



Dateline

Monthly News Bulletin

Volume 16, No. 1

<http://www.dignityusa.org>

1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW #8, Washington, DC 20005-1894

Phone: 1-800-877-8797

fax: 1-202-429-9808

DATELINE Editor: Bill Welch, DUSAEditor@comcast.net

January 2007

info@dignityusa.org

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

National Board of Directors Meets

DignityUSA's National Board of Directors met by teleconference on November 13 and December 13, 2006.

The main topics reported and discussed were:

- The proposed and approved guidelines by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled, "*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care.*"
- DignityUSA's Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People.
- A report provided by the DignityUSA Convention 2007 committee.
- The approval and funding for the expansion of the 4th Quarter *Quarterly Voice* to 12 pages and hard-copy mailing to members.

- Relocation of national office.

All of the above have been reported or addressed in recent DignityUSA publications.

An article, "Responses to the USCCB Proposed Guidelines," will be found in our November 2006 *Dateline*.

The following articles will be found in the 4th Quarter 2006 *Quarterly Voice*:

- "DignityUSA Responds to USCCB Pastoral Guideline,"
- "COR Response to Proposed USCCB Guidelines,"
- "Let Us Not Be Our Own Oppressors,"
- "Thoughts on U.S. Bishops' Approval of Ministry Document,"
- "NACDLGM Responds to USCCB Guidelines,"
- "DignityUSA Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People,"
- "DignityUSA Convention 2007 Speakers & Workshop Presenters."

A copy of the November 2006 *Dateline* will be found at <http://www.dignityusa.org/datelines/index.html>.

A copy of the 4th Quarter 2006 *Quarterly Voice*, marked as December 2006, will be found at <http://www.dignityusa.org/qv/index.html>.

The hard-copy distribution, of the 4th Quarter 2006 *Quarterly Voice* to DignityUSA members, should be in the US Postal Service pipeline the first week of January 2007. That version includes a listing of donors to DignityUSA for the fiscal year 2005-2006. The electronic version, less the donor listing, has been posted to our website as mentioned immediately above.

Sam Sinnett, DignityUSA President, has announced that the national office should be relocated and co-located with the offices of Dignity/Washington (DC) at Dignity Center (owned by the chapter) by January 31, 2007. This will result in rent savings, as well as other operational efficiencies.

DignityUSA Response to Retirement of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

On December 30, 2006, DignityUSA issued the following press release.

Gay Catholics Saddened at Church's Enforcement of Mandatory Retirement of Progressive Bishop

The leaders of DignityUSA reacted sadly to the impending removal of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit from active ministry. DignityUSA President Sam Sinnett stated: "Bishop Gumbleton has been one of the most powerful -- and now nearly unique -- voices for justice and inclusion in our Church for many years, particularly on behalf of the victims of sexual abuse by clergy, the poor, women in the Church, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. In addition, he has been a tireless advocate for peace in Iraq and elsewhere."

Looking forward to his 77th birthday in January, Bishop Gumbleton is past the Vatican-mandated retirement age of 75 for active clergy. Sinnett stated: "We are aware of Bishop Gumbleton's request that there be no public demonstrations or disruptions by the media surrounding his departure, and especially because of our great respect and love for him we intend to honor that request fully. However, Bishop Gumbleton's mandatory retirement raises issues that extend beyond his own situation and that of his parish to affect the entire Catholic Church, and we feel compelled to speak about them as a matter of justice."

Sinnett continued: "In particular, the Vatican frequently asks more conservative bishops to stay on and continue ministering well into their retirement years. Indeed, Pope Benedict XVI himself is 80 years old and according to the Vatican's own rule should have retired five years ago. Bishop Gumbleton specifically requested a retirement waiver from Rome in 2005, citing his sound mental and physical condition as reasons to continue his effective ministry. In contrast to its accommodation of bishops who seemingly put obedience to the Vatican over the call of the Holy Spirit, Rome enforces mandatory retirement for more progressive bishops. With severe priest shortages and faith communities without clergy, the decision to remove this faithful bishop at this time is unconscionable and mean-spirited."

Continues on page 2

Sinnott added: "Bishop Gumbleton has consistently been a courageous and prophetic figure within our Church, powerfully articulating Jesus' Gospel message of love, forgiveness and inclusion at a time when most of our bishops have shamefully abdicated this essential responsibility of their office. If justice were truly operating within our Church as a worldly institution, he would have been elevated to one of its highest positions of power, rather than being pushed to the margins. Yet, like Jesus, he has chosen the higher road of working directly among the people, many of them economically and socially disadvantaged."

Sinnott concluded: "We offer Bishop Gumbleton our complete support and solidarity. We pray that he will continue to minister to God's people, to publicly proclaim the Gospel message and to speak out on the vital issues confronting the Catholic Church. We also offer Bishop Gumbleton's soon-to-be former parishioners at St. Leo's in Detroit our best wishes as they continue to pursue his vision of an inclusive church, and we thank them for providing Bishop Gumbleton with a loving home for 23 years."

We Get Letters

Thanks for your communications and support.

In response to the issuance of DignityUSA's draft Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People, a member of Dignity/New York sent this message to Leo Egashira, Communications Committee Chair, on December 2, 2006:

"You and the others on your staff are doing an impressive job. The drafting of OUR statement on ministry to LGBT community is first rate. I personally think that the more history of sexuality we can surface for the masses, the better they will understand. But thank you, thank you, and thank you again for all you do."

In reacting to DignityUSA's overall response to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops pastoral guidelines for ministry to persons with a homosexual inclination, a heterosexual married couple addressed the following comments in a letter to Sam Sinnott, President, dated December 10, 2006.

"Congratulations on your extremely well-drafted [Advent Appeal] letter of November 27, 2006. Our check in the amount of \$100.00 is enclosed in response."

"Yours is the best writing we have seen on the bishops' embarrassing fumbling on this issue. Like a little child, you are going to have to lead them out of their confusion. Some day you will be able to write: '... one voice that continually provides the pastoral care that says all GLBT people are beloved and celebrated by our wonderful God and by his Roman Catholic Church.'"

"We are waiting for a cadre of courageous bishops to appear and switch the [USCCB] from the track of discrimination against to the track of

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love and compassion for all God's children. We believe DignityUSA will receive much of the credit for that switch.

"In justice."

In a New Year's greeting message of December 29, 2006, to Dignity/Philadelphia's officers, staff, committee members and presiders, and to DignityUSA's Executive Committee, Board of Directors and publications editor, a couple from the Greater Philadelphia, PA Area wrote:

"Please accept [our] most heartfelt & sincere wishes that each and every one of you have a truly blessed, joyous, healthy, safe and prosperous New Year, and accept our equally heartfelt & sincere thanks & appreciation & gratitude for all that you do individually & corporately at Dignity Phila & USA for the Catholic LGBT communities, here in Philly & Nationwide. God bless you all richly & eternally ... Cent Anni, Kudos, Bravo, Multo Gratia!!!"

REMINDER

With the release of Draft 1 of "DignityUSA Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People 2006," dated November 12, 2006, DignityUSA announced the beginning of a process to solicit feedback and comments on the draft.

We encourage anyone interested in these guidelines to review and provide comments to info@DignityUSA.org (with Pastoral Care as subject) or in writing to our national office at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 8, Washington DC, 20005, before May 15, 2007.

Copy of the guidelines are in *QuarterlyVoice* 4th Qtr 2006, and at www.dignityusa.org/pastoral/pastoral-1.html.

Save the Dates
DignityUSA's
18th Biennial Convention
Austin, Texas
Thu-Sun, July 5-9, 2007

Happy Anniversary
& Congratulations to:

Brooklyn (NY) - 30 years
Palm Springs (CA) - 2 years
***Phoenix, (AZ) - 30 years**

*** A Dignity/Integrity Chapter**