

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy and support.

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Moving From the Familiar and Usual

By Mark Matson, President, DignityUSA

A scholarship took me from my native Denver to the nation's capital to start college. I will never forget my first August day in Washington, D.C. It was 98 degrees with 97% humidity. I had never experienced heat like that. I had spent the previous 18 years of my life living in a white, working class suburb of semi-arid Denver, Colorado. "Hot" there seemed downright comfortable compared to the sultry hot of D.C. I landed at National Airport after nightfall. I remember the sights from the taxi. Long blocks of houses all attached to each other. I had never seen that. Where were the lawns and yards? Most people were out on their "stoops" trying to find a cool breeze. And most of those people were black. My normal freshman anxiety was increasing with every block. The next day I was driven to a grocery store in nearby Hyattsville, MD. I was the only white person in that store! An irrational fear took over and I left the store. Within a month, I was quite comfortable in my new home. Within a few months, I was no longer noticing that I was a racial minority. I thought many times of Tim back home. Tim was an African American who moved in down the street from my parents. His father was a Denver cop. They were the only people of color in the neighborhood. What I had been feeling must have been what Tim felt then. No wonder he was stand-offish at first. My move far away from home started a long process of discovering new places, new people, new customs and new perspectives that I will never regret.

Many years later in life, I found myself studying at The Ohio State University campus in Columbus, and attending Mass at the Newman Center, staffed by the Paulist Fathers. I loved the progressive experience of church I found there. That included hearing women preach on Sunday. We had to play some games to establish that tradition — having the homily delivered before the Gospel. Church law permitted only an ordained priest to deliver the homily, defined as a reflection following the Gospel. Needless to say, I had not heard a woman preach during Mass. One of the women on staff, Marie, was particularly skilled in reflecting on the Scriptures. One Sunday she told a story from her life to make a point. The story was from an experience as a little girl. I found myself translating it into my life as a boy. It wasn't a smooth translation. In fact, I couldn't relate to some of it at all. Then it occurred to me...I was experiencing what women had to do all the time!

In both of these situations, I was pulled from the familiar into the unfamiliar. My assumptions and beliefs were exposed and challenged as I got a glimpse from a very different window on the world. That is what can happen when we leave the security of home base.

The word "ghetto" was an original reference to an island outside Venice to which Jews were confined. It later described the section of European cities where the Jews were required to live. Eventually it came to be associated with inner-city slums inhabited by minorities. One meaning is "any segregated mode of living or working that results from bias or stereotyping." In that sense, I was raised in a white ghetto. My

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*Moving From the Familiar and Usual
 Continued from page 1*

entire education has been in Catholic schools...part of my Catholic ghetto. I see things as a member of the male ghetto, although my sexuality has certainly given me a different slant on that view! And believe it or not, there is such a thing as a gay ghetto. I once heard it said that America is no more segregated than it is on Sunday when we all go to Church to worship the God we created in our image and likeness.

DignityUSA and its local parts are not immune from this. We started as a ministry to the outcast. We became a sanctuary for refugees from hostile communities. We created our own faith communities and many have been fed by them. But over time, have we not become more comfortable, more rigid, and more locked into seeing and interpreting things through the narrow lens of our experience as an oppressed sexual minority?

Narrow is not what I think of when I think of God. Edwina Gately once proclaimed at a Dignity convention that God is immense and constantly streeeeetches us. As we approach our 40th year of ministry, I have been increasingly concerned that many of our chapters have acquired characteristics of the ghetto. How diverse is your community? What array of ages is present? What percentage is male? How many straight people are there? Married with children? How often do new people come and when they do, how frequently do they come back? How many “shoulds” does your community live by—“shoulds” that dictate how things have always been done and should be done?

In my humble opinion, **all** Catholics should be extended a warm and genuine welcome to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church and have access to its seven sacraments — this includes GLBT families; access to Holy Orders and ordination for women, and access to Matrimony and marriage for priests.

Your National Board of Directors has been talking quite a bit lately about the need to “enlarge our tent” by breaking out of the molds that have become hardened over time. Our future vitality requires it. We believe we must become more hospitable to the spiritual needs of women, of youth, of Hispanics, and of straight people hungering for a “parish” that lives what they value — a place that honors, respects and practices inclusivity as well as full participation in the life of the Church and community.

As we gather this summer in San Francisco, we will recall and celebrate what DignityUSA and its local communities have achieved. But your leadership will also challenge you to think differently, to consider scrapping the old wineskins, and to reach out to people we have not put the welcome mat out for before — people with a very different experience who can open our eyes and challenge our thinking. I plan for this to be one of the topics of discussion during our Convention 2009 Membership Meeting. I think the Spirit is calling us down some different paths that will require us to think differently if we are to thrive. I believe that staying where we have been comfortable is a sure recipe for a slow death. What do you think? Come to our convention in San Francisco and let your voice be heard.



**Happy
 Mothers
 Day
 and
 Blessings**

Dignity/Orlando will host Mass during Orlando Gay Days

Dignity/Orlando (Florida) will host a Mass on **Sunday, June 7, 2009**, at **9:00 a.m.** in the Jasmine Ballroom of the Royal Plaza Hotel, 1905 Hotel Plaza Blvd., Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830, located on the Disney property.

The event is in conjunction with Orlando Gay Days 2009, June 2-9. The Royal Plaza Hotel will serve as the host hotel for Orlando Gay Days, as well as the 11th Annual Gay Days Expo, June 4-6, 2009.

Dignity/Orlando members will assist staffing the Orlando Gay Days main welcome booth.

All are invited to attend the Mass on June 7th and to drop by to meet and chat with chapter members at the welcome booth.

Details on Orlando Gay Days can be found at <http://www.gaydays.com>.

More information on the chapter and St. Dorothy Parish, their host faith community, can be found at <http://saintdorothy.org>.

Happy Anniversary & Congratulations to:

San Fernando Valley (CA) - 13 years
Northern Virginia (VA) - 17 years
*Madison (WI) - 32 years
Dayton (OH) - 34 years
Detroit (MI) - 35 years
Philadelphia (PA) - 36 years
Chicago (IL) - 37 years
San Diego (CA) - 37 years

* Dignity/Integrity Chapter

Q&A with Father Geoffrey Farrow

Posed and compiled by Leo N. Egashira, Publications Committee Chair

Fr. Geoffrey Farrow, who was fired from his Fresno, CA parish after preaching against California Proposition 8 last October, has agreed to deliver the homily during the Eucharistic liturgy at our DignityUSA Convention 2009. He will also be participating in a newly-added pre-convention forum on Marriage Equality, which will be held on Thursday, July 2, 2009. (See story on page 8.)



Fr. Geoffrey Farrow: I have been invited to address DignityUSA's biennial convention in San Francisco on the 4th of July weekend this year. DignityUSA is an organization of LGBT Catholics and provides spiritual guidance and services to these underserved and all too often marginalized people within the Catholic Church. As a prelude to this year's convention, the organizers have asked me to respond to a series of questions which they believe will be of interest to their membership.

DignityUSA: What are you doing right now and what are your near- and long-term plans?

Farrow: Presently, I am active with Love, Honor and Cherish. This organization is working hard to place an initiative on the November 2010 California ballot to repeal Proposition 8. Beyond that, I am speaking at various organizations both about Prop 8 and other such hate legislation. I've also been asked by various people to write a book about the treatment of LGBT people in/by the Catholic Church. I've written two chapters so far and am currently shopping for a literary agent.

Dignity: How have your family and former colleagues reacted to recent events?

Farrow: I have to say that I have been humbled and deeply moved by the reaction of my family. My parents have been extremely loving and supportive throughout these past six months. They have been most loving, generous and understanding to me in these difficult times. I stand in awe as I contrast their reaction with that of my "spiritual father," the bishop. "Only that which Civil Law requires" and when my Canon Lawyer invoked Church Law which requires that a bishop provide support for his priest, the bishop responded, "I'm afraid I must decline."

Mind you, what is written in Canon Law is not a suggestion; it is not an "option;" it is what is required. Nevertheless, I am glad that he reacted as he did. As a hospital administrator once told me about not accepting federal funds, "If you take their money, you have to take their rules." By not providing me with any monetary assistance, he has in fact freed me completely to work as an LGBT activist.

My parents' unconditional love and support for me contrasts sharply with my bishop's total lack of practical concern for me. Brother priests have been very supportive, although quietly so; I've received many messages of support, encouragement and gratitude. Some have also sent me some financial gifts.

Dignity: What, if anything, has surprised you about West Hollywood's vibrant gay culture?

Farrow: The City of West Hollywood gave me an official commendation for my public statements in support of basic human dignity/civil rights for LGBT people. I was humbled by their expression of love and support. The gay culture in West Hollywood...well, we are people—just like everyone else: People who work, who

May 5, 2009 Chapter Leaders Conference Call

The next chapter leaders call will be **Tuesday, May 5, 2009, at 9:00 p.m. EDT (6:00 p.m. PDT)**. The call in number is (269) 320-8400 with access code of 890836#. Please RSVP to Secretary Lewis Tanner at Secretary@dignityusa.org and let him know if you CAN or CANNOT make the call.

You may listen to the last call (March 9, 2009) by contacting Lewis for access information.

Not every chapter has participated in the chapter leader calls over the past year. We want to increase communication between DignityUSA and chapters. Advise Lewis if there is something we can do differently to facilitate your chapter's participation.

In addition, Lewis would like to have an up-to-date chapter leader directory. Please e-mail him at the above e-mail address and advise him who the chapter president (and/or officers) is (are) and the person responsible for chapter membership.

Dignity/Philadelphia's 36th Anniversary

Dignity/Philadelphia will celebrate its 36th anniversary on **Sunday, May 17, 2009** at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, 330 S. 13th Street, Philadelphia between Pine and Spruce Streets.

Pot Luck Dinner 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.
Mass 7:00 p.m.
Toast at 8:30 p.m.

*Q&A with Father Geoffrey Farrow
 Continued from page 3*

struggle, who try to find happiness; people who love, who hurt, who try to find their way through life with all of its joys and hardships. The passage of Prop 8 and the hate, which it represents, has actually caused the community to draw closer together and motivated everyone to work for equality.

Dignity: How have you remained engaged with your Catholic faith since your dismissal?

Farrow: The word dismissal implies rejection on some level. Many LGBT people have experienced this from their families and from their faith communities. As I mentioned earlier, I am blessed with a loving and supportive family. As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, on one hand, if you think of the Catholic Church as the hierarchy, then there is very little reason to remain a Catholic. On the other hand, if you see the Church as the People of God, a living community of faith, then there are many reasons for hope. Catholics in the pews disagree sharply with their bishops on a host of social issues and tend to be far more progressive than their Protestant counterparts. Eventually, the bishops will get it or, will die off and be replaced by bishops who do get it. Pope John Paul II apologized for the hierarchy's decisions regarding Galileo, the Crusades and treatment of Jewish people. No one in the hierarchy stood up and rent their garments because this represented a rebuff of the hierarchy. They simply nodded in agreement and hoped that the apology would be accepted and that everyone would simply forget. Considering that many in our society do not know what Vietnam is, I believe that their hope is reasonable.

Dignity: Do you think movements and faith communities like Dignity and Women-priests are the faces of Catholicism in the future?

Farrow: I believe that they are faces within Catholicism and that slowly, the greater faith community will come to see the validity of their demands for simple justice and human dignity. After all, the heart of the Gospel is love, and its practical extension to all human beings. In the end, some future pope will apologize to women and LGBT persons just as John Paul II apologized to Muslims, Jewish people and secular society. It took centuries for that apology to come, but it came.

Dignity: Now that you've come out-of-the-closet politically, do you see yourself engaging in more public speaking on GLBT issues as well as other issues?

Farrow: I will endeavor to do whatever I can do in order to advance human dignity, civil rights and equality for all.

Dignity: Do you have any words of wisdom for the GLBT Catholic movement, specifically DignityUSA?

Farrow: Keep the beautiful and good things, which our parents and grandparents shared with us through their lived expressions of love. Lose everything else. Share those good values with others and as St. Francis said to his friar, "Preach the Gospel always, when necessary use words."

Dignity: Thank you for your thoughts and words of wisdom. DignityUSA looks forward to welcoming you at Convention 2009!

Ed. Note: Fr. Farrow is a new member of DignityUSA. His appearance and participation at our national convention is being sponsored by a very generous donation by Dignity/Boston. Fr. Farrow and the entire DignityUSA community is grateful for Boston's foresight and generosity.

TRANSITIONS

In MEMORIAM

John "Scotty" Schott, Dignity/Philadelphia. A tribute will appear in the June 2009 *Dateline*.

BIRTHS

ADOPTIONS

MARRIAGES

HOLY UNIONS

WEDDING/UNION ANNIVERSARIES

Please send DignityUSA member name(s) of the affected person(s) and event to Operations Manager Peggy Burns by email to info@dignityusa.org or by phone 800-877-8797.

For example, in events such as births and adoptions, the name(s) of parent(s) and child or children, or number of girls or boys, and chapter affiliation or city and state. In events such as marriage or holy union, the names of the couple and chapter affiliation or city and state.



Reaction to DignityUSA Press Release Celebrating Iowa Marriage Ruling (April 3, 2009)

"I did not know, before this email, that DignityUSA was an Amicus in the Iowa Supreme Court case. The statement endorsed by the membership at the Las Vegas meeting is truly stirring. THANK YOU. It's still difficult for me to not feel like a Jew in Germany when I enter a Catholic church for Mass, but Dignity keeps me with a foot in the door, mental images of Pope Maledict notwithstanding."

DignityUSA Garnering Press Coverage!

Fox News used comments by DignityUSA Executive Director Marianne Duddy-Burke in an unbiased, positive manner in the recent dispute over Harry Knox's appointment to President Obama's faith advisory council:

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/04/09/catholics-offense-obama-appointing-pope-basher-faith-based-panel/>

The installation of Archbishop Dolan in New York City has provided some great media coverage for DignityUSA. Jeff Stone of New York, DignityUSA's director of media relations, has been the visible, local person. Here's a link to a New York Post video where Jeff gives our response to Dolan's criticism of same-sex marriage:

http://www.nypost.com/seven/04162009/news/regionalnews/new_leader_joins_war_on_ny_gay_nups_164700.htm

Gay Dad Research Study

By Samantha Tornello, Graduate Student, University of Virginia

Are you a gay dad? Would you be willing to answer some confidential questions about your life and about your family? The purpose of this study is to examine the many ways families headed by gay fathers have been created, explore how families function, and learn about the relationship between partners.

The study consists of an online survey and will take approximately 25-35 minutes of your time. To qualify for the study you have to identify as male, a father, and gay, bisexual or homosexual and have at least one child of any age; this child can be biological, adopted, foster, step, or other child. You do not need to be the child's legal parent to participate.

This study has been approved by the University of Virginia IRB #2008-0407-00, and I am working with Dr. Charlotte J. Patterson who is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia.

If you and/or your partner are interested in participating or want further information please contact Samantha L. Tornello (Principal Investigator) via email GayDadsStudy@gmail.com. She will send you a web link that you can use to access the study.

Thank you for your interest and I hope to hear about your family soon!

Sincerely,

Samantha Tornello
Graduate Student
University of Virginia
(434) 243-8558

DignityUSA
Operating Statement of Revenue and Expense
For the Period 1 October 2008 – 31 March 2009

	Fiscal Year to Date Actual	Fiscal Year to Date Budget	Fiscal Year to Date Variance	% Variance of YTD Budget
<u>Revenues</u>				
Contributions	\$117,027.94	\$102,650.00	\$14,377.94	14%
Membership Dues	\$27,487.34	\$23,750.00	\$3,737.34	16%
Interest & Misc. Income	\$1,332.92	\$2,075.00	(\$742.08)	-36%
Total Revenue	\$145,848.20	\$128,475.00	\$17,373.20	14%
<u>Expenses</u>				
Salaries & related expenses	\$71,881.33	\$73,230.93	(\$1,349.60)	2%
Office Expense	\$25,019.29	\$31,969.20	(\$6,949.91)	22%
Marketing/Promotions	\$17,808.00	\$12,500.00	\$5,308.00	-42%
QV Publications	\$7,601.91	\$8,700.00	(\$1,098.09)	13%
Bank Fees/Merchant Fees	\$1,690.68	\$1,550.00	\$140.68	-9%
Chapter Support	\$3,815.00	\$4,750.00	(\$935.00)	20%
Total Operating Expenses	\$127,816.21	\$132,700.13	(\$4,883.92)	4%
Income (Loss) From Operations	\$18,031.99	(\$4,225.13)	\$22,257.12	
Unrealized gain (loss)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0%
Income from Donated Estates	\$21,435.26	\$18,000.00	\$3,435.26	19%
Total Other Income	\$21,435.26	\$18,000.00	\$3,435.26	19%
Excess Revenue over Expenses	\$39,467.25	\$13,774.87	\$25,692.38	187%





Transamerica Pyramid, San Francisco

**Convention 2009—
Celebrating 40 Years of
Ministry to GLBT Catholics**
DignityUSA Convention,
July 2-5, 2009
Parc 55 Hotel, Union
Square, San Francisco



Plan your 2009 summer vacation in San Francisco with DignityUSA!

Join us in 2009 as we return to San Francisco for **DignityUSA's 19th Biennial Convention**. We will celebrate 40 years of ministry to the LGBT Catholic community. Come early and join in the San Francisco Pride celebration happening the weekend before the convention. Show your Pride by joining DignityUSA's 40th Anniversary Pride Parade Contingent.

Convention Registration materials were mailed to all DignityUSA members. They are also available at <http://www.dignityusa.org>. See center Convention 2009 panel at top of page.

Regular Registration Deadline is May 15th. Young Adult Registration (age 30 and younger) remains \$125.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
San Francisco Pride Week DignityUSA Convention 2009 Planning Calendar			June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27 SF Gay Pride Weekend
June 28 SF Gay Pride Parade	June 29	June 30 Pre- Convention Offerings	July 1 Pre- Convention Offerings	July 2 Convention Opening (Evening)	July 3 Convention	July 4 Convention
July 5 Convention Ends (Noon)	July 6	July 7	July 8	July 9	July 10	

Low Convention Hotel Rates Available

The Parc 55 Hotel, located in the city's financial district and next to the Union Square shopping area and theater districts, will serve as the convention site. Handy public transportation is available. The Convention Committee has secured room rates of \$119 per night for single/double, plus \$20 each for the 3rd and 4th person (plus room tax). Kids under 12 are free. Please check www.dignityusa.org for updates. For hotel reservations go to site:

<https://www.reztrip.com/RezTripWeb/specialPromo.do?id=code1%3D9388314%26code2%3D10486706>

JetBlue offers DignityUSA Discount

Haven't made your DignityUSA Convention 2009 airline reservations yet?

Consider JetBlue, and enjoy a 5% discount on travel to San Francisco or San Jose. Just use the promo code DIGNITYUSA when making your reservation at www.jetblue.com/promo. The discount applies to **travel to San Francisco between June 30 and July 2, 2009, and home July 5 through 7, 2009.**



Fr. Junipero Serra, San Francisco



Stoked for Convention 2009!

By Mark Matson, President, DignityUSA

Let me tell you about the Parc55 Hotel — site of our 2009 convention! I just spent a weekend there for our April Board meeting. I took Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) from the San Francisco Airport to the Powell Street Station, San Francisco ...about a 30-minute ride. BART was a pleasure to ride. It reminded me of Washington, DC's METRO. When you come out of the Powell Street Station, the Parc 55 Hotel is looming above you! The Hotel has just been renovated from top to bottom. The hotel room was spacious, although storage is scarce. The conference facilities are mostly on the third floor and will serve our needs beautifully. The Hotel is in the middle of a bustling commercial district with all kinds of shopping and restaurants.

Across the street is the nine-level Westfield San Francisco Centre with over 100 stores, including Bloomingdales and Nordstrom. It is the largest urban shopping center west of the Mississippi. It has a great food court on the lowest level with Bristol Farms Gourmet Market and 15 fast, casual, gourmet eateries with seating for 880 guests — which will work well for people who want many quick food options located close to the hotel. The Centre has seven full-service restaurants as well. Nearby is a Walgreens, Gap, Old Navy, H&M, Eddie Bauer and Macy's Union Square. Well, you get the picture. *(Editor's Latin refresher: VENI, VIDI, VISA! — I came, I saw, I bought!)*

The Powell-Hyde cable car starts one block from the hotel and will take you up and over several hills to Fisherman's Wharf. The Castro Street section of the city is a Muni Metro subway ride away, as is the Embarcadero. One of our Dignity/San Francisco hosts took us to the top of Twin Peaks which offers a stunning view of the city. It is accessible by bus as well.

I came back to Columbus, Ohio full of excitement about what I experienced and saw. Our host chapter has secured a great facility for us at a most reasonable rate and in a great location. Just perfect for celebrating our 40th anniversary! Convention registrations are running well ahead of this time in 2007. The hotel is filling up. Airline fares are coming down with associated fuel prices. If you are on the fence about coming to our Convention 2009...Come! I have a feeling it is going to be one of our best. Besides, I've had several dreams about addressing a wildly enthusiastic crowd in a packed convention hall. You can help make my dreams come true!



PRE-CONVENTION OFFERINGS

Deadline for Wine Tour Extended

There are still a few openings to join Dignity members on our **June 30 – July 1, 2009** wine tasting tour to the beautiful Sonoma Valley. You will be escorted in a luxury private coach from the Parc 55 hotel at 9:00 a.m. June 30, direct to the Korbel Winery and then to a gourmet lunch at Guerneville where you may explore the many gay shops and bars of this Gay Mecca at the height of its season. In the late afternoon you will be escorted back to the four star La Rosa Hotel in downtown Santa Rosa. On July 1, after a hearty English breakfast, you will be escorted to private wine tastings at two premier wineries in the Sonoma Valley. You will be returned by your private coach to the Parc 55 Hotel in the afternoon. The cost is \$215 per person double occupancy (\$275 single occupancy). Sign up and payment for the wine tour must be received in the DignityUSA office, PO Box 376, Medford, MA 02155-0004 by May 15th. Even if you have already registered for the Convention, add this tour to your week in San Francisco!

Marriage Equality Forum Added to Pre-Convention Offerings

Prominent California activists will reflect on “People of Faith and Marriage Equality: Lessons from the Proposition 8 Campaign” during a forum added to DignityUSA's agenda for **Thursday, July 2**. This free event is sponsored by Dignity/San Francisco, and will be held at the Parc 55 hotel from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.. More information coming soon!

See Wicked with Dignity!

In conjunction with this year's convention, Dignity/San Francisco is coordinating an outing to see “Wicked” at the Orpheum Theatre on **Wednesday, July 1st** (the evening before the opening of the 2009 DignityUSA Convention). Our group rate for the Orchestra tickets is \$73.00 each (payable to Dignity/San Francisco) and the payment and reservation **deadline is May 1st**.

Please send your RSVP to dignitsf@pacbell.net ASAP (note the address does not have a “y”) and mail payment to Dignity San Francisco, 1329 Seventh Avenue, San Francisco CA 94122. Please join us!

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*Pre-Convention Offerings
Continued from page 8*

Day of Service: Leadership through Gospel Service

In celebration of our 40th Anniversary, DignityUSA will kick off our San Francisco convention with a day of volunteer service. Reflecting our belief that Eucharist is at the heart of our faith, DignityUSA members and friends are invited to spend **Thursday, July 2, 2009** volunteering at one of two organizations that provide food to people in need. Start your convention experience by working side-by-side with other Dignity members at either Project Open Hand or The San Francisco Food Bank. Both organizations work diligently to meet critical needs among vulnerable Bay Area communities, and both are accessible via public transportation.

Since 1985, **Project Open Hand** has been providing “meals with love” to people living with serious illnesses and to seniors in San Francisco and Alameda County, and has served as a model for over 100 organizations all over the world. The organization provides food and nourishment to people with symptomatic HIV and AIDS and breast cancer, seniors, and homebound and critically ill people. They offer home delivery of hot, nutritious meals, congregate meals at sites throughout the city, and delivery or pick-up of groceries. Volunteers will help prepare and pack food for home delivery, and will fill grocery boxes based on clients orders.

The San Francisco Food Bank collects millions of pounds of food from growers, packers, processors, manufacturers, the USDA and grocery stores each year. The food is sorted, shelved and repacked by volunteers, and then redistributed to over 600 programs, including neighborhood pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, homeless shelters and youth programs. DignityUSA volunteers will help with all aspects of the sorting, shelving, and redistribution process.

Sign up to help at one of these worthy organizations on the Convention Registration Form. More details about your assignment will be sent to you once your registration has been submitted.

You can help DignityUSA make a real difference in the community!

CONVENTION 2009 FUNDRAISING

Going, going...

Your help is needed to help make DignityUSA's 40th Anniversary auction a real success. In addition to the traditional silent auction held at the Convention Dinner-Dance, we are hoping to host an on-line auction that will enable us to raise

funds from a much broader population. Here's how you can help:

Donate! We are seeking weekend/weeklong stays at vacation homes, ski resorts, hotels, airline tickets, artwork, gift baskets and unique items that will draw widespread interest. Please contact Edwards Buice edwardsbuice@yahoo.com to discuss what you would like to contribute.

Solicit items! If you have connections with businesses or people who would be willing to contribute an item to DignityUSA's auction, we can provide the solicitation materials you need.

Help us run the on-line auction! We are seeking people with experience in managing an on-line auction to help us run our first one. Please contact executivedirector@dignityusa.org to volunteer.

OTHER NEWS

Vatican to Investigate U.S. Women Religious Leadership

By Bill Welch, Editor, DignityUSA

Since mid-April 2009, several media outlets have carried articles similar to the title shown above.

Officers of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) had received a communication from Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, that his congregation had begun a “doctrinal assessment” of the women's organization. Purportedly, the expressed concern is about speakers LCWR has invited to address their annual assemblies in recent years, based upon the texts of those presentations posted on the conference's web site.

Cardinal Levada's letter pointed to three areas of doctrine that he said the congregation first flagged in a 2001 meeting with officers of the leadership conference: the ordination of women, the theology of religious pluralism, and homosexuality. Most observers believe that a principal aim of the assessment is to ensure that future speakers at the conference's assemblies will be screened for their positions on those issues. The reason for the doctrinal congregation's involvement is because the issues touch on matters of theological orthodoxy.

As to why the Vatican is sponsoring the inquiry rather than the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, observers point out that the Leadership Conference of Women Religious has been recognized by the Vatican as an official entity under the

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Church's Code of Canon Law since 1959. The Vatican thus has the capacity to issue official recommendations or mandates, whereas the bishops' conference can present only non-binding guidance.

Below are links to articles on www.huffingtonpost.com and National Catholic Reporter Online.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/15/pope-investigating-us-cat_n_187516.html

<http://ncronline.org/news/women/vatican-investigates-us-women-religious-leadership>

<http://ncronline.org/news/women/women-religious-meet-vatican-accusers-rome>

ANNOUNCEMENT

Roman Catholic Womenpriests Ordain Four U.S. Bishops

Press Release April 21, 2009

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Roman Catholic Womenpriests USA is pleased to announce the ordinations of Joan Mary Clark Houk, Andrea Michele Johnson, Maria Regina Nicolosi and Bridget Mary Meehan as Roman Catholic bishops. These ordinations took place on April 19, 2009 in California. Officiating at the ceremony were Bishops Patricia Fresen and Ida Raming from Germany and Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger from Austria.

Joan Mary Clark Houk has been called by the members of the Great Waters Region to minister pastorally to the women-priests, womendeacons and People of God of her region. To be

always mindful of that call, she has "Faithful Servant" inscribed on her bishop's ring. Joan's many years of parish ministry and her experience as a wife and mother have prepared her well for her pastoral role. Joan and John have been married for forty-eight years and have six children, eight grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Andrea Michele Johnson resides in Annapolis, MD, and has been elected to serve as bishop for the Eastern Region. She has worked in international education exchange with the senior Fulbright Scholar Program, and also as a director of religious education over many years. She was pastoral minister in a priestless Catholic parish in the mid-1980s and also served as a former director of the Women's Ordination Conference. Andrea currently works in hospital chaplaincy. She is happily married to Spencer, her husband of thirty-nine years and is the mother of three adult children – two sons and one daughter, and is the grandmother of two.

Maria Regina Nicolosi was elected by the members of the Midwest Region to be their bishop. Regina was born in the Rhineland, Germany, close to the Abbey of St. Hildegard. Before she moved to the USA, she was a teacher. After raising her family, Regina worked as a senior housing manager and a nursing home chaplain. Currently, she celebrates Eucharist with small faith communities and has served as the program coordinator for the Midwest region. In this role she has helped prepare several women for priestly ordination. Regina is married and has four children and eight grandchildren. She and her husband Charles live in Red Wing, MN.

Bridget Mary Meehan, a Sister for Christian Community, was elected to serve as bishop for the Southern Region. She presides at inclusive liturgies and sacramental services for vibrant faith communities in Sarasota, Florida and Falls Church, Virginia. For fifteen years, Bridget Mary served as a pastoral associate at Ft. Myer Chapel in northern Virginia. She is the author of eighteen books including *Praying with Women of the Bible*, *Praying with Visionary Women*, and co-author of *Praying with Celtic Holy Women*. She is host/producer of TV/Internet media designed to promote justice, equality and mutual respect, and dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program for Global Ministries University.

More information at www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org

