Faith Takes the Lead During Pride
By Marianne Duddy-Burke, DignityUSA Executive Director

“Wow! Look at all the Church names! Do you see them right now? This is a huge number of people... And this is where you get a lot of straight people on the floats, because they are there to support... I have never seen this many Church groups walking together, and from the suburbs, not just the city. It’s almost a block long...it goes on, and on, and on... There’s a sign “God loves me the way God made me.” Amen! Another sign – “Gays are God’s People.” It’s like taking back the American flag, taking back the church and the cross and saying you can’t push me away...”

Those are all quotes from the commentators narrating the Chicago Pride Parade, held June 24, 2012, and broadcast on the local ABC television station. Thanks to the efforts of Dignity/Chicago, in honor of its 40th Anniversary, and in response to Cardinal George’s Christmastime comparison of LGBT people with the Ku Klux Klan, organizers of Chicago Pride march agreed to group all of the faith organizations together at the start of the parade. There were Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Jews, and people of many other faiths, wearing symbols of their beliefs, carrying signs affirming love, and witnessing to the 850,000 marchers and spectators. From Portland, Maine to San Diego, California, similar scenes were and will be part of 2012 Pride.

What a fitting indicator of the state of our movement. People of faith are more visible than ever in all aspects of our justice struggle this year. Governors, legislators, activists, bloggers, voters... so many different people working for LGBT equality, and clearly stating that they do so because of their faith. This is the vision we’ve held for more than four decades, and finally it is becoming reality. This is a joyous moment!

I had the great privilege of preaching the homily for my home Chapter, Dignity/Boston this year. Our 40th Anniversary Pride Celebration fell on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Christ. In the homily, I spoke about how these two celebrations came together in one great liturgy for me, how the Pride March was both public witness and sacred pilgrimage:

“The image I think I will carry the longest is of our 10-year-old daughter Emily marching nearly all of the way hand-in-hand and deep in conversation with George M. That’s where the power of this combination of Pride and Corpus Christi really came to life for me. George, one of our most long-term members, someone who was there when being gay meant being considered sick, criminal, and sinful, was sharing this day with a child whose two moms were legally married on the

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day she was baptized, and who is growing up in a world where the President of her nation is a biracial man who recently voiced his support for same-sex marriage... Their sharing of the Pride March, and the sharing of their lives as they talked, surrounded by tens of thousands of cheering marchers and spectators, was a vision of both how far we have come, and of what is yet to be achieved.

It has taken courage, tenacity, and determination from millions of people throughout the ages, and in particular during the 43 years since the Stonewall Riots, to bring us to this day. It has taken four decades of faith, hope, and love from thousands of people who have been part of Dignity for a day, for a few months, a few years, or for 40 years, to bring us to proudly proclaim “Progressive, Inclusive, Catholic”—putting forth a vision that can restore hope for so many who love our faith, but no longer see it being taught by Church leaders. It will take the resolve, vision, and bigheartedness of all of us and many thousands more to make the unity and harmony we experienced yesterday stretch beyond the space of a few hours over a few city blocks. For the Body of Christ to be whole and healed, that unity and harmony must be part of every interaction with all people, every day, in every place we are, and in parts of the world we reach primarily through our prayer. The liturgy of Pride/Corpus Christi will truly be celebrated in its fullness when it is not a “biduum” or two-day liturgy, but one that is endless and everywhere, including all the people of God.”

May the Spirit of Pride remain with you as you share your faith and truth through every part of your life.
Dignity/Washington News

Dignity/Washington Joins Vigil and March in Support of Women Religious
By Mark Clark, Dignity/Washington Member

Dignity/Washington members were part of a gathering of several hundred faithful Catholic lay men and women who, on May 29, presented the Pope's representative in the United States with a letter objecting to Vatican attacks on women religious. First the protesters prayed, sang, and offered a "love letter to the sisters" in the form of their presence at a rally near the Vatican embassy. Speakers cited the accomplishments of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Sr. Helen Prejean, SSJ, and Dignity/Washington co-founder Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL, as emblematic of the essential role of independently governed women religious in the life of the Catholic Church.

Following the rally, participants marched to the door of the embassy (officially known as the Apostolic Nunciature) and presented the letter. Papal Nuncio Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano listened to their objections and accepted the letter. He offered no hope that the Vatican would back away from its mandate directed against the Leadership Conference of Women Religious but assured the delegation that he would forward the letter to the Vatican. The sisters' and nuns' support for LGBT equality has been cited by the Vatican as one of the reasons for its offensive against the leadership conference. After the discussion between the nuncio and representatives of the protesters, he invited twenty from the group to pray in the Nunciature's chapel, which they did.

Washington’s 2012 Capital Pride Parade and Festival Enlivened With Large Dignity/Washington Contingent
By Henry Huot, Dignity/Washington Member

Every spectator who watched the 2012 Capital Pride Parade on June 9 came away knowing that Dignity/Washington is celebrating its 40th Anniversary, as its marching contingent of over forty members proudly filed by to cheering crowds displaying its new anniversary banner. The Dignity/Washington line-up included the banner with an initial color guard, and a special mobile “Dignity Pride Chapel” carried by six members, a colorful balloon arch that floated some twenty feet over the heads of yet another color guard belonging to the Dignity/Washington Defenders. We met our goal of having 40 marchers for 40 years of service to the LGBT community.

On Sunday, June 10, at the Capital Pride Festival held on Pennsylvania Avenue, Dignity/Washington and the Defenders staffed an information booth that welcomed many inquirers. This year, former Dignity/Washington presidents,

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Bernie Delia and Ray Panas, served on the Capital Pride Board, where Bernie was president of the week’s events and Ray its secretary. Kudos to both of them.

Dignity/Honolulu News

Dignity/Honolulu Keeping Busy During the Summer Months
By Gene Corpuz, Dignity/Honolulu President

On Sunday, May 27, Dignity/Honolulu celebrated its 36th Anniversary with a special liturgy and potluck supper at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Honolulu. Father Ernest Silva was the presider for the mass and also was the recipient of the St. John Award given to a non-member who contributed to the chapter during the past year. The recipient of the St. Peter Award was Joan Hudson, a chapter member who serves as usher during the liturgies as well as participating in the Martin Luther King Day and Pride Parades. Joan also helped with the cleaning of St. Mark’s Church. About 25 people attended the liturgy and potluck.

Dignity/Honolulu was one of the sponsors of the annual Honolulu Gay and Lesbian Foundation’s Rainbow Film Festival, May 31 thru June 4. This event was held at the Doris Duke Theater on the grounds of the Honolulu Museum of Art. Dignity/Honolulu had an ad in the festival program and its logo was displayed on the screen before the showing of the movies.

Dignity/Honolulu participated in the Honolulu Pride Parade and Festival on June 2nd as a Martin Rice level sponsor. Seven members either marched in the parade or rode in the trolley sponsored by PFLAG-Oahu. The parade started in Ala Moana Park and proceeded through Waikiki to Kapiolani Park. The chapter had a booth at the Pride Festival held at Kapiolani Park.

Other events planned by the Dignity/Honolulu chapter include a Pride Liturgy on June 24, marching in the Kailua Independence Day Parade with PFLAG-Oahu on July 4, and the Mary of Magdala Liturgy on July 22.

Dignity/Chicago News

Faith-Based Groups Prominent in the Pride Parade
By Martin Grochala, Dignity/Chicago

Area LGBT-affirming faith groups were slated as one of the lead off contingents of the 2012 Pride Parade that took place on Sunday, June 24. The Pride Parade organizers agreed to a request from two historic entries – the Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches (CCWC) and Dignity/Chicago – that their own and all other faith-based groups march as one continuous contingent in a prominent position of the parade.

“As one of the leaders requesting that all of our LGBT faith-based groups be recognized with a such a prominent position in this year’s parade, I am thrilled that the parade organizers recognize the value and impact of this collective voice in the LGBT community, speaking the real truth of our lives, families and relationships”, said Chris Pett, President of Dignity/Chicago. “This recognition of our role in the community is especially meaningful as Dignity/Chicago celebrates its 40th year of service to LGBT Catholics.”

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The vision for a prominent role for faith-based organizations in the parade emerged over recent months as area faith leaders collaborated in the responses to challenges to LGBT safety and respect. Two examples include last summer’s concerns about providing a safe haven for at-risk LGBT youth and individuals in the Lakeview neighborhood, as well as Cardinal George’s infamous statement of December, 2011 comparing the LGBT community and parade participants to the Ku Klux Klan. Religious voices were raised in both of these situations, facilitating strategies for mediating the Lakeview concerns, as well as responding to the Cardinal’s statement from a faith-based perspective. (The Cardinal issued an apology on January 5 which has been credited in part to the voices of LGBT Catholics and other faith leaders who sought accountability from him.)

Parade Coordinator Richard Pfeiffer responded, saying, “The annual parade is a time for affirmation and celebration. It’s a time when the various segments of the LGBT communities can participate and express themselves in the parade. In this case, the faith-based groups are expressing the fact that all of us have value, worth and dignity… and should be treated equally, fairly and with respect.”

The Chicago parade is the largest parade of its kind in the Midwest, and one of the largest in the country, celebrating LGBT pride and speaking as a collective voice advocating for full inclusion and the rights of LGBT persons in our society.

Dignity/Long Island News

Pride Events for Dignity/Long Island
By Kathleen Kane, Dignity/Long Island

On June 2 Dignity/Long Island was a proud sponsor of Jennifer Knapp’s Inside Out Faith Concert. The concert was held at the Sayville United Church of Christ (UCC). Jennifer is a Christian contemporary musician with a recording contract who recently came out as a lesbian. Her website describes Jennifer and her tour as follows:

“Under heavy scrutiny, Jennifer has unashamedly claimed her faith and her sexual orientation with astonishing straightforwardness and honesty. Her candor and compassion have led to overwhelming appeals for her to engage the challenging issue of LGBT inclusion and affirmation in religious communities. In an effort to continue to create a positive and constructive dialogue on behalf of LGBT people of faith Jennifer is now presenting Inside Out Faith. Having experienced, first hand, the devastating effects of rejection and judgment, Jennifer knows full well the challenges of being “out” in certain faith communities. However, it is in the sharing of her journey through story, music and conversation that she has discovered the healing that comes from breaking the silence.”

Check out Jennifer’s website to see if she will be in your area soon! http://www.jenniferknapp.com/insideoutfaith

Additionally, on June 10, our chapter was thrilled to be at the Spiritual Renewal Center at First Parish Church, UCC, located in Riverhead, as the congregation voted to be an open and affirming congregation. Chapter members present signed the congregation’s statement and received rainbow bracelets. To learn more about the parish, visit their website: http://www.spirit-renewal.com.
The gray skies parked over Washington for a week suddenly cleared on Saturday, May 12, to reveal a brilliant, sunshiny day, as members and friends of Dignity/Northern Virginia gathered to set sail on a dinner cruise along the Potomac River to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Dignity/NoVA.

Captain George, the skipper of the "Potomac Belle" left the Old Towne Alexandria dock promptly at 7:00 PM with over 30 passengers aboard.

Father Mickey presided at the anniversary liturgy. He reminded those gathered on the boat that the Church had turned its back on those in the LGBT community, and challenged us to not marginalize others, but to seek and find the face of Jesus in others with whom we come into contact.

A time for socializing over an informal dinner which included a beautiful and delicious anniversary cake, was followed by a silent auction and time to relax and enjoy the night air and the views from the boat. As the sun set, the boat slipped under the Key Bridge in Georgetown and turned around near part of the deepest waters in the river at 75 feet.

On the trip back, the beautiful monuments of Washington were illuminated and shined like jewels against the background of the dark night sky. The iconic figures of the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Jefferson Memorial were never more inspirational.

As the boat got closer to the Old Towne Alexandria dock, Dignity/NoVA President Joe Hennessy presented the 2012 Community Service Award to Dignity/Washington. The award read: "In recognition of their 40 years of service to the LGBT community of the Washington, DC Metro Area, in appreciation of their partnership during Holy Week and at other events during the year, for their steadfast and courageous leadership in advocating for full inclusion of LGBT Catholics in the Church, and especially for their faithful service in ministering to the spiritual and other needs of LGBT Catholics in the area this award is humbly and gratefully presented to Dignity/Washington". President Allen Rose of D/W graciously accepted the award on behalf of the D/W community.

Joe gave the President's Award to Karen Papouleas. Although Karen was not able to be present to accept the award, it will be given to her at a future date. The award read: "In recognition of her many years of faithful and dedicated service to Dignity/Northern Virginia as Social Committee chair, Board Member and, most importantly, caring member of our community, this award is humbly and gratefully presented to Karen Papouleas".

The boat safely reached the dock at 10:00 PM. As we disembarked, all were exuberant from the wonderful celebration of Dignity/NoVA's 20th Anniversary.
Dear Nun Justice Vigil participants and friends,

Thanks to everyone who helped share the petition with your lists, friends, family and parishioners. Thanks to you, we reached our goal of 57,000 signatures—one for every sister in the U.S.!

Yesterday, representatives from the Nun Justice Coalition flew to Atlanta to deliver the signatures to the Bishops. Marianne Walsh, RSM, who is the Bishops' spokesperson, received them on behalf of the bishops. Gratefully, thanks to our press release and media work, the Associated Press, NY Times, and other key media were there to witness and help keep public pressure on the bishops.

We're now on to the next part of the campaign which is encouraging Catholics to pledge what they would have given to Peter's Pence to a local community of nuns, instead. Peter's Pence is a second collection usually collected at the end of June. While the funds are said to go to the Pope's charities, money has been known to go to Vatican operating expenses and there is no public accounting of the collection as would be expected of any other charity.

To date (June 15, 2012), over $50,000 has already been pledged by Catholics across the country in support of women religious!

Please share the link to the pledge with your lists and help us spread the word: http://nunjustice.org/pledge/

As with this week, we'll be issuing a national press release and doing some media work to help publicize this effort. The petition effort has kept media pressure on the Bishops and we hope this new action on Peter's Pence will help us put the focus/pressure on the Vatican.

Also, some of you have asked if the coalition is attentive to the other issues affecting Catholic women that are going on including the bishops' "fortnight for freedom," Margaret Farley, and other issues. Yes, we are very much aware of these! On Margaret Farley, you can find our official statements of support on our websites and facebook pages of the various individual organizations. With regards to the "fortnight" and "religious liberty" issues, we are working with other partners in both Catholic and broader circles. Stay tuned for more on this!

We also imagine you have heard of LCWR's powerful response to the Vatican last week. Thanks to your vocal and public support, they felt they had the support needed to speak their truth. You can read their statement here: https://lcwr.org/media/news/lcwr-board-meets-review-cdf-report. There were more than 50 vigils across the country! I hope you have seen the great coverage in the NY Times and other places.

Finally, we invite you to check out the "Nuns on the Bus" initiative of NETWORK to highlight the work nuns are doing regarding poverty and social justice issues. To see if your local town is on their tour, check out: http://www.networklobby.org/nuns-bus-trip You can contact them to offer help with media, getting welcome crowds, etc.

Sincerely,
Nicole Sotelo, Call To Action