

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

wish to announce that, as of October 1st, 1986, the Order of Perpetual Indulgence (Toronto Chapter) will disband



Why?

The Sisters are very proud of their accomplishments and feel that needs still exist within our community. However, it seems as if our message has been overshadowed by our appearance. Our image has blinded many to the work we were doing.

What were the Sisters attempting to do?

The Sisters were dedicated to the following precepts:

- 1) The replacement of the concept of "sin" with a moral code based upon respect for the freedoms and rights of the individual. Within these boundaries, we wanted to encourage and support the diversity of human behaviour in all of its amazing richness.
- 2) The cultivation of a sense of "pride" and "self-worth" in lesbians and gay men while combatting the insidious process of "invisibilization" of our community.
- 3) The promulgation of "eternal joy" through the development of the ability to recognize and utilize the elements of "fun" or "light-heartedness" that are to be found in most situations.
- 4) The eradication of "stigmatic guilt" and the crippling sense of shame that such guilt engenders.
- 5) The dedication to fight against any groups or individuals who seek to limit the rights and freedoms of our community by imposing their standards of morality and behaviour on us.

Do you think that the Sisters accomplished these goals?

The Sisters feel that much was achieved. Others seemed to feel similarly. Some of the comments from our plebiscite were:

"Whenever you appear, you seem to be whittling away at some cause or task that needs and deserves to be done." — G.F.

"You have been a welcome and important part of what it is to be gay in Toronto." — J.C.

"You make us smile." — Sue and Linda

"Most important is your work on gender-fucking ... it challenges in undeniable terms the root of our oppression." — F.L.

"You were around to lighten spirits and promote having a good time." — M.D.

"You created confidence, humour and even hope by your presence." — J.B.

"Good solid challenges to our thinking but served on a platter of fun and puff pastry." — An appreciative friend

"The use of condoms was presented in an amusing and shameless fashion and if I stay free of AIDS, I have you Sisters to thank." — C.K.G.

How did the plebiscite figure in our decision?

While most responses were very positive and affirmed the work the Sisters were doing, we were challenged by some of the ideas and comments contained in the letters. One writer observed: "I am aware that onlookers respond only at their own level of awareness." This zeroed in on the main problem — "How people were perceiving us." Whether or not any single perception coincides with the image we were attempting to project is irrelevant! The fact that the perception exists validates itself. We now recognize that just by "being nuns," we are preventing the fulfillment of our goals. Therefore, it would defeat the purpose to continue.

Where do we go from here?

The Sisters will no longer be a part of the community scene *BUT* the needs we tried to meet, remain. Shame and Guilt need to be eradicated. Gay Pride and a Sense of Community need to be nurtured. We have to fight the pressures to remain "invisible" and "closeted." As individuals, we remain committed to these goals and we will do whatever we can.

What about the monies raised by the Order?

Sister Sleazia was so traumatized by the decision to disband that Sister Celestial Gates felt some immediate "R" and "R" was badly needed. Celestial Gates offered to accompany Sleazia on a Caribbean cruise which would have completely depleted the Treasury. The other Sisters (realizing that they would remain here) suggested a more, responsible use of the funds. Therefore the \$2,000 in the Convent Treasury has been given to:

- The AIDS Hospice
- The Lesbian Mothers Defence Fund
- The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
- Metamorphosis
- The Toronto Lesbian and Gay Counselling Centre
- Lesbian and Gay Youth Toronto

Any last words?

We Sisters feel that we made a difference by our presence here. We are very proud of the contributions we have made to the community. We want to express our sincere gratitude for all of the love and support you have shown us in the past. Carol Burnett had a most eloquent way of saying goodbye.

We're so glad we had this time together,

Just to have a laugh and sing a song,

Seems we just get started

And before you know it,

Comes the time we have

to say ... so long.

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