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KEYSTONE

DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 297
Harrisburg, PA 17108
Vol. 4 No. 7
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"The Stone Rejected by the Builders Has Become the Keystone." (Acts 4:11)
The newsletter of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania

Convention '79: Thanks, Rejoice, Yes

The 1979 Dignity Convention ended with what was perhaps the most emotional and spirit-filled highlight of the five days of meetings and celebrations. The Atlanta slate (elected as our leaders of Dignity, Inc. for the next two years), consisting of Frank Scheuren, President; Elinor Crocker, Secretary; and Joe Totten, Treasurer, were affirmed and indeed blessed by their predecessors, and then by the delegates who elected them by a "laying on of hands." As each of us walked up and put our hands on their heads and embraced them in gestures of love and acceptance, tears mingled with smiles and all of us were overcome with the emotion of the moment.

That was the culmination of five days that began at eight o'clock on the morning of Thursday, August 30th when the House of Delegates began their two-day business/working session.

A number of items were on the agenda of those two long, work-filled days. We will have a report available for our members' perusal in the near future. The following resolutions were some of those approved by the House of Delegates. It was approved to raise the assessment per member from the current \$8.00 per member to \$11.00.

It was also resolved that Dignity, Inc. encourage support for the October 14, 1979 March on Washington by Gay Men and Lesbian Women. There were also various comments and proposals in reference to the Constitution, and these will be taken up by the Initiative process as outlined in the Constitution of Dignity, Inc.

The budget was a major hurdle to overcome; but that was passed as presented by the outgoing Treasurer, our own Madeline. Most committees will draw on a pool-type fund for special projects, etc.

Friday, at 8 o'clock in the evening, saw the opening session of the Convention with a procession of banners to the accompaniment of fanfares and sacred processional music. Enthusiastic applause broke out as Bay Area's banners passed up the aisle.

Paul Weidig's keynote address followed and it was a message which conveyed the image of a cactus flower, beautiful and desirable but surrounded by thorns, when speaking about leadership in Dignity. We need to include our leaders in our prayers every time we come together in workshop.

A cocktail reception and light buffet supper followed the opening ceremonies and enabled all of us to talk with and get to know our sisters and brothers from across the country; indeed from the far-flung corners of the globe - Canada, Australia, included. (Continued Next Column)

Saturday found us standing to nearly five minutes of ovation for Fr. John McNeill's inspiring speech. We will all have an opportunity to hear that speech, thanks to the Butterfly Media tapes that were available at the convention. Morning workshops followed John's speech. Midge Costanza, former White House aide to the President for Minorities, was the guest speaker at the luncheon and she was hilarious in her opening remarks and moved on from there to a poignant closing; finding all of us on our feet applauding this courageous and outspoken woman. Workshops followed and the first of our daily Eucharistic celebrations started in later afternoon with liturgical dance gestures and movements, and the procession of the more than 35 priests in attendance. The spoken word, the music, the singing, the sharing of the kiss/embrace of peace and the sharing at the table of the Lord at Communion were all very moving.

Saturday evening nearly 600 of us walked the eight blocks from the convention center to the waterfront and boarded three harbor cruise boats for a moonlight filled, pleasant cruise up the harbor to Point Loma and then back down the east side of Coronado Island and under the bridge and back to the dock, thus ending our first day of convention activities.

Sunday morning's first program was an interesting and information-packed speech by John Boswell, who teaches Christian History at Yale. He spoke on the development of sexual attitudes within the Church from primitive Christian history to the present day. His workshops filled in a lot of the gaps of his speech. We will be anxious to obtain his book which will be published in November on the same subject.

Ellen Barrett, a woman Episcopal priest was the fourth major speaker on Sunday after lunch. This was followed by the final series of workshops and our second Eucharistic Liturgy.

Sunday evening at our dinner-dance we all settled back for a good evening of fine food, excellent music and an exhausting evening of dancing and "getting-to-know-you" conversations with each other.

Early Monday morning we all assembled for the final or our three Liturgies and this was followed by the selection, by the House of Delegates, of our next convention site, which was a contest between Houston and Philadelphia. Philadelphia, city of brotherly and sisterly love received an overwhelming vote.

A secret ballot was then made by the delegates for the slate of officers who will lead and direct Dignity, Inc. for the next two years.

I do want to leave you with one or two of my impressions. The theme of the three liturgies were expressed by: For what has been: Thanks; for what is now: Rejoice; and for what is to come: Yes -- all joined together with God's sign to Noah of his promise in the rainbow.

**Some people
think they've
never met a
gay person-**

**That's what
we get for
staying in
the closet.**

(Continued)

I recall vividly during the "silent" Lord's Prayer, at our last liturgy on Monday, how all of us at the end raised our joined hands, creating an unbreakable chain of praise and love - reassured and fortified in our belief that we are all part of the human, love and Spirit-filled Body of Christ in Dignity. And we all said: "Yes," for what is to come.

-Jim Ehrhart
Bay Area Dignity

REFLECTIONS

The Holy Land is besected, north to south, by the Jordan River. Rising in the snow-capped heights of Mount Hermon, the Jordan empties into the Sea of Galilee, emerges again at the south end of that sea and continues southward until it finally ends up in the brackish waters of the Dead Sea.

I want to reflect this month on those two bodies of water, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Although the same waters flow into them, the Sea of Galilee is teeming with aquatic life, the Dead Sea supports no life at all. The Dead Sea has no outlet. As a consequence, it has been storing up for centuries all the mineral particles that have emptied into it. It is dead, precisely because it has no outlet.

Human life is very much life these two bodies of water. Those who are out-going, concerned about the problems of others, truly active in meeting the needs of others, enjoy lives that are fresh and vibrant.

On the other hand, those who remain self-centered, concerned only about themselves, interested only in what will satisfy their own longings and whims, lead lives that are filled with disappointment, resentment, anger against God and fellow man. Their lives are spiritually dead.

In his oft-quoted prayer Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that "it is in giving that we receive". No relationship can be happy and endure if one of the partners is totally self-centered. No man can live at peace with his God, his neighbor, or himself, if his thoughts and motives are centered only on what will best serve his own whims.

We must give in order to receive. We must concern ourselves about the needs of others if our own needs are to be met. We must have an outlet in our lives as well as an inlet if we are to resemble the Sea of Galilee rather than the Dead Sea.

Father Sawdy
Co-Chaplain

MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

At the national convention held in San Diego last month, the delegates decided that each chapter is to be assessed \$11.00 annually for each chapter member. Until now we have forwarded to the national office \$8.00 per year for single members; \$10.00 per year for each couple. To offset this increase, the Board of Directors of Dignity/Central Pennsylvania have established the following schedule of membership dues, effective January 1, 1980:

\$18.00 for single members.
\$30.00 for each couple.

Prior to the first of the year any member may renew his/her dues for one year at the old rate, regardless of the present date of expiration. Save money! Renew your dues before January 1st.

Father Sawdy
Treasurer

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Annual General Membership Meeting and election of officers will take place October 28, 7:30 P.M. The nominations are as follows:

Jerry B.	-	President
Steve L.	-	Vice-President
Father S.	-	Treasurer
John B.	-	Secretary

Robert S.)	
Richard H.)	MEMBERS AT LARGE
Joan G.)	(2 to be elected)
Bill P.)	

Absentee ballots may be procured from the Secretary. Please note that according to the Chapter's Bylaws, only members may vote.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Gay Alcoholic Group meets every Friday evening. For time and location contact the Gay Switchboard at 234-0328.

A Lesbian Rap Group is forming and has begun meeting at 7:00 P.M. at the Friend's Meeting House, 6th & Herr Sts., Harrisburg. For more information contact Rap Group, c/o DIGNITY, P.O. Box 297, Harrisburg, PA 17108.

Central Pa. Gay Alliance located in Harrisburg meets the last Sunday of the month at 7:00 P.M. at the Friend's Meeting House, 6th & Herr Sts. The Executive Board will be planning the "Wintering with DIGNITY" Program. If you have an idea for a project and are willing to see it through, bring it to the attention of one of the officers. We are presently interested in anyone who would be interested in hosting a Christmas gathering as part of our "Twelve Days of Christmas" Program.

The Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg need volunteers. For information call 234-0328.

RETREAT FOR WOMEN

A weekend retreat designed especially for Catholic lesbian women will be held at a Catholic retreat facility in Baltimore, Maryland from 7 PM on Friday, November 2 to 2 PM Sunday, November 4, 1979.

The retreat is being sponsored and conducted by the staff of New Ways Ministry, a Catholic-oriented ministry of reconciliation and justice for lesbian women and gay men. Although the weekend is designed primarily for Catholics, gay women of other Christian groups are welcome to participate in the experience.

The weekend retreat will involve small group discussions, feminist prayer services and non-sexist liturgies, major presentations on women and the Church, private counseling, films, quiet time for prayer, reflection and sharing, songs, conversation, laughter and friends. The cost of the weekend is \$60.00 which includes registration fee, materials, room and meals. Limited financial help is available. (Continued).

For further information on content and format or for a registration form, interested lesbians are asked to contact New Ways Ministry, 3312 Buchanan Street, #302, Mt Rainier, Maryland 20822, or phone 301-864-7149.

IN RETROSPECT

During the Summer of 1969, I can vividly recall being part of a conversation with several of my gay brothers regarding the lack of alternatives to the bar scene for gay people in the Greater Harrisburg Area. As one person put it, "If the bars don't appeal to us, what's left but State Street?" Unfortunately at that point in time, that was the cold and disappointing truth. Other than for two gay bars in operation at the time, there was absolutely nothing else in existence in the Harrisburg area where gay people could socialize or interact with one another outside of a bar-oriented environment. Unless one wanted to drive to at least Baltimore, "the pickin's were mighty slim." Many people decided to relocate, but many remained. We complained habitually, but we lived here and made the most of what we had. Despite our limited choices during that period, we always felt fortunate when we touched base with one of our gay brothers who lived in a rural community and didn't even know another gay person existed, let alone complain about alternatives to the bars. That person would have been very grateful for the company of a single gay person, not to mention a place where he could freely socialize and be himself. But we should never settle for the mediocre when and where the potential exists for something better.

In the Fall of 1973, we experienced the advent of Gay Community Services (GCS). To the best of my knowledge, this was the first organization in the Harrisburg area formed by and for gay people to meet our many needs. All of a sudden there were alternatives to the bars -- socialization, recreation, consciousness-raising, crisis intervention, consultation, a variety of workshops, a monthly newsletter, and finally a long-overdue outreach program. For those of us who were involved in that organization from its humble beginnings, the results were more than rewarding to say the very least. GCS provided an alternative to many of our gay brothers and sisters who never would have ventured through the doors of one of our bars. Many who came had lived isolated from the gay community for the better part of their lives. Letters and referrals came from outlying and rural areas and even from within our own community from people who were thrilled to hear that someone else was out there. It was indeed a fulfilling experience.

About a year later we saw the formation of the Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg. This organization is still very much active and provides an array of information and referral services to callers while affording some degree of anonymity. I can't help but wonder how many of our gay brothers and sisters would have come "out of their closets" had this organization been in existence ten years ago. I'm certain the results would have been overwhelming. We should all be grateful for the fine work the volunteers at the Switchboard continue to do. (Continued Next Column)

Finally, DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania came into being in the Summer of 1975. We, too, have come a long way since a mere handful of us travelled to Lancaster, York, Reading, Shippensburg and outlying areas to celebrate Mass in the homes of our fellow-Catholics. We now enjoy a full and varied program of recreational and social activities coupled with the option of religious enrichment of our Catholic faith. The response has been encouraging and membership and Mass attendance is always increasing.

As this final year of the 1970's draws to a close, let us not take what we have for granted, but reflect briefly on our humble beginnings and "the way things used to be." Let us take this opportunity to examine from where we have come, where we are now, and where we are going. Let us never be content with the status quo, but strive constantly to learn from our past mistakes and build upon what we now enjoy. Yes my brothers and sisters, there are now alternatives!

At Swiftwoods
Richard H.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Once upon a time - and all good stories begin that way - There was a void, a vacuum, an absence of anything that now exists. Time was not yet born, space was not yet charted, and movement was not yet stirred from eternal slumber. Everything that is was not yet. Even the Creator was confined to solitude.

Once upon a time - and all good stories begin that way - there was separateness and difference. There was individuality and independence. The void had been transformed into a world. Time and space had been born into a thousand sunsets, and movement inched its way into history. Everything that is was given its existence. And the Creator saw that it was good.

Even though the world was boundless - pulsating with life and buzzing with a fury of activity - the Creator was confined to a minimal share of it . . . call it his environment. For the Creator, there was separateness and difference and individuality and independence.

Once upon a time - and all good stories begin that way - the secluded yet all-knowing and loving Creator touched the face of creation and kissed it. And the pulsations of life stirred, and the pulsations and fury of the world's activity paused. And the Creator and his creation became lovers. And their tender embrace burst into a symphony of feelings and emotions, excitement and veiled possibilities, perhaps unaware that the encounter of their separateness was the birth of friendship and love. And ever since that first primeval urge, all creation moves and has its being through acts of love and tenderness.

My friends, all of us in some way continue and participate in this ageless parable. We in our separateness and individuality have encountered the uniqueness and novelty of another. We call these others friends, lovers, confidants, allies

(Continued)

And so, each day, we are invited to remember, like the Creator, when we first smiled at our friends and loved ones, perhaps bashfully; when we first touched, perhaps cautiously; when we first became fascinated, perhaps tentatively.

But even more than that, thanks to the unselfish grace of a loving Creator, that bashfulness can now bloom into renewed intimacy, that caution can now spring into revitalized care and concern, that reservation can now evermore embrace all of our friendships.

My friends, each day we can learn and derive our common strengths, as Jesus did, even in the face of discrimination, intolerance, bigotry and prejudice, by learning that the meaning of our shared life together is found as we descend into the depths of love together. Friends and lovers know this because they have grafted themselves to the "vine" and derive their faith, love and energy from Him who said in the Gospel, "Live on in me, as I do in you."

"The Carillon"
DIGNITY/Tucson

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 23 - Volleyball (Refer to Fall Schedule)
28 - Mass for the Gay Community & Annual General Membership Meeting; 5:30 PM, Friend's Meeting House.
30 - Volleyball
Nov. 2 - First Friday Mass; 6:30 PM, Friend's Meeting House.
6 - Volleyball
9 - Baltimore by Nite & Day; Reservations to
8 10 - Jerry B. by November 7th. (232-2027)
11 - Sunday Mass and Dinner Nite; 5:30 Mass at Cathedral; Dinner 6:30 at Hanover Trail. Reservations to Fr. Sawdy by November 9th. (238-5380)
13 - Volleyball
14 - Executive Board Meeting; 7:30 PM, 1204 Penn Street, Hbg., John B. (233-8105)
15 - Bible Study & Prayer Group; 7:30 PM, Friend's Meeting House.
18 - Day of Recollection & Mass for the Gay Community; 3:00 PM Day of Recollection; 5:30 PM Mass; 6:30 PM Pot Luck Supper; Friend's Meeting House.
20 - Volleyball
27 - Volleyball
29 - Bible Study & Prayer Group (See Above)
Dec. 2 - Sunday Mass; 5:30 Mass at Cathedral.
4 - Volleyball
7 - First Friday Mass; 6:30 PM, Friend's Meeting House.
11 - Volleyball
13 - Bible Study & Prayer Group (See Above)

REFER TO THE "FALL-IN WITH DIGNITY" SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS OF THESE EVENTS.



THE LANGUAGE OF OPPRESSION

AN OPINION

I direct this article to all of the chapters of DIGNITY and to those who have leadership in these chapters, regions and nationally.

In the Statement of Position and Purpose of DIGNITY, INC., it states that, "We believe that Catholic gay men and women are members of Christ's mystical body . . . (that) we have an inherent dignity because God created us . . . (and) the channel through which the love of God might become visible. Because of this, it is our right, our privilege, and our duty to live the sacramental life of the Church, so that we might become more powerful instruments of God's love working among all people. We believe that gay men and women can express their sexuality in a manner that is consonant with Christ's teaching. We believe that all sexuality should be exercised in an ethically responsible and unselfish way."

During the past years, chapters all around the country have provided liturgies, retreats, meetings and socials. We have taken active interests in the rights of gay people. We have had large and dynamic conventions and we have spent much effort on organization. Many people have been able to come to grips with their sexuality, hopefully because of our efforts as well as those of other groups.

But what concerns me is what I see happening today. Bars and baths are opening and growing larger. Magazines, newspapers, films, pictures and video tapes concerning gay people have increased in number. What values these have in our lives, I think, should be judged and used, in so far as they can, within the context of our Statement of Position and Purpose.

As I go to different parties, meet people in bars and in the everyday contacts that we make, I find many good people who are trying to live full lives, not just sexual lives, but lives that embrace all that makes a person to be what he or she can be. What bothers me is seeing people trying to move in on one or another in a lover relationship; hearing people say that what they do is all right as long as their lover does not find out; watching people be picked up with words of "warmth" only to be sent out after the evening is over and ignored the next time contact is made. What bothers me even more is seeing some members of DIGNITY attending the liturgy and then later in the evening playing games in some bar or at some party.

What I am talking about is MORALITY, the forbidden topic. Several years ago, shortly after I had joined DIGNITY, I attended an east coast convention. I brought the topic of morality up to the many officers present and was told that if we pursued this topic with any vigor we could cause a split in DIGNITY.

Various reasons have been offered for our not attempting to establish what some would call our "Ten Commandment." It is true that our knowledge today and our understanding of human beings has caused us not to be so quick in our judgments of people's actions.

I am not questioning how lovers may decide to live their relationships, nor people who may share on an occasional basis, nor even the one-night stand. I sincerely believe that these all can be expressed with care, love and friendship. And I sincerely believe that this would be within the context of Christ's great commandments as found in Matthew 22:37-40.

What I do question is people being hurt, people being seen and used as sexual objects. I cannot believe that our "rights" have led us to believe that whatever a person thinks is all right is, in fact, good and in keeping with the message of Christ. Are we so caught up in our "human rights" that we have lost respect for each other as persons — part of God's creation — to each other. And the finest way of letting his message be known is by living it.

I offer a challenge to all chapters, regions and to the national office to address themselves to this issue in a dynamic manner. If we truly believe that we are members of Christ's mystical body, that we have an inherent dignity, that we are the channels of Christ's love, that we are the powerful instruments of God's love working among all people, and that we can express our sexuality in a manner that is consonant with Christ's teaching, then, I believe that this should take priority in our work as chapters, regions and nationally.

I ask that DIGNITY INC. consider this matter as a topic of serious consideration for the national convention because it is the very heart of our Statement of Position and Purpose. Whether programs be set up, workshops, committees or whatever, it should be approached in a direct and straight forward manner and not discreetly circumvented for fear of controversy. If we sincerely believe what we state, then we should be willing to actively live and spread this message.

Ron Shulte
DIGNITY/Detroit