



Dateline

Monthly News Bulletin

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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.

DIGNITYUSA Announcements

Fiscal Year Ends in Black

Thanks to the special generosity of many donors and attention to effective cost-cutting measures, DignityUSA completed its fiscal year 2005-2006, ended September 30, 2006, "in the black" with a surplus carryover to FY 2006-2007.

Executive Director Steps Down

Debra Weill has stepped down from the position of DignityUSA executive director effective October 8, 2006, upon mutual agreement with the national board of directors.

Sam Sinnett said, "We are grateful for Debbie's service to DignityUSA and her commitment to the goals of equality and inclusion for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics in the church and society."

Board of Directors Recommends Relocation of National Office

During its meeting of Oct 6-8, 2006, DignityUSA's board of directors recommended the adoption of the report findings of the *ad hoc* committee investigating cost savings in an alternate location of the national office.

The proposed move to Dignity Center, Washington, DC, a building owned by Dignity/Washington (DC), could effect a savings of \$1,000 a month in rental costs.

Operations to Continue

Operations of the national office of DignityUSA will continue for now with the current staff at the current location while Dignity leaders consider strategic and cost-savings measures such as staffing options and alternative office space.

Report on October 6-8, 2006, National Board Meeting

The DIGNITYUSA Board of Directors met in Washington, DC the weekend of October 6-8, 2006. The weekend began with an all day orientation for new directors Joe Gallagher, Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues, Mario Torrigino, and Tom Yates co-led by Mark Matson and Lewis Tanner. The Executive Committee also participated. They were joined in the evening by the rest of the board members.

Continues next column

The evening session began with a prayer led by Teri Myers and welcome and introductions led by President, Sam Sinnett.

After approving the agenda and the July 2006 minutes, the directors shared events to be celebrated since our last meeting. Some of these celebrations are:

- Financially finished the year in the black and the 2007 fiscal year budget is completed and approved.
- Chapters working to raise money for the national office: Dayton chapter has organized a traveling dinner and expects to raise \$1,500; New York had a party last month and raised over \$4,200; Chicago did a special mailing and collected \$1,000, Seattle has a party scheduled for Nov. 4, 2006.
- Tom Yates organized a group of volunteers from the Dignity/Washington chapter to help with the mailing from the national office saving time and money.
- "Saint of 9-11" movie is out nationally and features DIGNITYUSA and Dignity/New York prominently. The movie production is also coming out on DVD.
- Bill Welch has agreed to be the editor of the Quarterly Voice, as well as the Dateline.
- The Defenders had a successful meeting in Chicago and will be celebrating their 25th anniversary at the DignityUSA 2007 Biennial Convention in Austin, TX next summer.
- Many formerly lapsed members were contacted by directors and some are rejoining and donating.

The directors broke into groups to discuss the questions:

- What is our core mission?
- What are the current challenges facing DignityUSA today.

The core mission focused on being the voice for GLBT people of faith from a Catholic perspective and challenging the Church when it speaks out against GLBT people.

Many challenges facing DignityUSA were mentioned. The top three by order of priority are:

- declining revenue,
- the need of a more effective way to be the voice for GLBT Catholics, and
- burnout of talented persons.

On Saturday the directors began with a prayer led by Mark Matson in which we first named all those members who have been an inspiration to us. The Spirit was then called upon to bring their collective wisdom and strength to the board and the deliberations of the weekend.

Continues on page 2

The work on Saturday centered on the three aforementioned challenges and the core issue to each. The board considered the questions:

- In the current state of the Church, what are we most effective in changing that no one else is in position to do?
- How are we different from any other organization?
- How do we proclaim the message?
- Why is it of value to be in DignityUSA?
- How do we turn members into investors in DignityUSA?
- How do we develop the message that will attract investors, package the message so investors will consider it, and deliver the message to the right investors?

From these discussions the board created a long list of “to do” items. These were prioritized and assigned to committees.

Following other discussion, the board of directors accepted the resignation of Executive Director, Debbie Weill.

During the July 2006 board meeting, an ad hoc committee was created to look into the feasibility of moving the national office to reduce costs. The committee gave a report of their findings. Many options were looked into and discussed. The committee recommended that we move to the Dignity Center, the building owned by Dignity/Washington. It has the space needed and the rent offered would decrease DignityUSA expenses by about \$1,000 a month. A motion on Sunday was passed unanimously to make this move.

Sunday morning began with liturgy led by Peggy Burns and Marty Grochala. The directors were each assigned to committees and then the committees looked at the 5-year strategic plan created last year and the “to do” list created on Saturday to incorporate activities and get started in creating their strategic plans for this year.

A copy of the minutes can be obtained by contacting secretary@dignityusa.org.

A copy of the financial report can be obtained by contacting treasurer@dignityusa.org.

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

Happy Anniversary
& Congratulations to:
Northeast Pennsylvania (PA) - 28 years
Suffolk, Long Island (NY) - 30 years
Atlanta (GA) - 32 years
St. Louis (MO) - 32 years

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to Meet Nov 13-16, 2006

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will meet in Baltimore, MD, November 13-16, 2006.

According to a posting on the USCCB website, the agenda will include:

- approval of a reorganization plan for their national conference,
- approval of a revision to the Lectionary for Mass for selected days in the season of Advent,
- approval of a directory for music and the liturgy for use in the dioceses of the United States,
- approval of two documents from their Doctrine Committee:
 - a proposed statement on receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist worthily,
 - proposed guidelines for ministry to persons with a homosexual inclination,
 - a document from the Pro-Life Committee offering pastoral guidance on the Church's teaching concerning contraception, linked with a culture of life.

The proposed guidelines for ministry to persons with a homosexual inclination have received the most pre-meeting attention and media coverage. Bear in mind that the proposed guidelines will be given to the body of bishops for approval. They may not be in their final form. The proposal document is entitled, *“Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care.”*

The USCCB Office of Media Relations has prepared and released a summary of the guidelines under a document entitled, *“Guidelines for Ministry to Persons with Homosexual Inclination on Catholic Bishop's Agenda.”* It may be found at <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2006/06-203.shtml>.

An article entitled, *“Bishops to vote on guidelines for ministry to homosexuals,”* by Jerry Filleau of the Catholic News Service, may be found at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0605957.htm>

Responses to the USCCB Proposed Guidelines

As mentioned above, the USCCB proposed guidelines have drawn a fair amount of media coverage. What follows in this section of the *DATELINE* are various responses, including comments from Sam Sinnett, President, DignityUSA.

In concluding paragraphs of the article *“Bishops Form Rules for Ministry to Gays,”* by Rachell Zoll, AP Religion Writer, 10/18/2006, Sam Sinnett said it was clear the document was prepared “by none of us for whom it is intended.” “They speak in willful ignorance about people in same-gender families. They speak in willful ignorance about homosexuality _ sexuality in general,” Sinnett said. “They are continuing to discriminate against us.”

Continued on page 3

In a Boston Globe article, “Catholic bishops to define gay stance: Proposal would condemn “hatred” but reject unions,” by Michael Paulson, October 19, 2006, Sam Sinnett said the document “will be discussed entirely by celibate males, and their viewpoint is more concerned with keeping their jobs than being pastoral leaders.”

Responses from members of the Task Force’s National Religious Leadership Roundtable

Reprinted with permission of National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Immediately below are responses by organizations within the Roman Catholic tradition. These and additional responses will be found at <http://thetaskforce.org/media/release.cfm?ReleaseID=990>.

“The bishops are being asked to vote on a document that is self-contradictory. It is logically and morally impossible to claim respect for lesbian and gay people and at the same time reaffirm opposition to their exercising the basic human rights of marriage and the formation of families.

“To systematically exclude from leadership those who hold enlightened, progressive views on sexuality is to deprive the Catholic community of the talents of some of its best and brightest people.

“Rather than adopt such a flawed document, the bishops would do well to convene an educational forum to learn the facts of contemporary life, including the witness of countless lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender [LGBT] Catholics who live with integrity. LGBT Catholic scholars and their colleagues stand ready to provide such resources.”

— **Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D.**
Co-Director
Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)

“The guidelines offered in this draft are out of touch with the vibrant pastoral ministry with lesbian and gay people that has blossomed in parishes across the U.S. in the last 30 years. Catholic people, schools, parishes and dioceses have opened their doors to lesbian and gay people and our church has benefited greatly from this encounter. This document tries to turn back the clock three decades on Catholic acceptance of lesbian and gay people.

“The plan here is not to minister but to make a ‘problem’ disappear. If the guidelines are approved, they will be ignored by most Catholics because they do not reflect good science, good theology or human reality.

“If the bishops want to develop realistic guidelines, they should open a dialogue with gay and lesbian Catholics to listen to the experience of their lives, their relationships, their faith and their church. Gay ministry developed in the church by recognizing that lesbian and gay people have spiritual gifts and needs that spring from their entire lived reality, not only their sexuality. Good ministry views people as whole human beings. This document proposes that lesbian and gay people be viewed not in the entirety of their lives, but on one dimension only — the sexual dimension. No other group in the church is singled out in this way.

“Pastoral guidelines for gay ministry are surely needed in the U.S. Catholic Church, but this proposed set is certainly not the right one.”

— **Francis DeBernardo**
Executive Director
New Ways Ministry

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT] Catholics have been looking for sensitive, respectful and compassionate leadership from their bishops for decades. Some of the more welcoming language in this new document could be interpreted as an attempt to provide that. However, every positive statement in these proposed guidelines is contradicted by the bishops’ own statements and even more by their actions.

“This document attempts to welcome gay and lesbian people into an institution that is simultaneously leading attacks on our civil rights, relationships and families all across the world. It is an invitation to collaborate in our own oppression.

“As LGBT Catholics, families and friends, we call on the U.S. bishops to listen to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Catholics, who will willingly tell of the gifts we have received through our God-given orientation and the blessings we know through our loving relationships — as well as of our spiritual struggles in our church. Our voices and that of the Holy Spirit speaking in and through our lives must be heard in outlining the pastoral care the church provides.”

— **Sam Sinnett**
President
DignityUSA

Statement from Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

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“There’s plenty to be offended by in the new Catholic Church guidelines titled *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination*, but a few things stand out. First, the bishops tried to sound more compassionate by writing that even though the Catholic Church believes ‘the homosexual orientation is objectively

disordered,' that doesn't mean 'the person as a whole is disordered.' However, they also stated that 'other inclinations can likewise be disordered, such as those that lead to envy, malice or greed.' Sorry, but it's still an insult to compare an orientation that leads to love to 'inclinations' that lead to harm.

"Second, the guidelines state that 'no scientific consensus has been reached regarding the effectiveness of various therapies' to change one's sexual orientation. The authors probably saw this as a major concession to science. However, all medical and mental health professional associations do have consensus in warning of the dangers of so-called 'conversion therapy' programs. No scientific studies have found these programs to be effective. To the contrary, a growing body of research shows that they can cause profound psychological damage.

"Third, the guidelines say the Church should take action to keep people who experience same-sex attraction from falling 'into the lifestyles and values of a gay subculture.' Much of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community is working to protect our families, to be protected from discrimination and violence, and to have the freedom to serve in the U.S. military. So much for the 'immoral lifestyles' we are supposedly creating."

Commentary on USCCB Proposed Guidelines: Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care

By Bill Welch, Editor

Having read and reviewed the complete document on the guidelines to be presented to the body of bishops for approval at their Nov 13-16, 2006, meeting, I developed the following commentary in an attempt to address major portions of the document.

Timed for discussion and requested approval by the body of bishops gathered in Baltimore, MD, Nov 13-16, 2006, one week following the November elections, one may ask how much of the proposed guidelines are politically motivated or aligned in view of the political issues and constitutional amendments regarding same-sex marriage, same-sex civil unions and adoptions by homosexual persons.

As one reads the content of the proposed guidelines, it becomes rather clear that the writers had no consultation or dialogue with faithful Catholics within the gay community. If the goal of the committee were to alienate more gay Catholics, family, loved ones, friends and supportive others, they have done admirably well.

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Pastoral care comments deal more with prohibitions and negative admonitions than with proactive welcoming of Catholic homosexuals and full participation in the Church. There are few signs of affirmation or advocacy for Catholic homosexuals, and no signs of Christ-like compassion.

In the limited instances where the document touches on homosexuals as members of church organizations and faith communities, they are admonished to stay in the closet and refrain from announcing their homosexual orientation. It is another extension or application of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. The document writers have yet to understand how this leads to deceit, lies and duplicity in the lives of people desirous of being whole, authentic people with personal integrity. Nor do the writers recognize or appreciate how this leads to low self-esteem; depression; sex, alcohol and drug addition and suicidal tendencies. How does one build relationships in faith communities and the general community when admonished to secrecy in being who they are? Genuine relationships are founded on mutual trust and respect derived from interaction and shared exchange.

On the matter of being welcomed and establishing friendships in local faith communities and society at large, why would non-homosexual persons want to be associated with persons the body of bishops describe as being outside the moral order by their very existence and nature. Are not the bishops complicit in the setting of discriminatory barriers, as well as violence towards gay Catholics and others within the GLBT community, when they classify persons of a homosexual inclination to be objectively disordered and support anti-gay initiatives and legislation denying fundamental human and civil rights accorded others in society? Are they not complicit when they fail to recognize valid research findings within the physical and human sciences counter to their teachings and beliefs regarding homosexual orientation and diversity of sexuality in nature and the animal kingdom?

Nowhere in the document is there any discussion on the role of human touch and physicality in expressing love and affection in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. The principal thrust is on the requirement for being open to procreation.

In sections of the document discussing marriage with scriptural references, consideration must be given to the fact that the writers were writing from their experiences and perceptions, to the period of time and to whom the messages were being addressed. Marriage in those times, and many periods to follow, were civil contracts dealing with property rights. Wives and children were chattel, property of the husband to be dealt with as he saw fit. Marriage did not involve equality of the partners nor sacramentality.

Continues on page 5

The document is full of double-speak. For example, at the outset, it declares “God has created every human person out of love and wishes to grant him or her eternal life in the communions of the Trinity. All people are created in the image and likeness of God and thus possess an innate human dignity that must be acknowledged and respected.” A little later on are the words, “Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.” Alluding to the impact of Original Sin and personal sin, the document points up that homosexual acts violate the true purpose of sexuality inasmuch as they cannot be open to life, nor do they reflect the complementarity of man and woman that is an integral part of God’s design for human sexuality. . . . the Catholic Church has consistently taught that homosexual acts “are contrary to the natural law.” . . . Under no circumstances can they be approved.”

With respect to references to communications by St. Paul, we must consider to whom the messages were addressed and why. Paul admonished members of the recently formed and building Christian communities to refrain from pagan practices such as idol worship, temple prostitution and fertility rites, as well as prayers and rituals to ensure a good harvest. The purpose was to have members of the Christian communities to be different and distinguishable by setting such practices aside.

The document goes to some length in describing homosexual inclination as objectively disordered and homosexual acts as immoral acts contrary to natural law or the natural order of things. Natural law and natural order are philosophical rather than theological constructs. They are largely contributed by St. Thomas Aquinas based on his experience or perceptions of nature and the animal kingdom. He was not aware of more recent findings of homosexuality or the existence of sexual changes in the animal kingdom. Furthermore, since animals act out of built-in instinct rather than by rational choice, these are part and parcel of their nature and natural order of things. By extension, persons with a homosexual orientation do not choose to be homosexual. It is part and parcel of who they are. Might it not be possible that physical sexual expression and human touch are also expressions of love and complementarity between same-sex (same gender) persons in keeping with their nature?

The document holds that there is a strong tendency toward moral relativism in our society which inhibits the reception of Church teaching on sexual issues in general and on homosexuality in particular. However, it has also

been part of church teaching on moral culpability and sinfulness as to the role of discernment of proportionality and intent by the acting person. Yet the Church is very adamant about the strictures placed on persons in sexual matters and physical expression. There is no room for proportionality or intent in sexual morality.

Under the section *Pastoral Support* is a guideline, “Young people, in particular, need special encouragement and guidance, since the best way of helping young people is to aid them in not getting involved in homosexual relations or in the subculture, since these experiences create further obstacles.” The difficulty here is that puts people at risk of isolation during their crucial search to find answers to whether or not they alone have certain feelings and attractions. They need to have access to wholesome, caring and accepting friendships amongst peers gathered in supportive environments such as schools, colleges, universities or community centers.

Above all, homosexual persons need access to appropriate publications including spirituality, church teachings, physical and social scientific studies and the like to assist them to discern the truth for the formation of conscience.

The composition of families today goes far beyond the heterosexual husband and wife with 2½ children. Configurations include single parent, foster parents, families by adoption, extended families, communes, hospices, and other forms. Upon the incapacity or death of one or more parents, older children, uncles, aunts, grandparents, friends and court appointed persons may take over the parenting and care of the household. In numerous cases, the acting parent(s) may be lesbian or gay, including those of a Catholic background and tradition. There are over 100,000 children awaiting adoption for numerous reasons, including biological parents not wanting or incapable of raising the biological child or children. This is one of many reasons why such gay parents should be accorded the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships and accorded similar legal rights and protections. This would strengthen, not weaken, the meaning of marriage.

The language used in the document gives rise for concern. For example, “homosexual inclination,” infers predisposed, disposed to, or propensity towards homosexual genital activity and relationships. Would the authors set up a parallel “heterosexual inclination?” If so, should not the proposed guidelines on the Church’s teaching concerning contraception, to be discussed at the same November 13-16, 2006, USCCB conference, be identified as, “Guidelines for Persons with a Heterosexual Inclination on Matters of Contraception?”

While the document authors had the opportunity to recognize that homosexual orientation is not chosen but rather discovered at some point in the person's life and development, and be open to the possibility of legitimacy of sexual diversity and homosexual orientation as part of God's inclusive plan of creation, they chose to perpetuate such notions as:

- There are imperfections in the universe, in creation, and in the development of humanity.
- Homosexual persons and orientation are not commensurate with the Church's teaching on the end objective of male and female sexuality, namely marriage and procreation, and therefore are outside the moral and natural order of things.
- Homosexual persons and orientation are defects in creation as results of Original Sin or personal sin.
- Homosexual persons are deficient or defective heterosexuals.
- Homosexual persons are morally deficient or defective at birth or become so at some point during maturation.

In a letter to a bishop I said, "I strongly urge you and your fellow bishops to reconsider and revisit the guidelines in consultation with the lived experience and reality of conscience-driven gay persons."

DignityUSA Fundraising Parties Scheduled in November 2006

Dignity/Seattle (WA) will celebrate its 33rd Anniversary on Saturday, November 4th, 6:00 p.m. at Ravenna United Methodist Church, 5751-33rd Ave NE. All friends, members and past members are welcome. Dinner will be provided and served by the Dignity/Seattle Board. In addition, there will be a silent auction and raffle to benefit DignityUSA. Donations to DignityUSA are greatly appreciated. For more information, please contact 206-325-7314 or by email at mjrankin2000@worldnet.att.net

Dignity/Chicago (IL) will host a Thanksgiving Party in November for chapter members who make a donation to DignityUSA. For more information, please contact 312-458-9438 or by email at DignityChicago@aol.com.

If you are interested in organizing or hosting a House Party for DignityUSA, or want to know how to go about it, contact board members Peggy Burns mgtburns@comcast.net or Lewis Tanner lewistanner@yahoo.com. We can help you make your party successful!

Just In!

As this publication was in the final production stages, we received word that the **Dignity/Columbus (OH)** Traveling Dinner Fundraiser held Saturday evening, October 21, 2006, netted \$2,700, of which \$1,000 was a gift from a couple as new contributors. The goal for the event was \$1,500.

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Five households prepared a portion of the dinner. Guests moved from house to house to each of the hosting households.

Congratulations and thanks to the organizers, hosts and guests for the successful event and funds donated to DignityUSA.

Guests included friends from **Dignity/Dayton (OH)** who drove to lend their support..

The event sponsors suggest the traveling dinner by multiple hosts and hostesses as an alternative to a single house party.

The event coordinators report that a fun evening was had by all.

DignityUSA Seeks Volunteers for Women's Justice Coalition

Rea Howarth, of the Women's Justice Coalition, reminds us that DignityUSA joined the Women's Justice Coalition in January 2006. The group was formed to undertake one joint action annually to help move the cause of women forward. **The Time Has Come** statement forms the basis of coalition.

The Women's Justice Coalition says the time has come:

- To affirm the equal rights of women and men in the church,
- To share decision-making with women and men equally,
- For our liturgical ministries to reflect the equality we proclaim,
- For inclusive language, the language of hospitality, to be the norm for our preaching, our liturgy, and church documents,
- To acknowledge that the Holy Spirit calls women, as well as men, to ordained ministry.

You can read all about it and the report card project at <http://womensjusticecoalition.org>. The report card worksheets are available as a pdf file.

The coalition is still recruiting volunteers from the dioceses around the country. It would be great to have someone who is interested in pushing it forward."

Sam Sinnett, President of DignityUSA responds, "We definitely ought to be working on this and it certainly fits in with the importance of reaching out to women much better in our Long Range Strategic Plan. If anyone is interested in taking responsibility for this or knows of a volunteer who is, please let myself (president@dignityusa.org) or Peggy Burns (VicePresident@dignityusa.org) or Paula Lavallee (secretary@dignityusa.org) know. Getting this message out to our members to help the project and to be aware of this marvelous program of which we are a part is the kind of information that can build passion for DignityUSA among our members to become 'investors' or stakeholders."

*Wishing You and Yours
A Holy, Peaceful and
Joyous Thanksgiving*

Ask Pope Benedict XVI to Overturn the Ban on Condoms

Catholics For a Free Choice, a Catholic Organization for Renewal, currently has a program underway, known as Condoms4Life, which includes a petition to Pope Benedict XVI to overturn the ban on condoms as a stand for life amidst the worldwide AIDS pandemic.

The project encourages people of faith to sign on to the petition. Opening paragraphs of the petitioning letter are excerpted below:

Your Holiness:

Today, we are writing to you in solidarity with the approximately 40 million people living with HIV and AIDS and out of concern for the more than 15 million children who have been orphaned.

We know you share our concern and have supported the many Catholic health and social service agencies, who have treated those with HIV and AIDS. In so many ways, the Catholic community has been an international leader in providing compassionate, non-discriminatory treatment to those living with HIV and AIDS, and we applaud those efforts.

We write to you today to express our support for your decision announced 23 April 2006 for senior theologians and scientists to prepare a document discussing the use of condoms as a means of preventing the transmission of HIV. But we urge you to move forward quickly to set new guidelines for the prevention of this disease that would enable all agencies that collaborate with the Catholic community to educate those at risk of the option of using condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV and AIDS and to actually provide condoms to those it serves whose conscience leads them to choose to use them.

For years, Vatican spokespersons and other church officials have made clear the church's moral objections to condoms as a contraceptive. However, the extension of this position to HIV and AIDS prevention has resulted in dangerous practices that have contributed to the spread of HIV and AIDS. There have been public burnings of condoms, gross distortions of the statistics on the efficacy of condoms as a preventive and disregard of the very real human toll of this pandemic by some whose ecclesiastical objections outweigh concern for the common good and the promotion of a culture of life.

Indeed, since you became pope on 19 April 2005, 5.5 million people have acquired the HIV virus. And 3.7 million people have died of AIDS-related causes.

As people of faith, both Catholic and not, we urge you to pay special attention to those bishops and health care workers who have witnessed the devastation firsthand and who have courageously spoken out in support of the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV as a stand for life.

The full document may be viewed at <http://h1.ripway.com/activists/LettertoBXVI.pdf>

To sign onto the letter one, please go to <http://actionstudio.org/?Go=2387>.

DignityUSA's Executive Committee endorses the petition letter and invites our members and friends to sign on.

Further information about the Condoms4Life project will be found at <http://www.condoms4life.org>.

Further information about Catholics For A Free Choice will be found at <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org>.

Milwaukee Archdiocese Priest Alliance Makes Statement on Two Ballot Initiatives

The Milwaukee (WI) Archdiocese Priest Alliance makes a statement regarding two ballot initiatives that will appear on Wisconsin's November ballot — a constitutional amendment defining marriage and an advisory referendum about restoring the death penalty.

Drawing on their pastoral experience, the priests of the Alliance at their Fall General Assembly approved a statement asking that the public and the public servants in the state look beyond the issues suggested by the ballot referenda to the more weighty causes of marital instability and violent crime.

The Milwaukee Archdiocese Priest Alliance is a grassroots organization of 140 priests (diocesan and religious, active and retired) who serve in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

The statement released October 5, 2006, reads as follows:

“We priests work daily with the joys and sorrows of marriage and family life. We try to uphold a consistent ethic of life in our preaching and programs of religious instruction. Because we have a stake in policies that touch on these matters, we wish to join the public debate stirred up by the November ballot measures, namely the constitutional amendment defining marriage and the advisory referendum about restoring the death penalty.

“The death penalty is contrary to our deeply held belief in a consistent ethic of life. This barbaric practice was rejected by the people of this state in the 1850s. We do not believe its restoration will stop the brutal crimes that prompt calls for its return.

“On the proposed constitutional amendment concerning marriage and the larger concerns for the stability of marriage and family life, we have these concerns and hopes: We affirm the call of our bishops to work for the strengthening of marriage and family. We are especially grateful that they have urged that a vote on the defense of marriage amendment be accompanied by a repudiation of ‘words and deeds that demean individuals with a homosexual orientation, many of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ.’ Many gays and lesbians are a part of the Catholic family and we do not want to see them marginalized or driven away.

“We concur with the analysis offered by Fr. Bryan Massingale in his Catholic Herald ‘Guest Opinion’ of September 21, 2006 (Ed Note: Fr. Massingale recommends voting AGAINST the proposed amendment which would ban gay marriage/civil unions.) We share his well-founded fear that the amendment may be construed to deny rights and services, including health care, not only to those in civil unions but many other citizens of Wisconsin as well, irrespective of their marital status.

“Indeed, our pastoral experience tells us that the prospect of gay unions is not a chief cause of marital instability and family dissolution. Marriage and family are more at risk from more immediate challenges — problems that can and should be addressed by candidates. Among them are:

- The worsening poverty which is pervasive in a land blessed with wealth. One of every four Milwaukeeans lives below the poverty line.
- The fragility of jobs, the stagnation of salaries, the loss of pensions and the shrinking access to health insurance and healthcare.
- The commercialization of sex through pornography, prostitution and worldwide Internet access.

“These and other factors break apart marriage and undermine family life. We strongly encourage public officials to address how they will address them if elected or returned to office. We pledge our continued efforts to encourage marriage and stable family life. However, we need the reinforcement of sound public policies which strive for economic justice and the common good.”

Let Us Give Thanks —

- To God our Creator who made us in God’s image and likeness and loves us unconditionally as sons and daughters.
- To our brother Jesus Christ who taught us love, compassion and welcome by example.
- To our family, loved ones and friends who nurture and give of their loving affection and caring support in good, as well as difficult, times throughout our journey of life.
- For those who give of themselves in loving, caring ministry to members, friends and associates of the GLBT community.
- For those members of the institutional church and government who advocate and champion our cause amidst much personal risk.
- For those who have gone before us and served as mentors and leaders in the pursuit of equality, civil rights, human and social justice in our church and society.
- For DignityUSA leaders, members and associates, past and present, who have helped us form inclusive, welcoming faith communities and our national organization.
- For those who give of their time, talent and treasure in sustaining and promoting DignityUSA at the local and national level.
- For our non-gay family, friends and allies who abide with us in our personal and joint struggles for acceptance, as well as full and equal participation in church and society.

Thank You!

October 2006 Press Releases

Dignity/Washington (DC), October 17, 2006.

Virginia Bishops Accused of Misleading Catholics on Same Gender Marriages.

<http://www.dignityusa.org/news/2006/061024washington.html>

DignityUSA, October 19, 2006

Executive Director Steps Down

<http://www.dignityusa.org/news/2006/061019weill.html>

DignityUSA, October 25, 2006

Press Statement on Bishops Pastoral Care Guidelines

<http://www.dignityusa.org/news/2006/061025bishops.html>

DignityUSA, October 25, 2006

DignityUSA is Amici in Successful NJ Same-Sex Marriage Decision

<http://www.dignityusa.org/news/2006/061025nj.html>

Happy Thanksgiving