

# dignity / usa newsletter

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FOR THE GAY AND LESBIAN CATHOLIC MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

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## Southern California Bishops Act Up!

Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles and twelve bishops of dioceses in Southern California have prohibited priests from celebrating Masses sponsored by DIGNITY chapters in the Province of Los Angeles. The provincial area is larger than the L.A. Archdiocese and also includes the dioceses of Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, Fresno and Monterey. The decision affects five chapters in DIGNITY Region IX: Los Angeles, Westside (L.A.), Long Beach, San Diego and San Gabriel Valley.

The statement initiated by Mahony said their action stemmed from DIGNITY's repudiation of the Church's "clear and constant moral teaching" against homosexual acts, according to a story appearing in the Los Angeles Times.

The recent directive follows Mahony's earlier edict not to allow Masses to be held on property owned by the archdiocese, an action also taken by other U.S. bishops. In his letter to the diocesan and religious order priests of the dioceses included in the L.A. Provincialate, he advised them of the ban and stressed that the bishops "had no other choice" but to institute the order against celebration of Masses for the organization in any setting or for any reason.

What made his move all the more unexpected - at least at this time -



is that members of DIGNITY chapters in the L.A. archdiocese and other diocesan officials had been meeting recently in ongoing dialogue. The archbishop had assured them that he would try to take no action until after our San Francisco convention since he was aware that L.A. chapters were dialoging with other chapters in Region IX. It is now apparent that his word was not as good as his promise.

But the sheep of the fold are not on the run due to the actions of the shepherd - all area chapters continue to sponsor regular functions. Jack Stafford, president of DIGNITY/Los Angeles reports that he was even greatly encouraged when another chapter member noted that the action of the archbishop has liberated us and now we no longer have to live with false hopes and expectations.

### LOS ANGELES RESPONDS

Jack Stafford, president of DIGNITY/Los Angeles, said that during discussions with Mahony, the archbishop was fully aware that DIGNITY members were working diligently with the other chapters in the region to develop a statement that Region IX would place before the national convention's House of Delegates.

Stafford said that personally, he was deeply grieved that the archbishop did not keep his promise to the members. It appears there is no substance to his word. Where the chapter members thought there was dialogue, it now seems that we were only having a monologue. He said he would have expected more from the

"We the bishops of the Province of Los Angeles, are given no other choice than to state formally that no priest, either diocesan or religious, may celebrate Mass for Dignity in any setting or for any reason."

-Archbishop ROGER M. MAHONY

archbishop. The chapter continues to hold weekly services and all other ministries as usual whether spiritual, educational or social.

### WESTSIDE CHAPTER RESPONDS

DIGNITY/Westside, another chapter in the L.A. Archdiocese, expressed their sadness and sense of betrayal at the decision. Co-chairs Emmet and Anita, writing in their July newsletter, say that Mahony had said that any decision to be made would be issued after our National Convention, in hope that a modified version or a retraction of the Bal Harbour Statement would be made. Instead the decision was made and released the week prior to annual gay and lesbian chapters.

Their letter to chapter members stated further that "no human being can prevent us from practicing the faith to which we adhere. No act, no matter how un-Christian can sway us. We will turn the other cheek and go on being good Catholics, although not perhaps members in good standing of the institution all Roman Catholic Church. Too often we forget that WE ARE THE CHURCH, it is the Church hierarchy we must direct our frustration at.

### LONG BEACH RESPONDS

According to a co-chair of the chapter, the Board of Directors of DIGNITY/Long Beach, after discussion with their membership, is preparing a formal statement in response to the archbishop's letter. It is due to be released this month.

The chapter, which sponsors Masses, "rap groups", educational and social events for about 350 people -

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