



SOULFORCE: WHY WE VIGIL ACROSS THE NATION OUTSIDE LOCAL CATHOLIC CHANCERIES ON NOVEMBER 9, 2004

We vigil because the Roman Catholic Church has now taken the lead as one of the main opponents of equal civil rights for lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, not only in this country, but throughout the world. Just this last July, the Vatican refused to listen to pleas of Chicago and Rochester priests when it cited scripture and first century writers to describe LGBT persons as "intrinsically disordered" and demanded that governments deny equal rights to all its citizens. Is the Vatican seriously trying to return us to the days when scientific data was considered heresy? Aren't there more important moral questions to be considering, such as the protection of God's children to whom they have been entrusted?

We vigil to call our bishops back to a prophetic voice for justice. We remind them of the courage of Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran bishop named to the post as someone who would support the status quo of El Salvador, and not rock the boat. But Romero heard the cries of the outcasts and refused to stay silent in the face of injustice. Twenty-five years ago, Romero offered his life for his people. We remember too, the radical witness of Dorothy Day who committed her life to the daily reality of God's justice and to nonviolence, by crying in the wilderness against all forms of violence against persons - especially the marginalized, the poor and the outcast. Romero and Dorothy Day are just two of many who have been transformed, turning their lives upside down.

We sincerely believe that most American Bishops know the truth of the sanctity of the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. They know the truth because they have experienced daily contact with LGBT faithful who have committed their lives to doing God's work. In their families and in their chanceries they have seen our witness but they are afraid to speak out against the toxic rhetoric. Their fears and their ambitions have kept them imprisoned and silent; and that silence is deadly. We call down the power of the Holy Spirit to transform their fear and temerity into courage and prophesy.

We agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., a prophet in his own time, who in his letter from a Birmingham Jail some 40 years ago, said, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people."

Bishops, we implore you, to stand up and speak the truth! Tell the truth, not only because the truth is in your hearts, or simply to stop the unjust discrimination and hatred committed toward LGBTs, but for your own soul - free yourself from your fears and ambitions, reclaim your calling - **SPEAK OUT THE TRUTH - it is long past time.**

In the Spirit of Justice and Nonviolence,

The People of Soulforce

Soulforce is a national interfaith movement committed to ending spiritual violence perpetuated by religious policies and teachings against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals. We teach and employ the nonviolent principles of Gandhi and King to the liberation of sexual and gender minorities.
www.soulforce.org