



by Bob Rucker, Former Pastoral Council Member

Mass Readings

"...Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."

"Live as children of light."

"I was blind but now I see."

Today's readings are some of my favorite ...and they've reminded me of something that happened back when I was college.

In 1975, at Northern Illinois University, I was hired to be a Resident Advisor. The job was to help 40 young men living on a dormitory floor keep order, and create a sense of community and fellowship.

What a cool job...and I got room and board free of charge! But it wasn't as easy as it sounds.

One year, two strangers were assigned to live together as freshmen on my floor.

One was named Marty...a short, pudgy, friendly kid, very out-going, all smiles, with a huge AFRO which, in those days, rivaled my own!

Marty was a VERY talented musician. He grew up in the affluent, North shore Jewish community of Chicago, and had never lived away from home before. His excitement for college was overwhelming!

Marty's assigned roommate was almost a total opposite. Another freshman, Dave came from farm country in Southern Illinois, was very tall, strongly built like a football linebacker.

Now Dave started out very quiet, but had a forceful presence about him. He grew up as a Christian, but something of a loner type...so I thought he and Marty might be good for each other. Unfortunately, I was SO wrong.

Within weeks they were publicly feuding about study habits, music tastes... and complaining about their friends visiting the room. At one point they just STOPPED TALKING.

Then one day, I heard a huge commotion, and Marty came storming down to my room sporting a huge black eye. He was bleeding, and in tears, was demanding I do something or he'd call the police.

Immediately I talked with Dave and learned he too was fed up, but I never forgot what he he said to me about Marty...quote: **"He's just not a real man Bob, if you know what I mean."** I knew exactly what he was saying.

It wouldn't be long before Marty left the floor.

I felt horrible about what happened...and VERY disappointed in myself for NOT trying HARDER to say or do MORE to make that arrangement work.

Dave went on to pledge a fraternity. Soon, I'd get on him about all the noise, drinking and partying in his room. Dave had a car and was driving the frat guys wherever they wanted, whenever they wanted.

He did everything he could think of to **get in** with those guys...but when new initiates were finally announced by the fraternity, Dave's name was **NOT** on the list.

This tall, giant of a man was in tears, crushed by the rejection. Apparently one of the frat guys had even told him to his face, sorry but you're too much of "a country hay seed" for their fraternity.

At that point, I was feeling bad for Dave...and more guilty. Months before...WHY didn't I have the courage to remind my friend Christian buddy Dave of Bible readings we both knew like "Judge not and ye shall not be judged, for as you judge so shall you be judged."

It was too late by then...He had reaped what he had sown.

I left college wondering when would I ever find my voice for Christ.

During my TV news career and in academia I would sit on my own truth for 28 years...meticulously steering conversations away from it to prevent being ridiculed or rejected.

Fast Forward with me now to 1996.

During my first visit here to St. Julie Billiard Parish, I distinctly remember seeing Jeanine Jensen speaking up as a church leader and serving at the altar of the Lord.

SAY WHAT? A woman in a Catholic church allowed to publicly be a leader after all the centuries of women being forced to stay in the background...**WAY COOL, FINALLY**, I thought.

Jeanine, Monica Rising, Ana Collins and the MANY wonderful women religious here in this parish became my new role models because they were not willing to step back and hide their passion for Christ anymore. Did it raise some eyebrows? Sure, and it still does. But I thought to myself, so what?

Wasn't it St. Paul who wrote **If God is with you, WHO can be against you?"**

So, that's why it would be here at St. Julies, with God on all our sides, that I would finally feel safe enough to share my complete truth that I am a proud catholic and a gay man.

The teachings of catholic faith have kept me centered throughout life. The Holy Spirit has always protected me and my family, and has showered us with many wonderful blessings...including St. Julie's itself.

The warm and genuine welcome here...the kindness, friendship and determination to find more to help others continues to blow my mind.

For you see... **Gay and lesbian people have very few places where we are even thought of as Christians, nor less allowed to talk candidly about OUR faith in Jesus...OUR every day struggles, or OUR unique and loving families.**

And yet...Like everyone else we need spiritual support too to help us in our daily walk with Christ.

But we can't help but notice in most churches how others get to talk freely about their children, families, challenges, travels and achievements. It's hard for us to find that level of welcome.

Thank God for St. Julies!

In hours of joy sadness and despair...Your wonderful embrace has been there for me and my family. When my partner and I invited my 90 year old mother, my sister with Downs Syndrome, and my 94 year old aunt to live with us, it was this parish that helped us **believe WE could** take care of them. When mom died, the turnout at her memorial at this church touched us deeply and is still talked about by our family and friends to this day.

Loving gay households are NOT all that unusual...they are just UNFAMILIAR to most.

Understandably, it takes time for some people, on both sides, to see that, and not be blinded by the thoughts and prejudices of the world... so I thank you for daring to follow our Divine role model from God.

For it was Jesus who **showed us** how to embrace the people society labels as **“unsavory”** or **“unwanted.”**

He rescued a woman from being stoned to death for committing adultery, but instead of telling her to get lost, get away from us...He told her what He tells everyone of us ...
“Go and sin no more.”

And Jesus would trust that SHE COULD DO IT, no matter her history or the stories about her lifestyle.

He would also bring his disciples in close contact with human beings suffering the most horrible and degrading disease of leprosy.

By being so bold, Jesus showed His followers for all time how to trust in the awesome power of God to overcome ALL our fears, including danger, and public ridicule.

And Jesus knew when He cured the son of a Roman soldier and welcomed his conversion, that soldier's hated and feared comrades would soon nail Him to the cross on Calvary.

Our Saviour was not afraid to buck tradition or cultural practices.

He stood up to authority and challenged it to do better. AND he responded to criticism with a relentless & universal message of love and **HOPE for everyone**, which has survived and empowered throughout the ages.

So when people ask me why is it SO important for St. Julies to embark on a listening and learning outreach for the gay and lesbian community ...I simply remind them how blessed this parish has been every time it has DARED to walk more closely in the footsteps of Christ.

The Diocese of San Jose has developed a formal and loving process for outreach to the gays and lesbian Catholics...it's on their website (posted below)...and I witnessed last year Bishop McGraw tell Father Jon and 40 priests from all over this diocese **to try and incorporate such efforts** as Good Shepherds to ALL of God's Children.

We ARE encouraged to do so with the promise of THE greatest reward possible...Remember, Jesus said ...

Blessed are those who are scorned and mocked for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thank you for listening to me today.

Now...as you quietly consider what I've said...please take out those purple sheets of paper on the pews. As we have done every week during Lent, we ask you to write a private response to the following question, then come forward and include it in the Baptismal font where we collect community needs and petitions for prayer.

...**Here's the question:**

How is God calling YOU, as an individual, to set aside fear and concerns to SEE a way to welcome ALL people, even if they challenge your upbringing or personal comfort zones?

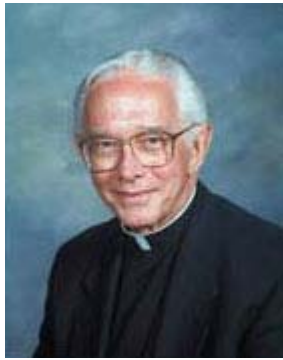
Again the question...

How is **God calling YOU**, as an **individual**, to **set aside fear and concerns** to SEE a way to welcome ALL people, even if they challenge your upbringing or personal comfort zones?

Thank you again.

St. Julie Billiart Parish: Proposed outreach to gay and lesbian Catholics rooted in diocese recommendations.

Pastoral Guidelines for Ministry to Homosexuals by the Diocese of San Jose



Diocese of
San Jose

Pierre DuMaine, D.D., Ph.D., Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of San Jose

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1.0 Rationale

1.0 Users and readers of these guidelines are asked to keep a certain *rationale* in mind.

1.1 Pastoral in Character

1.1 The guidelines are *pastoral in character*, intended to help priests and parish ministers meet their obligation to serve kindly and conscientiously all who turn to the Church with real needs and honest hope. They do not presume any particular social or psychological analysis of sexuality in our society, except for a generally accepted premise that individuals do not choose and cannot change their sexual orientation but must understand it and integrate it into their life of faith and conscience.

1.2 Catholic Teaching: Sexual Morality

1.2 The guidelines accept, without elaborating, the perennial teaching of the Catholic Church on *sexual morality*, conscience, and personal sin. Deeper probing of the ground of this teaching and the contemporary challenges to it must be left to the educational efforts proposed in Section 4.1 of these guidelines.

1.3 Catholic Teaching: Social Ethics

1.3 The guidelines also accept the teaching of the Catholic Church on social ethics but do not propose a social action agenda. When the voice or action of the Church is needed in the religious or secular forum, appropriate agents of the parish and diocese will be informed and enlisted to uphold basic human and civil rights against social or legal discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or violence.

1.4 Terminology

1.4 The guidelines do not resolve the dilemma surrounding *terminology*. "Homosexual" seems clear and objective but has come to be regarded by some as too clinical and impersonal, with unwarranted implications of pathology, inferiority, or alienation. "Gay" and "lesbian" are terms perceived by others as associated with political factions or particular lifestyles. These guidelines adopt "homosexual" without prejudice to any individuals or groups or to their right to call themselves "gay men" or "lesbian women."

2.0 Pastoral Needs

2.0 These guidelines have been prompted and guided by clear evidence of pastoral *needs* in the local Church for ministry to homosexuals that is genuinely "pastoral," "special" and "official."

2.1 "Pastoral" Ministry

2.1 The need for a "*pastoral*" ministry requires the embrace of the Church to be the same as that of Christ himself, open to all, excluding none. Hence it obligates the Church's ministers to respond without prejudice or condition to all who turn to the Church for support, counsel, reconciliation, solace or sacraments. All the baptized, regardless of sexual orientation or social attitudes, have an equal claim on this pastoral service.

2.2 "Special" Ministry

2.2 The need for a "*special*" ministry arises from widespread attitudes and actions in our society, and too often in our Church, that have made homosexual orientation the basis for discrimination and rejection or isolation of individuals and groups. This fact affects the needs of individuals and requires in ministers a special understanding, sensitivity, and skill in dealing with these social pressures and their impact on life and conscience.

2.3 "Official" Ministry

2.3 The need for a public, "*official*" ministry arises from the fact that social attitudes toward homosexual men and women are regularly deflected to those who minister to them, affirm their dignity, or uphold their rights. Hence the need for the formal and unequivocal support of the local bishop for this ministry, and adequate provision for training and supporting those who exercise it in the local Church.

3.0 Pastoral Response

3.0 The pastoral response to these needs is guided by the pastoral letter of the bishops of the United States ("To Live in Christ Jesus," 1976), who write: "Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship, and justice. They should have an active role in Christian community" (n.52) Pastoral ministers are obligated and committed to securing these rights and roles, above all, within the Catholic community.

3.1 Ministry to Individuals

3.1 *Ministry to individuals* who are homosexual (whether or not they publicly disclose their orientation) is guided by that same pastoral letter, which emphasizes that sexual orientation in itself is not sinful, but that the basic moral norms of the Church apply to homosexual as well as to heterosexual acts. Pastoral ministers must uphold these norms which are rooted in sacred scripture, where we indeed find prohibition of heterosexual and homosexual behavior contrary to the Christian ideal. There also we find equally urgent and even more frequent condemnation, especially in the words and deeds of Jesus, of hatred, anger, refusal to forgive, and judgment or ostracism of entire segments of the community. In particular ministers will strive and judgment or ostracism of entire segments of the community. In particular ministers will strive

(a) in pastoral counseling, to build up and not crush an individual's sense of dignity as a human person and responsibility as a Christian. Without this sense of self-worth and responsibility, ability to respond to Christ's call is severely hampered.

(b) in their teaching, to help each individual to form an honest and trustworthy conscience in accord with the Church's moral principles and norms. Every person's effort to understand, accept, and live by these norms is beset by difficulty, doubt, perplexity, and sometimes failure, but none of these absolves the minister from the obligation to receive each person with kindness and forbearance.

(c) in the sacrament of reconciliation and in all matters of conscience, to receive each with a presumption of good will, in the manner of Christ himself, that is, without reproach or recrimination, since the sacramental forum is above all a place of encounter with this same Christ.

(d) to welcome or seek out the alienated, who may be burdened with pain and anger which they perceive (perhaps with some justice) as caused or occasioned by the Church, its ministers or its members.

3.2 Ministry to Families

3.2 *Ministry to families* is equally urgent, when they must struggle with the dilemma of having a homosexual spouse, parent, brother or sister, son or daughter, These families have an equal right to counseling, support and reconciliation according to the provisions and intent of these guidelines.

3.3 Ministry to Groups

3.3 Ministry to groups is also necessary for those who feel a need for support to reduce their isolation and to foster the wholesome integration of their sexuality into their human and Christian growth. Ministry to these groups may take several forms:

(a) to provide opportunities and facilities for liturgy, prayer, study, or discussion for Catholics who are homosexual and who accept the Church's moral teaching and actively seek to assimilate it into their life of faith and conscience.

(b) to facilitate communication and dialogue among all such groups and between these groups and the Church in order to increase understanding and reduce divisions in the Church and in the community.

(c) to exercise pastoral prudence in separating this ministry from identification or association with the aims or actions of groups who may partially share the aims of the Church but also advocate legal or social provisions contrary to Christian moral or social principles.

3.4 Ministry to the Sick, Dying

3.4 *Ministry to the sick, dying, and bereaved* requires special attention and sensitivity in this context because the misunderstanding and hostility surrounding homosexuality has been grievously aggravated by the uncertainty and fear surrounding Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Afflicted individuals, their families, and friends have a special claim on the ministry of the Church.

4.0 Pastoral Resources

4.0 To implement these guidelines *pastoral resources* will be made available. Pastoral ministers will need continuing education, consultation, and support; some must be qualified and available to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups and to be a resource to other ministers.

4.1 Programs of Continuing Education

4.1 This ministry requires at least three programs of continuing education:

- (a) basic pastoral formation of parish ministers;
- (b) recruitment of special ministers to offer assistance to individuals and groups, or to other ministers;
- (c) information and education for the Catholic and non-Catholic community about the Church's teaching on sexuality and about its ministry to homosexual men and women.

4.2 "Pastoral Resource Committee"

4.2 The bishop will appoint the chair and members of a "**Pastoral Resource Committee**" for ministry to homosexual men

and women, comprising not fewer than seven nor more than fifteen members, qualified and experienced in the pastoral and professional areas required by this ministry. The Committee will establish its own organization and procedures to address its principal tasks:

- (a) to inform and advise the bishop on all aspects of this ministry;
- (b) to enlist the interest and cooperation of diocesan agencies in implementing these guidelines;
- (c) to recommend, promote, or provide, in consultation with these agencies, programs of education and information.

4.3 Study Resources

4.3 The Pastoral Resource Committee will regularly evaluate and recommend publications to support these education programs or the personal *study resources* for pastoral ministers.

4.4 Organizations

4.4 The Pastoral Resource Committee will evaluate, in accord with these guidelines (cf. 3.3 above) **organizations** to be served, consulted, or enlisted in this ministry.



Below see [St. Julie Billiard Parish](#) Mission Statement



[St. Julie Billiart Parish, San Jose, CA.](#)

St. Julie Billiart Parish Mission Statement

St. Julie Billiart Parish is a diverse, welcoming, contemporary Catholic community nurtured by Word and Sacrament. The Table of Christ inspires our faith and commits us to bring His message of hope to the world.

Misión Principal

La Parroquia Santa Julia Billiart es una comunidad Católica diversa, contemporánea, abierta a todos y nutrida por la Palabra y el Sacramento. La Mesa de Cristo inspira nuestra fé y nos guía a traer Su Mensaje de esperanza al mundo entero.

All Are Welcome

We are a community that welcomes the Christ, the Risen One who is revealed in the story of each person. We are a community that says, "ALL ARE WELCOME." We are a community of ...

- People of all ages — children, youth, young adults, middle aged and elderly.
- People of every marital status — single, married, divorced, separated, widowed and remarried.
- People of many races, national origins, languages, cultures and religious backgrounds.
- People who are straight, gay and lesbian.
- People who are native born and immigrants, documented and undocumented.
- People of all economic backgrounds — the poor, the middle class and the wealthy.
- People who struggle with hardships, handicaps, disabilities, mental illness and addiction.

Todos Son Bienvenidos

Nosotros somos una comunidad que acepta y recibe a Cristo, el Cristo Resucitado que se manifiesta en cada persona. Nosotros somos una comunidad que afirma, "TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS." Nosotros somos una comunidad de...

- Personas de toda las edades — niño/as, jóvenes, adultos jóvenes, personas adultas, y personas de edad avanzada.
- Personas de toda clase de estado civil — solteras, casadas, divorciadas, separadas, viudas y personas que se han vuelto a casar
- Personas de muchas razas, nacionalidades, lenguajes, culturas, y tradiciones religiosas.
- Personas heterosexuales y homosexuales
- Personas nacidas aquí, emigrantes, documentadas e indocumentadas
- Personas de toda clase económica — pobres, clase media, y ricas.
- Personas que luchan con adversidades, discapacidades, enfermedades mentales y adicciones.