

6 March 2007

MEDIA RELEASE

[A Divine Moment in the Mardi Gras Parade](#)

We'd been standing for nearly three hours waiting for the parade to begin. The participants next to us began to move off indicating we were only minutes away from making history.....I looked around at our [Freedom 2 b\(e\)](#) group of 40 and couldn't hold back the tears any longer. It had been a tough few days.....there had been personal attacks against me in the media and our group targeted by various Christian activist groups. Rev Nile, leader of the Christian Democratic Party said in his media release 02.03.07, "*I call upon Anthony Venn-Brown and these marchers to withdraw from this blasphemous, obscene parade and not bring the Name of Jesus Christ into disrepute*".

It wasn't the personal attacks that upset me though. You see.....[after telling my story](#), I live in the privileged position of knowing 1,000's of people's stories as they email me or tell me personally. Their stories have touched my heart and they all came flooding back in that moment before we marched off. I thought of the individuals in our group and of the journey each had taken to bring them to the place where they were proud enough to march.....a journey of great struggle and heartache. It was inspiring to see these individuals in their new courageous mode. I knew the ones in that group that nearly didn't make it.....the self-loathing took them to thoughts of killing themselves....some had even attempted. Self-loathing created by a religion that falsely declares you are not worthy of the kingdom of God. God only accepts heterosexuals.

I also thought of the young people we have lost.....Michael, 26, rejected by his Christian parents, who gassed himself in the car. The 16 year old young man, who put his head on the railway track seconds before the train approached because he was tormented by a secret. A secret he knew from the derogatory comments from friends and what he'd heard in church, meant he was an abomination. Bobby, who jumped off a freeway bridge into the path of the oncoming truck and the three young men I'd heard about who suicided in a church in Melbourne. I thought about the ones we will never hear about because the family is too ashamed to reveal the information in the notes left behind..... all such needless tragedies....and I cried some more. Oh my God, when will this insanity cease.

But I knew that on the 3rd of March 2007 we were drawing a line in the sand.....from now on we will create something new for gay and lesbian people from Pentecostal and Charismatic backgrounds...a safe space....a place of healing.....and our visible presence in the parade shows the work has begun. As I looked around I saw that I was not the only one in our group crying.....it seems it was a profound, collective moment for us all. Possibly we were the only entry that began marching in tears last Saturday night. It wasn't long though before the cheers of the crowd lifted our spirits.....and we waved back at the crowds with our heads held high.

And it was that precise moment I wanted Rev. Fred Nile to be there right next to me to see that the Mardi Gras is not all about tits, bums or debauchery as he constantly condemns. It's a divine moment when you realise how evil the shame and fear that imprisoned you isand finally you love the person you were created to be and know that God doesn't make mistakes. Jesus said, 'you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free'. **The truth is I'm GAY and I'm OK and no amount of condemnation or judgement from others will ever again shift me from that profound sense of knowing who I am!**

More Media information available from:

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