REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION

I, Cynthia Manning, Certified Shorthand Reporter, in and for the State of California, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing witness was by me duly sworn; that the deposition was then taken before me at the time and place herein set forth; that the testimony and proceedings were reported stenographically by me and later transcribed into typewriting under my direction; that the foregoing is a true record of the testimony and proceedings taken at that time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my name this ______ day of ________, 2005.

Cynthia Manning, CSR No. 7645
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Formerly, an openly gay orientation would not have been tolerated in our seminary system. In this intolerant environment they understandably had to stay in the closet. Now many were convinced that psychological and spiritual recovery required not only that they openly acknowledge their sexual orientation but that they explore every aspect of that life. For some that might even include participating in gay sex.

But as Franciscans solemnly committed to celibacy, this path of sexual exploration was theoretically closed to them. We never managed to formulate a policy about this serious issue. The reality was that no gay student was ever excluded from advancement to the priesthood, nor were gay priests in any way restricted.

*In a television interview with Carl Stern in October, 1972, Abraham J. Heschel said that he would rather go to Auschwitz than give up his religion. But he also shared his belief that “…religious pluralism is the will of God.”*

Perhaps the most moving experience at the time was the urgent request of a friend, a former priest (he had come out a year before), that I say a funeral Mass for his gay lover who had died of an accidental drug overdose. The couple had been very active in gay and lesbian politics in San Francisco and had made a large number of friends. A Catholic pastor, when apprised of the situation, said that while he would allow the Mass to be offered in his church he would not himself preside.

When invited to offer Mass in his church, I accepted immediately. My only concern was what to say on such an occasion. I learned from friends of theirs that the lover suffered severe depression, for which he was being medicated. Despite this burden, they were a loving and committed couple who found their relationship fulfilling.

The sexual expression of their love, whatever homophobes might say to the contrary, drew them close to one another and to God. Courage to come out and take pride in their identity came from their mutual support—clear evidence, the former priest maintained, that God was in their love. They prayed together, went to Mass together, and looked forward to a long life together.