

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

**Located at Dickinson College  
Archives & Special Collections**

**<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>**

## **Documents Online**

**Title:** *Dignity Brochure*

**Date:** circ 1976

**Location:** LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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[circa 1976]

DIGNITY FOR GAY CATHOLICS



DIGNITY

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

## WHAT IS DIGNITY?

**D**IGNITY is an organization of Gay Catholic men and women and other concerned people who believe that through Baptism we all share in the Death-Resurrection of Christ and have an inherent dignity that is preserved and strengthened through the sacramental life of the Church in which we have a right to participate as Catholics.

### DIGNITY is:

- a forum for human concerns
- a seeking for greater self-knowledge and wisdom
- an affirmation of one's sexual orientation in faith
- personal ministry

DIGNITY believes that gay people can express their sexuality in a manner consonant with Christ's teaching. We further believe that all sexuality should be exercised in an ethically responsible and unselfish way. The emphasis of DIGNITY then is on the total human being, not just sexuality.

## HISTORY & MEMBERSHIP



Aware of the fact that the efforts of the Church in ministering to the Gay Catholic were most inadequate, an Augustinian priest based in San Diego first formulated the DIGNITY idea in 1969. In 1972, groups

of Gay Catholics in other cities began affiliating with DIGNITY. National DIGNITY was formally organized at a convention held in Los Angeles over the 1973 Labor Day weekend. Presently there are over 30 chapters in cities throughout the United States. Its membership consists of religious and lay, men and women, straights and gays. A wide spectrum of professions indicative of the general population is represented in DIGNITY.

## A THEOLOGIAN'S THOUGHTS

**I**n the February 15, 1974 issue of *Commonweal*, the internationally recognized Augustinian theologian, Gregory Baum, made the following observations regarding DIGNITY.

Because of the pressures caused by social injustice and cultural ignorance, "homosexual men and women are in greater need of self-knowledge and personal wisdom than other people. ...But where can gay people turn for wisdom? Who teaches them self-knowledge? ...If gay people will ever find guidelines to free themselves from wounds that lead to hostility and self-hatred, it will be a wisdom generated within the homosexual community itself. This is the viewpoint adopted by Dignity."

Another observation by Father Baum is, "...that Dignity insists on the equality of men and women in the association and that men and women have equal representation in the various national

committees. Dignity reveals a greater sensitivity to the man-woman relationship than do most organizations in the Catholic Church."

A question posed in his article asks, "Is the homosexual orientation capable of grounding friendship that enables the partners to grow and become more truly human? This is the crucial question. For the structure of redeemed human life is mutuality." His answer to this question is, "Homosexual love, then, is not contrary to the human nature, defined in terms of mutuality, toward which mankind is summoned."

DIGNITY, both on the national and local level, provides the Gay individual with a positive framework from which and in which one can express this mutuality of love.



## AREAS OF CONCERN



The local chapter of DIGNITY actualizes the goals and stated aims of the national office through the following programs.

### SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

**B**y providing a supportive setting in which its individual members have access to the sacraments of the Church, the local chapter affirms its commitment to foster the spiritual formation of its members. It does this through:

- celebration of the mass as a community

- *encouraging personal prayer and active love of neighbor*
- *chaplains available for counseling*
- *retreats and weekend renewals*
- *home liturgies and penance services*
- *study of scripture and contemporary theology*

## **EDUCATION**

**T**he education of its members as well as communication with clergy and all Catholics is essential if personal and social understanding is to be achieved. The local chapter provides the following educational programs and services:

- *twice monthly meetings which present speakers, films, discussions and special demonstrations*
- *speakers for interested groups such as college classes, parish organizations, radio stations*
- *consciousness raising sessions*
- *a local newsletter which supplements the National newsletter*

## **SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

**A**s Catholics and as members of Society, it is important that DIGNITY encourages its members to become involved in those actions that bring the love of Christ to others and provide the basis of social reform. The local chapter urges its members to exercise Christian charity in their personal lives. As a group this commitment has been

expressed in the following ways:

- *donations of food, clothing and money to selected organizations*
- *individual counseling, support and help for people in need*
- *correspondence with imprisoned gays*

## SOCIAL EVENTS

**R**ecognizing that activities of a social and recreational nature promote an atmosphere where friendships can develop and mature, and where the Gay's sense of acceptance and dignity may be strengthened, the local chapter has a program of varied activities including:

- *wine and cheese parties*
- *annual picnic*
- *trips to museums, theaters, historic sites*
- *covered dish suppers*
- *open houses sponsored by individual members*
- *agape with the Metropolitan Community Church*
- *bicycle trips*
- *bake sales*

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