

March 24, 2018

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Madison, Wis.

Segment 3: FUTURE

How to change to tackle challenges/take advantage of opportunities?

Priorities? Needed resources? Advice to national leaders?

Why would you invest energy and money to support this desired future?

Why bother? Excerpts from the DignityUSA Statement of Position and Purpose:

become more powerful **instruments of God's love** working among all people.

we accept our **responsibilities** to the **Church**, to our Catholic heritage, to **society**, and to **individual** gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex Catholics.

to achieve **Christian maturity** through the sacraments, Scripture, prayer, an active love of neighbor as ourselves, and liturgical celebrations, especially the Mass

promote **inclusivity** in all areas of liturgical and community life

Challenges/Opportunities in Madison and Milwaukee: & the changes needed to meet them.

“Competition” from inclusive denominations reduces our small communities’ appeal:

Despite many friendly worship community options in the 21st century, we still need our small communities in order to see others like us and know we're not alone, especially for those who identify with the Roman denomination. Even in bigger communities which are outwardly welcoming, as minorities we can remain invisible. Because the Roman hierarchy approves some ministries that allow LGBTQI people to sit in pews as long as nothing changes, it remains important that Dignity complement what they offer, and expose what they don't, by existing locally and nationally and offering sacramental equality.

Modest diversity in race, gender, age:

Because presence changes the conversation, people at both local and national levels should continue meeting with diverse groups, even if it doesn't result in long-term commitments to our activities. Locally, we chapters should identify community groups to partner with for our own benefit, to be visible—but moreso to help us learn whether we can offer anything to serve *their* needs. We encourage DignityUSA to continue prioritizing caucuses, which connect people in smaller communities to people with whom they identify.

Staying informed and connected to represent Christians, and/or GLBTQIs, with authority.

Local communities depend more now than in the 20th century on DignityUSA communities and communications. Milwaukee relies on the “Breath of the Spirit” for its monthly liturgy. Both Wisconsin communities contain enthusiastic members of the Women's and Young Adult caucuses and, in the past, perhaps still, the Defenders. For ourselves, locally, we recognized the need to seek more gatherings or retreats with others, where we actively listen. We encourage DignityUSA to clearly advertise that paying for membership will keep the Church in touch with you on mailing lists, 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.” Because “thoughts and prayers” for BGLTIQs are not enough; Dignity practices **sacramental equality**. We encourage DignityUSA to continue using that phrase and invite the rest of the Church to recognize it. Locally, we should time a press release on something relevant, a week prior to the annual Pride Parade, to increase our recognition among the many other groups marching.

DignityUSA must use some religious language as purposefully as we’ve adjusted pronouns and acronyms. If Dignity at all levels doesn’t, who will? These comforting definitions can put many of our struggles in healthier perspective:

- **Catholic** means Universal, not uniform.
- **Catholic space** means “where 2 or 3 are gathered in Christ’s name.” (Flash church!)
- **Roman Catholic hierarchically controlled real estate** is a small, well-decorated, subset of Catholic space. We need to internalize and say the whole phrase, to avoid the confusing shorthand.
- **The Church** is the Pilgrim People of God, not just the USCCB or the local K of C.
- **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.” Hushh...
- **Catholic teaching** is from a much broader tradition than “current Roman Catholic hierarchical teaching.” Differentiate when relying on the former to revise the latter.
- **Fear**, not hatred, motivates oppressors, including us when we slip into that role. Fear not!
- **God is Love**. The opposite of Love is not hate, but fear, from which we strive to recognize God saving us.

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.

Bridging the age gap when members enjoy different activities.

We recognize this is not unique to Dignity. Youth will wisely avoid a group of desperate elders soliciting them for its own insecure purposes. Our aging local group should find youth, and listen to them. One commenter summed it up: “Offer young people a safe place to be listened to and respected. You’ll go where you’re fed.”

Recognize that chronological and “coming-out” ages often don’t match. Most recently out people have a lot of teen in them, while some teens are quite mature emotionally.

Few opportunities for honest, true “dialogue” with dwindling numbers of clerics.

Some one-to-one contacts succeed. Individual clerics within the Roman Catholic hierarchy will sometimes minister with us, at various levels of risk to their livelihoods. “Systemic” communication with bishops largely has to happen through the press. Speaking respectfully from our truth in straightforward language and by our actions, we continue to generally communicate better to a broad public than the hierarchy does.

Connecting to other Christian organizations.

We 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, TLBGIQs may be especially suited for ecumenism. Catholic means Universal, not Uniform. Locally, we recognized relatively simple matter of updating and distributing our brochure and not just relying on a website as we’ve done for more than a decade. The brochure information should go to our community GLBTQI centers and to social workers, counselors, campus ministries. We can also look on-line to Facebook and Craigslist. Also, our local groups could revive collaborating with other groups to host ecumenical community celebrations, which seldom happen without our leadership. Successful past events have been more topical (AIDS memorials, marriage celebrations), while the attempts to maintain generic annual events draw increasingly fewer attendees.

At the national level we recommend that our Jubilee convention in Chicago in 2019 include a strong resolution and big, juicy press release thanking the other churches and organizations who for 50 years have opened their facilities to Dignity events. Around the country we have absolutely relied on them as the Roman hierarchy removed the facilities it controls from use by our segment of God’s Church.

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