

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations, genders and gender identities—especially gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons—in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support.

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Pride 2010

By Bill Welch, Editor

DignityUSA's Board of Directors and Staff wish you, your family, and friends safe and joyous Pride 2010 celebrations and festivities.

May God's blessings and love abide with DignityUSA Chapters sponsoring contingents in local Pride parades, those staffing Pride event booths and information tables, and those gathered for Chapter Pride liturgies and celebrations.

It has been my experience that PFlag (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and religious group contingents in Pride parades and at other Pride events tend to garner acclamation, respect, and appreciation from participants, viewers, and audiences. LGBT youth and young adults, especially those with conflicted feelings regarding human sexuality, view them as validating messengers of hope.

I am also aware that some members of the LGBT community and community-at-large abhor the use of the word(s) or notion of "Pride" or "Gay Pride" as a descriptor for our celebrations and festivities.

Jesus Christ left us a message of love and encouraged its adoption — love of God; love of neighbor as oneself. In this vein or regard, we employ the descriptor to encourage self respect and love of self as replacements for self-loathing and lack of self esteem.

Peace and blessings. Have HAPPY PRIDE TIMES!

A Recent Communication

By Mark Matson, President, DignityUSA

Ben, a high school student in the Chicago area, contacted DignityUSA via our Internet website for assistance with a research paper he was assigned.

In his initial contact message, Ben said,

My topic is homosexuality in the Bible. I aim to write a paper about specific verses of the Bible that are frequently used in religious debates over the morality of non-heterosexuality. As DignityUSA is a well-known, credible organization, I would love to interview a staff member there who could provide me a lot of information about specific verses in the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, and DignityUSA's interpretation of those verses. I could do this interview via email or through a phone conversation.

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National Office

DignityUSA
 PO Box 376
 Medford, MA 02155-0004
 Voice: 202-861-0017 or
 800-877-8797
 Fax: 781-397-0584
 Website: www.dignityusa.org
 E-mail: info@dignityusa.org

Staff

Marianne Duddy-Burke –
 Executive Director
executivedirector@dignityusa.org
 Voice: 617-669-7810

Peggy Burns – Operations Mgr
Info@dignityusa.org

Dateline & QV: Quarterly Voice Publications Team

Leo Egashira – Publications
 Committee Chair
Legashira@yahoo.com

Bill Welch – Editor
DUSAEditor@comcast.net

Peggy Burns – Proofreader
 Paul Keaveney – Proofreader

Publication Archives

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*A Recent Communication
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As I have done a lot of thinking about this very question over the years, I took on the challenge. I found out Ben is Jewish and gay and was interested to learn a Christian perspective on his topic. I thought others might find this abbreviated transcript of our discussion to be of interest. I caution you that these are some complex questions that books have been written about. Ben and I had but an hour's discussion on the phone. These are Ben's questions and my responses.

Q: What are your views regarding homosexuality? Are these based upon your religious beliefs?

A: My views regarding homosexuality have definitely been influenced by my Catholicism. I have had to spend a lot of psychic energy trying to reconcile my sexuality with my spirituality. My Church taught me that homosexuality was sinful — “gravely” sinful. My Church also taught me that God is love, that every human is sacred by virtue of their divine origin, that Jesus said love was the greatest commandment, and that we were to love our neighbor as we did ourselves. As a result I never thought that God didn't love me because I knew my sexuality was a part of my being. I came to understand that my Church understood homosexuality to be an “aberrant behavior” that was sinful. I saw that as flawed because why would a loving God create me with an inborn inclination toward evil? That is what I have had to work through intellectually. I now believe that homosexuality is a variant in human creation. It is morally neutral like heterosexuality. Moral questions come to bear in how I behave.

Q: What do you believe God says about homosexuality?

A: I don't know what God says. I have never spoken to her, and as far as I know no one else has either. I do know what the Bible says about it, but I believe the Scriptures are more man's work than God's. Inspired by faith, no doubt. But not dictated.

Q: What verses of the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, do you see as forbidding homosexuality? Where in the Bible are those verses? As a Gay Christian, how do you reconcile those with your life?

A: These verses are found primarily in the Hebrew Scriptures, or what Christians call the Old Testament. The classic is taken from the Holiness Code of Leviticus which states that for a man to lie with another man as if he were a woman is an abomination. Other references in the Hebrew Scriptures have a similar motivation. I see these Scriptures as a record of the Tribe of Israel and its special and personal relationship with a God named Yahweh. This tribe was small and surrounded by hostile tribes. The Holiness Code consists of many proscriptions intended to protect the health and promote the vitality of the tribe. If you are concerned about growing the tribe and understand that semen contains 100% of the potential for reproduction, homosexual behavior is a significant threat. Leviticus has to be read with this context in mind. The people who quote Leviticus focus on homosexuality but dismiss other “abominations” such as eating pork, collecting interest, shaving the hair on the side of the head, and treating women as property of men. These are all seen as anachronistic — even by fundamentalists. That inconsistency undermines the credibility of those who cite Leviticus and other Old Testament verses to moralize against homosexuality.

In the New Testament, the source of disapproval is the Apostle Paul. Paul was a convert from Judaism. He imbibed the Hebrew Scriptures in his formative years. This had to influence his theology, certainly. But more important, I think, is that Paul thought the second coming of Christ was imminent. He declared that celibacy was better than marriage because why get married if the end is around the corner? Do we preach that today? Of course not. In my mind, the people in the majority pluck the Scriptures that support their pre-judgments. I like the expression “God did not make us in his image and likeness. We made God in our image and likeness.”

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As a Christian, I am first and foremost a follower of Jesus. My Church introduced me to Jesus. I look to Jesus as my primary source of inspiration and instruction. And Jesus was totally silent on the issue of homosexuality. It clearly was not an issue to him. I try to focus on the issues he spoke a lot about: love of God, self, and others; forgiveness; welcoming the stranger; not living by the sword, and taking care of the poor.

Q: What verses of the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, do you see as supporting homosexuality? Where in the Bible are those verses?

A: There are no verses “supporting” homosexuality. There are many verses about loving others. Sexuality is the force that pulls us into relationships. I think the Bible has a lot to say about how we treat people we are in relationship with. Being gay or straight is really not the point.

Q: What are some commonly held beliefs among other sects of Christianity?

A. Like Judaism, there are many expressions of Christianity. As it relates to your interest in the Bible, you should know there are a couple fundamentally different convictions about the role of Scripture. Catholics and many main-line Protestants believe in what is called a “critical-historical” approach to interpretation. We believe that to understand the true intent behind the verses of the Bible you need to understand the historical context in which it was written including the beliefs of the person writing it, what current events people were concerned about, what the common understandings of things were (like sexuality and the relationship between men and women.) This belief has stimulated extensive theological and scholarly research and in effect makes the laity more reliant on scholars (e.g., priests) to interpret the texts for them. Other Christians believe that the words in the Bible were dictated by God, recorded faithfully by man, and are “inerrant.” So when the Book of Leviticus says something is abominable — it is taken at face value.

Q: How do you feel about the stereotype that Catholics hate anyone who is not heterosexual? How about all of the religious groups that fight against gay rights?

A: It grieves me that so many homosexual, bisexual, and transgender people feel that followers of Christ hate them. Hate is the antithesis of love which Jesus said was our greatest calling. You need to understand two different realities in the Catholic community. There is the institutional Church, headed by the Pope and governed by the Bishops. Then there is the body of believers or “the people of God” who fill the pews and largely carry out the work of the Church. The institutional Church is the source of teachings on homosexuality that have created the impression that God hates homosexuality. That teaching is really not rooted in understanding Scripture but rather in a traditional moral principle called “natural law” which holds that the sole purpose of sex is procreation and anything that interferes with that is “evil” or unnatural. This is the basis for the institution’s teaching on birth control. The body of believers

have largely rejected the premise of natural law as evidenced by the large percentage of Catholics who say they practice birth control even though the Pope has condemned it. The same is true of the feelings of Catholics about homosexuality. Studies show that gay rights receive more support from American Catholics than any other Christian group. In my own personal experience, I have largely been accepted and treated with compassion by my fellow Catholics. There is a huge gap between where the people are on this issue and where the Bishops are. The mission of DignityUSA for 25 years has been to close that gap. I can tell you that we have many counterparts in other denominations such as Integrity (Episcopal), Lutherans Concerned, More Light Presbyterians, Affirmation (Methodists, Mormons), and the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists.

Q: What would you say to a closeted person who was struggling to consolidate his/her sexuality and his/her religion?

A: I would recall the story of Jesus calling Lazarus back from the tomb of death to live again. Being in the closet is like being entombed. This is not what God intended when he made you. God is love and love does not entomb. We are not required to be self-loathing for some greater good. You cannot love others until you learn to love yourself. The Church is simply wrong in its teaching. Clinging to the belief that one’s sexuality is immoral is a surefire recipe for depression, defensiveness, anger, resentment, and loneliness. These are not “fruits of the Spirit,” meaning they are not of God. The day I stopped denying who I was and allowed someone in to love me as I am was a day I felt tremendous Grace. I will never forget the day or time or spot or man I was with. I knew that I was experiencing love and tenderness. I was finally in my body. I felt whole, (“Holy”). This is what the Church calls “Sacrament” — the profound breaking-in of God’s grace in our lives. I have only grown closer to God ever since. There are so many others with similar experiences. Come – leave your tomb and join us. We’ll light your path.”



Executive Director Sends Note of Congratulations to Dignity/Honolulu

With news of passage of civil unions bill, HB444, by the Hawaii House of Representatives on April 29, 2010, Marianne Duddy-Burke, DignityUSA Executive Director, sent the following note to the leaders and members of Dignity/Honolulu.

Congratulations to all of our brothers and sisters in Hawaii on your legislature's passage of the civil unions bill. I am aware of the years of work that it has taken to get to this momentous day. Now the effort turns to your governor, who I hope will support equality for lesbian and gay Hawaiians by signing the bill into law.

Blessings on you and your continued witness! Please let me know how DignityUSA can support your work.

Editor's note: Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle, a Republican, has until July 6, 2010, to decide how to respond to the civil unions bill passed by the legislature. Reportedly she is under intense pressure from her political party to veto the measure.

Happy Fathers' Day



ANNOUNCEMENT

A Unique Opportunity in Mexico

Casa HOY in Cuernavaca, Mexico announces a participatory experience in Mexico City during the Gay Pride parade (*Marcha del Orgullo Gay*) on a weekend in June 2010 (exact dates to be announced).

Experience a week of cultural immersion, getting to know LGBT Mexican organizations, interaction with people, walking tours, volunteer work, and more!

Casa HOY is looking for a group of 10-12 people to participate in:

- Daily visits / volunteer activities with 2, 3, or more different organizations during the week
- Talks on Mexican culture, social activism, and LGBT issues
- Daily conducted Spanish practice
- Visits to less-known local attractions
- Meetings with local activists, students, and other LGBT community members
- Participation at the *Marcha del Orgullo Gay*!

Cost per individual for the week (US\$ 430) includes:

- Basic lodging at a local organization
- Breakfast and lunch
- Local transportation and transport to and from airport
- Talks and meetings
- All dynamics and arrangements for volunteer service
- Guided walking tours

NOT included: Airfare to Mexico, meals other than those specified, and personal expenses.

People interested (and to receive a registration form and more detailed info), please contact:

Gerardo Jaime at hoycommunity@gmail.com

For more information about the organization, please see their website www.hoycommunity.org.

Por un mejor HOY

“On the road to change the world”

“En camino a cambiar el mundo”

www.hoycommunity.org

hoycommunity@gmail.com

Por un mejor HOY is a U.S. nonprofit organization that offers individual and group travelers from around the globe a meaningful travel experience by pairing them with local community organizations where they may volunteer during their stay at Casa HOY.

DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus Pride Flyer

By Lauren Carpenter, President, DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus

The DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus (DYAC) is asking for your help this year at Pride festivals and celebrations. We have created a simple flyer to tell people about DYAC and we are asking all chapters and others representing DignityUSA at local Pride events to please print out a few copies of the flyer to distribute to any young adults who come by your booth or information table at the event, or for your Pride celebration and liturgy. We are hoping that it will draw more people into our national on-line community, and act as a conversation starter for chapters looking to attract younger members. We thank you in advance for your help and hope you have a fabulous time at Pride this year!

You can download a copy of the flyer in either PowerPoint format (.ppt) or Adobe pdf (.pdf) for printing from DignityUSA's website at <http://www.dignityusa.org/content/dignityusa-young-adult-caucus-flyers-pride>.

- Learn more about us at <http://www.dignityusa.org/content/help-us-begin-our-ministry-young-adults>
- Send a message to the Young Adult Caucus via the contact sheet at http://www.dignityusa.org/contact/Young_Adult_Caucus
- DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus is on **facebook** at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=373146241027>.

Happy Anniversary & Congratulations to:

Columbus (OH) - 15 years
Southern Colorado - 18 years
Houston (TX) - 36 years



YOU are never too
YOUNG to
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.

DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus

Visit us online:

"DignityUSA Young Adult Caucus"
Group on Facebook

www.dignityusa.org
(search "DYAC")



Reduced-size replica of flyer



All Are Welcome to Witness the Board in Action

DignityUSA's Board of Directors will meet July 9–11, 2010, in a Columbus, OH area hotel.

Details will appear soon on our website www.dignityusa.org and in the July 2010 *Dateline*. Contact Lewis Tanner (secretary@dignityusa.org) for more details.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

National Board Elections

Six candidates are running for four seats on the DignityUSA Board of Directors. This year we will conduct our first electronic balloting for those who have provided us with their e-mail address.

Members with an e-mail address connected to their national membership record will receive their ballots electronically by June 1, 2010. Members without an e-mail address in their membership file will receive a paper ballot in the mail by June 5, 2010. Ballots must be returned to the national office by **July 6, 2010**.

If any member does not receive a ballot, she or he may contact the national office (info@dignityusa.org) or by phone at 800-877-8797 or 202-861-0017).

CHAPTER NEWS

Dignity/San Antonio News

Dignity/Austin joined Dignity/San Antonio's Liturgy celebration on April 17, 2010, which was followed by a potluck. A great time was had by all. Special thanks to Jerry Pennington and his partner Larry for bringing their group to San Antonio. When members of the chapter met the Austin group at DignityUSA's Convention 2009 in San Francisco, we promised that we would keep in contact with each other. Another joint gathering is being planned.

Over the last few months, Dignity/San Antonio started fundraising for participation in DignityUSA Convention 2011 in Washington, D.C. We have had a couple of garage sales and dinners in conjunction with our regular business meetings. More is being planned over the next few months.

Dignity/Detroit News

Dignity/Detroit plans on having a presence at the annual local PRIDE celebration on Sunday, June 6, 2010.

For more information, visit our website <http://www.dignitydetroit.org> or email dignitydetroit74@yahoo.com.

Dignity/New York News

The homilist for Dignity/New York's annual Pride liturgy on June 26, 2010, will be Sr. Theresa Kane, RSM. She became world-famous in 1979 when she welcomed Pope John Paul II to the United States and publicly asked that he reconsider the issue of women's ordination.

The theme of the chapter's Pride liturgy will be "Celebrating the Priesthood of All Believers." Handmade stoles will be presented to all who attend.

Dignity/Seattle News

Dignity/Seattle will sponsor the 22nd Annual Pride Week Breakfast & Raffle on Saturday, June 26, 2010, at Central Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill. The charity fundraiser allows the chapter to donate over \$1,500 in proceeds to LGBT social service organizations, and has been one of the highlights of Seattle's Pride Week. Join us for breakfast Saturday; then on Sunday, partake in one of the nation's largest LGBT parades (Downtown on 4th Ave) and festivals (at the Seattle Center).

For more information, visit www.dignityseattle.org or call 206-659-5519.

Dignity/Chicago News

Dignity/Chicago celebrated its 38th Anniversary on Sunday, May 16, 2010. During the celebration event, chapter President Blane Roberts and VP Claudia Mercado presented two awards.

- The John Michie Award, given to individuals or organizations who show hospitality and service in the community, was presented to Armando Smith.

TRANSITIONS

In MEMORIAM

BIRTHS

ADOPTIONS

MARRIAGES

Former DignityUSA Board Member Marty Grochala, Dignity/Chicago, and his partner Fred Reuland had a civil marriage ceremony in Des Moines, Iowa over the Memorial Day 2010 weekend. They had a Union Ceremony at Dignity/Chicago in 2003.

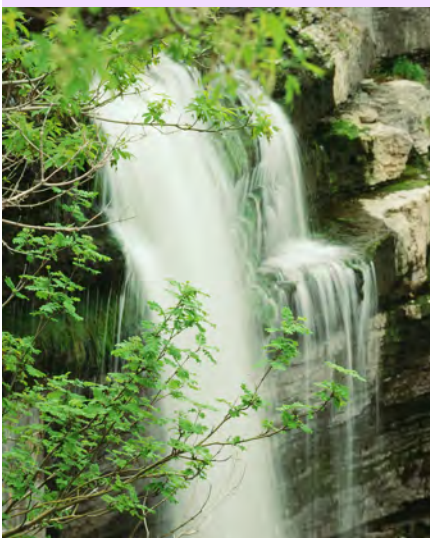
HOLY UNIONS

WEDDING/UNION ANNIVERSARIES

Sylvia De Los Santos and Terri Sarris Carrisal, both of Dignity/San Antonio, celebrated 22 years together on May 21, 2010.

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.



*Dignity/Chicago News
Continued from page 6*

- The annual Spirit of Dignity Award, given to a new member who shows exceptional enthusiasm and involvement in the chapter, was presented to Ron Alfano.

Dignity/Chicago will have a presence at both the Andersonville Sommerfest June 12 & 13, 2010, and in the Pride Parade on June 27. Please join in the fun if you find yourself in the Windy City for Pride.



(L to R) President Blane Roberts, Armando Smith, VP Claudia Mercado



(L to R) President Blane Roberts, Ron Alfano, VP Claudia Mercado