

AUGUST 2011



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The Independence

The Monthly Newsletter of Dignity/Philadelphia for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Catholics & Friends

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Joanne R. Collins

One of my goals that I want to accomplish during my time as President is to have open communication with all of you. One of the plans that we already implemented was to have a community meeting to discuss spiritual and social activities and I would like to thank everyone who participated in this successful evening. Next, I would like to utilize a small section of the paper to get even closer with all of you. One of the questions that were asked at the Dignity convention was a question that I wanted to bring back to our community. What would you like Dignity/Philadelphia to start doing? What do you want us to continue doing and what do you want us to stop doing? Please email me at President.dignityphila@gmail.com or write at P.O. Box 53348, Philadelphia, PA 19105 and I will let you know some of the responses that I get. Remember YOU are Dignity/Philadelphia and everybody's response is important. If you want to maintain anonymity just let me know. Thank you for your time and devotion.

DIGNITY/USA CONVENTION: REFLECTIONS / REPORTS / PHOTOS

THE CONVENTION EXPERIENCE - WASHINGTON, D.C.

by David Kalinowski

Philadelphia was well represented at the Dignity USA Convention that was held in Washington, D.C. at the beginning of July. We had 17 attendees that took part in the liturgies, workshops, and dinner dance. This convention consisted mainly of panel discussions one of which was moderated by Phil Donahue who graciously donated his time to be part of the panel. A big thanks to Phil for supporting of our Dignity family and the LGBT community. Workshops were held on the Defenders, Women's Concerns, Hispanic, and Young Adults. Dignity/Philadelphia had a representative attend each of the workshops so we could gather ideas and bring them back to our Dignity family to see if they can enhance our outreach. Everyone had a great time seeing old friends and making new ones, enjoying time spent to share our thoughts and ideas, a fantastic fireworks display on the mall, and plans to meet again in 2013 in Minneapolis, MN. Attending a Dignity USA Convention is a wonderful experience and we hope you can attend the next one in July 2013 in Minneapolis. Thanks to everyone who attended the 2011 convention.

LIVING THE TRANSGENDER LIFE

by Linda Barrett, Treasurer

The weekend of July 1st, I along with other members of our Dignity community had the opportunity to attend the convention. During the time I met many wonderful people however one person in particular will remain forever in my mind and heart. Her name is Denise Brunner and her story is one of extreme courage. Denise is a male to female transsexual who put her whole life on the line to become the person she was born to be. She transitioned in 2005 and had reassignment surgery about a year later. Although they faced a very tough battle, Denise, her wife of 30 years and their 3 children took this journey together. Denise is upfront with everyone about her story and how she arrived to this point in her life. As I listened to her story and met her family I felt the love and the strength that they have for each other and the courage to do what you believe is right was so rewarding.

WOMEN OF DIGNITY

by Joanne R. Collins, President

For the Convention I had the pleasure of meeting many amazing women of Dignity. I went to the Women Concerns Group and the very first thing that was discussed was vocabulary. The next generation is here and one of the biggest things I found is young women don't want to be labeled. We formed a circle and most of us identified ourselves as Catholic lesbians and there were four young women who, simply put, did not want to be tied to a name. Another big thing was that many women found the word "concerns" to have a negative meaning, which meant that all women had issues. I found myself so empowered by these women and I didn't want to leave. One thing is for sure and that is things are changing and we need to change with them. At the end of the meeting there was a silk cloth placed in the middle of the group and a candle was lit and one of the women carried the candle in a spiritual way around the room blessing us all as she passed us by. It was definitely worth going and I can't wait till the next one.

THE DEFENDERS: A DIGNITY LEATHER CLUB

by Dick O'Malley

At the recent Dignity USA Convention in Washington, D.C., I attended a workshop on the Defenders, a leather group within Dignity USA. I had known about the Defenders because over ten years ago, a number of chapter members in Philadelphia had formed a club and even purchased leather outfits with the Defender logo on them. Unfortunately, the club soon became inactive before I could find out more about the organization.. I thought that the workshop would give me provide with the information which I had been seeking.

According to the literature which I received at the workshop, the Defenders is a club, affiliated with Dignity USA, for individuals, men and women, who want to “celebrate both their leather ‘lifestyle’ and their Christian spirituality.” They believe that “the leather experience can, when integrated and spiritually informed, actually produce a richer spirituality” for themselves and the Church. In other words, spirituality and sexuality can be integrated and are not mutually exclusive.

The Defenders were established in 1981 in New York City, and soon, by 1987, it was a national organization, from coast to coast, as far west as San Francisco. The clubs have also become noted for their charitable fund raising drives and activities. If you would like to find out more about the Defenders check the Dignity USA.org web site and let Dignity Philadelphia know if you might be interested in re-establishing a club in Philly.



bottom row (l-r): Jim, Tom, Michael, Paul, Dick and Dick
top row (l-r): David, Convention Attendee, Melissa, Joanne, Michael, Alice, Linda, Melina (face blocked), Ben, Sue, Tom



Two convention attendees with David



David and Tom



Alice, Linda, Joanne, Melissa



Eleanor, Melissa, Linda, Joanne



Linda, Joanne, Jim



Linda, Joanne, John

Monthly Munchie

“It is institutions that find change difficult, more so than people served by those institutions.”
– Thomas Sweetser, SJ

DIGNITY THROUGH THE YEARS

by Jimmy Calnan

When Dignity USA was preparing to celebrate its 25th Anniversary at a bi-annual convention, chapters were invited to prepare a book of their history for display. Dignity/Philadelphia created an Ad-hoc Committee which worked on what became a three volume history. In order to accomplish this, file drawers full of reports, minutes from meetings and other memorabilia had to be sorted and cataloged. From this came the history books that we keep on file in the office. As a lead in to the chapter's 40th Anniversary in 2013, we are going to reprint in each monthly newsletter one year's fact sheet beginning with 1973 in this issue. We will try to include photos and copies of some of the documents mentioned in the reports. 1973 was reported in the May Newsletter, 1974 in June and 1975 in July.

“TAKING A CHANCE ON GOD: A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN MCNEILL”

by Dick O'Malley



John, Dick and Charles

Four years ago, Dignity Philadelphia had a fund-raiser, hosted by Bill Wood, at his newly opened restaurant of Knock. Money was raised for the making of a film biography of John McNeill, one of the founders of Dignity and an icon in the GLBT community. His first and best known book, *The Church and the Homosexual*, has been translated into many foreign languages and continues to be an important book for those who want to find support in Bible for the integration of their sexuality and their spirituality. The producer of the film, “Taking a Chance on God: A Biography of John McNeill,” is Brendan Fay who earlier had made a well-known film on the life and death of Fr. Mychal Judge of 9-11 fame. “Taking a Chance” also tells a love story between John and his partner of forty years, Charles Chiarelli, who were recently married on Toronto, Charles’ home town.

The making of this film has been an odyssey all by itself. Since the expenses required for its production grew and grew, many thought it would never be made in John's lifetime. Not only was it made but it premiered last month in the annual Euro-Pride celebration in Rome! The USA premier took place in Washington, D.C. at Dignity USA's recent convention before a standing room crowd. At the conclusion of the film the audience rose in unison to acknowledge the power of the filmed biography. Before the hour-long film is released for general viewing, it will be submitted to film festivals throughout the country, including in John's hometown of Ft. Lauderdale in November. The wait was well worth it.

1976

On January 23, 1976, the Articles of Incorporation were approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Dignity/Philadelphia was granted non-profit status as a foundation for religious, educational and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501© of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. From May 28-30, the East Coast Regional Conference was held on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. Approximately one hundred people were in attendance. It was a smashing success! Joseph Tozzi, elected for a second term as chapter President in March, presided at this conference. On June 12-13, Dignity/Philadelphia was well represented in the Philadelphia Gay Pride Weekend.

On August 3, 1976, during the Eucharistic Congress, a special liturgy was celebrated near the Civic Center while another special liturgy was being celebrated inside for priests and religious of the Archdiocese. The theme of the liturgy was “Freedom and Justice for Gay Catholics.” All the Philadelphia newspapers carried articles about this liturgy. The Archdiocese was shocked and concerned. On Sunday, October 17, weekly liturgies began being celebrated at Trinity Memorial Episcopal Church, 22nd and Spruce Sts. The church hall was rented for 7p.m. liturgy and 8p.m. social hour.

During October 21-23, Dignity was represented at the American Catholic Bishops' biannual meeting. Brian McNaught represented Dignity National. In a special document approved by the Bishops, it was recommended that the Church actively seek to serve the pastoral needs of those persons with homosexual orientation. The document gave special recognition to Dignity.

In November-December, 1976, the first Advent at Trinity Memorial Church Hall was celebrated. The attendance by this time had grown tremendously. For the first time a liturgy was celebrated by Dignity/Philadelphia on Christmas Eve, 1976.

-EDITOR NEEDED-

Dignity Philadelphia is in need of an editor for The Independence newsletter. If you can take notes and type, you can be the editor! Once the material is typed, Creative Characters does the rest of the work. And once it is ready for printing, an assistant will ensure that it is folded, sealed, stamped, and mailed out to circa 50 members. Everyone else gets an electronic copy- and someone does that too!

As editor, you report news/events, motions, 50/50 recipients and calendar of events; the Steering Committee is extremely helpful in suggesting what gets reported. Members also submit pictures for some of the events- and these get plugged into the articles. This volunteer activity takes about 5-8 hours a month.

Still undecided? I saved the best for last. As editor of the newsletter, you will get a vote as a Steering Committee member! You help to move the chapter forward by contributing and acting on major decisions proposed by the Steering Committee and members of the chapter. This representation on the Steering Committee requires 2 hours a month- the 1st Sunday of the month. And the rewards are numerous!

If you are interested or have questions, please call me- Dolores- on 215-476-8578. I will write step-by-step instructions on what is required, and

who the Communications Committee members are, who the Catholic school graduate proofreader is, who the assistant is, etc. Plus, this position just gets better- I will be a resource for any concerns of questions you may have regarding this position.

Please consider helping out Dignity Philadelphia by volunteering to serve as editor and contributing to the Steering Committee. And this position looks impressive on a resume!

LIFE PARTNERS CEREMONY

by John Rygiel

Charles and Leo (our Dignity members) from South Philadelphia were united as "Life Partners" on Sunday, July 10 in a beautiful afternoon ceremony by our own Father Ron Hoskins at their home on South Franklin Street. A beautiful selection of music for the ceremony was provided by John Rygiel (our Dignity member) from South Jersey, followed by a beautiful reception at their home. Charles and Leo have been with each other for nine years. We wish them God's blessings for many years to come!



Charles and Leo

50/50 FOR AUGUST – THE TREVOR PROJECT

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. If you are a youth who is feeling alone, confused or in crisis, please call The Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (1-866-488-7386) for immediate help.



DIGNITY AT BROAD STREET MINISTRY IN THE SUMMER

This will be the second summer that Dignity/Philadelphia members and friends have volunteered to serve at the monthly No Barriers Dinner. Summertime is critical at BSM because they have no air conditioning, school groups are not available to volunteer and folks still need to be fed. Dignity has been outstanding to the mission of BSM because we continue our service through it all.

No Barriers Dinners are scheduled for the last Wednesday of each month, August 31 and September 28 from 5:30 until about 7:00p.m. Listen for announcements at liturgy for sign up or just show up.

DIGNITY/PHILADELPHIA REVISED MEMBERSHIP FORM BEGINS

JANUARY 1, 2011

August renewals – please consider Dignity/USA membership

The Steering Committee has made a commitment to have a closer relationship with DignityUSA and they need your help. Please, when renewing your Dignity/Philadelphia membership also join DignityUSA. Please visit the DignityUSA website (<http://www.dignityusa.org/>) to see all the work DignityUSA does for us.

Over the years Dignity/Philadelphia has been one of the largest chapters in DignityUSA and we need to reclaim that position.

What does it mean to be a member of DignityUSA? By being a member of DignityUSA, you make a commitment to a national, if not international, organization and become a voice for GLBT Catholics and our friends. The media works with, and knows, DignityUSA and reaches out to the national office when a counterbalance viewpoint is sought.

Please speak with a member of the Steering Committee if you would like more information.

TOGETHER, our Voices are heard – locally, nationally and internationally! Let yours be heard – join both Dignity/Philadelphia and DignityUSA.

MOTIONS FROM THE JULY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Motion 11-07-01 made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Joanne Collins. Be it moved that the 50/50 for August 2011 be designated to the Trevor Project.

Motion 11-07-02 made by Jimmy Calnan; seconded by Joanne Collins. Be it moved that D/P advertise up to \$100 for ads in QUEERTimes Weekly.

TIDBITS AND PIECES:

- Dignity/Philadelphia membership is currently 142 members.
- If a member of the chapter needs to take advantage of the Emergency Community Fund, please see the President or one of the coordinators of the Community Life Committee.
- Parking is available next to the church. Please see a member of the Steering Committee for a special placard.
- Limited funds in the Dan Estes and Michael Durkin funds for convention participation and attendance. The Estes Fund is for people with HIV/AIDS and the Durkin fund is for women. Please see a member of the Steering Committee to determine if you are eligible to help defray a part of the expenses to attend the convention. Donations to these two funds are always accepted.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (weekly mass at 330 S 13th Street between Pine and Spruce Streets)

August

- Friday, Aug 5 Prayer Around The Cross at 7pm
- Sunday, Aug 7** Steering Committee Meeting at 4:30pm
Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm
- Sunday, Aug 14** Liturgy Committee Meeting at 4:30pm
Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm
- Monday, Aug 15 Assumption of Mary – NO MASS
- Sunday, Aug 21** **Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm**
- Friday, Aug 26 Gay Night at the Phillies
- Sunday, Aug 28** **Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm**

September

- Friday, Sep 2 Prayer Around The Cross at 7pm
- Sunday, Sep 4 Steering Committee Meeting at 4:30pm
Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm
- Monday, Sep 5 Labor Day
- Sunday, Sep 11 Liturgy Committee Meeting at 4:30pm
Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm with commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of September 11, 2001
- Sunday, Sep 18** **Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm**
Semiannual Business Meeting at 8:30pm
- Sunday, Sep 25** 14th Annual Clyde Sams Potluck Dinner at 4:30pm
Eucharistic Liturgy at 7pm (Investiture Mass for Committee Chairs)



PRAYER INTENTIONS

Please sign our Prayer Intentions book if you have anyone you would like the community to remember in our prayers.

The deadline for submission of articles for the September newsletter is August 21, 2011.

Steering Committee

- Joanne Collins – President
- Jimmy Calnan – Vice President
- Kevin Davies – Secretary
- Linda Barrett – Treasurer
- Jim Clay – Liturgy Committee Coordinator
- Anjeanette & Suzanne – Community Life Committee Co-coordinators
- Vacant – Communications Co-coordinator
- Vacant – Education Committee Coordinator
- Chaplains: Barbara Gindhart & Father Ron Hoskins



The Catholic Christian Tradition in the L/G/B/T Community
Celebrate Who You Are And Embrace The Person God Calls You To Be!
Yes, I want to be a member of the Dignity family!

I am joining as a **new member** I am **renewing my membership** **Address Change**

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Numbers: cell _____ home _____ work _____

Email address: _____ to receive Dignity/Philadelphia's Newsletter (*The Independence*) and the latest news via email blasts. Your support through your dues to Dignity/USA will entitle you to voting privileges in national elections; subscriptions to the monthly Dateline and Quarterly Voice; discounted registration for biennial conventions and other Dignity/USA events; and access to Dignity News email list and chat groups.

Scholarships are available for Dignity/Philadelphia and Dignity/USA memberships. Contact the Dignity/Philadelphia Vice President for more information (vp.dignityphila@gmail.com).

The total amount of your dues and donations to both Dignity/Philadelphia and Dignity/USA may be included in one check. We will forward your Dignity/USA dues/donations and your contact information to the Dignity/USA national office.

Please enclose your check, payable to Dignity/Philadelphia, and mail to: Dignity/Philadelphia, P.O. Box 53348, Philadelphia, PA 19105.

Individual annual dues:
Dignity/Phila \$20;
Dignity/USA \$30
\$ _____ **Total**

Couple's annual dues:
Dignity/Phila \$35;
Dignity/USA \$60
\$ _____ **Total**