

Dignity Boston is a progressive and inclusive Catholic community for people of all sexual orientations, genders and gender identities, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, our family, friends and supporters. All are welcome.

Feast of LGBTQI PRIDE Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

I first need to acknowledge the holiness of this day, our homecoming to in-person, indoor worship, the first such occasion in well over two years.

I also want us to take a moment to acknowledge all who are present today including those who have joined us for the first time; as well as all those who are not physically present yet are part of our history—those who have gone before us, those who were unable to attend today for any reason, and those who have yet to join our community.

I want to also acknowledge the brokenness in our world today:

- the COVID-19 pandemic and all of its ongoing effects
- the mental and behavioral health crisis
- the political deadlock in our country and the struggle to find common ground
- dissent within our own LGBTQI+ community
- the implications of impending Supreme Court decisions on our community and others
- the crises of homelessness, economic inequality, food insecurity, addiction
- anti-LGBTQI discrimination and violence, including anti-LGBTQI legislation
- senseless gun violence and mass shootings
- institutional racism, anti-immigrant and anti-Asian sentiment, anti-semitism, and white supremacy
- inequality in pay and compensation based on gender and race
- unrest in the Middle East
- the Russian invasion and war in Ukraine
- and the list goes on.

I'm going to leave this brokenness for the next few minutes, but we'll come back to it at the end.

For my sources of inspiration today, I have used the readings of the solemnity of the Holy Trinity, children's books, and an essay written by Peggy Hayes for Boston Spirit magazine [May/June 2022 issue].

I love Peggy's essay because it summarizes beautifully what our Dignity Boston community is all about:

'Dignity'

"What Pride means to me is Dignity Boston (LGBTQI Catholics) making it to our 50th year with joy, determination, hard work, hope and pride. The 50th anniversary of our founding is in December 2022.

"We have marched in every Boston Pride, we have withstood the threats and condemnation by Catholic Church officials, we have opened our doors every week to anyone who would like to join us, since 1972 (the last two years we have been online) for liturgy and socializing.

"Dignity Boston is home for me—where I see my friends who have become my family. We celebrate marriages, mourn together at funerals, and baptize children. We have fun together—socials (including dozens of online socials), dances, variety shows, holiday dinners and potlucks and lots and lots of pizza and sheet cake in the church hall.

"We work together to advocate for our community, for the right to marry when the Catholic church opposed it so vehemently, for the rights of LGBTQI foster and adoptive parents, and to protect transgender kids and adults from violence and discrimination. We've participated in every Boston AIDS Walk, have had a team riding and raising money in Harbor to the Bay fundraising ride for AIDS organizations for more than a decade and we co-founded, co-sponsor and support the Friday Night Support meals program at the Arlington Street Church. Every month at liturgy we "pass the basket" a second time and give what is collected to organizations doing good work in the community, from protecting LGBTQI youth and elders to disaster relief, hunger relief and refugee assistance.

"Mostly we support each other, laugh and cry together, and try our best to make everyone who walks through our door feel welcome."

Thank you, Peggy!

In today's first reading from Proverbs, Wisdom speaks to us:

"Our God gave birth to me at the beginning, before the first acts of creation...

[When the foundation of the earth was laid out, I was the skilled artisan standing next to the Almighty.]

I was God's delight day after day, rejoicing at being in God's presence continually, Rejoicing in the whole world and delighting in humankind."

In today's Holy Gospel reading from John, we hear of the importance of truth:

Jesus said to the disciples:

When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all truth...

[Everything that Our God has belongs to me. This is why I said that the Spirit will take what is mine and reveal it to you.]

And finally, in Paul's letter to the Romans, we hear the importance of our faith:

...since we have been made right in God's sight by our faith, we are at peace with God through our Savior Jesus Christ. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us to the grace in which we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to the day on which we will become all that God has intended.

For the next passage, I prefer to change the word "affliction" to "challenge"

"That we even rejoice in our *challenges*!

We know that *challenge* produces perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and character, hope. And such a hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

As individuals and as a community, we have known *challenge*, through which we have encountered character and hope.

So what does the solemnity of the Holy Trinity have to do with today's Feast of Pentecost?

I won't even try to give an exegesis or interpretation of the Trinity, only to say, that in my simple frame of reference, the Trinity reflects and attempts to reconcile the profound complexity and richness of God.

That no one, two, or even three images are sufficient to reveal the abundance of God.
(repeat for emphasis)

And of course, from Genesis: the human family was created in God's likeness:

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in Our image, after Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.'

"Humankind was created in God's image; in the divine image God created them: all genders, God created them.

...

"And so it was. God looked at all of this creation, and proclaimed it good — very good."

Just as no one image of God is sufficient to represent the abundance of God, the human family is rich in our diversity. No one image of family is sufficient to reflect the abundance and richness of the human family.

As I meditated humbly over the last several weeks about what I might say today, I found amazing images, words, and characters in books written for children. I found great inspiration in these books, and I thought I would share some of these with you today.

[Images from children's books:]

Strong is the story of the first and only openly gay professional strongman in the world. These are the ones who lift atlas stones, toss kegs, and flip tips, and pull fire trucks. Rob Kearney, writes:

“There were many times in my life when unkind words hurt me or I thought I would never be a professional strongman. I even started to believe I shouldn't be myself or couldn't succeed. But I followed my passion, overcame doubt, and rose above bullies by being true to myself and following my heart. Today, I hope I can inspire other young athletes to live by my motto: ‘Train to be the person they said you would never become.’ ”

[**Strong**, written by Rob Kearney & Eric Rosswood, illustrated by Nidhi Chanani, Little, Brown and Company, New York, Boston 2022]

In the book, **Julián Is A Mermaid**, little Julián is riding on the subway with his abuela, his grandmother, and they see three women on the subway, and Julián is entranced by their beautiful hair, their swishy, shimmering mermaid gowns, and their total confidence. When Julián goes home, he decides he wants to be a mermaid and starts dressing up. When he shares this information with his grandmother, rather than scolding, discouraging, distracting, or punishing Julián, she acknowledges, affirms, and encourages him and together they go to a gathering of mermaids.

[**Julián Is A Mermaid**, written and illustrated by Jessica Love, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA 2018]

It Feels Good to Be Yourself, A Book About Gender Identity, is a beautifully written and illustrated book that children (and adults) can understand:

“You might feel like a boy. You might feel like a girl. You might feel like both boy and girl—or like neither. You might feel like your gender changes from day to day or from year to year. You might feel that none of these words describes you perfectly. You might not be sure yet. Maybe you're still figuring it out.

“Your feelings about your gender are real. Listen to your heart.

“No matter what your gender identity is, you are okay exactly the way you are. And you are loved.

“It feels good to be YOURSELF, doesn't it?”

[It Feels Good To Be Yourself, A Book About Gender Identity, written by Theresa Thorn, illustrated by Noah Grigni, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2019]

What Are Your Words? A Book About Pronouns

This book is not just about pronouns about other words that help to describe who we are.

It takes Ari awhile to find the right words, but by the end of the book they say this:

“Hi there! I haven’t met you yet.

My name is Ari. My words are *impatient, bouncy, excited, nervous, colorful, and hopeful*. And today my pronouns are *they and them*.”

My words are gay, Asian, physician, singer, musician, meticulous, grandson of immigrants, friend, worrier, and warrior.

And my pronouns are he and him.

What are your Words, Pronouns, and Images?

[A Book About Pronouns, What Are Your Words?, written by Katherine Locke, illustrated by Anne Passchier, Little, Brown and Company New York, Boston, 2021]

I can’t imagine how different it would be for us today, if these books were around when we were growing up. These books give me hope; they remind me that we have allies that make our work, God’s work, a little easier. These books remind me that today’s children will one day become our greatest allies in this journey.

For my last bit of inspiration, this week Jon and I went to see an exhibit at the Boston Children’s Museum, and I highly recommend that you go see it if you can (it will be there until July 24, 2022). The exhibit is called “A Portrait Project by Noah Grigni: Protect Trans Dreams.”

Noah, a trans artist, illustrated the book “It Feels Good To Be Yourself.” For the Portrait exhibit, “Noah (they) spoke with seven trans children from across New England between the ages of 6 and 13. They interviewed these children about their dreams and painted portraits illustrating the ideas and scenes they described. The paintings show each child on their own terms, in the fantasies they imagined. Every child is shown with a circle, similar to a halo, around their head.” They are beautiful and iconic. “The halos remind us that the dreams of trans children—just like the dreams of all children—are sacred. Their dreams deserve to be celebrated and protected.”

Today we celebrate the diversity of God, and the diversity of the human family.

And in our rainbow of diversity, we answer God’s call:

To welcome all the brokenhearted, all who suffer violence and long for safety and peace, all who are forgotten, excluded, and dignity denied

To invite the stranger as our guest
To speak out against injustice, fear, and ignorance
To fulfill God's dreams for us, conceived before creation.
To work for justice, bringing hope, charity, and peace...

...which brings us back to the brokenness of the world in which we live.

On this feast of Holy Pride (and the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity), we are called to recommit ourselves to the hard work of justice--

I've always found myself drawn to the Jewish principle of "tikkun olam" which is Hebrew for "world repair," "to repair the world." "Tikkun olam" has come to connote social action and the pursuit of social justice.

The ancient phrase "tikkun olam" remains connected with human responsibility for fixing what is wrong with the world and is tightly connected to God's creation.

To repair the world is no easy task, but I do believe, that Dignity Boston is called as a community to continue to be warriors of justice.

In closing, and in the spirit of the Trinity, I offer a tripartite prescription or recipe for us to take with us as warriors for justice:

- 1) #1 is Self-care, whether through prayer, or meditation, or exercise, or nature; take care of your self because the work of tikkun olam, to repair what is broken in the world, the work of the justice warrior is hard.
- 2) #2 is Community: connect to this Dignity Boston community and to other communities that give you strength. Give and support these communities and help to sustain them; but also remember to take what and when YOU need; and finally,
- 3) And #3, Trust in God, our Creator, our Redeemer, and the Spirit—have faith in the Wisdom and Truth that was birthed by God before the first acts of creation. Here we may find the hope, strength, and courage to continue the work of justice, in this our 50th year, and beyond.

Happy Pride!