



Jesus Talks With A Gay Man

1 In late July, the Metro Chicago Synod heard that Jesus was attracting more first-time visitors and baptizing more adults than any other ELCA pastor in the city. 2 although in fact it was not really Jesus who had baptized them, but his irregularly-commissioned staff of unordained lay ministers. 3 Now when Jesus learned of this, he left the seminary community in Hyde Park and went back once more toward the ELCA headquarters on Higgins Road.

4 Now to get there, he had to go through an area just north of downtown called Boystown. 5 So he came to a part of Boystown called Northhalsted, not far from the plot of ground where Mayor Daley had ordained that the Chicago Cubs should play baseball. 6 Cub's Stadium was near there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey on the Red Line, sat down at a sidewalk café table outside the bar called Hydrate. It was just about lunch-time, and though the rainbow flags were fluttering in the breeze and the music inside the bar was pumping, there weren't many people around (because it's often hot and miserable outside, at mid-day in late July, in Chicago).

7 A waiter came to the table, wearing a bright pink "His+His" t-shirt and a "Silence=Death" armband, and raised one eyebrow at the man seated at the table in front of him in the "Come Follow Me" t-shirt. Jesus said to him, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (All the lay ministers had gone down the street to pick up Subway sandwiches for the rest of the journey.)

9 The gay man said to him, "Hey...you tell me. After all, you appear to be a straight Christian, and I'm a gay man. Let's face it - we don't get many religious folks in *Boystown*, let alone places like *this*. And I'm not only a gay man, but I'm a Muslim gay man. So where does a guy like you get off asking someone like me for a drink?" (For Christians do not associate with gays, nor with Muslims if they can help it.)

10 Jesus answered him, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Hey, mister," the gay man said, "I'm the waiter here. I don't see you with an order pad or a serving tray, and it's tough for customers to even get close to our *fountain-drink station*, let alone our bar. So how are you going to get anything for me to drink, let alone *living water*? Where can you get this living water?"

12 Are you somehow greater than the folks who own this place, who let us drink have free water and soda (and snitch the occasional mixed drink) whenever we want?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks your water, or your soda, or your beer will get thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

15 The gay man said to him, "Yeah? Mister...you know what, I have no idea who you really are, or even what the heck you're

talking about. But you're the first Christian man in 20 years that hasn't spit on me, or called me 'an abomination' to my face. Somehow, I think I want some of what you're offering. Give me some of this water you keep talking about, so I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to get something to drink."

16 Jesus told the man, "OK - just call your wife and come back here, and we'll talk."

17 "Who are you *kidding*?" the gay man said. "Don't you know where you *are*? You're in *Boystown*, for crujin' out loud. I don't have a wife, or a girlfriend. Heck, right now I don't even have a *boyfriend*," he replied.

Jesus said to her, "You're right when you say you have no boyfriend. The fact is, you've had *five* boyfriends, and the guy you're living with now isn't even your *boyfriend*. He's just a guy you picked up in the club - some guy who doesn't even know your real last name."

19 Whoah, buddy," the gay man said, "that's pretty intense! How'd you know that about me?" Jesus was silent. "OK...I get it. Maybe you're one of those folks who can see right through people - maybe one of those guys with 'second sight.' Maybe you're one of those folks who 'have the Spirit,' like those televangelists say. 20 I don't know anything about that. My family - my people (the ones who are observant, anyway) - think that you have to pray five times a day to Allah to get that kind of power. The rest of the people I know don't even bother with that spiritual mumbo-jumbo...they just think you have to work out a lot, look good, live fast, die hard and leave a good-looking corpse. And all the *Christians* I've met think that I have to pray their way, and start living life their way, or I'm 'going to hell.' Either way, my day-to-day life is so empty, I'm not convinced that I'm not already *in* hell. What's a guy supposed to believe?"

21 Jesus said, "Believe me, my friend, a time is coming when you won't worship God in Mecca, or in the gym, or in the club, or in a church sanctuary. 22 You and your friends worship what you think you know, but do not know. Christians worship what they do know, for salvation is promised in Scripture. 23 Yet a time is coming - and has *now come* - when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

25 The gay man said, "I know that the church folks say that their Savior is coming. Maybe when he finally gets here, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus declared, "Then wait no longer. I'm the one they're waiting for."

The Irregularly-Commissioned Lay Ministers Rejoin Jesus

27 Just then the lay ministers returned and were more than a little surprised to find Jesus apparently talking with a gay man - one who appeared to be Middle-Eastern in origin, to boot. But no one asked, "What do you want?"

or "Why are you talking with *him*?"

28 Then, leaving his tray and his order pad behind at the table, the gay man went back to the bar, and even next door to the gym and to the other clubs, and said to the people, 29 "You gotta come and *see* this... come see a guy who told me everything I ever did, and didn't run away or act disgusted. Could this possibly be 'the Christ' all those religious folks keep talking about?" 30 People came out of the gym, and out of the bars and clubs, and made their way toward him.

31 Meanwhile the lay ministers (the ones who considered themselves Jesus' disciples) kept saying, "Hey, *padré*, you may walk on water, but come on - even *Michael Jordan*'s gotta eat *something*." 32 But Jesus said to them, "I have a source of energy that you know nothing about."

33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Did someone slip him some Mrs. Field's cookies while we weren't looking?"

Many Gays and Lesbians Believe

39 Many of the gays and lesbians who gathered from all around Boystown believed in Jesus because of what the waiter said: "You gotta come and see this... come see a guy who told me everything I ever did, and didn't run away or act disgusted." 40 So when the people of that area - gay men, lesbians, bisexuals (even people in civil unions from Vermont and Episcopalians visiting from New Hampshire) came to him, they urged Jesus to stay with them. So rather than continuing the ride out to Higgins Road, the irregularly consecrated lay ministers found some rooms at a nearby bed-&-breakfast, and he stayed in Boystown - amidst the people with whom most Christians would not associate - for two days. 41 And because of what Jesus spoke to the men and women there, many more became believers.

42 The people who heard Jesus said to the gay man who first encountered him, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."