

Participants

Dan
Greg
John
Mark
Milt

Facilitator/Notetaker

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How do we need to change to tackle the challenges of the present and take advantage of the opportunities?

Greg – Dignity USA does such a good job in addressing politics, not in a mean way ~ “this is us, oh, GLBTQ, don’t forget GLBTQ Catholics”

Milt – coalition with other groups is important but needs to be emphasized. Maryanne Duddy-Burke has focused on this with connecting with women’s groups, but [need to do so with] other groups in and outside the Catholic umbrella to effect change, impact policy.

Mark – the organization is doing a good job with like-minded organizations. The issue is how to strengthen this. I don’t have any ideas as I’m not privy to the connections they have/resources they have.

Dan – the role is vital at this point – while there have been advances for the LGBTQ politically, there is a polarization against the LGBTQ in the church and various governments. While we have gains in particular venues, we have backlash in society and governments. We need to have a prophetic voice and Dignity USA is one of those.

Dan – we are so small on a national scale – the only way to be heard is as part of a broader coalition

Mark – [Dignity USA] has been focused only on LGBTQ issue – would it make sense for them to connect with the broader coalitions – be part of a larger spectrum of issues?

Dan – our role as gays, lesbians, etc., we’ve grown beyond needing to focus on ourselves to survive – the marriage act has been a leap forward in our place in society. Thus, we can join in the larger fight – immigration, social justice, civil rights for all. If we have any chance to survive (sic) the targeted setbacks is to join with other coalitions.

Mark – the strategies that the Dignity USA has used could be shared with other groups. We need to move to a more synergistic [approach]. No need to lose our identity [in doing so].

Dan ~ Speaking [about being] in collaboration with others, we reaffirm who we are in collaboration with others – joining with others as a distinct entity will help us be stronger – affirm who we are.

Mark – reviewed the website [Dignity USA] – all about LGBT stuff – singular mission.

Dan – the fact is that Dignity USA fails to recognize the larger community of which we are a part.

John – missed opportunity not to acknowledge the other issues.

Dan – all the issues the last two years, all the issues about the dignity of persons have been threatened and jeopardized and tossed about by issue papers – regardless of whose rights, it's all affected –

John – the tapestry . . .

Mark – attended the Parliament of the World's Religions – [focus on] what are the common threads that can be mobilized and brought together in order to deal with what the world is facing: justice, peace, and sustainability. All of us face these issues either directly or indirectly. In the USA, we need this.

Dan – how do we as a national organization dovetail with the larger unit? How do we mesh with that experience to promote justice, sustainability and peace?

Mark – there is a strong undercurrent of unity to effect change. The Spirit is at work.

Mark – politics have not been much of an issue in the past because the membership of Dignity has been largely male – earning more, educated – threatened – is that a reason?

What should the key priorities of DignityUSA be in the next few years? What's most important to us and what values from our rich history do we want to ensure are carried forward?

Mark – the context has grown from the in-house LGBT Catholic issue – expanding concentrically.

Dan – 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].

Mark – the theme of common humanity – reiterated over and over at the Parliament. An embracing of the diversity – not fear. That within the expanding circles, Dignity faces the possibility of being out of sync – it's our opportunity and we may lose it.

Milt – we must not accept the illusion that we have “made it.” Dignity USA – the battles are still going on at local levels – the battles are not won. The fact that we can celebrate the marriage act is great, but the poor are not recognized within the fabric of the organization – this is a great danger.

Mark - No complacency – We have to avoid the arrogance of self-congratulation.

What to carry forward?

Milt - Do not forget the origins – That we belong

Mark - Do not forget the persistence – do not forget the groundedness in faith – this is a faith-based movement – we come from a deep conviction that God values all people.

Dan – it also is in the Vatican II liturgy – quality liturgy. We have tenacity.

Milt – we also have to recognize that if we are going to fight for our inclusion, we need to fight for the *inclusion of all*. The presence of women is a dividing factor [in Dignity].

Why would people want to invest their life energy and financial resources in support of this desired future?

Dan – beats me. . .

Mark – People would be willing to do it if Dignity would be able to link the goals more clearly to their lived experiences – DignityUSA seems as an organization at the distance – the connectivity is not strong [to the local level].

Dan – I wonder if Dignity would be wise to invest in an ad agency to shape things, to draw in other groups, especially younger [people] – I don't know if everyone nationally and locally know how to sell things to a younger generation.

Mark - As a larger movement for human rights, being part of this would be a way for us to fight for our inclusion, but also others.

Dan – how many of us support organizations that have some kind of movement versus other organizations that seem to have some heft to what they are doing.

Milt – Catholic heritage is what motivates us to invest our time and energy to work towards the goals of faith to the activities of faith.

Milt – if I don't recognize that my supporting the organizations HRC etc, [links to the goals/activities of faith] then it really is not grounded in faith.

Greg – 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?

Mark – We need to get better at linking with the social justice issues –

Dan – thinking about what Greg said – the Catholic identity is precious and natural to us – if we can maintain the “foot in the door” with our own Catholic church, that would be great.

Mark – grounding to move our involvement with Catholic Social Justice – This is a Catholic issue

Dan – Catholics within our own catholic community veracity

Milt – one of the current strengths – whether they like it or not, the American Bishops have recognized Dignity as a voice for LGBTQ within the church and they cannot let up on that. The dialogue must continue.

Mark – LGBT language included in the statement for the World Youth Day. Many Bishops have trouble with this. LGBT language solidifies the existence of people – same-sex attraction does not solidify identity.

What is this community's guidance to the national leadership as they create a strategic plan for the next few years of Dignity USA's mission and work?

Mark – CONNECTION, CONNECTION, CONNECTION!!

Dan- COMMUNICATE

MARK – CONSULTATION with the local chapters ~ Text without Context is subtext!

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Dan – we don't see other people and they don't see us.

Milt – that's telling in the situation in our chapter of Dignity – [our folks] see themselves as members of Dignity Arizona – not of Dignity National ~ No sense of membership with Dignity National.

Greg – we've nudged people to at least consider being part of Dignity USA.

Mark – local members do not see the relevance of Dignity USA

Dan – If I get a mailer from a national organization – there's a sense of connectedness right there from HRC, Planned Parenthood, Wildlife International

Mark - Even our own members don't feel connected with us. Look at today – 4 board members one former board member [are here]

Greg – as Dignity USA gets more involved politically – how do we not exclude others – maybe focusing on the “Catholic” would keep us together.

Catholic

Catholic Social Teaching

Non-Partisanship

Gospel of Love

Focus on what we have in common –

Light of the World

Greatest commandment

Dan – embrace its prophetic voice - Dignity USA – review Vatican II documents and start speaking as Catholic, LGBT, using these documents that apply to the global world.

Mark – maybe we recommend that Dignity USA have a theologian?