



DIGNITY

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR CATHOLIC HOMOPHILES AND CONCERNED HETEROPHILES

VOLUME IV

NUMBER 9

NOVEMBER 1973

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EDITORIAL



NEEDS DEMAND ACTION

The first national convention of DIGNITY issued a letter that was sent to all bishops and major superiors of religious communities in the United States. A copy of that letter appears in this issue.

Of particular importance in the letter are the listed needs of the Gay Catholic community -- not an exhaustive list but a list meant to set forth the most basic needs which, when satisfied, will open the way to a whole new era in the lives of Gay Catholics.

Certainly, the Church has an obligation of ministry to Gay Catholics. They constitute a sizeable minority with special needs -- needs that have all kinds of ramifications: psychological, legal, social, spiritual, familial, economic. To see only a sex act as the object of concern is an oversimplification. Counseling chastity as the solution to all the problems of Gays is no solution. Too many other things are involved, including some serious second thoughts in the fields of sexual theology and biblical interpretation. As long as bishops and priests see only sex as an issue, no effective apostolate can be initiated. As long as they seek no cure for their own heterosexual homophobia, they remain too sick to meet the needs of the Gay portion of their flock. As long as they refuse to look beyond the stereotype, ministry and needs can have little meaning for them.

Arguments for and against an official apostolate can be advanced. Still, as long as a priest must work with Gays voluntarily in a program of his own, the heterosexual Catholic is going to be very suspicious indeed, and very un-Christian. Official sanction for a program, official appointment of priests will not only protect the "missionary" but will protect the rights of the Gay Catholic because it is presumed the priest will be a "specialist" -- one who knows the problems, knows the Gay scene, is willing to work for solutions on the personal, social, legal, and ecclesiastical levels.

If a ministry is to be established, it can best be done when there is a recognizable group to work with. Gays, as such, are not immediately identifiable. A group such as DIGNITY is. The ministry, to be most effective, should preferably work with a group to which Gays can readily relate. Many Gay Catholics (most?) no longer readily relate to the clergy. A group such as DIGNITY could be the middle ground on which the Gay Catholic community and the clergy meet in a ministry that truly ministers -- SERVES, not a ministry that seeks to dominate, to change culture and life-style for the sake of sexual uniformity.

The Church has to be willing to listen to Gay Catholics. Bishops have to listen. Priests and religious have to listen. The laity has to listen. Most don't even know what a homophile is. They think they do because their minds have closed on a stereotype. And how is that stereotype to be eradicated if the Church doesn't listen? If Catholic avenues of communication are denied, how can Gay Catholics speak to the Church? The Catholic press, Catholic radio and television are avenues that should be available if truth is desired. There should be an opportunity to speak before Catholic groups. Direct, personal contact is the most effective antidote to prejudice.

Underlying all needs is the need for a real bishop in the diocese. More than anyone else, the burden to listen and to provide ministry falls on him. If he won't listen, others will not be very willing to listen. If he won't take the initiative, few others will be brave enough to do it. If he can't recognize his own homophobia as a sickness, who else will see the need for a cure by seeking the truth in personal encounter? Before God, he must bear full responsibility for the lives that are crushed beneath the weight of his crozier.

Let the bishop of the diocese meet with representative Gay Catholics. Let him listen to them define their own needs. Let him open up channels of communication with the clergy and laity. Let him establish an apostolate and select priests who can truly serve. Let him provide for a permanent means of official dialogue to be carried on by his own commission and representative Gay Catholics through which forms of ministry can evolve both to Gay and to Straight and through which the local church can grow in clarity of vision, depth of perception, and the all embracing warmth of Christian love.

The grace of his office is there. How many bishops will use it? God give us a bishop!

DIGNITY LETTER TO AMERICAN HIERARCHY

(The following letter was prepared at the first national DIGNITY Convention for release to all bishops and major superiors of religious communities in the United States. DIGNITY'S "Statement of Position and Purpose" was included with each letter.)



e, the delegates to the first national Convention of DIGNITY, an organization of Roman Catholic homophile men and women and concerned heterosexuals do hereby address this affirmation and appeal to the bishops of the United States of

Although homosexuals have often been a persecuted minority, suffering a martyrdom across the centuries because of their sexual orientation, many Gay Catholics never lost their faith in Jesus Christ and the Church he founded. We are confident that the compassion and understanding that Jesus displayed toward all misunderstood and persecuted minorities must always be reflected in the pastoral concern of the apostolic successors of his apostles.

America.

We believe that through Baptism we share in the Death-Resurrection of Christ and have an inherent dignity that is preserved and strengthened through the sacramental life of the Church in which we have a right to participate as Gay Catholics.

The bishops at the 1971 International Synod in Rome called on all members of the Church "to be prophetic in championing the rights of individuals and groups that are treated unjustly" and called for an end to all forms of injustice. Surely, the Gay community within the Church is just such a minority that has been treated unjustly.

We believe that homophiles can express their sexuality in a manner that is consonant with Christ's teaching. We believe that all sexuality should be exercised in an ethically responsible and unselfish way.

We, in convention assembled, wish to recount the constantly increasing interest and pastoral activity throughout the



ST. BERNARD

I LOVE BECAUSE I LOVE.

United States designed to offset the many past injustices to Gay Catholics. In some dioceses regular Sunday Masses are offered specifically for Gay Catholics; in others, bishops have commissioned their clergy to apostolates for the Gay community. The Catholic Conference of Ohio this year sponsored a statewide workshop for the Campus Ministry on counseling the Catholic homosexual. Catholic universities and seminaries are increasingly exploring new dimensions of moral theology and pastoral theology relative to a better understanding of sexual morality. Much has been done in recent years by the Church to make Gay Catholics feel welcome in the Church to which they belong and which they love.

We appeal to you, our bishops, to continue to expand your apostolate to us. We are concerned about the alarmingly large number of Gay Catholics who constantly leave the Church to find spiritual consolation in other religious bodies more open to their needs. We need your leadership. We need your love and concern. We need your apostolic guidance for the Catholic clergy and laity alike to a better understanding of and compassion for our life style. Above all, we need justice. But there is a widespread awareness that the traditional approaches of the Church are inadequate. Much remains to be done.

Among the pressing needs of Gay Catholics today are the following:

- 1) increased and continuing education of the clergy in all aspects of sexual theology;
- 2) officially recognized apostolates through which priests can work within the Gay community without the fear of stigma by association;
- 3) recognition of the right of form groups within the Church th collective voice can be heard an vice is provided for their speci
- 4) access to communication with the purpose of eradicating false prejudices which infect the mind Catholics;
- 5) meaningful dialogue with those who exercise ecclesiastical authority and who consequently have the responsibility of providing a ministry to the Gays within the Christian community who represent a significant percentage of the population according to recent scientific studies;
- 6) church leadership in the reform of the criminal laws of our country that perpetuate

grave injustices against Gays and in the reform of civil laws that restrict the exercise of their rights, particularly in the areas of employment and housing.

We of DIGNITY pledge our help to you in this vital task of improving the Church's apostolate to Gay Catholics. We affirm our loyalty to our Church and our confidence in you, our beloved bishops. Just ask and our membership stands ready to help you individually and collectively. Our resources and experiences are at your service. Let us work together -- bishop, priest, laity, homosexual and heterosexual -- to spread the good news of God's kingdom and the means of salvation which are found in the Church and the sacraments. We, saints and sinners alike, are the Church, ever striving for greater sanctity. We appeal to you to help us grow in faith and loving service. This is our hope in Christ, in the Church and in you.

Sincerely in Christ,

THE 1973 NATIONAL DIGNITY CONVENTION

Paul A. Diederich, Executive Director

John E. Hart, Treasurer

(Rev.) Thomas C. Oddo, Secretary

***** QUICKIES *****

Please inform us of any change of address. Don't forget to mail in your ballot (p. 9). It is extremely important that the total membership express itself on this issue: the Constitution. Priests interested in helping to establish a DIGNITY

Chapter in their area should contact the national office in Boston. Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco put out very fine local newsletters. New York is preparing to publish its first issue.

.... No letters to the editor were received for this issue. Hopefully we can publish some in the next issue.

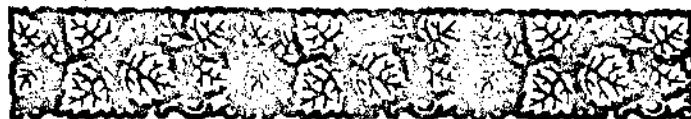


POETRY

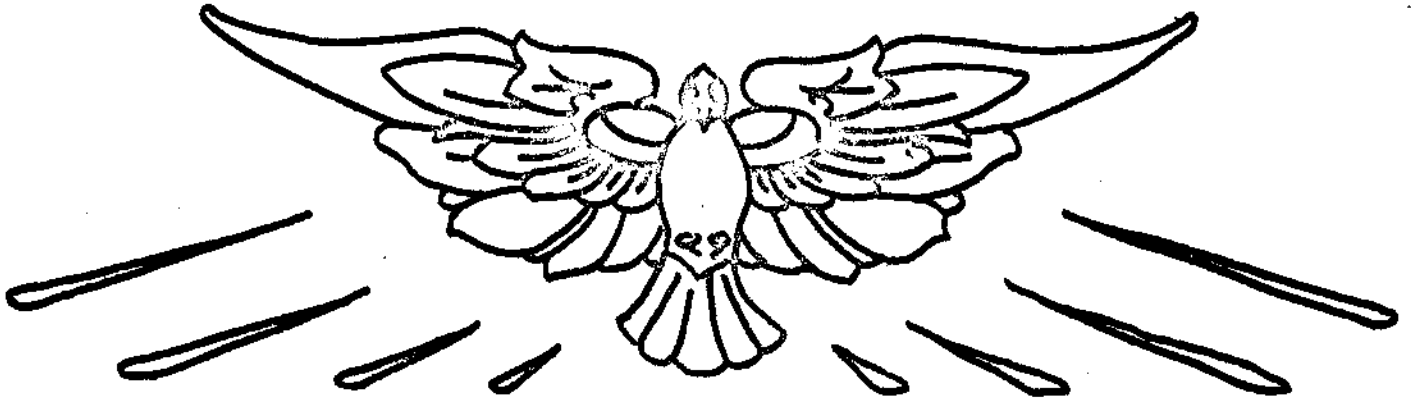
Le Voyant Le Voyou

(in this city in this night in the stench that the river makes in the acid air in this decay i watch from my window a garden a terrace a hideaway and you who walk who walk one step in front of the other across the terrace lace upon lace upon soft skin unbuttoned you slip into a transparent blouse beige and a summer breeze moves the folds searching unaware that the city watches not caring you in whom my blue eye watches the strike of a match its odor indelible you reach to light to light a candle while the smoke and circles drift and the rings drift and drift circling around you and me and the smell of the trees from my window the summer blossoms tapestries of purple and green in the night in the dark faded grey and you stand there looking out into the night past the blossoms the trees at the railing staring and i console you and i console me and i look at you sitting standing walking you who walk one thigh and the other thigh one in front of the other and for a second for a breathless moment you look up you glance up into my eyes and you say nothing and nothing moves not the wind the trees not a sound nor does the river speak but for a second into each others eyes we say nothing and yet with no one around it is said you know it is said and o and o afterward you know it will be so much better)

Adele
Philadelphia



THE SPIRIT IS CALLING US



Fr. John J. McNeill, S.J.

(The following is an excerpt from the address delivered by Fr. McNeill at the first national DIGNITY Convention. Subsequent issues will carry the remainder of that address. The first three introductory pages have been omitted.)

I. DIALOGUE WITH THE CHURCH

The 1971 International Synod of Catholic Bishops issued a statement, Justice in the World, in which they emphasized that action for justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, and part of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. One of those "oppressive situations" which calls for action on behalf of justice is certainly that of the homosexual. The message of love in the Gospels implies an absolute demand for the recognition of the dignity and rights of all individuals; but for the most part such a recognition has not been extended by the Catholic Church to the homosexual in its midst.

Structural Social Injustices Frequently Christians simply do not see structural social injustices as sin. Consequently, they feel no obligation to do anything about them. So powerful and pervasive are these social structures that people are not aware of their existence; rather, they are inclined to see a law of nature or of God in what are purely human creations. Thus, they tend not to accept responsibility for these social

structures which embody and make operative attitudes of prejudice and blindness. The Church has only recently become aware that racial prejudice and discrimination against women were structured unconsciously into the life and operation of the Church. The Church's attitude toward the homosexual is another example of structural social injustice, equally based in a questionable interpretation of Scripture, prejudice and blind adherence to purely human traditions falsely interpreted as laws of nature and of God. There is, then, a need to undertake a process of consciousness raising, whereby these injustices and the ideas and structures which support them can be identified.

Right To Organize For Dialogue All members of the Church are called on by the Synod to be prophetic in championing the rights of individuals and groups that are treated unjustly and in calling for an end to all forms of injustice. Participation by persons in the discourse which affects their lives and destinies

is recognized by the Synod as a basic right and human need. The Synod fathers recognize a special need to implement that right within the Church itself so that everyone can be heard in a spirit of dialogue. The Synod makes the point that the action of the Church is to be directed above all to those men who because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice. This has certainly been the situation of the Christian homosexual within the Church. Consequently, Church authorities should recognize the same right for the Christian homosexual minority that the Synod proclaims for all minority groups, the right of association and the right to enter into dialogue with authorities and the rest of the community.

All too often in the past the Church and its moral theologians have made a priori statements concerning the morality and life-style of homosexuals without any serious effort at dialogue. In this area especially the words spoken by Cardinal Dearden apply: "We must freely acknowledge that the Church must learn and not merely teach what is required for justice." Homosexuals within the Church have an obligation and, therefore, a right to organize and attempt to enter into dialogue with the Church. Church authorities in turn should show an example in terms of just behavior toward the homosexual minority by displaying an active willingness to hear, dialogue and seek ways to resolve whatever injustice becomes clear as a result of dialogue. It is only by means of such a dialogue that the Church can attain true consciousness of the injustices which the homosexual suffers and a real process can begin of separating off the true implications of Christian faith and morality for the homosexual from the misunderstandings and prejudice of the past.

Sexual Revolution It should be obvious to

all of us in the Christian community by now that our culture is in the throes of a serious revolt against the standards, forms and values of western Christian tradition concerning human sexuality. The revolt takes many forms: The women's liberation movement, the gay liberation movement, the prohibition of pre-marital sex, the ideal of exclusive sexual fidelity within marriage and the charge

that the Christian tradition is puritanical and basically opposed to sexual pleasure and fulfillment.

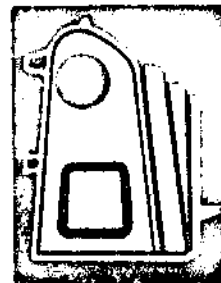
There is a real danger that the revolutionaries in their frequently legitimate revolt against traditional cultural attitudes concerning sexual behavior will destroy the real human values which these cultural attitudes both preserved and at times distorted. The sexual revolution places a difficult task on the shoulders of the Christian theologian and pastor, the task of separating off the true ideals and implications of Christian belief from an overlay of purely human traditions, which, while they may have helped to preserve true Christian values in the past, no longer do so.

Moral Ideals vs.
Cultural Stereotypes

The Church must continue its divinely appointed

task of upholding moral ideals for the truly human use of sex; however, it must not continue to confuse moral ideals with cultural stereotypes and purely formal rules. As Thielecke observes: "The primary moral problem in sexual relations is not sex within marriage versus sex outside of marriage, or sex within a heterosexual versus sex within a homosexual relationship. The problem is sex as a de-personalizing force versus sex as a fulfillment of human relationship."

Consequently, there is a serious need for the Christian community to make a critical



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return to its sources in Scripture and tradition in the process of dialogue with the parties concerned. It would be well for the Church to frankly face the fact that rationalization of sexual prejudice, animated by false notions of sexual privilege have played no inconsiderable part in forming the traditions we have inherited and probably control public opinion and policy today in sexual matters to a greater extent than is commonly realized.

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## from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



While going over our Statement of Position and Purpose I realized how in these past formative years we have done a great deal towards our own collective and/or individual spiritual growth. In line with our responsibility to the Church, we've supported her as individuals, given much thought to the concepts of Gay parishes and Masses, etc., in the Newsletter and Chapter/Mission discussions. The same applies to the individual responsibility we have towards ourselves, in the areas of self-acceptance, our own sense of dignity and in becoming more active members of the Church and society.

We've turned inward in a sense on an individual level and on a collective level in our own Chapters and Missions and just recently on a National level at the convention. However, we started something new at the convention, we started the long (and sometimes painful) task of turning outward. This we did by addressing a statement of purpose and love to our Bishops and the major superiors of the various religious orders in the U. S. and Canada. Further we reached out in a statement of love and support to our brothers and sisters in the Metropolitan Community Churches. This is only a beginning. We must now continue to reach-out collectively on a national and local level, and on an individual plain.

As Christians we have a duty to be of service to our fellow human beings. As members of DIGNITY we have a special obligation to reach out to our Gay brothers and sisters, to spread the word that Christ is here for all of us, that Jesus' words are for everyone, not just for heterosexuals, but for all persons.

How we can do this is a matter of individual preference. How to render visible the love of Christ can best be decided by you, the individual member of DIGNITY, wherever you are! Chapters and Missions can work with other local Gay groups for justice and solidarity. All of us can work towards aiding others to understand, to destroy myths which abound to the point of choking us in some areas.

The time to turn out-ward is here! We must (unfortunately) continue to be discrete to protect ourselves and our families, yet we have so many opportunities to be Christian and to act in loving ways within the Gay Community. Outside the Gay Community it can be sticky, but with a liberal application of Faith and Charity we certainly can make that impression which made the observers of the early Church remark, "See how they love one another".

I would suggest only a few ways which we can use to reach out; visits to shut-ins, prisoners, the elderly. As individuals, in our conversations with friends, our confessors and others who are interested enough to listen. Letters to Newspapers are good (if they'll print them), and publicity where possible about DIGNITY activities. The list could go on indefinitely, but again, it's up to you, the individual member and Chapter/Mission.

It's time to go out of ourselves, painful though it may be in many cases. A time to share His love which we have felt and seen in DIGNITY, "...for He has anointed me and sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those who are in prison, sight to those who are blind, to liberate the oppressed peoples and proclaim a time of grace for the Lord." (Luke 4: 18-19)

Paul Diederich

THE PROPOSED NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

A DISSENTING VIEW



We, the Board of Directors of DIGNITY/Chicago, urge a NO vote on the proposed national constitution. We object to Article III, Section A-1: "Each chapter and mission will elect two representatives to the national board,

one woman and one man....If no woman or man chooses to run, then only one from that Chapter will be represented on the National Board of Governors." This article denies the local Chapters and Missions free and equal representation on the Board of Governors. It denies free representation by dictating to the local group whom it shall elect as its representatives. We feel that we should be free to elect the two people from the Chapter best qualified to represent us regardless of sex. It denies equal representation by depriving a local group of one representative if it chooses not to comply with the above sexist edict.

The proposed constitution makes the Board of Governors the chartering authority and final appeal board in all matters. Such an important body must reflect free and equal representation. It has been argued that if the sexist article proves to be a mistake, the constitution can be amended. Please note that any amendment to the constitution must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Governors. We would then be in the position of asking a loaded Board of Governors to vote on an amendment to unload itself.

Article III, Section A-1 of the proposed constitution is unwise and unjust. Vote NO.

Board of Directors  
DIGNITY/Chicago

CONSTITUTION VOTE

The first national convention prepared a Constitution for DIGNITY that was meant to be temporary. This temporary Constitution, however, cannot go into effect until the membership ratifies it.

Until we have a Constitution, the national officers of DIGNITY have the responsibility of leading us. They operate within the framework of our "Statement of Position and Purpose" which has been incorporated into the new Constitution. But without a Constitution, DIGNITY lacks structure and the guidelines necessary to protect it as it grows. At the rate we are growing, it should be obvious how much we need a Constitution.

The convention delegates have worked out a temporary document, but only the membership can make it operative. Surely, this is not asking too much. Your vote is needed -- the vote of every paid member. Votes are to be mailed directly to the national office or to your Chapter or Mission, the chairman of which will in turn mail all ballots to Boston for counting.

The Constitution appeared in the September issue. You may feel it is a good instrument and vote in favor of it. If so, we would appreciate a comment on the ballot indicating what points you feel should be retained in the permanent Constitution to be drawn up in the next few years. You may feel it is not a good instrument and vote against it. If so, we would appreciate a comment on the ballot indicating what points you feel should be changed for the permanent Constitution. All such comments will be a great help to the committee that must prepare the permanent Constitution.

Give serious consideration to your vote before sending it in. Is it a workable document? Is it representative of all members of DIGNITY? These and many other questions should be considered before voting.

PLEASE VOTE. All votes must be in before December 1, 1973.

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"In thinking be mature." (1 Cor. 14:20)



# CHAPTER NEWS



**BOSTON:** Members and guests meet the first Sunday of each month at St. Clement's (1105 Boylston St.), 1:00 p.m. for the general meeting and Mass. .... The December 2 meeting will be the first anniversary of DIGNITY/Boston. A special Mass and celebration is planned. .... A Christmas party is tentatively set for Dec. 16. .... Fr. Tom Oddo presented a series of lectures on "Humanizing Sexuality" (Oct. 15, 29, Nov. 5) at the Paulist Community Center. .... Representatives of DIGNITY were guests of Boston's Gay Way Radio, Oct. 4. .... Home liturgies are a regular feature of this Chapter's spiritual program.

**CHICAGO:** Gay Mass every Sunday, 7:00 p.m. at St. Sebastian Church (824 W. Wellington), followed by coffee social. .... New Board officers are: Dennis Taylor (Chairman), Jim Gagnon (Vice-Chairman), Jim Ozga (Secretary), and George Herrera (Treasurer). .... Home liturgies are becoming more popular. Those who wish to host a home Mass are to contact Jim Voepel, Chairman of Liturgy Committee. .... Oct. 21 was the 3rd anniversary celebration of the Mass for the Gay community. Fr. John McNeill, S.J., was the guest speaker. Paul Diederich, national Executive Director of DIGNITY, attended. .... A 3-day retreat to be held at Cabrini Contact Center in DesPlaines, Illinois (Feb. 15-17, 1974).

**LOS ANGELES:** Members and guests meet every 3rd Saturday for the General Meeting, 8:00 p.m., at Los Angeles City College Newman Center (4665 Willowbrook, 2 blks west of Vermont, 1 blk. south of Santa Monica). .... Halloween Dance was held Oct. 26, co-sponsored with Greater Liberated Chicanos.

**NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY:** Mass is celebrated at 7:30 p.m. before the General Meeting at the Jesuit Residence (220 W. 98th St.).

**SAN DIEGO:** Members and guests meet 2nd Saturday of each month, 8:00 p.m. at the Gay Center of San Diego (2250 B St.).

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Members and guests meet the 1st Sun. of each month at St. Peter's Church (Alabama & 24th Sts.), 4:00 p.m. For info., call: John Hammett (282-3170), Paula McGorkle (771-7289), or write to DIGNITY, 2449 Harrison, S.F. 94110. ....

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** Members and guests meet every 1st & 3rd Fri. at George Washington University Newman Center, 2210 F St., NW, 8:00 p.m.

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## OFFICIAL BALLOT

I vote  FOR

AGAINST

ratification of the proposed national Constitution.

WOMEN AND MEN TOGETHER

(This brief statement was prepared for presentation at the recent DIGNITY convention and appeared in this form in the October issue of DIGNITY/San Diego's newsletter, "Hummingbird".)

It's doubly hard for Lesbians to reconcile themselves with the Catholic Church, for on finding themselves cast out on account of their sexuality, they often notice for the first time that there has been really no place for them in the Church all along. This causes, in many cases, as deep a hurt as the rejection for expression of our sexuality. In the Church, women have been distinctly third class citizens. First class being clerics, and then the lay men. Until the hard-fought battle preceding the Second Vatican Council (to simply allow women to sit in the council chamber), the opinions and feelings of women have been ignored. Yet it is said that women are the backbone of Mother Church.

In the gay community, and all other communities too, this attitude has been a problem. Yet we exist with many of the same problems of guilt and alienation facing all our brothers, gay, straight, Catholic, non-Catholic. We feel it is important that attitudes among men, in the Church and out of it, be changed from giving lip service to equality among women and men, to being a reality in everyone's life. Our aims at this convention are: FIRST, how to bring about this integration and equality; SECOND, what is the importance and significance of this move toward equality?

We, women and men in Dignity, would like to be able to work hand in hand, co-equally, to achieve humanity. Only together will we be able to break down the barriers of sexism in our lives. Only together will we be able to achieve integration within our lives and closeness to God.

Toni Hoyden



George Washington Carver: "When you do the common things of life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world."



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