

1. What led you to Dignity? What fueled your engine?

Dignity San Antonio formed in 1976 from a small group of Catholics who had already been meeting for a few years for support. The earliest members largely were seeking the friendship of like-minded persons seeking a way to live out their Catholic faith in the context of their GLBT identity.

The current members of our chapter have been led to Dignity and energized by a variety of desires and needs, including that same desire for friendship, support, to feel safe without judgement, and the integration of their spiritual lives with their sexuality. Many members of our current group were raised in strong Catholic environments and have a need for a Catholic expression of their faith and spirituality. Some members have come out of frustration at their pastoral needs not being met or at having to “edit” their story in parish settings. Others came to Dignity looking for healing from institution inflicted wounds, and experienced there a sense of belonging and having a place in the Church.

2. How has the purpose of Dignity evolved over time? What drove the changes in how we did our work? Consider dynamics in the organization, in the Church, and in society. In what ways might our chapter have contributed to this evolution?

Dignity's San Antonio's purpose over the years has evolved as the climate in the larger Church has evolved. In its early years Dignity enjoyed greater institutional access and support, and so contributed to the rising social consciousness and dialogue around GLBT issues in the Church in the 1970s. We were blessed to have the support of our Archbishop Patrick Flores, who was in charge here from 1979-2004. His presence cushioned us from the harshest effects of the papacy of JP II and the Ratzinger letter, for example we were allowed to continue meeting on Catholic property. As a result, we have been a very stable organization, even as the hierarchy has moved the Church sharply to the right. In 2010, we were finally asked to leave Catholic property. While this was a painful moment for us, we found another place immediately, and continue to meet every Sunday for liturgy, helped by a number of supportive clergy. Since we are no longer on Catholic property, we can advertise more openly, and we remain visible by participating in various service projects in San Antonio such as Gay Pride, Solidarity Sunday, food drives, and HIV awareness events. While we don't have the same institutional support as before, members of our community recently had a dialogue with our Archbishop regarding some of our pastoral needs. We continue to be well known in San Antonio as a safe space for GLBT Catholics.

3. The theme of our 50<sup>th</sup> 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” been evident in our history (nationally and locally)?

--We have kept faithful and true to ourselves in our own faith journeys of integrating our sexuality with our spirituality, and we have supported one another as fellow travelers on our journeys.

--We have insisted on our LGBT identity as we have interacted to the Institutional Church. We have not “waffled” on our values.

--We have been a consistent and visible presence.

--We have been faithful the gospel call to hospitality.

--We have been a voice for LGBTQI persons who needed a voice.

--We have embraced transgender issues

4. Locally and nationally, how has Dignity changed your life for the better? Changed the Catholic community? Impacted the LGBTQ social justice movement?

Members felt that Dignity has changed them by:

1. Helping members to feel renewed in their relationship with God, more peaceful, and happier.

2. Broadening their horizons, creating a new sense of “normal”
3. Helping some transition from “closeted” to “out”
4. Helping members feel more resolved, determined, confirmed in their faith.
5. Providing support and a sense of community to members.

Members felt that Dignity has changed Church by:

1. Its presence—it is a known in the Catholic community.
2. Its witness-speaking out on LGBTQI issues.
3. By its leadership in ecumenical and interfaith issues—these are no barrier for members of Dignity.
4. By its efforts to “enlarge the tent” and welcome progressive Catholics/allies.
5. Little by little through efforts of dedicated members, yet there is much more to do.

Members felt that Dignity has contributed to LGBTQI social justice movement by:

1. Providing spokespersons to talk to the press (locally and nationally) about Church issues affecting us.

2. By continuing to speak out about our issues.
3. By cultivating relationships with other progressive Catholic organizations to help amplify our voices.