

PHILOSOPHY AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In 1979, we announced the reasons for our existence. We are an Order of 21st century nuns dedicated to the promulgation of universal joy and the expiation of stigmatic guilt. Our ministry is one of public manifestation a habitual, perpetration. No more guilt!

Freedom of expression

In keeping with this philosophy we believe there should be few restrictions on our artistic creativity. Although rare, at certain events the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence General Membership (SPIGM) requires all Novices and Fully Professed Members (FPM) to wear traditional habits (though these are usually accessorized with buttons, jewelry, hats, make-up, etc.) Most of the time we are encouraged to develop wild, abstract habits incorporating the whiteface make-up and wimple into the appearance. This allows the individual spirit open unrestricted expression. We are artists as well as social activists, and our faces and bodies are our canvases.

Diversity

Originally our statement contained the phrase “Gay Male Nuns”. Our vision and philosophy have broadened, become more inclusive, and become more consistent with the other aspects of our mission. We are a queer family. “Queer” means the freedom to be an individual in a close knit family of individuals: diversity and unity. The sisterhood, priesthood or any subset of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (SPI) membership is open to women and men, young and old, rich and poor, gay and lesbian, straight, bisexual and transgender; our organization includes masculine and feminine identified as well as androgynous personas. We feel no need to separate different people into separate affiliated organizations. In fact, to do so would be hypocritical and contrary to our statement of purpose. Our rules are frequently bent and stretched. They are not made of concrete. We are not machines, we are people. Rules are guidelines. Sometimes they must be enforced strictly and other times loosely applied. Each person is an individual and each situation is unique. That’s life. Our lengthy screening process for new members became necessary because people were joining with incompatible motives: egotism (“I want to be a star”), party animals, etc... These people had no commitment to our philosophy or the ability to work with others.

Social Activism

SPI members are inherently, by their very nature, inescapably political change agents. Some members wish to identify only with the social service or spiritual aspects of the Order, but there is no escape from the controversial and political qualities of the membership. Sub groups of SPI plan demonstrations and actions affecting various social issues or organize parties to raise money for charities. The entire membership usually participates.

Social Service

SPI printed the world’s first safe sex pamphlet, and organized the first AIDS benefit. When we are asked “Why are you mocking nuns?” We answer “We are Nuns!” We do all that traditional nuns have done for centuries. We are 21st century Nuns. We have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for AIDS and other social causes. We visit the sick, feed the hungry and generally service the community.

Spiritual Development

Members experience great freedom to discover and express various qualities, aspects and characters within them, with consideration for the image of SPI in the community. Certain behaviors in habit are not tolerated! Offensive drunkenness, inappropriate hostility, etc. But much tolerance is always exercised by other members. Many members practice individual disciplines; goddess worship, transcendental meditation, radical fairy-ism, etc. We struggle

with our individual egoism and expiate the bitchy and uncooperative impulse within that permeated our past and continues in today's queer culture.

Commitment

Although once a member of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence attains Fully Professed status they are considered members for life, the road to that end is not an easy one. The Order requires its members, especially new ones, to demonstrate commitment to the ideals of the Order, the community at large and to the individuals that comprise the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. As with all Nuns, Priests, Clerics, Shamans, Brahmins and other holy individuals around the world, there is inherent in their title an immense amount of self sacrifice. SPI members may not always agree with each other on a particular direction that the Order is pursuing, but they are expected to work for the good of the group and the community. Many, many times since the founding of this Order, our members have made personal sacrifices so that SPI would reap the full benefits of their efforts. Members have performed mundane but necessary services to the Order, participated in functions that they would not normally care to attend, given up some of their personal freedoms so that the group would flourish, or even participated with the group though they were in severe physical pain. This is what it is to be a nun, what it is to support the community, and what it is to serve the human race. We are not Gods, but rather "the appointed servants to the Gods."