

Common Ground Sought at the Table

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spiritual abuse." Every time I hear those ugly words assault my ears, I feel battered.

The truth is, though, I know that I am neither evil nor disordered per se in my fundamental sexual orientation and expression. Lesbians tell me the same thing about the experience of their sexual orientation and expression. More of us are mustering the courage to speak. We only wish that church officials would take us seriously and listen to our stories that must inform any honest teaching about human sexuality.

During his recent talk, Father Nugent quoted from a critique of "Always Our Children," addressed primarily to Catholic parents of gay sons and daughters. That critique, written by Ed Ingebretsen, a Jesuit priest and tenured English professor at Georgetown University, focuses on a contradiction in teaching on homosexuality — that curiously Catholic tension of affirming God's love revealed in gay people while simultaneously asserting a thoroughly shaming, guilt- and (in

some cases) violence-producing doctrine of vile, disordered homosexual expression.

But "we do not love those whom we do not touch. Nor do we care for those to whom we will not listen, regardless of what our words declare. To espouse love for a person while repudiating that person in subtle and not so subtle ways is the worst kind of emotional anorexia," said Nugent, quoting Father Ingebretsen.

Surely, homophobia manifested among the faithful — from silence to violence, with varying degrees of psychological and spiritual abuse and emotional anorexia in

between — cannot be denied. Don't you think that Rev. White and Rev. Falwell will demonstrate true Christian courage if they follow through on their agreement to discuss the tone and tenor of public discourse on homosexuality? I do.

That's why I am asking my regular dinner companion, a conservative Catholic activist, to request a similar gathering with our spiritual leader, Bernard Cardinal Law. (And I urge other gay and lesbian Catholics to request up-close time with their local bishops.) Such a dinner gathering of faithful lesbian and gay Catholics, our families, and friends and His Eminence is not only long over due, but also potentially healing.

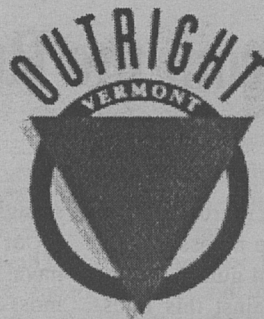
Such language, especially in a pastoral setting, is at best arcane and irrelevant.

At worst it's counter productive, insulting, and enraging.

And what a grace-filled opportunity for all to listen and learn, safely and respectfully.

Such an up-close and personal ministerial initiative demonstrates real Gospel values. After all, when Our Lord touched and healed people with his message of compassion and love, didn't he teach us most effectively by example? ▼

Chuck Colbert, who serves on the board of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, is a graduate student at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology.



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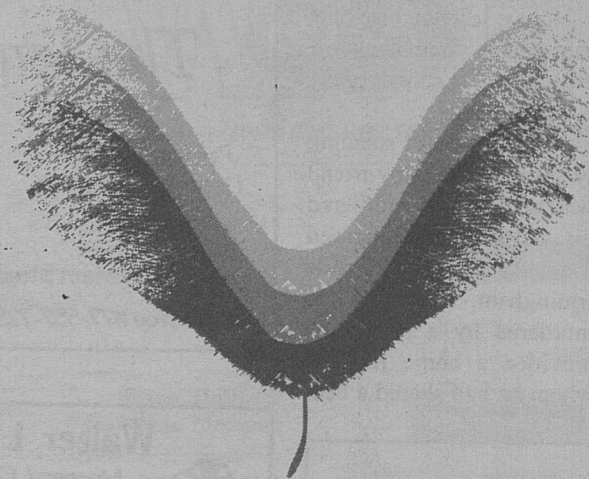
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