

Rather let our hearts go out to the outcast, those for whom society finds no welcome, and remember the words of the Lord: "As often as you did it to one of these, the least, you did it to me."



Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace.

May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, find rest in peace.

ST. VICTOR'S Catholic Church

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Rev. Msgr. George Parnassus
Pastor

Inquiries have been made about contributions for the chapel. From this point on, we would like to direct contributions to The Serra Project, residences maintained by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to care for people living with AIDS. Please send gifts to:

*The Serra Project
Seton Hall Suite 220
2131 W. Third St. Los Angeles, CA 90057
213 413 0306*



Thoughts on the Dedication of the AIDS Memorial Chapel at St. Victor's Church

*by the Most Rev. Stephen E. Blaire,
Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles
Palm Sunday, March 27, 1994*

"CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!" Today this chilling shout rings out in Catholic churches throughout the world, as we hear the gospel account of the Lord's passion. We will hear these same words in our churches again this week on Good Friday, as we remember the death of Christ and our part in it. The crowds of Jerusalem passed judgment on Jesus, pressuring the civil authorities to hand down a sentence of a humiliating death reserved for the most despicable of criminals.

How much have we learned in the 2,000 years since we passed judgment on the Son of God? Have we listened to the Lord's admonition to judge not, lest we be judged? Sadly, the AIDS epidemic has shown that we still have an ugly tendency to judge others. Too often, faced with the unimaginable suffering of those with HIV or AIDS, we have hardened our hearts, ascribed guilt to the sick, and neglected our Christian calling to compassion and fellowship for all, especially for those whom society has named outcast, unwanted, despised. When we jeer at a gay man, disown our gay children, fire a gay coworker, and say of a brave man facing a disease which should rouse us to solidarity and compassion: "he deserves it," we are once again pounding nails into the hands and feet of Christ and hoisting him up on the cross.

While it is certainly true that sickness and death entered the world because of original sin—resulting in our tendency not to do the right thing all the time—no particular ailment or problem is a divine punishment of any individual or community. Neither earthquake nor financial

trouble nor AIDS is dealt out by God to us as retribution for our individual sins; we know this because many evil people live healthy and comfortable lives. We need to ask ourselves if we have ever fallen to that spiritual pride which causes us to assume for ourselves God's right of judgment of our brother or sister, coldly ignoring pain and loneliness.

It has been noted that the collective experience of the gay community is that when no one else realizes that one is gay, a mother can tell. "A mother always knows," they say. It's a phenomenon seen time and time again. Our blessed mother Mary knows her gay and lesbian children, just as she knows all her children. She knows them and accepts them with the unconditional love of a mother. And when her gay children are treated as outcasts from society, abandoned and left alone to die, she feels for them as she felt at the foot of the cross, watching her only Son endure a lonely and humiliating death.

For this reason it is especially appropriate that the new chapel we dedicate today at St. Victor's Church in West Hollywood in memory of those who have died

of AIDS houses an image of our Blessed Mother, whom we honor as *Comforter of the Afflicted* in the Litany of Loreto. It is an ancient Catholic custom to pray for the dead. We join them in the hope of everlasting joy, when every tear shall be wiped away.

At the feet of Our Lady in the AIDS chapel lies a book. In it are written the names of loved ones whom we have lost to this epidemic, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Though we mourn their loss, this book is not a record of a dreary fate, but rather a sign of our hope and trust in the prophecy of Isaiah from the readings of the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. Isaiah foretold of Christ that he was sent "to comfort those who mourn and to give them for ashes a garland, for mourning the robe of gladness, for despondency, praise." It is a promise made to all the faithful, gay and straight, for we are all children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.

Let this be the lesson we learn from AIDS this Holy Week: that we honor our dead and care for the sick, and that we not cry out in judgement on one another, calling out again for Christ to be crucified in the person of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.