

## **Report: Dignity/Chicago 2<sup>nd</sup> Jubilee Consultion – Taking Stock Today**

### **Overall Findings:**

- DignityUSA's mission is still relevant today, but the needs have changed, and the way to deliver on that mission needs to change.
- Our chapter has not yet adapted to the current needs of the community, relying and focusing too much on weekly liturgy – We need a new model
- Trans community is currently being underserved – how do we reorient our efforts to better address their needs
- Desire to build more time and energy for outreach efforts and avoid becoming too insular

### **Current Context:**

- Attendance has declined significantly over the years – currently get 15-20 people on Sundays
- New people come, but few come back or engage regularly
- Seeing fewer people who come from religious communities or who have been educated in catholic school system
- Overall church attendance down, even at parishes and AGLO
- Younger generations less interested in weekly liturgy
- Those who do attend church typically prefer to be with their local community, with parishes now welcoming couples and children
- Continued competition from welcoming parishes and AGLO
- Disconnect between Pope Francis's friendlier message and the stance of US Bishops, including many in Illinois.

### **Mission:**

- Members feel there is still a need for Dignity's mission, particularly when it comes to education, advocacy, and support
- Several members noticed that the word "liturgy" is not part of the mission, and yet it consumes 90% of our time and effort
- Over the years, liturgy has been, and continues to be, a flashpoint for conflict that drives members away
- Despite shrinking numbers, the mission is still relevant because:
  - Not all parishes are willing to administer the sacraments to LGBTQIA – we had a recent adult baptism
  - US Bishops all over the place when it comes to inclusivity
  - There is still need for affirming, LGBTQIA-positive theology and education to counter outdated church teaching
  - The church needs an independent and visible organization to hold it accountable and push it in a more progressive direction, especially when it comes to LGBTQIA social justice issues

### **What is different from other DignityUSA chapters:**

- Women Presiders

- One of the few chapter still offering weekly liturgy
- Coexist with AGLO and welcoming parishes, and located in a relatively liberal archdiocese
- Not afraid to try new programs, but could be more entrepreneurial
- Opportunity for more outreach to external groups

#### **Our Impact:**

- The very existence of AGLO and welcoming parishes is in response to Dignity
- Community a reliable source of support for many people, even people who do not regularly attend liturgy
- We are often the only public and visible, LGBTQIA catholic presence in the community
- We provide confidence to people struggling with catholic theology and what it means in their life
- We provide a responsible sexual ethic for those looking to reconcile catholicism with their sexuality
- Role model of inclusivity
- We empower young Catholics, but we could do more

#### **Things we need to change**

- More outreach to empower younger Catholics
- Support trans community – tackle poverty and violence
- Raise visibility for our mission and message
- Consider more partnerships with other groups
- Take Dignity “on the road”
- Make our education more accessible
- Make education on the intersection of Catholic & LGBTQIA our key differentiator vs social service agencies
- None of this will be possible unless we build some capacity – test reducing the frequency of liturgies or the way it is delivered
- We need a financial model that is less reliable on weekly liturgy contributions