

DIGNITY BOSTON PRIDE LITURGY 2018

How is a Pride March like a kiss?

You never forget your first one!

Think about it - the anticipation, the excitement, the anxiety, the fear of being caught...can I be in the open, or should I hide? Do I tell? What if someone sees me? And the list goes on, depending on your age, the environment around you, the culture, maybe even your gender...Can you picture yourself?

That first Pride was like that for many of us.

Remember when people wore brown bags in their heads to hide who they were. Do you know any teacher back then who did just that?

Do you remember anyone whose picture on the paper cost them their job?

Do you remember those who watched standing in the sidewalk, pretending not to know you, and definitely not cheering; but maybe hoping they could be safe just watching.

So many of those images come to my mind.

And as we got bolder, individually and collectively, our March got more loud and emboldened and political. It was about our freedom, our legal status, our safety after all!

Who can forget the right in your face Lesbian Avengers!? I can still see the image of the bed carrying a couple in an intimate exchange rolling down Boylston Street.

And the surprise and appreciation when the first politician dared to walk with us - I think it was Elaine Noble, an out lesbian running for state rep?

Remember the days of Act Up? They were so out there screaming out loud what others were trying to silence - our community was dying of AIDS and nobody cared.

There were many risks then, and many courageous souls who were willing to take those first steps for the sake of a larger goal that would make the difference between life and death, visibility and invisibility, being equal or less than, being safe or persecuted, being legal or afraid to be caught in the act.

We just celebrated Pentecost. I love the readings of that day and the images they conjure in my mind. Being afraid, and confused, and divided, and in shock...you name it. We have been there.

And then being filled with a passion and a courage, and a freedom, and a certainty, and a peace that they had not known before. We have been there too.

Opening the doors and going out into the streets and every town feeling able to talk freely about a new way of being in the world that would change people's earthly and eternal life forever.

It occurs to me that our Pride March is like our own Pentecost moment, especially that first one when perhaps we were transformed from feeling fear to feeling courage in an instant, not even knowing how or why.

Let us never forget that every one of those transformative moments that sent us proudly into our world to march for our freedom, was possible because we have been able to be carried on the shoulders of those that came before us, risking much so that we could join the journey a little bit less afraid. And so it continues.

Today, as we realize that in this state, in this city and even in this country, most of us have a little less to lose or fear, we look at the March and wonder if for some this has become more like a Mardi Gras, a carnival, a Parade. We can be more outrageous in our dress - at least some of us - ; the dance music is louder than the chants, the beads are more plentiful than the angry signs, and many more LGBTQ and allies can watch and cheer watching us go by, fearing no repercussions.

Many of us - me included - say "Pride March, been there, done that, I'll go to the movies instead..." "I don't need to be there, others will." "The same old..." This is so passé"...it is someone else's turn".

Complacency? Privilege? Denial?

But let's be careful friends, because our country is taking a turn, and not for the better. For many, we're still "the other," an "other" that is to be feared, hated, persecuted, denied basic rights, and even killed. Ask transgender folks who are constantly looking over their shoulders, transgender women who are killed in higher numbers; or the gay kids bullied in school; or those being denied a marriage certificate or a cake; those who have been killed or beaten up. Or all of us who hear politicians, clergy, preachers, and the average citizen say publicly, emboldened by the current national culture, horrible things about our community - and women, and Muslims, and men of color; and Jews, and immigrants.... This hateful discourse has incited violence in word and deed. And yes, we have to be vigilant.

Our complacency has been born out of our privilege - living in Boston, in MA in the USA. Is it enough justice that we have that privilege?

What about LGBTQ people who live in rural America, in the Bible Belt, in a town where the Christian Right is the "ruling" class? Are they safe?

And then there are other parts of the world, where extreme religious and cultural beliefs are used to imprison and kill human beings every day if they are even suspected of being gay. I am so happy that Dignity USA is involved in the Global Rainbow Coalition, making us more aware, and sharing resources and connections with all those sisters and brothers who need light and hope.

Complacency allows us to enjoy the Carnival that the Pride March has become here in our city. It allows us the privilege of feeling comfortably safe and even be dismissive and in denial of this new "immoral" United States. No, there is not enough justice in our world.

But with privilege comes responsibility. And ours is immense. Because all around us, the "other" is being persecuted in ways that we cannot deny or tolerate.

Our responsibility is not a choice, it is a commandment. Our responsibility is rooted in our faith. That is why we are all here today celebrating a Pride liturgy. gathering around the table that we believe is set up for all.

It is because we believe that we must act to eradicate the prejudice that imprisons the "other." And believe me, we are still

the "other" for so many, and every day we are more and more confronted with that reality.

We cannot allow others to use the name of God - our God - to hate, kill, demean, shove aside, beat up, ignore, humiliate those who they, in their immoral righteousness, believe God rejects. Enough of that.

We have to believe out loud, we have to speak for what we believe is the true message of Jesus.

The Christian ultra right, the orthodox interpretation of a supreme being in religions across the world do not speak for all who believe. They do not own faith. They are not the holders of truth.

We must reclaim that right, speaking out loud what we know in our hearts and souls - that the world God wants is one where we are all beloved, equal in our dignity and our worthiness.

We know the great commandment, we know the mission, we have heard the call. We know what we have to do.

May our fear, our shame, our complacency, our laziness, our anxiety, our doubt - whatever those are - be changed by the Holy Spirit into committed courage and wisdom.

That we might be changed into true disciples, who in faith and because of faith, claim a world where all have dignity and freedom; where all can celebrate the PRIDE of who they are every day of their lives. Because we do March for Our Lives.

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