

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the
Robert Clement papers

1971-1977

MssCol 567

Compiled by John Stinson, December 1990

Summary

Creator: Clement, Robert M.

Title: Robert Clement papers, 1971-1977

Size: 2.92 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: International Gay Information Center

Abstract: Robert Clement founded the Church of the Beloved Disciple in New York City for the purpose of ministering to the needs of the gay community. The collection consist of miscellaneous correspondence and papers and photographs. The photographs consist of 35mm color slides, and Ektachrome transparencies. The photographs show church interiors, religious ceremonies and to a lesser extent, gay rallies and demonstrations.

Access: Apply to Manuscripts and Archives Division for access at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>. In order to protect the privacy of individual persons some correspondence has been removed from the papers and restricted.

Preferred citation: Robert Clement papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Robert M. Clement, pastor of the Church of the Beloved Disciple, the first church to serve the gay community in New York City, was born (ca.1924) in Lee Park, Pennsylvania. He was ordained (1948) in the Polish National Catholic Church, a schismatic denomination which had separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th century and which maintained its headquarters in Pennsylvania. In 1970 Father Clement founded the Church of the Beloved Disciple as a place where gays could worship freely without fear of censure or denunciation. Nondenominational, with a congregation of some 600, and its own religious order, the Oblate Companion of St. John, the new church stressed the apostolic and sacramental nature of its ministry in contrast to the established church which it felt had consistently denied the sacraments to gays. Its liturgy was derived from a sixth-century Gallican or Gothic mass first codified by Bishop St. Germain of Paris. It claimed to be descended from the American Orthodox Church of the United States (Western Orthodox) founded in 1968, an independent denomination of which Father Clement was curial administrator.

The church held its first services in the sanctuary of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles (at 9th Avenue and 28th Street). It subsequently relocated to the Moravian Church (at Lexington Avenue and 30th Street) and then to its own building at 348 West 14th Street.

By its ancient liturgy and its high-church tone the Church of the Beloved Disciple set itself apart from other gay congregations of a more evangelical nature such as the affiliates of the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles founded by Rev. Troy Perry.

In 1974 in recognition of his services to the gay community Father Clement was consecrated Bishop of New York of the Eucharistic Catholic Church by Archbishop George A. Hyde, who had founded the church in 1946 in Atlanta, Georgia, as the "world's first gay church".

Scope and content note

The bulk of the papers consist of 35mm color slides and Ektachrome transparencies of views of church interiors, religious ceremonies, services and gay rallies. There is also a file of miscellaneous correspondence and papers relating to the pastoral activities of Father Clement at the Church of the Beloved Disciple.

Key terms

Subjects

Christian sects -- United States
Church work with gays
Clergy -- New York (State) -- New York
Gay liberation movement -- New York (State) --
New York

Occupations

Clergy

Names

Church of the Beloved Disciple
Clement, Robert M.

Special formats

Photographs
Slides (photographs) aat

Container list

b.97 Topical file

b.98 Photographs

b.99 Photographs

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b.97 Topical file

b.98 Photographs

b.99 Photographs