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Gays and Grays: The Story of the Gay Community at Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church. By **Donal Godfrey.** Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2007. xii + 197 pp. \$75.00 cloth.

Father Donal Godfrey, S.J., revised his dissertation to produce *Gays and Grays*, a contemporary history of the people and ideas that constitute San Francisco's Most Holy Redeemer Parish (MHR). What makes the story of MHR unique is its positioning as a Roman Catholic parish in the heart of San Francisco's gay Castro neighborhood. Godfrey argues that MHR is a model for how Catholics can integrate diverse communities into the life of their parishes. Scholars of history, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) studies, and American religion will take interest in Godfrey's work, which broadens the histories of cooperation and protest between religious and LGBT communities. He fills in a much-needed Catholic component to the developing and largely Protestant histories of LGBT religious movements in California, such as the Council on Religion and the Homosexual and the growth of Metropolitan Community Churches, in the closing decades of the twentieth century. While Godfrey's *Gays and Grays* is a local history, the central debate—how to be both gay and Catholic—has national and international consequences for Roman Catholics. Godfrey takes these larger themes and movements, such as the Catholic group Dignity, Inc., into his local account.

He organizes the tale of MHR chronologically, bookmarking the narrative with the centennial celebrations of the parish. Using interviews and archival sources, he traces the transformation of a lively, active Irish Catholic parish in the first half of the twentieth century to a parish struggling to define its identity and mission in the midst of San Francisco's changing demographics after World War II. In the 1970s, MHR was largely isolationist, defensive, and at times embroiled in hostility toward the gay population. After parishioner numbers dramatically declined in the 1970s, most assumed MHR's relevance was dying, at least until two presumably unlikely communities—the gays and the old-time parishioners (or grays)—bonded to create a welcoming, compassionate parish especially equipped to respond to San Francisco's AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s.

Godfrey argues that during the closing decades of the twentieth century, MHR parishioners provided a prophetic witness that it was "possible to be both gay and Catholic at the same time" (3). He situates MHR as a successful parish not immune to conflict, but open to compromise as a result of its distinctive positioning in both gay and Catholic culture. He writes that MHR "challenges the institutional church not by clamoring for change but by allowing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people of faith to be themselves and be

Catholic without shame or subterfuge” (3). Much of the book traces the delicate relationships between the Archdiocese of San Francisco, church pastors, gay and straight parishioners, San Francisco’s gay population, and the wider institutional church, allowing Godfrey to argue that MHR could be “something traditional and radical at the same time” (20).

The bonding of gay and gay communities contributed to the development of the welcoming parish; yet, charismatic pastors—more specifically Father Anthony “Tony” McGuire—guided MHR’s transformation. From the beginning of his appointment in 1982, the priest helped organize a parish council whose members determined inclusive outreach ministries were needed for the gay and lesbian community. MHR’s mission was not to change church teaching on sexuality issues (they left a call for reform up to Dignity), but instead McGuire emphasized parish unity and pastoral ministries that encouraged quietly living lives in truth of who one was. While this created tension for those who wanted MHR to more openly challenge homophobic church teaching and express their reality (for instance, announcing gay couples’ anniversaries or baptizing children being raised by gay couples), Godfrey portrays a parish community with immense pastoral concern that was able to strike a delicate balance with the wider church. In these regards, MHR’s straight and LGBT parishioners were especially skilled and positioned to respond to the AIDS epidemic that crippled their community.

Godfrey’s third chapter, “Bearing Witness in the Hour of Aids,” raises the most questions. Compared to other chapters, Godfrey’s voice and connecting narrative is less transparent. He configures chapter 3 with long quotations from transcribed interviews, sermons, and first-hand accounts from periodicals. If AIDS changed everything in the Castro, it also changed MHR. MHR was fortunate to have parishioners with expertise in the emerging field of health care and AIDS, and in early 1985 the parish began a visiting program to AIDS patients that evolved into the MHR AIDS Support Group. Parishioners provided services ranging from in-home care to bereavement groups to prayer vigils. MHR also cooperated with the community to lease the convent on parish property to Hospice of San Francisco for AIDS patients.

Godfrey writes that in the midst of the horrible “pain and messiness of AIDS” (73), MHR was able to experience meaning and produce solidarity through suffering for its own parishioners and the wider community. While the HIV epidemic devastated the Castro, Godfrey points out that paradoxically the epidemic “brought [MHR] back to life” (73). He determines that at the moment when the Castro community suffered the most, even those who were hostile toward the Catholic Church could recognize grace and hope at MHR. These connections raise profound

questions about the relationships between human suffering, spirituality, and sexuality. Godfrey points to the correlations by showcasing personal narratives and reflections about the crisis. However, a deeper investigation of Catholic theologies and practices regarding suffering and changing attitudes about human sexuality remain unexplained.

In the early 1990s, Father Zachary Shore followed McGuire's tenure and guided MHR through a changing relationship with the diocese and reactions to church politics. MHR's activities became more transparent under Shore's relaxed management style, and MHR parishioners more vocally expressed their frustration with wider church politics on homosexuality. Nonetheless, the parish delicately maintained a moderate position with an eye to what might and might not be acceptable. Godfrey expounds on this in-between status in the final chapter when he conveys his own experience of a double bind—criticized by the church for being too openly gay and slandered by some queer activists for being part of a homophobic organization. Yet it is exactly this experience of marginality and vulnerability that Godfrey links to the protective and comforting attributes of MHR, which make it a growing, active parish. In other words, it is the experience of vulnerability and perhaps suffering that the people of MHR embrace but also heal, thus giving MHR a type of sacred and empowering status.

Overall, *Gays and Grays* provides an excellent local history of Catholic culture and gay and lesbian issues. Godfrey has adequately crafted a story of MHR's unique and distinctive identity, but readers might question MHR's significance beyond the scope of San Francisco. Godfrey's conclusion that MHR is a new model of holiness in Catholic culture raises questions about alternative and competing models of "holiness" and who or what defines this sacred status beyond the Bay City (160).

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After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion. By **Robert Wuthnow.**

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\$29.95 cloth.

According to the conventional wisdom, American religious institutions are divided by a ruinous culture war and beset by militant atheists. Mainline Protestants have dwindled because of their failure to present a strong