



Discussion Recording Form

SEGMENT ONE: RECALLING OUR ROOTS

Facilitator / Recorder Worksheet

- 1. What was the initial need that DignityUSA 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”?**

Local Drivers

- Dignity was originally seen as a welcoming/safe space
- Strong representation from religious communities (>20% of our members), with religious communities actually sending members to Dignity
- Dignity also benefitted early on from “benign neglect from” the archdiocese, which also encourage more clergy to be active
- Dignity was also seen as a source of support, with members watching out for each other – “Bail Out Cards” – people could still be arrested for being gay.
- Dignity also filled an important social role – limited opportunities for LGBTQ people to meet each other outside of bars.

National Drivers

- Sexual Ethics Taskforce helped catalyzed the national movement
- Demand from other communities who wanted to replicated the Dignity model
- Having a presence in multiple cities across the country brought credibility
- Some parallels between how chapters replicated and how religious communities organized themselves nationally

2. 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?

- Between the election of JP II, AIDS epidemic, and the Halloween letter, the focus shifted towards survival
- We started to see local chapters increasingly coming together for mass, whereas the national organization was becoming more focused on advocacy, leading to some misalignment.
- Communities became increasingly divided over what it means to be Catholic, how liturgy should be celebrated, generational experiences, as well as attitudes towards Vatican II
- At the same time, members had increasingly more options to socialize and be out
- In some ways, we are victims of our own success – AGLO and Welcoming Parishes make Dignity’s liturgy less unique in the eyes of many, but:
 - How well-integrated are LGBTQ Catholics in their parish?
 - Neither AGLO nor official parishes can always speak out publicly
 - We’ve managed to coexist side by side for decades
- With the Halloween Letter, religious communities have been less willing to support Dignity.
- In the past, the chapter has tried to diversify from Liturgy and Advocacy work by exploring Spiritual Growth/Education as a third core ministry, however, it’s been difficult to formalize and systematize this type of work.
- However, some members see a renewed interest among Millennials for rituals, as well as social justice and more targeted socializing.
- Dignity/Chicago has historically made strong contributions to DignityUSA, providing leadership at the national and regional levels
- Dignity/Chicago is seen as a well-respected voice with local media and local advocacy organizations.



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3. 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?

- We are still around and we continue to engage the hierarchy
- We protest and respond in our own way
- We do not “seek approval” to act according to our principles
- We perform the sacraments and support full inclusion at all levels of the church

Key words that represent Dignity include:

- Courage
- Persistence
- Resistance
- Witnessing
- Dedication
- Hope
- Eucharist
- Honesty
- Community
- Loyalty
- Faith
- Refuge
- Safe place
- Family