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WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

There was a time when fear drove people to religious belief. Hell packs considerably less clout than it did several decades ago and, if people at the beginning of the third millennium search for faith, it has less to do with apprehension over the future than with a troubling ennui over the emptiness of the present. As a culture we want more and we want it now. Hence, we fall easy prey to the vacuous promises of our material society. Eventually, some of us decide to look elsewhere for meaning and purpose. But to traditional religion? Not if we can help it! – at least not many of us. We are skeptical that the faith of our fathers offers anything more than superstition, bigotry and a defense of the status quo.

Such a judgment is not entirely off base. Much of American Christianity proffers a set of iron clad doctrines rather than a deep, transformative spirituality. Such religion easily misses the point and lapses into legalistic belief systems that lend considerable security to those wanting to belong to a club of the like minded. Jesus had real problems with people who thought that way. He promised, "The truth will set you free," knowing that truth is much deeper than the doctrines that attempt to contain it. Failure to recognize this leads to bondage rather than to freedom.

There is a tradition of profound spirituality in Christianity. It survives in spite of the stubborn resistance of many to grasp it. Inevitably this spirituality is rooted in a relationship to God based on prayer. Prayer is as diverse as the people who pray and has no formula. While it is possible to pray with and without words, the only constant is that true prayer comes from the heart and leads to God. You begin wherever you are and over years your prayer life grows.

At first prayer feels like work and seems like an exercise in futility. With practice a prayerful habit takes root and prayer becomes as natural as breathing. Indeed, prayer is the breath of the spiritual life. Give it a try! It might just be the kick start you need for awakening to the true meaning of your life.

A Message from the Anawim Community
A Community of Gay Men Seeking to Follow Jesus
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NATIONAL *news*

SAN FRANCISCO TREAT

City makes history by granting marriage licenses to same-sex couples

by Bob Roehr

Phyllis Lyon (left) and Del Martin became the first same-sex couple officially married in the United States on Feb. 12, just two days before their 51st anniversary

This has been a historically exhilarating time for same-sex marriage. The Massachusetts Legislature deadlocked over a state constitutional amendment to ban it, while the floodgates opened, albeit perhaps temporarily, for thousands to wed in San Francisco's City Hall.

Demonstrators on both sides of the issue rallied outside the Massachusetts Statehouse as a joint session of the Legislature met Feb. 11 to consider amending the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. In a surprise move at the start of the constitutional convention, House Speaker Thomas M. Finneran, a Democrat, offered an amendment to ban same-sex marriage but allow the Legislature to create civil unions at some later date.

The proposal had the support of Republican Gov. Mitt Romney. But the tactic was seen as a power grab by Finneran and perhaps contributed to its failing by the narrowest of margins, 100-98.

That led to a version by the Senate's leaders, Democrat Robert E. Travaglini and Republican Brian P. Lees, that would still ban same-sex marriage but authorize civil unions. When it failed by a vote of 104-94, the legislators adjourned for the night.

Back the next day, openly gay Democratic state Sen. Jarrett T. Barrios told the convention of the difficulty he had when taking his sick 7-year-old adopted son to the hospital emergency room. He said, "If this were to pass, I would be denied basic human rights that most of you don't even know that you have."

A motion to adjourn by pro-gay Republican state Rep. Shaun P. Kelly failed 153-44. When it looked like a compromise amendment was being pulled together that might pass, a filibuster by pro-gay forces for the last hour and a half of the session prevented a vote, and the convention adjourned at midnight.

A healthy majority of the legislators clearly remain uncomfortable with the prospect of allowing gay men and lesbians to marry, but no one has been able to take that sentiment and cobble together enough votes to alter the constitution. Thus, through its inability to change the situation, the legislators have conceded to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, which found that the constitution requires all citizens of the Bay State to be treated equally when it comes to marriage.

The Boston Globe editorialized, "There is a plain and powerful reason that legislators at the constitutional convention had such difficulty reaching compromise on an amendment that would ban gay marriage: Civil rights cannot be compromised."

Arline Isaacson, co-chairwoman of the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus, said: "We have managed so far to dodge several bullets. We've made it through one more day." The legislators return to again consider amending the constitution March 11.

"Regardless of what comes out of the process, the fact that we have a process that involves the elected representatives of the people is a very laudable thing," Romney told the *Globe*. It is possible that this represents a softening of the charge by him and others that "activist judges" are imposing same-sex marriage upon the state.

Meanwhile, a plan was quietly being put together in San Francisco. Newly elected

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