

## NACDLGM

*Continued from Page 1*

Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican House of Studies. He recently became the Director of the International Forum, Pope John Paul II Cultural Center located in Washington, DC. His remarks will be centered around issues dealing with the *Ministry With Gay and Lesbian Persons: Catholic Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*.

On September 20, attendees will be greeted with an introduction to the proceedings, along with a plenary presentation. This is followed by a reception at Hodges Taylor Gallery. The next day participants can dig into a Continental Breakfast which precedes the morning meetings and prayer. Plenary presentations, along with presentations by conference speakers, will fill the remainder of the day. A dinner at the South End Trolley Barn will end the day's activities.

For the rest of the conference, participants will be involved in additional plenary sessions, along with workshops. Participants may select from 12 workshops that will be led by many regional and national leaders with a lunch break in between two session-time periods. The afternoon will be filled with ministerial caucuses as well as membership meetings. A Liturgy will take place early Saturday evening with a banquet following immediately afterwards. The final day's activities begin with breakfast, prayer and a closing presentation which includes a service.

NACDLGM was founded in 1995 to serve as a national resource of ministry information and support for Diocesan and Parish ministries with gay and lesbian Catholics and their families. Its purpose is to foster ministry with lesbian and gay Catholics, their families and friends; serve as a network of communication among Diocesan and Parish leaders regarding gay and lesbian ministry; provide educational resources and models of ministry; encourage the participation of gay and lesbian Catholics within the Church and communicate with national Catholic organizations, especially the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference.

The local ministry was originally formulated in Charlotte as a collective thought process by Fr. Gene McCreesh, SJ, former pastor of St.

Peter's Catholic Church, Charlotte, Msr. Richard Allen, retired pastor of St. Ann's Catholic Church, Charlotte, Bishop William G. Curlin, Charlotte Diocese, Kevin Melody and Ricky Carswell. Fr. McCreesh, served as spiritual support to Melody and Carswell, as Carswell was dealing with end of life issues surrounding AIDS. Fr. McCreesh, who had been a champion of many social welfare issues and has, until recent years, been best known for his ministry, scouring the streets and alley ways to bring food to the homeless. He had never dealt with AIDS, but quickly became versed in its travails while tending to Carswell. Although not a Catholic himself, Carswell was tremendously lifted up by Fr. McCreesh's humble bedside manner. Melody, who was Catholic, saw this relationship bud and became a leader locally in bringing AIDS and church-related issues together. Through this liaison, Fr. McCreesh, Fr. Msr. Allen, Bishop Curlin and Melody birthed the specialized ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics. Since then, over 100 parishes nationally have created local ministries under the direction of NACDLGM's Executive Director Fr. Jim Schexnayder.

The ministry is supported by Bishop Curlin, through The Diocesan Ministry to Gay and Lesbian Catholics (TDMGLC). Bishop Curlin has remarked that "we are living in a society that is too often marked with an unjust lack of charity and compassion. I pray that the [ministry] will help to erase that prejudice and open hearts to look on all of God's children as brothers and sisters."

Conference Co-Chairs for the event are Kevin Melody and Marco Cipoletti, members of St. Peter's Catholic Church in Charlotte, along with Fr. Conrad Hoover. Melody, who has been a stalwart defender of civil liberties and has served on various local and national GLBT initiatives, serves as chair of the TDMGLC board. Fr. Hoover is pastor of St. Ann's Catholic Church in Charlotte and is a board member of TDMGLC. Cipoletti serves as a member of the board as well. St. Peter's Director of Faith Formation Clint Hunche, serves as the publications and marketing coordinator.

For more information on this conference, write to the Diocesan Ministry to Gay and Lesbian Catholics, P.O. Box 12451, Charlotte, NC 28220-2451. ▼

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