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Happy Holidays!!



sappho psalm

by Toni J.P. Pizanie
E-mail: Psalmwrite@aol.com

Merry Christmas

It's that special season of the year when parties abound and hearts are filled with joy and generosity. With the loss of my family, I had stopped celebrating with my former delight and gratitude. This year, however, I have been moved by Santa Trahan. He and Ray Bates raided my attic and brought down everything Christmas that has been stored and collected for over twenty years. He also brought me a new wreath for the front door even though there were three others in the attic and Poinsettias to brighten my attitude.

Ray put the tree up and wrapped it with lights. He then turned and said it was time for him to leave and I was instructed to complete the decorations. I sorted the dolls that Mom had made years ago and the bows and the other handmade ornaments. Two hours later, I was satisfied that the tree was as close to perfect as I could get it without Randy and Ray shouting out instructions or orders.

It was time to invite people over to see my achievement. Ray was on his way to Mesa, AZ to visit with Rex and Nicholas Romans so disappointedly I scratched him off my list. Randy was next. And, of course, I called Julie Thompson and my cousin-in-law Arvilla. You've got to have a holiday cocktail party, Arvilla insisted, now that the house looks so festive.

I'm trying to work that plan out now. It has been so long since I've had a holiday party that I'm not sure what to do first. While most people start with a guest list, I was concerned about what to serve. I am neither a cook nor do I do fancy party snacks. I realized it was time to talk to Matti and Randy. Matti did all the great snacks for the Day of Remembrance at the Community Center. Randy makes the best shrimp dip I have ever tasted and has the largest, most unusual collection of serving pieces in Gay existence.

Ah, at last, I am filled with Christmas spirit. It feels good. And it is time to make plans to enjoy all that our Community has to offer. Let's see there is 12/12 at the Community Center and the Gay Men's' Chorus. There are private parties and **Christmas with the Crawford's** is a must see. PFLAG is having their annual Christmas Party/Meeting. Wow, dates are running short for planning another party.

I hope to see all my readers during the holidays to wish you a merry, merry with lots of peace and good health and happiness in person. If I miss some of you, please know that I am grateful and very happy to be a small part of your holiday season.

Holiday Movies

I am recommending two movies that will be showing by the time this issue comes out. First is **Milk** and the second is **Seven Pounds**. I was asked to screen several others but they didn't satisfy my fancy. Both the above mentioned films are serious and dramatic. There is nothing seasonal about either.

Milk is the story about the life and death of Harvey Milk, the first openly Gay politician in America. He was gunned down in his City Hall office by a homophobic San Francisco Board of Supervisors member who he tried to befriend and educate.

The importance of the film is the fight for equality and the unity of the Gay community to demand change. A demand that was successful. It strongly brought to my mind how the New Orleans Gay community has failed to



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come together for our openly Gay candidates. But that is a different rant for another time.

There are also lots of fun shots of drugs, sex and Puccini opera. If you never visited the Castro which is very changed today, this is your chance at a first hand view of Gayland in the 1970s.

I am not a fan of Sean Penn. I don't like the sameness of his portrayals of the characters he has chosen. I find him physically unpleasant and limited. He still did not impress me as the lead in **Milk** but the story was of such great value that I was able to ignore Penn's manic performance.

A real annoyance for me was that Gay organizations and groups were invited to the press screening and only 20 people outside the press group attended. I was saddened by this lack of response but it once again shows the lackadaisical attitude of the New Orleans community. Wake up, people, or there will be no **Milk** on our menu.

Seven Pounds is a strange story of payback by a man filled with remorse and guilt. His pain does not allow for forgiveness –

his own. This is another perfectly odd character for Will Smith who can pull these strange roles off convincingly.

A few of the other reviewers didn't seem to like the story until I insisted, this is a fantasy and all things are possible. That is the attitude I go into every movie with – this is a story designed for entertainment not reality. So it is easy for me to enjoy most of the movies that I see.

This character carelessly but not maliciously takes the lives of seven people. Before his untimely death, he is able to give back life to seven deserving people. It is a story of love and respon-

[continued on Expose-4]



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THE PINK PASTOR

by Rev. Clinton Crawshaw, 504.214.4340
E-mail: pastor@bigeasymcc.com
www.bigeasymcc.com
www.thebigeasymccblog.blogspot.com

Putting Christ in Christmas?

With horrifying rapidity I am approaching my second Christmas in New Orleans! The changes in church have been extraordinary. Our main problem has been running to keep up with growth, and build the ministries, activities, outreach projects and everything else that will keep our new members engaged and active. When Leon and I arrived a year ago we had 11 members, for the last few weeks we have been getting 60 in church and we are on a pretty steep growth curve.

As we approach Christmas the usual question comes up – how do we celebrate uniquely something we are celebrating every Sunday of the year? Just dressing the church up like Macy's isn't enough. Things like advent wreaths and trees are all very nice but they don't summon the presence of God into the midst of the congregation. In The Big Easy MCC the one consistent factor in our recovery has been a very strong feeling of God's *presence* and I see no need to replace that genuine, powerful sense of God with too many sickly sentiments invented by Victorian

toymakers. It is important to make sure that whatever you add to the mix is meaningful and not just 'Christmassy'!

There is a lot of bitching at this time of year about 'keeping Christ in Christmas', this is all very well and understandable, but isn't it a Christian's job to keep Christ in *their own* Christmas? Surely they can't moan about non Christians enjoying themselves at this time of year – it is not the non Christian's job to prosper the spirituality of the Christian!

We live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith country and world, and several different religious festivals fall at the same time of year. I understand therefore why some people insist on saying 'Happy Holidays' but I rather think they miss the point. 'Happy Holidays' makes nobody happy; I find no offence when friends wish me 'Happy Hanukah' and Jewish friends tell me that being wished 'Happy Christmas' is no great trauma either. Muslim leaders in the United Kingdom actually came out to support the celebration of Christmas partly because the undermining of the authenticity of Christmas casts a shadow over their own freedom to authentically celebrate Ramadan or Ede. In England many schoolchildren of all faiths celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali, and I think many Hindus would feel threatened by an assault on Christmas because it would set a precedent that religious festivals must be all be subsumed into some artificial secular kitsch-fest in December.

Still, encouraging everyone to say Happy Christmas does not make them all Christians! One of the main horrors of religion in 21st century America is that a whole bunch of people think they are Christians simply because they have been born and brought up Southern Baptist, or because they live according to conservative social mores, or because they hate all the right groups of people.

Christians should be defined by love just as The Christ was defined by love. I understand that this cuts the number of practicing Christians in the world rather dramatically! I think my point would be that love – of self, neighbor, stranger and especially the outcast – is the defining characteristic of the Christian life. It is not an optional extra. In this respect Christmas can be dangerous distraction, a time set aside when we do nice things to each other, what about the rest of the year? When did being nice to each other turn into spending a fortune at Dillards? When did warm fuzzy feelings, stoked by eggnog and booze replace authentic

spiritual experience?

Well, it is *my* business as a Christian to prosper my own spiritual journey, it is my job to ensure I don't lose sight of Christ under a huge pile of glitter and house drag; for those who are not able, ready or willing to name themselves as Christians then knock yourselves out! Life has few enough chances to forget problems - grasp and embrace the celebrations without worrying about a bunch of hand wringing Christians trying to keep focused on a small child born two thousand years ago.

Rev. Clinton Crawshaw is the Pastor of The Big Easy Metropolitan Community Church in New Orleans. They meet every Sunday at 5pm at 1333 S. Carrollton Ave. NOLA 70118. For details contact pastor@bigeasymcc.com,



www.bigeasymcc.com, 504.214.4340.



ONE LAST SONG

by Donnie "Jager" Jay, SDGM XXXII
E-mail: donniejay@hotmail.com

Fund-Raisers, The Other Side of the Coin

It is the season to be jolly and it is the season to be joyous. It is that time of the year, the season to reach into our pockets and help others, to give to the less fortunate and share the year's bounty, to thank those who have been so generous to us and share that generosity with those less fortunate. In other words, it is time to rob our coffers, and give away what we can not necessarily afford darning this widening recession.

I am not speaking of those charities that spend their wealth throughout our own community, who are helping with medication, housing and substance for those who can not afford to fend for themselves. These organizations are above reproach, and certainly deserve to be supported to the best of our collective endeavors. I could begin a list here of hundreds of such organizations, and my hat goes off to those involved with them.

Of course each one of us has our favorite charities and the reasons that we support them and what I am about to say certainly is not directed with animosity to any one person, one group or any honorable charity. But rather I suspect it is directed to those among us whom claim to be supporting some of our dearest causes.

Are we all aware that in some cases only a small percentage of the monies we raise for them get to the very people we are trying to help. Sometimes the amount is down right embarrassing. Some of the more national fund-raising concerns actually have expenses that are jacked up beyond sensibilities and from each dollar donated as little as a nickel may reach to help with the cause. Somehow this makes

me cringe, so before you do select which groups to support, check them out thoroughly. Don't be suckered in.

But I am more concerned about fund-raising on a more local level. I know that many of you have heard people from one charity or another mumble "not another drag show." I have heard that comment from people you would never expect to mumble such things, but when it comes to fund-raising who gets the calls first? **THE DRAG QUEENS!**

That's right capitalized and on purpose. As an entertainer I am constantly asked by some bar to help out raising monies for one cause or another, some of which I have never heard of and can find out nothing about. "It won't take much of your time and you have everything you need to do it." That is the logic they assail me with. And you know, for the most part they are right. It will only take five to ten minutes of my time. Of course they always advertise a starting time, for which I always arrive thirty minutes ahead of so as not to be late for the Overture. Thing is the Overture is never on time, it in many instances is twenty to thirty minutes late or in the case of one bar as much as an hour, the reason? They have two to four times the crowd they usually have and are ringing the register, more about this later. All this time the entertainers are trapped along with the customers and they expect you to drink at your own expense. Now in all fairness some bars do give the entertainers a coupon or two for a free drink. Now if I am getting paid for a show, I don't mind paying my way.

Speaking of paying one's way, has any one ever considered just how much it costs to prepare one's self for an evening? First there is the make-up.

[continued on Expose-17]

sappho psalm ...from Expose-2

sibility that is deeper than any we might encounter in our lives.

Oh, I wouldn't be the true dog lover that I am without a mention of Duke the Great Dane that is one of the important characters. Duke is a Harlequin like the one I had when I lived on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

I hope you enjoy these two films as much as I did. And I do hope you find time during these busy holiday weeks to catch a movie.

Drunk Driving

Just learned that a friend was arrested for drunk driving. I'm feeling really sad about it because this is a usually responsible man with a good job and friends that love and respect him. But after doing some reading on AOL from the **Forbes.com** report, I learned that Louisiana is #5 in the ratings for states with drunk drivers.

Surprisingly, Montana was #1 – a dubious honor. South Carolina was #2 and Mississippi was #3. Southern states seem to rank high in this list of shame. Please don't drink and drive this holiday season. I'll be out on the road and I don't want to have to worry about my friends killing me when there are so many drunks I don't know.

Stay safe, have a Happy Holiday and a Blessed New Year.

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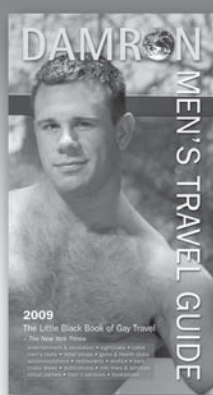
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