

A Legacy of Dissent . . .

Dissent Has Its Dark Side

By PAUL LIKOUDIS

Rochester, N.Y., Bishop Matthew Clark's dissent-riddled chancery got rattled in 2006.

Clark's longtime chief financial officer, Jim Rinefierd, announced his "coming out," left his wife, Karen, and their two children, ages 18 and 21, and moved to Washington, D.C., where he landed a job as vice president of finance and operations for the Human Rights Campaign, a \$45 million-a-year gay agitprop organization.

Rinefierd was profiled by D.C.'s major homosexual newspaper, *The Washington Blade*, on January 12, 2012, with a photograph of him dressed in his leathers.

The story by Joey DiGuglielmo opened:

"Jim Rinefierd, like many D.C. gays, is gearing up for Mid-Atlantic Leather [MAL] Weekend, an annual event that draws enthusiasts from all over the country to the District each January.

"The event has special significance for him — when he arrived here in January 2007 he found his apartment was next door to the host hotel — the Washington Plaza in Thomas Circle (MAL is at the Hyatt on Capitol Hill now). Chicago's International Mr. Leather event was where he came out in May 2006.

"The 57-year-old Liverpool, N.Y., native — Mr. Capital Pride Leather 2008, by the way — lived in Rochester, N.Y., for 34 years before starting a new life in Washington."

Rinefierd told the *Blade*: "I came out in 2006 at age 52. The hardest people to tell were my ex-wife and our two sons (then 18 and 21) for I knew I was setting something in motion that was going to change our lives forever and I feared I would lose everyone and everything in my life. Fast forward five-and-a-half years and I'm a fortunate man — I've lost no one. My life is full of family and friends including my ex-wife and sons. I'm indebted to my ex-wife because people took their cue from her. She is a remarkable and loving woman who has taught me much about the power of compassion and love and I'm fortunate that she is a part of my life."

He also told the *Blade* that he is looking forward to marrying his partner, and he said he is proud of his Catholic faith.

"I'm a Catholic. I believe in God and God's presence in the world and my life — especially as I came to accept who I am. I believe that I am the person God made me and helps me to be."

Jim Rinefierd's wife, Karen, worked for Bishop Clark as his director of Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium (PPNM), which in 2006 was in the midst of a second round of church closings. She had to take six months off from her work "to take care of something."

"[L]et's try to fathom this puzzle," wrote Diane Harris in her *It Really Matters* newsletter (July 2010). Harris was working with Karen Rinefierd in a church closing/consolidation process in Naples, south of Rochester, at the time.

"The Rochester bishop," wrote Harris, "has said much that is perceived as advocating acceptance of gays and lesbians, yet when something happens right inside the chancery, affecting the person at the center of Finance and a person who is a planning coordinator bragging about closing churches, why is it treated like a covered-up story?"

Harris further commented, in a posting at the CleansingFire web site, which has an extensive dossier on Clark:

"Anyway, some of the probing behind writing the newsletter turned up Karen Rinefierd as a key player. She was the diocesan coordinator who made such a mess of things in OLOL [Our Lady of the Lakes in Naples] (with a lot of help from Fr. Robert Ring.) It filled in some blanks for me. Fr. Ring had asked me to chair a survey committee in 2005 to find out what would be helpful in the planning process. I was willing to do so, even though it was an enormous effort. Slowly, over a period of time, and 340,000 data points later, it came out that we were just marking time in the PPNM . . . and he would eventually ignore all the results. It was just a filler while Karen Rinefierd took a hiatus (about 6 months) to straighten out her marriage situation with the CFO of DoR [Diocese of Rochester].

"Obviously I felt used and abused, seeming to have just been a cover story for Karen's personal problems; i.e. 'We're taking a break from planning so we can do a survey.' Then when Karen was ready to come back, there was no interest in what the 418 survey respondents actually said. . . . I did not know at the time why Karen was out for 6 months, just that she 'had to take care of something.' I thought it was a personal health issue. Later I learned what had happened."

Karen Rinefierd has been involved in two major pro-homosexual organizations connected to the Diocese of Rochester, the Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry (CGLFM), founded by Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata with Clark's blessing, and Fortunate Families (FF), a spin-off from the latter.

The Lopatas have long connections with New Ways Ministry, Dignity/USA, and are among the 28 cofounders of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries.

In September 1997, Karen Rinefierd was Bishop Clark's liaison to Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry and attempted to institute a diocesan-wide "Solidarity Sunday" in conjunction with National Coming Out Day, an event sponsored by Dignity/USA on the first Sunday in October.

In a letter to all pastors in the diocese, encouraging them to participate in the program, she explained that the purpose of Solidarity Sunday is to "raise awareness of discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. It asks people to pray for an end to discrimination and violence, to pledge to stop verbal and physical gay bashing, and to wear a rainbow ribbon in solidarity with our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered brothers and sisters who, with us, are God's beloved children.

"The Solidarity Sunday project was started by Dignity/USA in 1995. . . . Last year, over 100,000 persons participated in the project. In one local parish, over 340 parishioners took ribbons and cards proclaiming their caring and desire for justice."

In part due to publicity in *The Wanderer* two weeks before the scheduled event, Clark had to admit that the Solidarity Sunday event had raised eyebrows at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose prefect was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

At an October 22 press conference convoked to launch the diocese's annual Thanksgiving Appeal, Clark acknowledged, according to a *Catholic Courier* report by Kathleen Schwar, that "he had called Pro-Nuncio Agostino Cacciavillan in Washington, D.C., [because of concerns conveyed by [John] Cardinal O'Connor of New York. That September 24 talk with Archbishop Cacciavillan was 'thoroughly cordial and positive,' he said. 'I wasn't on the carpet.'

"The recent inquiries," Schwar continued, "came apparently in response to letters sent Vatican authorities indicating that 'somehow we were departing from where we ought to be in terms of Catholic teaching,' the bishop said. The questions focused only on Solidarity Sunday, he said. . . .

"The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had passed along three major concerns, Bishop Clark noted: the ribbon might be seen as endorsing what was termed the 'gay liberation agenda'; the fact that Solidarity Sunday was begun by Dignity/USA . . . and the prayer. . . .

"[Clark] noted that those who have objected so vocally to the diocese's outreach efforts constitute a small number of people.

"I think folks who protest so strongly about pastoral outreach have not as yet absorbed what has been emerging in official teaching of the Church."

"A Pretty Strong Indictment"

From September 17-20, 1998, the Diocese of Rochester hosted the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries, with some 250 homosexual advocates from 58 dioceses "brainstorming" to devise strategies to promote their agenda.

The many "interactive" seminars and workshops were revealing on several levels. Not only did they provide chancery apparatus such as Sr. Kay Ryan, family life director for the Diocese of Albany, or Karen Rinefierd, then head of adult education for the Diocese of Rochester, to both educate and learn from participants, but these seminars were forums where Church ministers candidly spoke of their dissent and dissatisfaction with Church teaching and leadership.

One participant at the conference, Rochester-area Catholic Libby Ford, exhorted her peers with children in Catholic schools or religion programs to insist children receive "no negative messages" about homosexuality.

Among the line-up of speakers at this NACDLGM conference were three men who illustrate the advance of the homosexual agenda in the Diocese of Rochester: Ex-priest Marvin Mich, Fr. Robert J. Kennedy, then professor of liturgy at St. Bernard's Institute, and Monroe County Family Court Judge Anthony Sciolino, now retired.

Mich, with degrees from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's St. Francis Seminary and the Alphonsonian (Lateran University) in Rome, spoke of the work he has done for Catholic Charities, in both Rochester and nationally, in persuading Catholic Charities staffs to understand the importance of following state nondiscrimination laws, rather than Church teaching, in the placement of adoptees in the homes of same-sex couples.

His presentation consisted of a critique of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1992 *Some Considerations*...letter on homosexuality, which was sent to all the bishops of North America, and which called on the bishops to oppose special rights legislation for homosexuals, then making progress in most state legislatures.

Mich repeatedly dismissed this letter as a "memo" and an "internal memo" that "was never meant

to go public," and said it was a statement which "concluded that discrimination is justified because it would endanger the heterosexual family. . . .

"I have some criticisms of this document. If you don't buy mine, there's others," he cracked.

His main objections to the document, he said, were: "The people who put the memo together have not followed thoroughly our Roman Catholic moral tradition," "have not used resources adequately," and are "kind of stepping around the inside of our moral tradition to defend the sexual ethic as they understand it. . . .

"That's a pretty strong indictment," Mich continued. The CDF document, he maintained, "uses natural law in a fixed way. It views sexuality in terms of the animal world, pro-creation. . . . When we look at peace and economics, we look at natural law in a different way. We stress more the order of reason, that humanity has the gift of reason. And we trust more in human experience and reason.

"As a moral theologian, I step back and say: Why do we have two systems? Why are there two different yardsticks? This is understandable from a medieval perspective . . . but the order of reason should predominate."

Judge Sciolino, ordained a deacon by Clark, was the first family court judge in New York to grant adoption rights to an artificially inseminated lesbian and her partner. He was recently appointed to the board of Clark's theologate, St. Bernard's Institute.

He mentioned that he went "through the process of evaluating the '92 [CDF] letter" with Mich.

Since his groundbreaking judicial decision on homosexual adoption, Sciolino said, "we've gone from something heroic to a hummer. It's accepted. That's how it goes in Church and society." The progress has been so rapid, he said, that in November (1998), Rochester would host a conference on adoption, with one presentation on "Lesbian Perspectives" in adoptions.

"Same-sex adoption is now routine in New York," he said, "so routine that one judge says there is no need to treat homosexual couples and heterosexuals separately; that there is no need to do anything out of the ordinary."

Fr. Robert J. Kennedy, editor of "Reconciling Embrace: Foundations for the Future of Sacramental Reconciliation" (Liturgy Training Publications), and a team member of the Re-Membering Church Institute sponsored by the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, spoke on "Finding Ways to Reconciliation."

At one point in his talk, he asked: "Is the Church on the side of healthy, human integration? Do we promote in all of our efforts — religious education, liturgical celebrations, pastoral ministry in all its forms — do we promote the healthy development of the human person?"

The answer, presumably, for both Kennedy and his audience, was no.

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