

LGBT Initiative Team Meeting – Great Energy and a Surprise Guest!

By Beth Garascia

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When Ish Ruiz told the members of the LGBT Initiative to expect guests at our annual meeting, which was to be via Zoom this year, we all thought we'd be joined by some potential new members for our team, possibly people who saw our video at the Assembly or online and wanted to meet us. Were we ever surprised to see Fr. James Martin, SJ, was part of our "Brady Bunch" screen shot. Ish had invited him to lead us in a beautiful reflection on the Visitation to begin the retreat portion of our meeting and Fr. Jim had said "Yes!" After that he had to say good-bye. We'll always remember that amazing start of our get together.

After then dividing into two small groups to read and process together readings of the Annunciation and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple, we moved to the business part of our meeting. Brian Halderman began with a dynamite presentation about a gathering at Bergamo in 1974 called "The Gay Christian." That meeting was attended by Jeannine Grammick, Brian McNaught, Fr. John Harvey, Bob Bouffier, SM, and Fr. Norb Brockman, SM, among others. Brian Halderman and Brian Zampier, SM, have been sending out letters and combing the Marianist archives for information about the gathering, and the results Brian Halderman shared with us were amazing and intriguing. Our team decided to consider the possibility of having a fiftieth-year anniversary gathering to commemorate the event in 2024.

We then had a virtual scavenger hunt won by Jenee Gonzalez, who had twenty icons of Mary, giving her twenty points to put her over the top and be victorious. We then gave our love and thanks to Dominic Garascia, who resigned after six years as co-chair and welcomed Brian Halderman as new co-chair with Ish Ruiz. Our meeting ended with reports and visioning for 2021, which include brainstorming ways to use the video we've developed, creating a 2020 Virtual LGBT educational workshop, and exploring the idea of having a symposium to commemorate the aforementioned Bergamo meeting. I think the eleven of us who were able to attend the online meeting would agree it was time well spent.

