

## ***Taking Stock.... a summary of responses from Dignity/SF***

### ***1. How is DignityUSA different today than it was in the past?***

- Not a lot of input here, unfortunately, as too few members are still “involved” in national conventions and events, but
- We see DUSA as a representative “voice” in the world, speaking out on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community, via events and press releases, and that is immensely appreciated
- Used to be large enough (?) for Regional conferences, which provided better connections
- Changed from a mission of “confrontation with a conservative hierarchy to advocacy for LGBT Catholics to the greater LGBT community and other communities of faith.”

### ***How are your local chapter and community different?***

- Chapter numbers have dwindled, and average member is older, but we are slowly growing and maintain a steady stream of participants
- Blessing of a smaller community is a closer group of faithful friends to connect and share their lives with; we have a more well-defined “infrastructure” and offer consistent events for members and friends to participate with and
- We are a “more welcoming group than when we were the largest chapter in the system.”
- We are “a persistent community...balancing service to members with service to community at large.”
- Used to meet in Catholic space; no longer allowed
- Folks seem to have stopped attending Church at all because they’re fed up with the Institutional Roman Church (RC) and its harmful teachings

### ***How are YOU different?***

- “I am different that I am older today. Also, because I am more comfortable with the knowledge that God loves me just as I am...” *thanks in great part to the presence and access to Dignity.*
- “...older, feeling a bit more isolated and disconnected, and searching for spiritual grounding and guidance...found more of in other communities, such as welcoming parishes, meditation groups and social groups.”
- “I’ve grown bitter concerning the teachings of the church, when before the teachings...only caused me despair and fear.”

### ***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?***

- “I believe we need to correct the moral teachings of the RC before we can fully become members of the RC... I do not want to be a part of an immoral church.”
- DUSA still gives voice to our issues as a community
- Locally, our engine is a bit slow and we’re unsure of how to rejuvenate our systems; we discussed how we are distinguished from other welcoming churches, including a local parish with a large LGBT membership and how we can acknowledge WHO we are from pew to coffee hour, not just downstairs for an event....
- Our desire to reach out more to women, youth, & improve diversity is not yet met by strong energy and action...
- We are making efforts to engage in interfaith activities, support social justice actions – as individuals – but likely need to do more so as a group.
- We are spiritually aware of the truths we can offer, we need to be more visible to invite in those who need us most; but folks are so turned off or tuned out....

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?*

- “Absolutely relevant, even more so in Trump’s Amerika.”
- “I believe yes, or I wouldn’t still be a member. What I don’t understand is how practicing LGBT Catholics in parishes all around us do not seem very supportive of the group, nor do they seem to want to mingle (much) with us [recent exception where an Oakland parish invited us for a BBQ!]
- “The purpose of Dignity today is to protect the gay community against the harmful doctrine of the RC, and to stop them from spreading such psychologically harmful teachings.”
- We can be critical of the RC, where another parish locally cannot; DUSA’s statements in response to whatever hurtful rhetoric comes from the Vatican are an example of the voice that the other parish cannot express.
- We can give women opportunities to serve and do so....

4. *With the benefit of hindsight, how has Dignity changed lives for the better, locally and nationally?*

- Dignity’s existence has given LGBTQ+ Catholics HOPE and a sense that RC dogma can/should be questioned and that one can feel safe to “not obey.”
- We receive calls from folks local and across the country, looking to find comfort and solace and a listening ear; we recently stepped up for a stranger seeking a Catholic presence for his funeral that he, as a gay man, couldn’t find within his family/parish.
- We’ve made a conscious effort to act as a benevolent group, offering support where possible to members in financial distress, without supportive families or environments to help.
- “has allowed a platform to express our experience openly as both LGBTQ+ and Catholic, supported in our sacramental lives without fear of reprisal, and has consistently voiced an alternative Catholic approach...”

*Changed the Catholic community?*

- Dignity has changed the lives of many people within the Catholic Church by showing that the official doctrine concerning homosexuality is WRONG...providing hope for gay people to live in an honest, rewarding manner, without the fear of God condemning them for who they are.
- “...shown that the doctrine of the Church in various issues should be questioned. The Church is not infallible.”
- We see more parish Catholics express support on a personal level – could be exposure to Dignity or just the progression of society
- We can/do offer an alternate worship home

*Impacted the LGBTQ social justice movement?*

- “Dignity has helped the LGBTQ+ social justice movement, but the movement would’ve happened with or without Dignity.”
- We are received well by the community at PRIDE events, but a presence and finding a way to reach the hearts of those who have turned away from faith to protect themselves is still a challenge to overcome.