

dignity/usa newsletter

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FOR THE GAY AND LESBIAN CATHOLIC MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

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Weakland Evicts Milwaukee Chapter

In two different dioceses of Wisconsin, two very different events took place in recent weeks. In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the chapter was evicted from its parish meeting site. In the Diocese of Madison, people gathered at an AIDS Service co-sponsor ed by several local gay and lesbian groups.

Wisconsin Service

Over one hundred people gathered in Madison, Wisconsin recently for a Service of Remembrance and Reconciliation and created a memorial banner for groups to use in worship and education about care for persons living with AIDS and those whose lives are affected by the disease.

Symbolic rituals, music, poetry, dance, prayer and stories enhanced the service which was held at Drew House, an interdenominational Christian center on the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin.

INTEGRITY-DIGNITY/Madison sponsored the annual event in cooperation with an ecumenical group of clergy and laity and Affirmation, the United Methodist gay/lesbian group. Ron Kondrat, an I/D member read Michael Niemoeiler's poem, "The Names DIGNITY/Los Angeles member wrote after viewing the AIDS quilt. The poem evokes strong images of names joining together and being raised up by the hands of loved ones who work together on the quilt. It appeared on a recent front page of this national newsletter.

Clergy of many denominations including Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Moravian took part during the services; people were invited to write the names of deceased friends on a banner which will be used as a memorial in area services; and led a congregational lit any "for the death of fear," as slips of paper were burned. Liturgical dancers moved to the folk hymn "If God Is For Us, Who Can Be Against?" - a feminist piece because the two women embrace and support each other several times. A loaf of rye bread was broke and distributed as a symbol of unity among all present. Also included in the two-hour service was a slide show of panels from the national quilt as well as music by a pianist, cellist, guitar 1st and singers.

Archbishop Rembert Weakland, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, joined an increasing number of American bishops who have banned local DIGNITY chapters from meeting in Catholic facilities. Weakland, a Collegeville Benedictine monk, is considered to be among the most liberal of the American bishops.

Weakland has named St. Pius X Parish in Milwaukee to be a center for gay and lesbian ministry and a weekly Mass and other services will be planned there. He cited the "aggressive stance against church doctrine (on homosexuality)" which he feels DIGNITY has taken in recent years, as being incompatible with continued use of church facilities.

His action has not deterred the chapter which has found another location for their liturgies - the Cream City Foundation Center, a gay and lesbian community center. According to Kevin Guader, chapter chairperson, the chapter has some priests who have agreed to preside at their Masses.

CHICAGO UPDATE

Members and friends of DIGNITY joined in a candlelight vigil at the Cenacle Retreat House in Chicago, which for several years has hosted their annual retreat. This year, the chapter received notice from the Cenacle Sisters that they would no longer be welcome as a group, to use the facilities. The Sisters joined Cardinal Joseph Berardin in condemning the DIGNITY/USA statement that same sex relationships can be "loving, life-giving and life-affirming." This statement was adopted by the House of Delegates at the 1987 Miami Convention.

Sister Rosemary Duncan, ministry coordinator for the retreat center stated that the recent decision applied only to DIGNITY and despite statements made to the contrary, the Cenacle will continue to provide ministry to gay and lesbian people, the alienated and rejected and in particular, persons living with AIDS and their families.

The Religious of the Cenacle conduct 85 retreat centers in the world, 32 of which are in the U.S.



A Blessed Easter to All
Our Members and Friends
from the Officers and
Board of Directors of
DIGNITY/USA

Art by William Hart McNichols
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Why Bother?

PART II of "Why Bother?"
Lesbian and Gay People
from the Christian Tradition
appears on pages 6-7

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