendships are made and nourished. In the end, we cannot think of the church without friendship.

My favorite speaker at the conference was moral theologian James Keenan. I believe that attending his session was why God wanted me at the conference. He made four preliminary points:



1. It is always important to get the story right.
2. We need to view things from both the classical and historical views within the church. The classical view of the church and the truth is that all that we can know is already known. The historical view, on the other hand, presents the person most affected as the one who needs to be the one most heard. In other words, in addition to defining morals and truth from the purely classical view, we need to listen to the people and see where they have been and where they are.
3. Conversion is the key. Communities of discourse keep the discussions going. One such type of community of discourse, for example, is NACDLGM. So are other groups represented at the conference.
4. If we see a stop sign, we need to see how to get around the stop sign and move forward.

Building on these preliminary points, Keenan spoke also of Nature, Virtue, the Cross, and Love.

1. What does the Church mean when it speaks of nature and natural law? The real question to ask about natural law is, "Can people flourish in this nature, in a community?" He referred to Gene Porter's book on natural law. Natural law is not where you begin, it's where you end. It's about the deepest desire for love and intimacy. Moral theologians are saying something about nature that no one else is saying.
2. You can flourish only if you have virtue. Primary virtues are truth-telling, just generosity, and being faithful to your word. We have three ways of relating to other people: generally, with partiality, and with self-care or prudence. We must treat all human beings with justice, fairness, equality and fidelity. But we also have

special relationships and fidelity perfects these relationships.

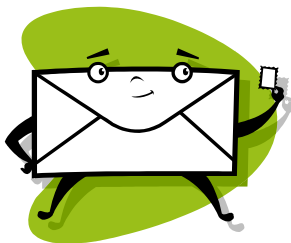
3. All people should embrace the Cross because
  - a) The Cross conquers death, and therefore this moment is being filtered into a newer moment. The Cross can conquer where our fear is.
  - b) The Cross teaches us unconditional love, and therefore we shouldn't ever hesitate to talk about the Cross in any community.
  - c) The Cross teaches us empathy, enabling us to see the crosses in other people's lives.
  - d) The Cross is the ultimate standard of reconciliation (1 Cor. 2:5).
4. We need to practice unconditional love. Keenan gave examples from theologian James Alison's recent books *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* and *On Being Liked*. [Editor's note: James Alison is expected to be a plenary speaker at the 2005 NACDLGM Conference in San Jose.]

The topics varied and the speakers came from different viewpoints, but the best thing about the conference was that it inspired hope in my spirit. I was reminded that it is OK not to take ourselves seriously all the time. I look forward to next year, and remain very grateful indeed not only for NACDLGM as an organization, but also for the people who make it a vibrant, much-needed place for those who are looking to serve God and live out their identity in the world.

## Letter to the Editor

Attending the NACDLGM Conference in Richmond, Virginia, was a rewarding experience. The scope and focus of the presentations and the sharing of ideas was most helpful. NACDLGM by its nature, allows everyone at the banquet table of the church to feel included, loved and validated. As we all go back to our own dioceses and ministries we will be able to share this wealth of ideas. God made us all and he made us to love. I pray the church can be more open to all her members.

“---Anthony Schweigert, Saint Louis, Mo.”

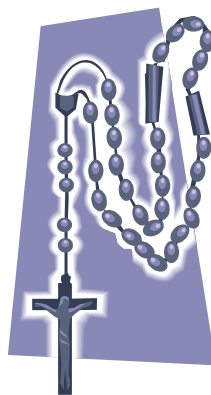


## Book Review

### *"Acts of Faith, Acts of Love: Gay Catholic Autobiographies as Sacred Texts"* (Continuum), Author Dugan McGinley

This book analyzes the autobiographical writings of 40 gay male Catholics. This is an exploration of the overlap of religious and sexual identities as told by the writers themselves. In the book the author makes references to the NACDLGM:

"Some dioceses maintain various outreach programs for gays and lesbians, grouped under the umbrella National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM). Most of these are designed to keep gay and lesbian Catholics connected to the church by offering opportunities for spiritual enrichment, without challenging church teaching."



"The polarization was starkly visible a few years ago at the fifth annual conference of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries, held in Rochester, New York, with the full support of Bishop Matthew Clark. A wide variety of speakers talked of hope, love, justice, and reconciliation between the church and its lesbian and gay members. Though none of the speakers at this officially sanctioned event directly challenged the magisterial position on the moral status of homosexual acts, the overall theme of the conference was acceptance and advocacy of lesbian and gay participation in the church. Outside, however, the picture was very different. Protesters made their objections clear by carrying a variety of signs: 'Practicing Catholics cannot practice homosexuality', 'Bishop Clark: Love the Homosexual with the Truth', 'Homosexual Persons Are Called to Chastity.' The scene was a microcosm of the American Catholic Church's 'tense and increasingly public struggle over homosexuality.'"

## Committee News

### Fundraising

1. Over \$4000 was generously donated by attendees at our Richmond Conference- thanks to the faithful!
2. Over \$1000 was raised at our Silent Auction- thanks to those who donated and bid!
3. Our Annual Appeal letter was mailed on November 1<sup>st</sup>. It is our only appeal every year for monies to support our efforts!
4. Membership should be reminded to ask supportive family, friends, parishes, and businesses to help us financially.

### Ministry Outreach

It is time to reach out with the good news of the gospel!

Please help us build our list of welcoming communities by e-mailing us names of people and organizations that reach out to the gay and lesbian community. We would like to be able to contact them by telephone, email and/or letter.

Please send your e-mail to [office@nacdlgm.org](mailto:office@nacdlgm.org)

### Pastoral Resources

#### *Best Practices in Ministry*

The CARA report from the survey of parish and diocesan ministries has been published. If you have not received your copy of the summary report please contact us at (925) 680-8139. The report has also been sent to each U.S. diocese and to other interested parties such as other denominational leadership offices and to interested press outlets.

### Communications

Plenary speakers have submitted their speeches from the 2004 conference. Speeches are available on our website: [www.nacdlgm.org](http://www.nacdlgm.org)

Did you take pictures at the conference that we can add to our website? Please share them with us.

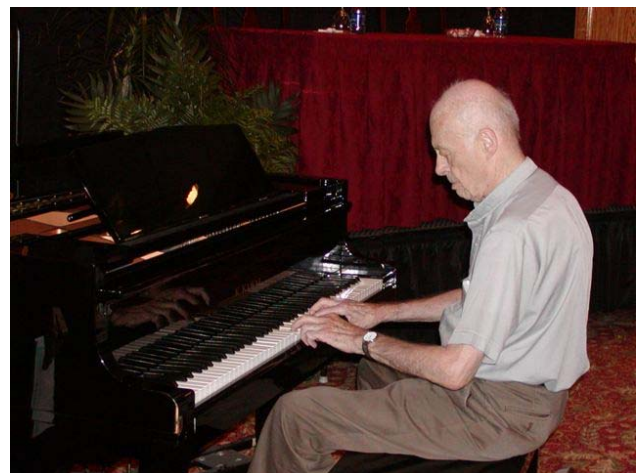
Also, please continue to share your stories, faith journeys, and experiences with church.

We need your help to fill our publications.

Please send your article submissions to [Communications@nacdlgm.org](mailto:Communications@nacdlgm.org)

### Membership

This committee is in need of a few good volunteers. We need your creative ideas to help us devise a new approach of reaching people and letting them know about NACDLGM. We have a very small budget to work with so innovation and thoughtfulness is a prerequisite. ☺



## Calendar

**November 20, 2004**  
NACDLGM Regional Gathering  
St. Bernadette Parish, Severn MD

**February 24 to February 26, 2005**  
NACDLGM Board of Directors Meeting in  
Orange, California

**September 22 to September 25, 2005**  
2005 National Conference in San Jose, California

## GET READY FOR SAN JOSE!



## Please Join Us!

NACDLGM Membership is open to persons who embrace NACDLGM's mission and are:

- Involved in diocesan or parish lesbian and gay ministry; or
- Involved in other diocesan and parish ministries - such as family life, youth and social justice - that need to be aware of gay and lesbian persons and their families; or
- Interested in the development of diocesan and parish lesbian and gay ministries, including persons currently volunteering or working in Catholic-based lesbian and gay ministries.

Visit our website to become a member!

[www.nacdlgm.org](http://www.nacdlgm.org)

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