

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.

Celebrating Relationships

By Bill Welch, Editor

Several years ago, while serving as a member of the board of directors for Dignity/San Jose (CA) and as Director for Spiritual Development, I became aware that our local GLBT community (and probably many similar communities across the country) was/were not very supportive of persons in developing, formative or ongoing relationships.

I wrote a Blessing of Couples Liturgy which Dignity/San Jose introduced to the community at a chapter-sponsored event at San Jose State University. Later, the chapter used it on an annual basis around St. Valentine's Day in conjunction with a chapter-sponsored potluck hosted in private homes. Same gender couples, heterosexual married couples and single chapter members and friends welcomed and participated in the prayerful ceremony. The presider was a non-ordained layperson.

I created a modified version for use at the DignityUSA Convention 2003 in Las Vegas. The liturgical event was well-received by about 200 participants. One couple thanked the presider and remarked it was the first public affirming, celebratory acknowledgement of their long-term relationship.

In order that it will not be construed as limited to married couples, domestic- or life-partners, I have redesigned it a "Blessing of Relationships Liturgy" to be more inclusive and welcoming of developing and formative relationships and special friendships.

With St. Valentine's Day 2007 approaching, the liturgy is provided here as a resource and incentive for adaptation by local DignityUSA chapters and faith

Continues next column

communities. Be sure to make early, timely invitations in order that people can place it on their busy calendars.

I believe persons in developing and ongoing relationships will find the Gathering Prayer, Liturgy of the Word, A Reflection on Love, Rite of Reconciliation and Rite of Blessing contain spiritual dynamics of affirmation and support, as well as something to reflect upon. It is how we see God's presence in our lives and offers encouragement to pursue and treat meaningful relationships. The liturgy lends more credence to communal participation, affirmation and support.

I invite your comments and feedback, especially from those communities which have found this to be a useful resource in their ministry. Please respond to DUSAEditor@comcast.net

Blessing of Relationships Liturgy begins on page 2.

It is being added to the Couples' Ministry portal on our website www.dignityusa.org/couples/index.html.

The *QV* (*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 *QV* 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 non-profit 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, *QV* 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

This issue:

- Celebrating Relationships — 1
- Blessing of Relationships Liturgy — 2
- Couples' Ministry — 7
- Donate Your Miles — 8
- New Designs and Changes — 9
- We Are Grateful for Your Gifts — 9
- Special Announcement — 9

Blessing of Relationships Liturgy

GATHERING PRAYER

Presider:

Sisters and brothers, trusting the promise of our brother Jesus Christ, “*Where two or more are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst,*” we pray † In the Name of our Loving God who is Mother/Father, Brother Jesus Christ and Sister Spirit.



All:

Amen.

Presider:

God be with you.

All:

And also with you.

Presider:

Brother Jesus, when you assumed our humanity and lived your redeeming ministry, you taught us to love by word and example.

There were significant others and close friends in your life whom you cherished. You wept at the news of the death of Lazarus before restoring him to life. We refer to John as *the Apostle whom You loved*. After your resurrection, you first appeared to Mary of Magdala.

At the supper with your friends the day before you died, you told your friends and us, “As my Abba has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love.

“I tell you all this that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.”¹

Therefore, we ask you be present with us as we celebrate long term living partnerships, or newfound and developing relationships with significant others in our lives.

All:

God of All Creation, as a member of your family on earth, I thank you for your loving presence. I pray that the Spirit of Truth, Hope and Courage assist me to be honest and loving towards the special person you have entrusted to my care as friend and loved one.

Help me to understand that to whatever level the relationship may grow, it is part of my relationship with you who is God and Lover of All.

Those in Committed Relationships:

Loving God, help me to be a truly loving person towards my partner-in-life and honor the personal commitment we freely exchanged.

All:

This we pray through our brother Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Continues on page 3

LITURGY OF THE WORD:

Reader #1:

A reading from the First Letter of John.

Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. Those who do not love have known nothing of God, for God is love.

God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: by sending The Only Begotten into the world, that we may have faith through the Anointed One.

Reader #2:

Love then consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that God has loved us and sent the Only Begotten to be an offering for our sins.

Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another.

Reader #3:

No one has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another, God dwells in us, and God's love is brought to perfection in us.

The way we know that we remain in God and God in us is that we have been given the Spirit. We have seen for ourselves, and can testify, That God has sent the Only Begotten as Savior of the world.

Reader #4:

When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Only Begotten, God dwells in them and they in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God in them.

Reader #5:

Love will come to perfection in us when we can face the day of judgment without fear — because our relation to this world is just like Christ's. There is no fear in love, for perfect love drives out fear. To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.

Reader #6:

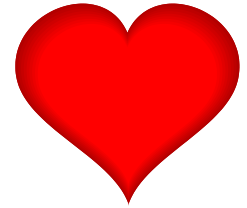
We love because God first loved us. If you say you love God but hate your brother or sister, you are a liar. For you cannot love God whom you have not seen, if you hate your neighbor whom you have seen. If we love God, we should love our sisters and brothers as well; we have this commandment from God.²
The Word of God.

All:

Thanks be to God.



Continues on page 4



A REFLECTION ON LOVE:

Presenter:

This reading is from the poem, "Spectrum of Love"© by humanist and poet Walter Rinder

"I love you."

There is a much greater motivation than simply my spoken words.

Reader #1:

For me to love, is to commit myself, freely and without reservation. I am sincerely interested in your happiness and well-being. Whatever your needs are, I will try to fulfill them and will bend in my values depending on the importance of your need. If you are lonely and need me, I will be there. If in that loneliness you need to talk, I will listen. If you need to listen, I will talk. If you need the strength of human touch, I will touch you. If you need to be held, I will hold you. I will lie naked in body with you if that be your need. If you need fulfillment of the flesh, I will give that also, but only through my love.

Reader #2:

I will try to be constant with you so that you will understand the core of my personality and from that understanding you can gain strength and security that I am acting as me. I may falter with my moods. I may project, at times, a strangeness that is alien to you which may bewilder or frighten you. There will be times when you question my motives. But because people are never constant and are as changeable as the seasons, I will try to build up within you a faith in my fundamental attitude and show you that my inconsistency is only for the moment and not a lasting part of me. I will show you love now. Each and every day, for each day is a lifetime. Every day we live, we learn more how to love. I will not defer my love nor neglect it, for if I wait until tomorrow, tomorrow never comes. It is like a cloud in the sky, passing by. They always do, you know!

Reader #3:

If I give you kindness and understanding, then I will receive your faith. If I give hate and dishonesty, I will receive your distrust. If I give you fear and am afraid, you will become afraid and fear me. I will give to you what I need to receive.

To what degree (amount) I give love is determined by my own capability. My capability is determined by the environment of my past existence and my understanding of love, truth and God. My understanding is determined by my parents, friends, places I have lived and been. All experiences that have fed into my mind from living.

Reader #4:

I will give you as much love as I can. If you will show me how to give more, then I will give more. I can only give as much as you need to receive or allow me to give. If you receive all I can give, then my love is endless and fulfilled. If you receive a portion (part) of my love, then I will give others the balance I am capable of giving. I must give all that I have, being what I am.

Reader #5:

Love is universal. Love is the movement of life. I have loved a boy, a girl, my parents, art, nature. All things in life I find beautiful. No human being or society has the right to condemn any kind of love I feel or my way of expressing it, if I am sincere, sincerity being the honest realization of myself and there is no hurt or pain intentionally involved in my life or any life my life touches.

Continues on page 5

Reader #6:

I want to become a truly loving spirit. Let my word, if I must speak, become a restoration of your soul. But when speech is silent, does [one] project the great depth of his [or her] sensitivity. When I touch you, or kiss you, or hold you, I am saying a thousand words.



RITE OF RECONCILIATION

(NOTE : Each person in a couple is asked to turn towards his or her partner. You are invited to hold hands.)

Presider:

Dear God, Source of Life, you have a special relationship with us. We know you as Our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. You have chosen us to be your own.

Time and again you have admonished us that whatsoever we do to our sisters and brothers, we also do to you. You taught us that when we separate ourselves from you we are reconnected by reconciliation. You also admonish that before coming to you we first seek reconciliation with our brothers and sisters.

Therefore, gathered in your presence, we seek your special blessing on our evolving relationship with you, as well as a significant other in our lives. We prayerfully ask you and our loved one's forgiveness:

Reader #1:

For the times I have failed to listen, been inattentive to my companion's needs, or not been present in times of sorrow, loss, misfortune or distress.

Reader #2:

For the times I have been short-tempered and expressed my anger with enmity or disrespect, or assaulted her or him verbally, emotionally or physically.

Reader #3:

For the times I have been less than honest with, wrongfully mistrusted or questioned the integrity of my companion.

Reader #4:

For the times I have not upheld my promises or commitments.

Reader #5:

For the times I have hurt my companion by my silence or failure to engage in conversation to reconcile or address areas of conflict.

Reader #6:

For the times I have failed my companion in any way by acts of commission or omission.

Continues on page 6

Presider:

As part of our reconciliation, we also acknowledge those things that draw us closer to God and each other and pray in thanksgiving:

Reader #1:

For the times I am lonely and my companion becomes present and affirming by voice, expression, touch or deed.

Reader #2:

For the times I am brought reassurance, support, joy, hope and happiness to my life.

Reader #3:

For the thoughtful things done to express love, affection, commitment, care and fidelity.

Reader #4:

For the times I suffer loss or pain and my companion offers solace, compassion, and comfort, and holds me close in reassuring, caring, and loving embraces.

Reader #5:

For the times we have set things aside in order to carefully address grievances or items of concern with mutual trust and respect to reach amicable solutions.

Reader #6:

For the times we freely give of ourselves sharing in intimacy of word and touch that we may grow in our personal and shared lives.

RITE OF BLESSING

Presider:

Throughout human history we find God as Provider and Nurturer with such examples as the manna and water for the nomadic chosen people in the desert and Christ feeding the hungry in soul and body.

It was with water that we were initiated into our life with Christ at baptism. We now ask God send our sister Spirit to enrich and nourish our lives with water.

(Please extend your right arm with your palm facing downward towards the container of water as together we pray.)

All:

Beloved God, your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth; it nourishes and refreshes us and brings us eternal life.

Bless † this water and give us your protection all the days of our lives. Renew the living spring of your life within us.

Protect us in spirit and body that we may live the fullness of life now and in eternity. We ask this through our brother Jesus Christ. Amen.

Continues on page 7



Blessing of Couples Liturgy
Continued from page 6

(NOTE: Sprinkling water on those gathered, presider says:)

Presider:

May the blessing of God, Who is † Mother/Father, Brother Jesus Christ and Sister Spirit remain with us always.

(NOTE: Following the sprinkling of water, companions are invited to come forward to bless each other with water.)

Presider:

God be with you.

All:

And also with you.

Presider:

God, we thank you for that special person in our life as an extension of your loving creation and living presence. Help us to recognize and appreciate our role in perpetuating that divine love and presence.

Let us recognize and celebrate the good in our partners, ourselves and all of God's children.

As we leave, we ask you to be our loving mentor that we may act responsibly towards each other with love, compassion, respect and dignity. This we pray in the presence of our brother Jesus Christ.

All:

Amen.

¹ and ² New Testament references taken from "*The Inclusive New Testament*," Priest for Equality, W. Hyattsville, MD, a project of the Quixote Center.

Liturgy developed and produced by Bill Welch, Director for Spiritual Development, Dignity/San Jose (CA), Feb 2000, Modified Jul 2003, Jan 2007.

Couples' Ministry

By Bill Welch, Editor

The roots of DignityUSA's couples' ministry goes back to DignityUSA's 12th Biennial Convention held in Hollywood, CA in 1995, where the Board of Directors and National House of Delegates (no longer within the organizational structure) authorized the formation of a National Couples Task Force, which began meeting in March 1996.

Following the completion and analysis of a survey by the task force, the group proposed the following to the DignityUSA National Board of Directors in October 1996:

1. That DignityUSA formulate guidelines for Holy Unions.
2. That DignityUSA develop a resource booklet for couples' ministry.
3. That DignityUSA declare an annual National Couples Day/Month.

The Board accepted the recommendations and encouraged the task force to follow through on them.

A resource book was developed and provided to each of DignityUSA's local chapters as an enticement for the establishment of couples' ministries at local chapter levels.

The resource guide included such things as:

- Guidelines for Holy Unions
- A sample program of preparation for a Holy Union developed and used by Dignity/Washington (DC)
- Essential elements of a holy union ceremony
- Information on DignityUSA's National Registry of Holy Unions
- Examples of Holy Union Ceremonies developed or adopted by some local DignityUSA chapters
- Suggested examples of support programs and events sponsored by some DignityUSA chapters
- A bibliography of resource materials.

Continues next column

Continues on page 8

Couples' Ministry
Continued from page 7

DignityUSA's National Registry for Holy Unions was established in July 1997.

Further information on DignityUSA's Couples' Ministry Resource Guide will be found on our website at: <http://www.dignityusa.org/couples/index.html>.

Also visit DignityUSA's homepage at: <http://www.dignityusa.org>.

Suggestions

I believe some of the best ways to garner and profess support of developing and ongoing relationships are:

- Periodic community spiritual and social events such as the Blessing of Relationships Liturgy displayed in this publication beginning on [page 2](#).
- Annual events in February around St. Valentine's Day
 - Celebrating anniversaries of ongoing relationships
 - Encouraging Holy Unions as public events within local chapters and other faith communities
 - Welcoming couples at chapter or faith community Masses, liturgical events, retreats, and social events
 - Inquire about the welfare of a partner when absent
 - As appropriate, visit absent partners during times of illness, hospitalization, grief, loss of loved one, etc.
 - Above all, respect, honor and support developing and ongoing relationships, as well as the personal and shared lives of the friends and partners.



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

DignityUSA Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Sam Sinnett - President
Margaret M. Burns - Vice President
Paula J. Lavallee - Secretary
Christopher Lawrence - Treasurer

At-Large Board Members

Gabino Cabanilla
Leo Egashira
Joe Gallagher
Marty Grochala
Mark Matson
Theresa Myers
Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues
Lewis Tanner
Mario Torrigino
Rita Ann Wagner
Tom Yates

National Office

DignityUSA
PO Box 15373
Washington, DC 20003-5373
Voice: 202-861-0017 or 800-877-8797
Fax: 202-543-5511
www.dignityusa.org
info@dignityusa.org

Staff

Michael Seneco, Office Administrator
info@dignityusa.org

Richard Ressa, Database Manager
datamgr@verizon.net

DONATE YOUR MILES

If you are willing to put your name in a Bank-of-Miles to help with traveling expenses of our Executive Committee representing YOU at an event, or to bring speakers to the DignityUSA Convention 2007 in Austin, TX, please send your name, contact information and name of airline to Lourdes at LRODNO@aol.com.

Your Board of Directors appreciates your generosity and support.

New Designs and Changes

Watch for new design features and a fresh look in DignityUSA's Internet web site.

Following discussions by members of our communications committee, our very talented web manager, Chuck Provancher, quickly responded with a redesign of the web site homepage and navigational features on the web site.

You will find a fresh, clean, colorful, attractive display of the homepage with the latest news or features at the top of the page under the mission statement and recycling testimonials.

You will find excerpts from our current *Dateline* and *QV* publications with enabled links to the full current edition and archived copies.

For navigational improvements, you will find flyout menus for most of the navigational buttons located in the upper portion of the left column (frame) display. Clicking on the navigational buttons or items listed in the flyout menus will take you to the appropriate portal contents.

Your national executive committee has enthusiastically endorsed the implementation of the changes.

You will find your browsing of the web site to be pleasantly easier, interesting and more enjoyable. You will also find the site chock full of information and resources.

Go to <http://www.dignityusa.org>.

Perhaps you noticed the logo for this publication in the header of the opening page.

The "Romanized" *QV* logo and publication name is an abbreviated form of "*quo vadis*," a Latin phrase meaning "*Where are you going?*" coming out of DignityUSA's assessment and re-visioning process.

The *QV* (*Quarterly Voice*) of DignityUSA includes news, views, commentary, special reports, book reviews, information sharing by individuals, Dignity USA chapters, faith communities and allies, and similar information and resource materials.

We Are Grateful for Your Gifts

By Marty Grochala, Fundraising Committee Chair

In the 4th Quarter 2006 hard-copy edition of DignityUSA's *Quarterly Voice* we listed about 900 contributors to DignityUSA during fiscal year 2005-2006.

Many thanks to all members who have made contributions in the first quarter of our fiscal year (Oct - Dec 2006). Gifts to date total \$47,620.

We thank all who have made monthly Guardian Angel gifts, contributed through their Anniversary membership renewal letter, responded to our Advent Appeal, or just felt compelled to be generous. You have all helped to *Amplify Our Voice*.

Continues next column

Our fundraising goal for Fiscal Year 2007 (October '06 to September '07) is \$175,400.

We are off to a good start in meeting this goal.

If you have not yet made a gift in support of DignityUSA, please consider doing so in the coming months. Your support is vital to DignityUSA's ability to effectively minister to and voice the concerns of GLBT Catholics, our families and friends.

Internet online donations may be made at our website <http://www.dignityusa.org> and clicking on the JOIN, RENEW or DONATE button of the homepage. Currently we accept VISA, Mastercard and American Express credit or debit cards.

You may contact Michael Seneco, Office Administrator, at info@dignityusa.org or by phone at 800-877-8797 or 202-861-0017.

You may send checks or money orders, made payable to Dignity, Inc., to DignityUSA, PO Box 15373, Washington DC 20003-5373.

We are an IRS-recognized non-profit organization. Thank you for your generosity.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

DignityUSA's national office has relocated to its new shared site.

Information below is now operational.

New mailing address:

DignityUSA
P.O. Box 15373
Washington, DC 20003-5373

New Fax number:

202-543-5511

Unchanged voice phone numbers:

202-861-0017
800-877-8797

Unchanged email address:

Info@dignityusa.org