

DignityUSA Jubilee 3rd Round of
Consultations Summary
“What is the future direction of DignityUSA?”

We’ve now completed all three community consultations and we are happy to report that 84% of our chapters and caucuses have participated in this special Jubilee initiative!

The input shared during this final and critical round of discussions will form the basis of an executive summary report, as well as guide the DignityUSA Board of Directors in formulating what we are calling the 3-4 “great ideas” or strategic priorities that will be discussed during the Dynamic Dialogue Session at the 2019 Chicago Conference.

As we’ve done in the prior two reports, this summary provides representative themes and quotes that summarize these varied conversations. There are also unique inputs noted here. You are welcome to review the posted reports on the DignityUSA website for more detail and to provide a broader context for this summary.

When we last met, we talked about key ongoing and future challenges and opportunities. What do we need to change in order to tackle these challenges and leverage our opportunities?

Challenges	Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resistance to Change will also be a challenge; can expect resistance from some local communities due to aging members who don’t want to or don’t know how to “let go” of what served them well; “how do we respect our humanity but also embrace what will drive our “engine” going forward even if it looks and feels very different from what we’ve experienced in the past” • Remain relevant and be more agile • Outreach beyond gay/lesbian couples to attract people from full LGBTQI spectrum including straight people • Include non-Catholic denominations and men/women balance • Greater awareness of what DignityUSA does; more accessible and easier to find • Recognize 50 years of achievements • Our mission remains unique although there are many more welcoming parishes • The early-thirties generation is experiencing a massive lack of community and a great hunger for community • People today are not so concerned at being excluded from the Church; they are more secular and don’t necessarily want to be connected to the Catholic Church • Commentary on religion in LGBTQI media brings out vitriol; how respond to question asking why belong to an organization connected to religion? • Sexual abuse crisis impacts Church membership as well as impacts our ability to attract members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a) re-assess priorities and commitments; b) communicate more with members regarding financial health; 2) be more welcoming especially to visitors; 3) leverage website and social media for outreach and providing conveniences to members; 4) Take advantage of DignityUSA national board expertise” • Fully understand why are LGBTQI people interested in DignityUSA and identifying what we are offering them that draws people closer • Continue to need to speak out in as loud a voice as possible and as often as is necessary • Be willing to go where we “don’t belong,” for example, show up at a parish mass as a group • Individuals are increasingly doing things electronically and interested in more online active participation opportunities • Community overall is less liturgically driven (Think outside the box versus every Sunday liturgy) • Need to tackle issues e.g. immigration and separation of families in an organized voice which anti-Christians and the church is not addressing; focus on specific human rights • Making sure anyone looking for an LGBT Catholic community can easily find us – through the Internet, social media, etc.; • Pragmatic problem: institutional church facing millennials “voting with their feet” • Must re-consider our relationship to the institutional Church while keeping in mind the needs of our people to be spiritually fed and holding onto a Catholic identity and yet rejecting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Catholic language about sin has to change in order to attract people attracted to “spirituality but not religion” • “We need to be doing service as well as prayer; we need both action and contemplation...” • Trans membership/participation is growing but still small in spite of good national outreach • Maintaining/increasing number of engaged members, younger members • Learning more about what our membership wants/needs from us • Responding to the current political climate as it affects LGBTQIA life • Enhancing our online and other media presence • Look beyond our organization to other local resources and alliances • Election and/or appointment of Dignity USA board members who are female, people of color, transgender or under 40 years old • Need to remain "Undiluted in Catholicism" but network and collaborate with others; continue to find “Allies” • Resources to help all understand the ritual and tradition of the liturgy • Understand how to properly interact within diversity; pronouns; increased diversity • Not a place for young families and people with kids • Succession planning • Class, race, gender?; when will we talk about these intersections?; marginalized voices having a seat <u>and</u> voice at the table • Language used is behind the times and very binary 	<p>the Church’s teachings and intolerance; what kind of relationship do we have now?; is that what we want?; is that what will facilitate our growth?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chapter model is not going to take us far into our future as a source for funding and volunteers; we must identify and embrace a new operating model that will • Need to take the lead of future generations and women when it comes to language adjustments – in light of gender fluidity; increasingly you can’t make assumptions based on what you see • While many gains, e.g. marriage equality, need to survive any targeted setbacks by joining with other coalitions • Promote interfaith involvement (LGBTQI Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) • Promote webinars that foster education and communication • Support political candidates that promote progressive values such as LGBTQI rights • We need to do things that cause the media to pay attention to us
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What should the key priorities of DignityUSA be in the next few years?

- “Be fearless. Tell the story.”
- Model inclusive communities; share/leverage our long history of activism and advocacy and living Gospel values; articulate the importance of our role in the life of a more just and inclusive Church
- Speak out as expert witnesses to national, world and church events; maintain contacts with media personnel
- Engage authority; LCWR has adopted a two-point stance of engaging in dialogue with Church authority without sacrificing their integrity; our need for integrity is why most of us went into exile in the first place
- Evangelize; tell people (e.g. disaffected Catholics) that we have something to offer them; be intentional about welcoming non-LGBTQI people – outreach to progressive “seekers”
- Insist that the Church change the language about sexuality in the Catechism
- Retention of members—why do people stop coming?; need to find out and do our best to keep them
- We have done a wonderful job of interfacing with other organizations and should continue this; local chapters could also be strengthened by doing this
- DignityUSA could give more advice and guidance to local chapters, including sharing best practices
- Evolve beyond being a network of chapters offering a Catholic Mass in major cities once a week
- Understand better how people are perceiving the communications and outreach of DignityUSA; we are putting out a lot of information but people are not necessarily reading it or paying attention to it

- There needs to be a liaison to DignityUSA in every chapter who reports on what DignityUSA has been doing in the past month or week.
- Become a prophetic movement for the whole Church and continue to evolve in that direction; counter-balance institutional church
- Saying “join us because we are not the official Catholic Church” is not good enough, not positive enough; we have to tell people your vision of the future, communities where gender and sexual orientation don’t matter, a Catholic community that is truly inclusive and welcoming
- “Inclusivity was deemed important by our members. We also want to be a critical and clear voice on issues/teachings from the institutional church, to make it clear that even if we remain Roman Catholics, we are not affiliated with the Institution and disagree.”
- “We’d like help in determining how we can better spread the word at our local level when statements should be made in support of events/activities, or in dissent against the RC messaging that’s out there. We are already doing so at the national level and would like to better support that aspect of your mission. We know we need to balance risk vs success out here, but we’d like to learn how to do better.”
- Keep hitting the RCC with the science, psychology, and theology that says it is off track on LGBTQ issues
- We believe the next generations need to lead the way; it is time for us (primarily boomers) to follow; we support it but the next wave of Dignity’s service is not our parade to lead; Millennials connect in different ways; we need to study and come to understand how millennials needs and values and perspective are different from boomers to help us understand how to more effectively understand the other and work well together around a shared mission we all care about strongly
- “They (young adults) are not interested in going someplace to hear someone talk. They will join communities that are proactive, that are about action and getting something done, getting involved to address salient problems.”
- Pastoral care for seniors; develop a program for wakes and funerals
- Be nimble about language – stay current with identity terminology
- Connect DignityUSA messaging to opportunities for local experience – worship, socializing, finding community, activism.
- Remember our triple identity – we’re a church, a community and a family
- We need a Voice! – national and international – to advocate for inclusion; being “church” without requiring me to sacrifice my own integrity
- “Priorities should be “the things that unite us – our Christianity. That’s the glue that binds us as church...a priority should be our ‘active prophecy back to the institutional church’, adding the hope is that ‘the church joins us’, not that we are invited to join it.”
- DignityUSA is to be a bridge between the Catholic community and gay members
- Look to expand and grow the international community; view the other countries for their successes; attend international conferences
- “We’ve become more prophetic in that we witness a recognition of who we are as beloved, accepted – we do not cower in the shadows any longer, we are not sick, we are not diseased. We are no longer a pathology, we are acceptable – the governor of Colorado introduced his husband. We have emerged as the Phoenix reborn out of the funeral pyre of the AIDS crisis and other crises. We have a prophetic role for the new generation – high suicide rate among young people. Anything we can do to help proclaim the prophetic word of God that we are all beloved [we must do].”
- We need to have a more public presence in the media such as tweeting and having a You Tube channel
- Our key priorities should be to target new members, younger members; all the while, continuing to value longstanding members. Increasing membership is the most important priority as the more members, the more energy and more ability to be visible to the Catholic Church
- Encourage activism in reaching out to faith seeking LGBTQ Catholics; dialogue with our local Catholic communities and try to form relationships with our local churches
- DignityUSA should go to Catholic Universities with strong LGBTQ organizations such as Georgetown LGBTQ Resource Center and talk with the members of these communities to learn from them and to

see if we can form alliances with them; Meet with area college chaplains, asking how we can partner with them in ministry to GLBTQI students

- Serve as consultants for the chapters and members as they face challenges
- Witness to the fact that “You can be gay and Catholic”, and “Love is love”, and speak to the truth of our lives and relationships
- Network with other faith-based and civil organizations and a sharing of resources
- Reach out and build a strong membership base that goes far beyond the familiar chapter-based model that served and serves us well
- Make our own theology; a big dream would be to make resources available online and make these resources known to seminaries preparing people for ministry
- Articulate the priorities (our message) that we must keep representing to the institutional church, i.e. the gifts of LGBTQI persons that we bring to the church and society
- Continue our focus on young adults and conducting programs and opportunities for bringing them together; keep promoting the DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus and its activities
- Forcefully make the distinctions between sexual predators and the healthy outlook of LGBTQI persons; continue to fight the invalid and unhealthy message/tendency within the institutional church and bishops that want to “blame” the clerical abuse problem on gay priests or gay people.
- Continue the spirit of Vatican II in emphasizing the church moves from the bottom up; we speak for the church
- Listen to outside experts in the fields of sociology, theology, etc.; learn from what others are doing that is working
- Continue to stand in solidarity with anyone who is suffering oppression; stay bigger than just our issue (intersectionality)
- Help chapters that are declining to possibly morph into a different organization, i.e Living Beatitudes community in Dayton; can the BOD assist other chapters in evolving rather than disbanding?
- 18-25 is a key range of activism. Millennials are starting to settle down and hibernate...need to focus on post millennial...the next generation. *Define who are audience is going forward.
- Families of all identities
- Educational programs
- Support for aging and sick members
- Determining, clarifying who our audience is; who are we serving?
- Outreach to parents and offering resources (e.g. speakers bureau, parenting transgender children)
- Lead the movement on articulating a values-based, renewed sexual ethics teaching and gender studies
- Increase and better demonstrate technical expertise/savviness
- A stronger presence in the online world; e.g. an online publication can be continually updated with new resources, reaching people and organizations that may not otherwise have access
- Communication will be increasingly critical to our ability to mobilize, message and fund-raise; what is the cost of using multiple communication channels?; what resources are required?
- Remain faithful to what we value: Eucharist as community and for nourishment; inclusion, i.e. cultivate inclusiveness as a core organizational value and tie that to an ever-expanding tent
- Continue to have bi-annual conferences
- Revive webinars to provide additional information and enhance communications
- As a member of Equally Blessed, to continue to challenge the kyriarchy of the Church

What resources do we need to fuel our “engine” (passion and purpose) in the future? Why would people want to invest their life energy and financial resources in support of this desired future?

- Activities that build local communities; increased engagement and willingness to participate and sustain these activities and programs; a burden that is shared by a larger pool of committed members
- Mentor/partner the next generation of local/national leaders

- Continued strong, capable leadership that is provided by the Executive Director, such as Marianne has provided; also keep paid staff
- Continued investment in technical expertise; hire professional to manage social media with dedicated funding
- Focus less on chapters and more on campus ministry and connecting with disaffected Catholics who are seeking spiritual support and community
- “Estates!; Dignity sitting on a gold mine as boomers age; continue to capitalize on it”; develop broad initiatives that would inspire people to name Dignity in their will, as well as Chapters
- Connect our prophetic mission to fundraising efforts and legacy; e.g. “I want to contribute to a legacy of a Eucharistic faith community, rooted in the Catholic tradition that recognizes the goodness of each person.”
- Broaden the mission through mergers to broaden the appeal to foundations; look at foundations that support social justice and care about the role religious values have in its pursuit
- Focus on our website; build it into a resource center like HRC has – a public service that will attract information seekers that may not know much about us; resources around supporting local organizing that our “stakeholders/members” care about; how would this resonate with younger generations?; we could uniquely contribute to an LGBTQ theology
- “Like other non-profit groups, Dignity should have promotional wear (caps, shirts, book marks, pens, address labels, etc.) to visually identify members and allies, and attract potential members and collaborators.” (Branding)
- “We need to let like-minded individuals and organizations know about the work of Dignity to be able to secure funding from grants and foundations so that the mission of Dignity can move forward to support LGBTQI Catholics and their families and friends.”

What is your community’s guidance to the national leadership as they create a strategic plan for the next few years of DignityUSA’s mission and work?

- “EVERYTHING flows out of a **core PURPOSE** that will appeal to the needs of the future and a broader base of people who will be motivated to join the ranks and support the work. Look at Simon Sinek’s You Tube on the importance of the “Why?” to every organization; keep our SPP under review – it must always align with everything else we do; if it strikes at the heart of what many people care about – it should be referenced frequently; everything we invest time and money in should be constructed in reference to this purpose.”
- DignityUSA must continue to be a vital force in the foreseeable future in advocating for us on a national level vis a vis those forces within the Catholic Church that continue to be non-affirming, non-accepting and, unfortunately at times, blatantly homophobic; DignityUSA is the national face of our community to the Bishops and hierarchy within the Catholic Church and supporting Dignity USA is vital
- “We were founded in the idea of bringing people from isolation into community and affirming human dignity. That is still our work today, so our lens should always be to ask ourselves: does this work bring people from isolation or separation into community and connection, and does this work affirm human dignity? If the answer is yes, it is our work. The rest is all prioritization, what can we take on now or what must we address later, what can we afford, do we have the staff and resources?”
- “Dignity USA should be more involved in trying to push the RC Bishops to embrace LGBT Catholics. I listen to Catholic Radio in Phoenix – the language around LGBT has softened. Now the folks are more nuanced – they know how to meet gay people where they are instead of espousing therapy. They still are not good at addressing transgender. There has been movement in the RC among the pundits – should we continue to keep nudging and lean towards the positive instead of focusing on the negative and yet, also be more aggressive prophetic within the RC?”
- Establish DignityUSA as go-to response / counter voice to the Pope or hierarchy, e.g. hire a PR firm – to help issue guidance and response; get someone with stature/recognizable name as spokesperson

to represent Dignity USA on national news – convey our voice every day our issue is in news; Dignity USA should send a “white paper” to the Pope with our issues that need to be addressed.

- Membership growth; target areas where there are no chapters
- New national leadership structure; return to regional & delegate representation?
- Greater outreach to LGBTQI young adults, campus groups, other Catholic progressive groups, and secular LGBTQI groups; remain relevant to the next generation
- Outreach to Latino Catholics, whose culture may at times be more conservative on LGBTQI issues
- Identifying our saints and other heroic figures, such as John McNeill and Mychal Judge from our own chapter, and declaring them saints of DignityUSA as well as the whole church
- “Continuing the external outreach is very important; one member stated was “surprised and delighted” to read about DignityUSA providing support and consultation for an LGBT Catholic group in Mexico City. This kind of work is critical as the Dignity model is replicated in other parts of the world.”
- Continue acceptance of young adult’s ideas and priorities in DignityUSA; welcome into national leadership positions; continue to support conferences, retreats, mentoring opportunities, etc.
- Expand ethnic participation and draw them into the Dignity community; improve synergy with non-English speaking Catholics
- Pursue partnerships to economize on operating costs, leverage resources better and broaden the tent; this will require compromise of organizations considering mergers
- Engagement: Develop a strategy for how local communities can move a visitor to involvement, to contribution, to volunteering, to major donor
- Continued leadership dev. and recruitment; link the importance of this to a passionate core purpose
- Dignity USA make appointments to the board of talented people who represent the diversity within its membership ranks, such as people of color, those from the western part of the U.S., young adults, etc.
- “Staying informed and connected to represent Christians, and/or LGBTQIs, with authority; local communities depend more now than in the 21st century on DignityUSA communities and communications; conference calls and events which provide real news and two-way communication.”
- “Communicating clearly amid overwhelming misinformation; we need not be louder or richer than homophobes, transphobes, etc. in society and the Church; one of our strengths is that Dignity needs only to exist and visibly model Christ, locally and nationally, to expose irrational fears, hatred, or dubious “ministries.”; Dignity practices **sacramental equality** and needs to continue using that phrase and invite the rest of the Church to recognize
- “Many transgender members were inspired by the recent work done at the World Meeting of Families. This global work is important. We recognize that even if the overall membership of DignityUSA is small compared to the total number of LGBTQ Catholics and allies, the work we are going is important and our impact is significant. How can we get more of our would-be supporters to engage? The more people we have, the greater our power is.”
- “There are a number of trans justice issues related to Catholic institutions that we need to keep our eye on and continue to work on. Supporting trans youth in Catholic institutions is one of them. More and more young people are recognizing their gender identities earlier on and coming out- this presents a problem for catholic schools. This is an emerging issue, and maybe dignity should work on developing a formal program of support. Other issues of importance to the trans community are Catholic adoption agencies not allowing LGBTQ families to adopt, and Catholic hospitals denying transgender people access to health care.”
- DignityUSA must use some religious language as purposefully as we’ve adjusted pronouns and acronyms; e.g. Catholic means Universal, not uniform; Catholic space means “where 2 or 3 are gathered in Christ’s name”; you’re in *and are* the Church if you participate in Dignity, so don’t talk of “returning (or not going back) to the Church.”
- Understand how we can bridge the age gap when members enjoy different activities; “Offer young people a safe place to be listened to and respected. You’ll go where you’re fed.”

- Recognize our role in the important work of ecumenism, inviting and uniting people into a “Catholic,” i.e. Universal, Church; having learned to cross other societal lines, LGBTQIs may be especially suited for ecumenism
- CCD leadership; education/curriculum (CCD and resources provided); e.g. parenting as a progressive Catholic; sexual ethics for the teenage mind
- Theology that goes into marginalization and justice for ALL people; Dignity continue to develop the rich theology and spirituality that has emerged from our movement.
- Resources for people that are transitioning with their faith, gender or sexuality; Dignity podcasts for sermons, talks, etc.
- Helping chapters by sharing successful membership- increasing strategies and recruiting “stand alone” members outside of chapters can help all of us to be more effective
- Work with experts and local chapters/faith communities to create a new model for bringing people together in a sustainable format
- Continued involvement nationally in legal proceedings or cases, such as the amicus brief submitted by Dignity with other faith and civil rights groups to the US Supreme Court in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, recently decided, as well as comments on other cases
- Have a seminar of theologians who come together and publish online some very strong statements saying what is not right...stand up for what you believe in...be more Christian
- Our dream is that Dignity (locally and nationally) becomes a household word so people would know where to go for support and welcome, in alignment with our SPP
- Connect with college age audience especially in rural areas or areas where DignityUSA doesn’t have local chapters or communities; educate on Catholic and LGBT issues.
- Evangelize more, i.e. outreach to disaffected Catholics, parents/families; how to build small, local faith communities
- Need to strengthen our relationship with priests and religious. We also see a need to support LGBTQI priests and religious.
- More connection thru our chapter's president /liaison chair to DignityUSA; more invitations to engage in conversation
- Merge forces through increased collaboration and connection with allies in the work; consider how can we reduce expenses and optimize resources and “magnify the voice” by working better together – even merging.
- Safe Space: Dignity got started creating safe spaces; there is still a need for that for many segments of our community; safe spaces for women, transgender, etc.
- Learning and flexibility; leadership should focus on the dynamics of change with the intent to understand how to facilitate a new future;
- Chapters that have been successful in fundraising efforts should be heralded and may serve as an example for Dignity USA fundraising activities
- Spirituality of “letting go”; we can’t grow without being willing to let go; letting go is core to the spiritual path; how can we tap into that rich tradition to cultivate a willingness to change?
- Conduct workshops on how acceptance of LGBT people have been actualized in the military, church, society, and politics
- Dignity USA could publicize more about monthly giving (Angels). Special charitable gifts (Ex--Day of Dignity, Planned Giving upon death) should be lauded and explained to arouse interest
- Modeling others is the best teaching device; highlight those who volunteer for the organization; publicize individuals who are chapter/caucus leaders or serve on national committees as people to be emulated
- In the Advocate/Out magazines, there are lists of businesses that support LGBTQI causes; Greater outreach to businesses that support LGBTQI
- Encourage Dignity members to come forward and testify at state legislatures or at county/municipal government to support causes important to LGBTQI people and other progressive causes; activities

such as Martin Luther King Day marches/parades, Women's March, March for Our lives (against gun violence), AIDS Walk, etc.

SELECT QUOTES:

“Our 21st century challenge is to identify fear and model Love widely. Do understand and invite bullies and cowards in Roman hierarchically controlled property *out into the rest of the Church*. The Church is all over the Universe. We can also share some Church with people cowering inside Roman hierarchically controlled real estate if we respect their paths and recognize the Holy Spirit within them too. See Pentecost. Christian maturity. Namasté.”

“Grace (unmerited divine assistance given to humans for regeneration) gives us opportunities.”

“ In representation, numbers count, and membership and supporters of Dignity USA demonstrate to the Church hierarchy that LGBT Catholics are an active, vibrant part of the Catholic Church, and we matter...while Dignity USA advocates for us, we can also advocate for ourselves and our community through “coming out” more to others we may meet in the world. In this way members can bear witness and plant seeds of mutual understanding and acceptance in the broader church and outside world.