

SEGMENT ONE: RECALLING OUR ROOTS
Facilitator / Recorder Worksheet

What was the initial need that Dignity USA/Dignity/ARIZONA was organized to meet and that drove our rapid growth from a local community in L.A. to a national network of chapters? What "fueled" our engine"?

The consensus of the group is that the initial need came from a need of community, including, but not limited to

- Safe communal Catholic worship
- A place where LGBTQ Catholics could come together, experience full inclusion, and share experiences with others who knew the position of the RC, but were not driven away.
- Freedom to not hide one's sexual identity and would be accepted without question or judgement
- Social activities with other like-minded persons
- A means or avenue for having a voice in the RC

Attendees shared deeply personal experiences of their journey to and with Dignity including how they participated for a while, left, and returned. The overwhelming need for connection, community and not being alone in the struggle appear to be the "fuel" for the engine.

How did the mission of Dignity evolve over time? What drove those changes in how we did our work? Consider dynamics in the organization, in the Church, and in society. In what ways might your chapter/community/caucus have contributed to this evolution?

Over time, the constant appears to be the connections and relationships established among members of Dignity. Dignity/ARIZONA experienced times when a Jesuit priest from Brophy HS and a few priests from the Phoenix Diocese presided at Mass and ministered to the community. Dignity/ARIZONA also experienced a period when strong social activism and advocacy dominated the charism of the community. However, similar to other places in the country, that changed as arch-conservatives held firmer ground both at the Vatican and the local level. The Diocese of Phoenix experienced a shift from leadership in the 90s from one bishop who knew of, tolerated, and allowed gatherings of LGBTQ Catholics at local parishes and Dignity to the next bishop who aligned significantly with Cardinal Ratzinger and later Pope Benedict across all dimensions of Catholicism. Thus, even priests not affiliated in any way with the Diocese no longer presided at

Jubilee Discussions - Discussion Recording Form

Dignity/ARIZONA liturgies. Today, priests from the Catholic Church of Antioch, the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, as well as several priests who still identify as Roman Catholic but who no longer have faculties from the Phoenix Diocese, preside at Dignity/ARIZONA liturgies. Dignity/ARIZONA does not engage in social activism as a community, but does engage in opportunities to bring to the forefront that Catholicism can be inclusive of all, such as the Rainbow Festival. Dignity/ARIZONA has been grateful that Dignity USA has served as the voice at the national level and with other Catholic reform organizations for full inclusion of LGBTQ persons and their families in society, not only in the RC

The theme of our 50th Anniversary Conference is "True to the Spirit, True to Ourselves." In what ways has "being true to ourselves and true to the calling of the Spirit" evident in our history? Your local history?

The members were in agreement that both at the national and local level "True to the Spirit, True to Ourselves" really has meant 1) embracing all aspects of ourselves and claiming our place at the Table as children of God who are loved and accepted by the Creator, and 2) challenging the institutional structure not just related to equality, but also equity. We recognize that answering the call of the Spirit is a work in progress and for that we need and rely on community to help us remain connected.

For Dignity/ARIZONA, remaining true to ourselves as well as the calling of the Spirit has meant that the chapter has not remained stagnant or stuck in one charism. As noted above, Dignity/ARIZONA experienced a period of social activism and advocacy. Yet this has not remained the core over the past 40 years. Connection has remained the core charism which has afforded members the opportunity to be with Dignity/ARIZONA for a period of time, depart due to life circumstances, and then return again. Dignity/ARIZONA has been open to members participating to the extent they are called and/or feel comfortable. For some, the social aspect has been the primary driver of their involvement; for others, the liturgical, worship, and spiritual community aspects have been what has kept them connected and returning.