

The Splendor of Truth

Paul Olsen

While many gay men and lesbians struggle to reconcile their sexuality and spiritual life, a group of approximately twelve Vermont Roman Catholics have been regularly meeting to celebrate both. Burlington based Dignity/Vermont was formed two years ago by lesbian and gay Catholics interested in observing their faith and being recognized and accepted as full members of the Catholic church.

As the newest official chapter of Dignity/USA, Dignity/Vermont is struggling to have a liturgical life when much of the Catholic church opposes the agenda of Dignity/USA. Dennis Finnegan, Dignity's New England Regional Coordinator, characterizes the church's position on gays and lesbians as "it's okay to be a bird, but don't fly". According to Finnegan, Dignity's mission is to provide a spiritual haven for gay men and lesbians who feel marginalized by the Catholic church. Dignity/Vermont's dedication to "eradicating all restraints on the ascribed roles of women and men in the Church and society at large - gay, straight, lesbian, divorced, separated and, especially those afflicted with AIDS" places them in the position of being church dissidents.

The establishment of Dignity/Vermont has not been without incident. Shortly after Dignity mailed Bishop Kenneth Angell a copy of their monthly newsletter, the priest who regularly performed mass for the group stopped attending Dignity meet-

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