

Dignity Denver's Jubilee Discussion Two

Date: April 15, 2018

Chapter: Dignity Denver

Question 1. How is DignityUSA different today than it was in the past? How is DignityDenver and our community different? How are YOU different?

There were 17 people in attendance for this discussion, including the moderator.

- Today Dignity Denver is smaller than it has been in the recent past. But we need to remember that compared to the period of our initial founding, it was smaller then yet we have survived and continue to carry on the important functions that people wish to have.

- We are certainly more inclusion now than before. We've widened our letters (LGBTQI versus LGBT) as well as being aware of the importance of straight members of our community.

- Society has changed. It is certainly more accepting and that has impacted our membership. People today simply do not need the affirmation we previously provided.

- Pope Francis has changed the dynamic.

- In 1992, Colorado was facing the results of Amendment 2 to our state constitution which would have allowed discrimination against LGBT persons. There was more of an atmosphere of being under siege. That has lessened with Amendment 2 being declared unconstitutional.

- In the current atmosphere, it is more acceptable to be an "out" catholic.

- Young people seem much less interested in a church community.

- DignityUSA has matured and grown. Today it projects a much more professional persona.

Question 2. Considering the passion and conviction that fueled our growth, how well is our "engine" running, (nationally and locally) in terms of inspiring passion, involvement, change, etc. – in service to our mission today?

- Dignity is not as visible today as it was in the past.

- DignityDenver has a liturgy – our core mission. Our local chapter needs to concentrate its limited resources on what is our purpose – to hold liturgies. There seemed to be strong consensus on this point.

- There seemed to be more energy in the past. Now it is just harder for people to get the energy to do many things.

- We are older and have less energy than we used to for activities.

- We are doing our best with the limited resources we have.

- We simply don't have any new ideas for what we can do to bring in new people.

- Not much desire to expand to do other things. (Not any response to agree or disagree.)

- There is great spirit in our community and good friendships. While it would be good to strive for new members, let's remember to continue what we are doing to create a great atmosphere

- There is resilience in our community: while there was an attempt by the Archdiocese of Denver to limit the priests who minister to us, we have continued to survive. Although we lost our music minister, we continued to adapt.

- While it would be good to have more persons attending our liturgies, let's concentrate on how great our liturgies are and be thankful for their existence.

- We should keep in mind that DignityDenver is facing exactly what all parishes are, namely smaller numbers and an aging population.

Question 3. Is the mission and purpose of Dignity still relevant today? If not, why not? If it is, what key challenges and opportunities do you see ahead?

- This is the most liberal pontiff in 50 years. When DignityDenver was founded in 1974, chapter representatives were in communication with the Archdiocese, requesting the names of priests to minister to it. This was a positive exchange of correspondence. Should we be doing that again and expect positive dialogue considering the current pontificate?

- Some expressed a desire for DignityUSA to be in communications with the institutional church. If we have as one of our goals to put ourselves out of business, that cannot be achieved without talking with representatives of the institutional church.

- Will the cardinal of Chicago be invited to the Chicago Conference in 2019?

- It is always best when being pro-active, as opposed to re-active.

- Dignity Denver has changed a lot. It now has a woman priest ministering to us. We are living the church we would like to become. Women priests bring in a different perspective and one very much needed within our church. One cannot just look at the numbers of attendees to see if we are being relevant.

Question 4. With the benefit of hindsight, how has Dignity changed lives for the better, locally and nationally? Changed the Catholic community? Impacted the LGBTQ social justice movement?

- We continue to be relevant today because we have not reached the time when we can put ourselves out of business because of full inclusion in the institutional church.

- Recently DignityDenver received a phone message from an aging gay person outside the metro area. In a subsequent phone call with the gentleman, he expressed concern whether he might be denied burial in a catholic cemetery where currently he owns a plot. Conversations and public statements by some in the institutional church had made him afraid of possible exclusion. He was assured that there had been no such discussion in our Archdiocese according to our best information. That is just one reason by Dignity continues to be relevant today.

- One member suggests wearing rainbow ribbons to the Basilica on Solidarity Sunday to determine what is the level of acceptance in our institutional church.

- One of the members who regularly attends a welcoming parish said that generally he has no problem of being accepted in the regular parish. But if something happens, if there is a crisis – either personally or publicly – then he needs to attend Dignity Denver and feel as if he is receiving strength and support from “our” family.

- We continue to minister to our community members as difficulties arise in their lives. This continues to make us relevant and needed.

- By the changes of our own development, we help changes in the greater community. DignityDenver’s awareness of “B”, “T” and “Q” issues is an example of that.

- We project an atmosphere of acceptance where new people can come in and find acceptance.