

*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 Responds to USCCB Pastoral Guidelines

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) met in Baltimore, MD, November 13-16, 2006. Prior to that meeting, the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, chaired by Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli, drafted a set of proposed guidelines entitled, "*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care*," to be presented to the bishops for approval during the meeting.

The proposed guidelines prompted a lot of media attention and discussion in church and public circles, as well as within gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender advocacy organizations, especially those within the Catholic tradition. DignityUSA played a very active and important role in the discussion.

Responses to and commentary on the proposed guidelines were reported in DignityUSA's *Dateline* newsletter for November 2006. An archived copy of the publication is available at our Internet webpage <http://www.dignityusa.org/datelines/index.html>.

On November 14, 2006, the bishops approved a set of guidelines in a vote 194-37, with one abstention, after turning back a motion to send it back to the USCCB Committee on Doctrine for more consultation and revision. The draft document was heavily amended before it came to a final vote. The approved document is available at <http://www.usccb.org/dpp/Ministry.pdf>.

Leading up to and following the vote, DignityUSA's profile was raised immeasurably. Sam Sinnett, President, and other spokespersons within the DignityUSA organization, responded to TV, radio and press interviews. Coverage appeared on major TV and radio networks and major publications from coast to coast, as well as internationally.

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In an article by Rachel Zoll, AP Religion Writer, on November 14, 2006, Sam Sinnett said the new guidelines reflect the bishops' ignorance about sexuality and that the document would alienate gays. "This document recommends the most unhealthy thing to do which is to stay emotionally and spiritually in the closet," Sinnett said.

In an article by Neela Banerjee, of the New York Times, November 15, 2006, is a paragraph stating "DignityUSA, an advocacy group for gay Catholics, said the new guidelines would further alienate gay people from the church. Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli of Paterson, N.J., chairman of the (USCCB) doctrine committee, which developed the guidelines, said on Monday that the committee did not consult with gay men and lesbians on the document. 'It's really disappointing,' Sam Sinnett, president of DignityUSA, said of the new guidelines, 'At some point the bishops have to realize that they speak in willful ignorance about what homosexuality is and about sexuality in general.'"

In an article by Virginia Montet, Agence France Presse (AFP), November 16, 2006, referring to the document, "It is disappointing. It's not welcoming at all," said Sam Sinnett, president of DignityUSA, the main gay Catholic group formed in 1969. 'In choosing 'inclination' versus 'God-given orientation' they continue to be willfully ignorant of what is homosexuality,' Sinnett told AFP. He also complained that bishops 'have been working behind closed doors ... without the courtesy to speak to us about our needs in our Church.'"

## November 12, 2006, Press Release

Prior to the bishops' meeting and release of the approved USCCB guidelines, DignityUSA issued the following press release on November 12, 2006, under the title, "DignityUSA Issues Guidelines for Pastoral Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Catholics in Response to Proposed Document from U.S. Bishops."

Washington, DC – DignityUSA finds the proposed document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), "*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care*," to be deeply flawed. Therefore, DignityUSA has joined with some other members of Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) to ask the bishops not to approve any such guidelines without further consultation with the faithful – especially those LGBT Catholics who are most affected.

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DignityUSA's involvement in the pastoral care of LGBT people dates back to its founding in 1969. In 1987, DignityUSA issued its first comprehensive letter on pastoral care and is today releasing the following updated draft of this letter.

Sam Sinnett, president of DignityUSA, further announced the beginning of a process to solicit feedback and comments on this draft. We encourage anyone interested in these guidelines to review and provide comments to [info@DignityUSA.org](mailto: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. A final version will be released at the DignityUSA biennial Convention in Austin, TX, July 5 – 8, 2007.

Vatican II and the Code of Canon Law encourage Catholic faithful to make known to their pastors items of urgent concern in which they have special competence. It is in this spirit that these guidelines are updated and this open process of comments is being begun.

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## DignityUSA Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People

As discussed in the preceding press release, immediately following is Draft 1 of "DignityUSA Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People 2006," dated November 12, 2006.

*"By the grace of God I am what I am, and God's grace to me has not been without effect." (1 Corinthians 15:10)*

*"We believe that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics in our diversity are members of Christ's mystical body, numbered among the People of God. We have an inherent dignity because God created us, Christ died for us, and the Holy Spirit sanctified us in Baptism, making us temples of the Spirit, and channels through which God's love becomes visible. Because of this, it is our right, our privilege, and our duty to live the sacramental life of the Church, so that we might become more powerful instruments of God's love working among all people."*

Opening of *DignityUSA Statement of Position and Purpose*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Catholics and their families, like all Catholics, need and deserve pastoral care from ministers and members of the church that is respectful, affirming, challenging and directed towards helping them mature and deepen their commitment to the Gospel. DignityUSA draws on thirty-seven years of providing this care for LGBT people, and on the lived experience of thousands of faithful LGBT Catholics, to put forth the following declaration of what this care should encompass.

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**Quarterly Voice** is a publication of DignityUSA. It supplements DignityUSA's **DATELINE**, a monthly newsletter, as well as special news releases issued from time to time. Special editions of **Quarterly Voice** are distributed in hardcopy once or twice a year; other times in electronic format to persons on the Dignity News-List-Serve.

The **DATELINE** is distributed to persons on the Dignity News-List-Serve in electronic format ONLY. Sign up at <http://lists.dignityusa.org/mailman/listinfo/dusa-news>.

Begun in 1969 in San Diego, CA under the leadership of Fr. Patrick Nidorf, OSA, first as a counseling group and then a support group in Los Angeles, DignityUSA has been a national organization since 1973 uniting GLBT Catholics, their families and friends.

DignityUSA is an independent nonprofit organization whose national office is located in Washington, DC, with chapters located throughout the United States.

Members gather at periodic regional meetings and biennial national conventions.

In addition to certain news items, **Quarterly Voice** encourages the exchange of views, book reviews, reflections, noteworthy reports from chapters and other items, especially personal experiences and what has worked well in such areas as pastoral ministry, human and social justice issues, leadership, chapter building and the like.

Opinions expressed in reflections, reviews, letters, etc., are those of their authors and not necessarily those of DignityUSA.

Bill Welch, Editor  
[DUSAEditor@comcast.net](mailto:DUSAEditor@comcast.net)

**1. Pastoral care for LGBT Catholics must truly embody and reflect the truth that we are equal in worth and dignity to other people.** As children of God, we are created in God's divine image and likeness, as are all people. We should, therefore, be treated with respect, and be constantly challenged to respect others, especially those unlike us or unfamiliar to us. As individuals and as a community, we deserve the same legal protection of basic human rights enjoyed by other members of the church and of civil society. These include the rights to safe housing, equal opportunity in employment, and freedom from physical and verbal violence. These rights should not merely be affirmed, but actively supported by leaders and ministers of the church in the arena of public discourse and civil legislation.

**2. LGBT Catholics must be welcomed as full and equal participants in the life of the church.** All sacraments and roles of ministry, leadership and service should be open to LGBT Catholics, as they are to other members of the church. Church employees and volunteers must be free of any harassment or discrimination due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, regardless of whether that orientation has been publicly disclosed or acknowledged.

**3. Ministry to LGBT Catholics and our families must be sensitive to the history of alienation caused by decades of negative statements and actions directed against our community by church officials and ministers.** Awareness of the pain and fear of religious institutions carried by many LGBT Catholics and family members, and a willingness to work to regain trust, are essential qualities for all involved in these ministries. LGBT people will need space and time to tell our

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National Office

DignityUSA  
1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Suite 8  
Washington, DC 20005-1894  
Voice: 202-861-0017 or 800-877-8797  
Fax: 202-429-9808  
[www.dignityusa.org](http://www.dignityusa.org)  
[Info@dignityusa.org](mailto:Info@dignityusa.org)

Staff

Michael Seneco, Office Administrator  
[info@dignityusa.org](mailto:info@dignityusa.org)

Richard Ressa, Database Manager  
[datamgr@verizon.net](mailto:datamgr@verizon.net)

Love and Blessings  
to You  
In the New Year

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

*DignityUSA Letter on Pastoral Care of LGBT People  
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stories, and to be heard with a sincere openness and willingness to learn about our lives, our relationships, and the relationship between our lives and our faith.

**4. The lives and experiences of LGBT Catholics must be reflected in the liturgical, educational and social events of the church.** For too long, the invisibility of LGBT people in church and society has enabled our continued oppression. Maintaining the veil of secrecy leads to isolation, confusion and a sense of shame. It invites those who do not understand us or are hostile to us to dehumanize and pathologize LGBT people, and to view us as threatening and alien. Our lives and experiences must be counted as normal dimensions of God's creation. We must be made visible – for our own sakes, and that of the rest of the human family. Rituals that help to sanctify aspects of LGBT people's lives are needed to help ensure that the church is truly welcoming.

**5. A revised theology of sexuality must acknowledge that many intimate relationships express unitive love, even in the absence of possible procreation. This must be affirmed as an expression of divine love.** The church has long acknowledged that one of the primary functions of the sexual relationship within marriage is the unitive function, which facilitates the development of a bond of love and intimacy between partners. Furthermore, the church sanctions marriage between men and women who have no possibility of procreating, whether by reason of age or infertility. Sexually intimate relationships between same-gender couples must be affirmed as having the same potential for holiness as those between opposite-gender married couples. Guidelines for ethical expression of sexuality are welcome, to the extent that they promote respect, freedom from exploitation, honesty and mature love between partners.

**6. Same-gender partners must have the opportunity to formalize our commitments sacramentally, as well as through civil marriage.** Equality in the eyes of God and under the law must be affirmed. LGBT people must have the same access as our heterosexual sisters and brothers to the sacrament of marriage and to legal protections that support and provide public affirmation of our commitments. Church leaders should be in the forefront of advocating for equal recognition of commitments between same-gender partners.

**7. Pastoral care for the families of LGBT people—both the families from which we originate, and the families we create—should emphasize respect, ongoing inclusion, love and affirmation, while providing support for the particular struggles that LGBT people and their families undergo.** Many parents, grandparents, siblings and extended families find their love for LGBT Catholic family members in conflict with social and religious messages. They struggle to maintain positive relationships with family members who “come out” by disclosing their sexual orientation. The experience of “coming out,” which can be a painful as well as a graced one for all involved, requires compassionate support. Church officials and ministers must urge family members to maintain relationships,

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offer unconditional respect for one another, and communicate honestly with one another.

**8. Church leaders must affirm and support LGBT individuals and couples who parent children, as well as the children of these families.** The number of families with children headed by LGBT people is considerable and growing. The formation of these families, which include both biological and adopted children, is motivated by the fundamental human desire to love and nurture the young. Church leaders should provide equal and free access to all relevant sacraments, work to ensure equal legal protections for all families, and lead efforts to end verbal and physical violence experienced by members of these families.

**9. The church must work to ensure that all youth, including those who are “coming out” or questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation, are safe from verbal or physical harassment and violence at school and in other social settings.** The opportunity to mature with a positive sense of identity is vital for all young people. They need a variety of positive role models, strong boundaries, and encouragement to act in ways that demonstrate respect for themselves and others, even as they take risks that help them understand their capabilities and limitations.

**10. LGBT Catholics, like all others, should be challenged to live out the Gospel values of service, compassion and community.** LGBT Catholics must be involved in serving people living in poverty, suffering illness or living at the margins of society. We must be part of the faith-sharing that builds spiritual community. We must be reminded that loving neighbor as self is part of the Great Commandment. We must extend to all others the respect and dignity we have worked so hard to gain for ourselves.

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## Catholic Organizations for Renewal Response to Proposed USCCB Guidelines

On November 12, 2006, Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) issued the following press release in response to the proposed USCCB guidelines for pastoral care for persons with a homosexual inclination.

“An expected set of ‘pastoral guidelines’ scheduled for review by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) at its annual Fall meeting in Baltimore begins with an erroneous understanding of what it means to be homosexual, Catholic reform leaders say in a letter to U.S. Catholic bishops.

“The bishops’ premise that homosexuality is a *choice* rather than a deeply ingrained emotional and psychological attraction for members of the same sex that is a part of one’s basic humanity has caused much harm, Catholic church reform leaders agree.

““The bishops latest guidelines, entitled ‘Ministry to Persons  
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with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care,’ begins with the premise that homosexuality is an inclination towards same-gender, genital activity and it denies the well-known existence of homosexual orientation as a normal variation of human sexuality,’ members of Catholic Organizations for Renewal, a forum of 23 North American church reform groups said in a letter to the USCCB committees that drafted the proposed pastoral guidelines.

“Because of the committee’s mistaken premise and their failure to consult widely with affected and knowledgeable lay members of the church, the group says the guidelines are ‘deeply flawed.’

“Further, the proposed guidelines are not at all pastoral but rather harmful because they repeat the same ‘spiritually violent language’ used over the past 20 years, describing homosexuality as ‘objectively disordered’ and labeling same-gender relationships ‘inherently evil.’

““We bear witness to the physical and spiritual harm done to the Catholic community—ourselves, our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters—specifically because of this language.’

“Noting that under church law (Canon Law 212, 3), Catholics are encouraged to make their concerns known to the bishops, especially in areas where they have special expertise, the groups urge the bishops to withdraw the proposed guidelines and begin anew with consultations with members of the church at large, including those most affected by the document—homosexual Catholics.”

*Catholic Organizations for Renewal is a forum of 23 church reform and renewal organizations in the United States and Canada, which meets twice annually. The letter to the bishops was drafted and approved by the following signatories at the group’s Nov. 1 -2, 2006 meeting in Milwaukee prior to Call to Action USA’s annual meeting, which drew more than 3,200 participants.*

**Call to Action USA, Chicago, IL** - Nicole Sotelo, 857 928-4112 cell  
**Call to Action, Northern Virginia, Arlington, VA** - Sharon Danner 703-680-0860

**Catholics For a Free Choice, Washington, DC** - Frances Kissling, President, 202 986 -6093

**Catholics Speak Out/Quixote Center, Brentwood, MD** - Rea Howarth, CoDirector 301-699-0042 [csq@quixote.org](mailto:csq@quixote.org)

**CORPUS USA** - Anthony Padovano 973-539-8732

**DignityUSA, Washington, DC** - Sam Sinnett, President, 314 477-5798 (cell), [President@DignityUSA.org](mailto:President@DignityUSA.org)

**Eighth Day Center for Justice, Chicago, IL**, Kathleen DeSautels, 312/641-5151

**Ecumenical Catholic Communion, California** - Charlie Davis

**FOSIL, Southern Illinois** – Fred & Tari Harms, 618-985-2377

**Save our Sacraments, Scituate, MA** - Jan Leary, 508-655-1863

**Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference, Philadelphia, PA** - Regina Bannan, President 215-350-9877 (cell)

**Spiritus Christi Church, Rochester, NY** - Mary Ramerman, Pastor, 585-325-1180

**Voice Of The Faithful, New Jersey** - Theresa Padovano 973-539-8732

**Women’s Ordination Conference, Fairfax, VA** - Aisha S. Taylor, Executive Director, 703 352-1006, [ataylor@womensordination.org](mailto:ataylor@womensordination.org)

**Women–Church Convergence**, Susan Farrell, 718-368-4511

## Let Us Not Be Our Own Oppressors

A Guest Opinion in *Bay Windows* – New England’s largest GLBT newspaper, October 31, 2006

By Marianne Duddy-Burke

Reprinted with permission

“This week marks twenty years since the release of the Vatican’s infamous ‘Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.’<sup>1</sup> This Letter, authored largely by the man who now is Pope, set the tone for much of what our community has heard from Rome and the U.S. Catholic bishops during the past two decades. This was the document that first labeled lesbian and gay people ‘objectively disordered,’ and our sexually intimate relationships ‘intrinsically evil.’ It insisted that ‘neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when ... irrational and violent reactions increase’ during legislative consideration of civil rights protections for our community. It ordered bishops and priests to deny use of church space to organizations that did not clearly uphold official sexual teachings regarding homosexuality. This resulted in the eviction of dozens of Dignity chapters, disrupting communities of LGBT Catholics trying to remain Catholic. The ‘pastoral care’ the official church offered our community as a result of this document became shutting people out, working to deny us civil rights, and tacitly condoning anti-gay violence.

“When they gather for their national meeting later this month, the U.S. Catholic bishops will be considering an updated set of guidelines for ‘Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination.’ Although milder in tone than the earlier Vatican document, the bishops’ draft statement is still a rock for people who seek bread. It continues to deal with lesbian and gay people as exclusively sexual beings, to deny any possibility of sacredness in our loving, intimate relationships, and to defend efforts to maintain legalized oppression. Further, the draft document instructs lesbian and gay people to limit the number of people to whom we reveal our identity, and disallows gay and lesbian Catholics who are known not to be celibate from holding any roles of leadership or service in their faith communities, thereby reinforcing a culture of secrecy and shame.

“Even the apparently most welcome part of this document—an unqualified condemnation of antigay violence in speech, action or attitude—is undermined by the many, many bishops who have said truly despicable and demeaning things about our community.

“The temperate language and firm denunciation of violence may once have been enough to lure lesbians and gay men craving official affirmation back to church-approved ministries. Thankfully, however, our movement has advanced to the point where this is no longer likely. We are no longer waiting for the official church to validate our lives and our loving—we do that for ourselves, in faith communities we create or choose because they are vibrant expressions of the core Gospel values of love and justice.

“Lesbian and gay Catholics do indeed need pastoral care that is responsive to the needs and challenges of our community. In 1987, DignityUSA, the only nationwide organization of out

and proud LGBT Catholics, our families and friends, issued our own Letter on Pastoral Care of Lesbians and Gay Men. Although outdated in many ways (we did not reflect the concerns or gifts of the bisexual and transgender communities; we speak only of lesbian parents; the concept of sacramental affirmation of our committed relationships never comes up) this document represents us defining our own needs, something clearly lacking in the Vatican or U.S. bishops’ statements.

“While the U.S. Catholic bishops argue and politic over what they think constitutes appropriate ministry to keep lesbian and gay people quiet and compliant, I call for the community of LGBT Catholics, our families, friends and supporters to identify what kind of pastoral care we need and deserve in 2006. Some key components might include:

- ❖ Ministry that affirms the full human dignity of LGBT people as equal to that of heterosexuals
- ❖ Affirmation of the holiness of our sexually intimate loving relationships
- ❖ Respect for the families we create, and for our decision-making about how to form them
- ❖ Development of rituals to honor our joys and provide strength to address the challenges of our lives
- ❖ Guidelines for ethical sexual expression that are respectful of our particular experience and challenges
- ❖ Leadership in combatting the legal, cultural and other institutional forces that continue to discriminate against LGBT people
- ❖ Creation of opportunities for dialogue and faith-sharing among LGBT people, and between straight and gay people of faith
- ❖ Opportunities to live out the call to serve others in need
- ❖ Acknowledgment of the differences among subgroups within our community
- ❖ Creation of safe schools and other gathering spaces for youth who are coming out or questioning their sexual identities

“For many of us, the longing for a place in a community of faith is deep and powerful. Yet, we need not settle for second class status, in our church or anywhere else. Perhaps the best advice on pastoral care for the LGBT community I ever heard came from the late Rev. Rich Rasi, a priest who led Dignity Boston liturgies for over 20 years. At the conclusion of every liturgy he urged, ‘Let us not be our own oppressors.’ Now that’s advice that liberates, affirms and challenges.”

<sup>1</sup> *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 1986, section 10.

Marianne Duddy-Burke is a 24-year member of Dignity Boston and lives in Hyde Park with her spouse and daughter. She previously served as President and Executive Director of DignityUSA.

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## Thoughts on U.S. Bishops’ Approval of Ministry Document

A Statement by Fortunate Families Reprinted with permission

“Dear Families and Friends,

“It’s difficult to express our level of distress at the U.S. Bishops’ approval of ‘Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care.’ You can read the approved document at: [www.usccb.org/dpp/Ministry.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/dpp/Ministry.pdf).

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“Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli, Chair of the Committee on Doctrine that drafted the document, said the tone of the statement was intended to be ‘positive, pastoral and welcoming.’ Yet the statement says, ‘the homosexual inclination is objectively disordered’ and compares it to other disordered inclinations ‘such as those that lead to envy, malice, or greed.’”

“Serratelli admitted that the committee did not consult with gay men and lesbians. Nor, per our extensive contacts, did it consult with parents or pastoral ministers in this ministry. The result is a hurtful, harmful, and pastorally hollow document that essentially says the Church welcomes only gay people if they are ashamed of their orientation and are willing to hide it, even if they are not sexually active -- the same position the institutional Church holds relative to gay seminarians.

“We are deeply concerned this document will:

1. Continue the spiritual and psychological abuse of our LGBT loved ones, their families, and those who minister with them.
2. Be used by Church ministers or parents to coerce people struggling with their sexual identity into ministries and therapy that will harm them and, if the person refuses, cause some families to be torn apart.
3. Be used as a license to impede or end ministries that do not adhere to the Courage approach, and divert the energies of such ministries to fending off attacks.
4. Be used to nullify the pastoral language of Always Our Children. This document, and its 45 footnotes, fails to even acknowledge the existence of Always Our Children.
5. Cause many more LGBT Catholics and their families to leave our Church in search of Christian communities where they are truly welcomed and their gifts affirmed.
6. Cause the Church to lose more credibility, and thus have its statements on war, poverty, and other social justice issues more easily dismissed.

“We place these concerns in the care of our gracious and loving God as we pray for wisdom and for an appropriate personal response.

“Knowing we *must* always follow our consciences, our decision must be an intentional one. We suggest that to stay in this Church, one must do so in a way that does not enable the Church to spiritually abuse our LGBT loved ones. What might we do?

“Do we throw up our hands and walk away?

“Do we simply ignore the document as the work of uninformed and pastorally insensitive men who reduce pastoral care to obsession with sexual activity?

“Do we speak our truth to church leaders, challenging them to see God’s love revealed in our children, as they stated so clearly in *Always Our Children*?

“Perhaps, we can actively respond as the document itself recommends. The document says: ‘it is important that Church ministers LISTEN TO THE EXPERIENCES, NEEDS, AND HOPES of the persons with a homosexual inclination to whom and WITH whom they minister. Dialogue provides an exchange

of information, and also communicates a respect for the innate dignity of other persons and a RESPECT FOR THEIR CONSCIENCES. ‘Authentic dialogue, therefore, is aimed above all at the rebirth of individuals through interior conversion and repentance, but always with PROFOUND RESPECT FOR CONSCIENCES and with patience and at the step-by-step pace indispensable for modern conditions.’ [John Paul II] Such dialogue facilitates an ongoing, interior conversion for ALL parties truly engaged in the exchange.’ [Emphases are ours]

“It’s too bad the bishops didn’t heed their own words while developing this document. Still, we can find out if the bishops really mean they are serious about such dialogue. Here are some suggestions for what each of us might do:

- Talk to your pastor individually or with other concerned persons.
- Call your bishop and ask to meet with him, as individuals, couples, or a group – perhaps in a listening session.
- Plan a service for LGBT Catholics and their families and friends to gather and affirm that ‘nothing can separate us from the love of God.’ Report on the service to your Bishop and perhaps in the local Catholic or secular media.
- Pray for the strength and wisdom to continue working for justice in the church.
- Pray for the bishops, so they will be graced by opportunities to get to know and see the faithfulness, goodness, and giftedness of our LGBT loved ones.
- Come up with your own creative possibilities.

*“Fortunately, the Church of the People of God has been listening to our lesbian and gay loved ones, and their families and friends. That’s why polls continue to show increasing grassroots support, acceptance, and affirmation [e.g., a July 2006 poll shows 63% of U.S. Catholics support civil unions for gay couples, 32% oppose them]. That’s where we find our hope! It’s only a matter of time—time that unfortunately means more hurt—before the Church hierarchy catches up.*

“We close with the remarks of a mom and dad who sent the following note with their survey to the Fortunate Families.

““This has been a ten year journey... With the love and respect of those who came before us, we have been able to move from the pain and sadness, loss and grief to the joy, courage and passion to have a voice in places that our son cannot. To carry the message that God’s love is given to EVERY person. That this precious son of ours is the same son that we and God conceived, carried, gave birth to and had baptized into the Catholic Family. Although he feels too tired to fight for a place at the table, we will spend our last breath carrying the message that God loves each of His precious children and we do too.’”

“With prayers that the bishops will soon come to see and cherish our fortunate families and, that in the meantime, our LGBT loved ones, their families, and those that compassionately minister with them are protected by our loving God.”

**Mary Ellen & Casey Lopata**  
**Fortunate Families**

[www.fortunatefamilies.com](http://www.fortunatefamilies.com)

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## NACDLGM Responds to USCCB Pastoral Guidelines

The National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM), with headquarters in Berkeley, CA, released the following statement on November 17, 2006, in response to the USCCB pastoral guidelines.

“The Board of Directors and Staff of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM) are saddened by the approval of the USCCB document ‘Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination.’ While the statement acknowledges the need for ministry with homosexual persons, the guidelines were developed without consultation with bishops and pastoral leaders of existing local diocesan outreach ministries, and without consultation with lesbian and gay Catholics. They also ignored the insights of science on sexuality and the valuable contribution of the 1997 pastoral letter, ‘Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers.’

“We are especially disappointed that the guidelines, while recommending that ‘Church ministers listen to the experiences, needs, and hopes of the persons with a homosexual inclination to whom and with whom they minister,’ do not in fact reflect the real lives of gay and lesbian people, especially Catholics. The guidelines characterize homosexual persons as focused on sexual inclinations, tendencies, acts and behavior without reference to the integrity of the fuller lives of faith, love, commitment, service and spirituality of Catholic gay and lesbian persons.

“For more than 25 years, diocesan ministries have welcomed in the Church gay and lesbian Catholics who understand and affirm their sexual orientation as intrinsic to their identity. It is profoundly sad that many of them and their families will be unnecessarily alienated by the tone of this document.

“In calling them to public silence about their identity the Church would render gay and lesbian Catholics less than welcome as equals by baptism and would encourage deception and shame.

“In accordance with the Mission Statement of NACDLGM, we urge individual bishops and the Bishops’ Conference to ‘reflect on Sacred Scripture, reflect on Church teaching and pastoral practice, study the social and physical sciences, listen to and ponder the lived experience of lesbian and gay persons and their families,’ and to develop a truly pastoral and prophetic document on the place of lesbian and gay Catholics in their Church.”

Founded in 1994, NACDLGM includes members from 55 Catholic dioceses and 130 parishes. Since 1997, when the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Marriage and Family issued their pastoral letter to parents and church ministers, *Always Our Children*, increasing numbers of dioceses and parishes have explored the development of such ministries.

Further information about NACDLGM can be obtained on their website [www.nacdlgm.org](http://www.nacdlgm.org).

## DignityUSA Convention 2007 Speakers and Workshop Presenters

DignityUSA will hold its 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention in Austin, TX, Thursday to Sunday, July 5-9, 2007.

As this publication goes to press, the following have been confirmed as speakers and/or workshop presenters:

**Sister Jeannine Gramick**—Co-founder of New Ways Ministry, Sister Gramick has been on the world stage by refusing Vatican directives to be silenced in her ministry to gays and lesbians, practicing a form of civil disobedience while remaining a religious sister. The co-author of several books on living as a Catholic and GLBT person and the focus of the movie “In Good Conscience,” Sister Gramick is a well-known member of our DignityUSA family and the first to accept a position as a speaker.

**Bishop John Shelby Spong**—Retired Episcopalian Bishop of Newark, NJ, and author of 14 books, Bishop Spong is known in the GLBT community for his “Catechesis on Homosexuality.” He is a dynamic speaker, with a history of being a sports announcer as well as theologian. His determined emphasis on the gospel of Jesus being a message of love makes him powerful in the fray of political church bickering. Bishop Spong will be both a keynote speaker and breakout speaker.

**David Trissel**—David is a meditation specialist and computer scientist. In addition to writing software to speed up computer and cell phone operations, David meditates several hours a day. He has studied meditation in different forms around the world and is aware of the wide range of meditation traditions, including those of contemplative Catholics. David will share some of his interesting connections with the spirit and physical phenomena during his eight-hour meditations.

**Kathy Ann Gianino**—A member of Dignity/Boston, Kathy Ann will provide a dance ministry workshop. More details will follow in later publications.

**John McNeill**—Well known for his books on Catholicism and homosexuality, John is a beloved member of the DignityUSA family and a speaker at almost every DignityUSA national convention. John is author of “The Church and the Homosexual”, “Taking a Chance on God”, “Freedom, Glorious Freedom”, and “Homosexuality and Spirituality”. A Jesuit priest and psychotherapist for many years, John remains a model of a “contemplative in action”.

**Linda Pieczynski**—A former president of Call to Action, Linda is deeply connected to the reform movement in the Catholic Church, including issues such as women’s ordination and the effects of the sex abuse crisis. Linda, who will celebrate her 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary during the weekend of the convention, is dedicated to making the institutional church stretch in reaction to the real lives of people.

**Chris Connors**—A member of Dignity/Boston, Chris has offered to present a version of a workshop she has presented at Call To Action entitled, “ReBirth: The Spiritual Journey of a Catholic Lesbian.” The workshop will include both the story and her music.

*Continues on page 8*

**Gary Preuss**—Intrigued while a Jesuit novice by the works of Teilhard de Chardin, Gary works in fields that straddle science and religion. Professionally trained in the sciences, Gary has a fascination with the links between spirituality and science, as seen in Quantum Mechanics and in spirituality research and writings by Gregg Braden, Wayne Dyer, Sylvia Browne, and Carolyn Myss. Thought to be opposites one hundred years ago, science and spirituality are increasingly discovered to be complementary.

**Tish Charette and Paula Lavallee**—DignityUSA and Dignity/Seattle members and partners, Tish and Paula are providing a “Kids” workshop for convention participants who bring children.

**Father Lou Brusatti**—Director of Humanities at St. Edward’s University, Austin, TX. Father Brusatti is an active Catholic priest and educator. He has presided at various Dignity chapters Masses for many years. Father Brusatti is an engaging speaker. His topic for presentation will be revealed in later publications.

**Daniel Helminiak**—Although Daniel is the author of many scholarly works in academic theology, he is perhaps best known in the GLBT community for his much simpler but necessary book written while he was living in Austin, “What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality.” Daniel served as a chaplain for Dignity/Austin and Dignity/San Antonio for many years. He is returning to familiar turf for the convention.

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## Your Quarterly Voice Seeks Underwriters

Sending the *Quarterly Voice* (QV) out to the membership is an expensive endeavor. Currently, once a year, the QV is mailed to the entire membership. For three quarters, the QV is e-mailed to all who have e-mail addresses. Mailing the QV to non-e-mail subscribers is dependent upon more stable funding.

The *Quarterly Voice* is an important communication medium for the DignityUSA membership. To keep these USPS mailed editions coming, DignityUSA seeks members willing to underwrite this quarterly publication. \$12,000 will underwrite the costs of producing and mailing the QV for a full year. One or many can share this cost. If you are interested in helping to underwrite the QV, contact National Office Administrator Michael Seneco at 800-877-8797, e-mail [info@dignityusa.org](mailto:info@dignityusa.org), or the national office mailing address found on page 3 of this publication.

Please designate your donations as “QV underwriting,” and please advise whether or not you wish to have your name acknowledged in the *Quarterly Voice* as an underwriter.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

## Announcement: New Ways Ministry Symposium

New Ways Ministry will sponsor a symposium entitled "Outward Signs: Lesbian/Gay Catholics in a Sacramental Church," March 16-18, 2007, in Minneapolis, MN. The symposium will highlight the essential role the sacraments play in the lives of lesbian/gay Catholics and how we understand ourselves as an inclusive Church.

Presenters in five plenary sessions will examine major sacramental themes. Brian McNaught, a prominent gay activist, will address Baptism and the Experience of Coming Out. Sister Margaret Farley, RSM, will speak about Matrimony and Same-Sex Relationships. Fr. Richard McBrien, an ecclesialogist and well-known columnist, will analyze Ordination to the Priesthood and Gay Men while Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, will address Reconciliation, Liberation, and Lesbian/Gay People. There will also be a panel of bishops, including Archbishop Francis Hurley, Bishop Leroy Matthiesen, and Bishop Joseph Sullivan, to speak about Healing our Wounds and Building a Eucharistic Community.

A variety of individual focus sessions will occur twice during the weekend. Among the focus session speakers are Michael Bayly and Julie Madden on gay/lesbian parish ministry; Sharon Casey, OP, on lesbian nuns; Fran Ferder, FSPA, on psychology; Christine Gudorf on intersex and transgendered persons; Diana Hayes on homophobia; Luke Timothy Johnson on Scripture; Anthony Kall, OFM Conv, on gay men in priesthood and religious life; Brenda Kirby on US Catholic attitudes toward homosexuality; Daniel Maguire on conscience; and Gregory Maguire on gay parenting.

Preceding the opening of the symposium, a special conference day will be held March 16, 9 am - 4 pm, for campus personnel, GLBT young adults, and parents of lesbian daughters or gay sons. James Alison, a theologian from Great Britain, will address the theme "Faith and Coming Out" at the Friday conference day.

Following is a pdf link to the six-page symposium brochure and registration form.  
<http://mysite.verizon.net/~vze43yrc/2007SympBroWEB.pdf>

For more information, contact  
New Ways Ministry,  
4012 29th Street,  
Mt. Rainier, MD 20712,  
[NewWaysM@verizon.net](mailto:NewWaysM@verizon.net),  
301-277-5674,  
[www.NewWaysMinistry.org](http://www.NewWaysMinistry.org).

## DignityUSA's Work is Blessed by Angels

DignityUSA is grateful to have the support of nearly 900 Angels who made contributions at all levels of support between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006.

These Angels have helped keep our and your Voice strong and have supported our work across the country.

The categories of "Angels" and number of donors is as follows:

**Angels of Love (\$5000 and above):** 5 individuals/couples/chapters/organizations

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For security purpose and protection of privacy, donors are not listed.

On behalf of GLBT Catholics, our families and friends, we say "Thank You!"

If you are not yet an Angel, please make a gift at [www.dignityusa.org/mem\\_reg/index.html](http://www.dignityusa.org/mem_reg/index.html).

## Welcome From the Editor

By Bill Welch

Greetings! Welcome to this edition of the *Quarterly Voice* made possible by the collective effort of members of the national board of directors and staff of DignityUSA and authors of articles and press releases.

Here you will find responses leading up to and following the issuance of guidelines for pastoral ministry to persons with a "homosexual inclination" by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

You will find the revised letter by DignityUSA on the pastoral care of LGBT people. You are invited to read and comment on the letter for valued input derived from your lived experience to help formulate a revision to be adopted at the DignityUSA Convention 2007 in July.

You will see a new look to the publication. It is my intent to make it more interactive with our readers to allow for shared experiences in certain issues, as well as what has worked in the development of leaders, chapters, ministry, talent, activities and effective welcoming and affirming faith communities.

As I take on the editorship of this publication and continue as *Dateline* editor, I welcome your feedback and humbly ask you to keep me in your prayers that I may be a channel of God's love and peace to you, our DignityUSA family and friends. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, may I be part of the Voice of DignityUSA to and within our church, the people of God.

God's blessings be with you and yours as we take on the journey and challenges of 2007.