

## **A Homily for Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered People**

Maybe you've heard about the "Stonewall Rebellion." (It is more often called the "Stonewall Riot", but the participants from the Stonewall Inn prefer to call it a "rebellion".) It occurred in 1969 at a bar called the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village section of New York City. At that time the GLBT people had no public gathering places except a few "gay bars" mostly owned and run by the Mafia. The police regularly raided the gay bars. When they did so they treated the GLBT people roughly and called them perverts and numerous other derogatory names. The police were the representatives of the dominant culture telling the GLBT people that they were not normal and could never fit in.

In late June 1969 the police came to the Stonewall Inn for another raid. However, a large number of patrons, mostly "drag queens", decided that they were "not going to take it anymore". Instead of meekly and docilely going to the police wagons as usual, they unexpectedly turned on the police and attacked them, literally, with fingernails and high heels. The police were unprepared for this and on the defensive for a while until reinforcements arrived. There followed three nights of demonstrations (riots?) by GLBT people in Greenwich Village for civil rights and against police harassment.

Though previous events led up to this incident, it is this rebellion that caught the attention of GLBT people in the U.S.A and abroad. Worldwide, it is now considered the start of the fight for GLBT civil rights.

You might say that, in today's readings, Job, Paul and Jesus each had their own "little Stonewall." This is because in each reading, the person decided that he was not going to let others define who he is.

Job knew that he was not a great sinner. But his three closest friends, following the beliefs of the time, said that he must be a sinner and that he lost his family, health, and wealth as punishment for his sins. Today's 1st reading shows how depressed Job felt. But later he defines himself and says that he is not a sinner. Of course, no one believes him.

The people of Corinth expected Paul to accept payment for his ministry like all the other Apostles. When he refused their payment, they not only criticized him, but also began to question whether he was a real Apostle. But Paul did not let them define who he was. He made it clear that he was a real Apostle and had his own reasons for his actions. Since he did not seek the calling of Apostle like a type of work, he would not seek payment as for a job. Rather, the calling was a gift to him and he chose to freely give the ministry, striving to be all things to all people.

The people of Capernaum liked what they saw when Jesus cured so many people and spoke so well. They wanted him to hang around and be their holy man, healer and "guru". Simon (later called Peter), who was newly chosen by Jesus to be a special follower, liked the idea. Though not stated in the Gospel, it appears that he wanted Jesus to stay, not so that Jesus might do great ministry there, but because then he (Simon) could have prestige and perks as the right hand man of the most popular man in Peter's hometown. Jesus knew this would happen. That's why he left early in the morning before everyone was up. He declined the offer to be Capernaum's "guru". Instead, he followed his own agenda and brought the message to other towns and villages. Jesus did not let Simon or the people define him or his mission.

I think that is what God is telling us GLBT people today. God says, "Don't let other people define you. Though you grow up hearing many say that GLBT people are deviant, perverted, and sinful, etc., you know that you are not. There are many deviations, perversions and sins committed by both 'straights' and GLBT people. But I, your God, tell you that I made you in your mother's womb, and I do not make deviations, perversions or sins. Let ME define you. I call you my beloved, my cherished children."

Job, Paul, Jesus and others filled with God's life, have experienced many difficulties, pains and sorrows in being who we are. So do we GLBT people. Many people want to make us into something bad that they can control. But, ever since our brothers and sisters in the Stonewall Rebellion redefined themselves as persons of worth we must do the same.

Do what Jesus did in today's Gospel. Go away by yourself and pray. Get in touch with God. Listen. You will hear God tell you how s/he loves you, her/his GLBT son or daughter. Celebrate this in your heart. Then find others, GLBT and straight, to share yourself with, as Jesus did. When you are ready, and each will have their own right time, tell the world who you are: a child of God, a child of Stonewall, a beautiful GLB or T person of great worth "casting out devils."

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By Don Becker