Houses of the Holy

January 7, 2014 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I was raised as a Roman Catholic. I admittedly have moved into the “lapsed” category, but my connection to the faith remains. My hope is that the religion of my birth reconciles itself to the modern world, which would benefit us all.

Pope Francis has made me dare to believe such a reconciliation is not as far off as it once seemed. His “Who am I to judge?” comments about gay priests seeking God, combined with his many other comments about the need to refocus on the poor and other charitable concerns, inspire hope.

For better or worse, religion holds a key role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We know all too well that many doctrines hamper us. Countless examples reveal how that is so. What we do not acknowledge often enough, however, is that many people of faith help us in the fight. They need our support.

The Reverend Savalas Squire Sr. is one of them. Living with HIV since 2010, he leads his Baptist church in North Carolina in song, in prayer—and in education on the virus. Click here to read how Savalas and others across the country are helping the black church take a seat at the HIV/AIDS table.

Sean Strub has had a seat at many tables. From AIDS activist to POZ founder, from politics to business, his titles and domains abound. He also was raised as a Roman Catholic, and this played an important role in shaping his views and actions. We learn that and so much more in his new book.

In Body Counts: A Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS and Survival, Sean takes us from his childhood in Iowa to his years as a Senate elevator operator in Washington, DC; from his LGBT advocacy to the launch of POZ; and from producing The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me to running as the first openly HIV-positive candidate for U.S. Congress.

Along the way, Sean introduces a cast of characters difficult to believe if it weren’t true: Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Vito Russo, Yoko Ono, Bill Clinton and the list goes on and on. The book ends with his current role as founder and executive director of the Sero Project. The group fights stigma and injustice against people living with the virus, which includes combating HIV criminalization.

A memoir excerpt details the launch of POZ and its aftermath. Former POZ editor-in-chief Walter Armstrong provides a thought-provoking introduction that places Sean's many contributions to both the LGBT and HIV/AIDS movements in perspective.

Last November, POZ comptroller Dennis Daniel died. He was our friend, as well as the life of the party. He was with the company from the beginning. Click here to read our remembrances. Dennis, rest in peace.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/editor-letter-janfeb-25010-8449