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## **NACDLGM conference set for San José, to feature workshops, networking for homosexual ministry**

By Roberta Ward

The Diocese of San José will host the 12th annual conference of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM), Sept. 22-25, at the Hilton Hotel in downtown San José. A Eucharistic Liturgy will be celebrated at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph, Sept. 24.

The conference, themed “At Work in the Vineyard—Planting, Nurturing, Harvesting,” will offer three days of speakers, workshops, worship and networking on the topic of Catholic ministry with gay and lesbian people and their families.

NACDLGM is the national network of those who minister to homosexual Catholics within the guidelines of the Catholic Church. The organization provides ministry to the ministers who serve gay and lesbian Catholics and their families and friends. The association’s mission statement notes that it is “inspired by the Gospel of

Jesus Christ and grounded in the Catholic moral and social justice tradition,” and, “as a resource and network, encourages pastoral care with lesbian and gay persons and their families.” NACDLGM urges those in the ministry to reflect on Sacred Scripture and on Church teaching and pastoral practice; study the social and physical sciences; listen to the lived experiences of lesbian and gay persons and their families.

“This ministry respects the human dignity and human rights of lesbian and gay persons, and affirms that all who are baptized are called to full participation in the life, worship and mission of the Church,” the mission statement concludes.

The association provides educational resources to ministers as well as models of ministry and encourages the participation of gay and lesbian Catholics within the Church. It supports an array of ministries which may be

diocesan, parish-based or campus-based. There are 55 dioceses and 130 parishes among current members.

Since 1977, when the U.S. Catholic Bishops' committee on Marriage and Family issued their pastoral letter *Always Our Children*, to parents and Church ministers, increasing numbers of dioceses and parishes have explored development of such ministries.

*Always Our Children* recommends that parents accept and love themselves in order to accept and love their homosexual children; urge their children to stay joined to the Catholic faith community; urge their children to seek spiritual guidance in leading a chaste and virtuous life; and join support groups and reach out to other parents.

The bishops' document also recommends that Church ministry be available to parents and families who seek their pastoral help; that the Church welcome homosexual persons into the faith community and seek out those on the margins. The document further says not to stereotype or condemn homosexual persons; urges learning more about homosexuality and Church teaching; and urges ministers to maintain a referral list of groups or persons who may provide assistance.

In 1986, San José became one of the first Catholic dioceses to establish a ministry with gay and lesbian people and their families. This ministry continues today as a weekly Mass

celebrated on Saturday evenings at St. Martin of Tours Church in San José. The diocesan ministry is based on guidelines for ministry to homosexual Catholics which were written by Bishop Emeritus Pierre DuMaine with a local committee of pastoral ministers. It urges compassionate ministry and calls for participation and acceptance of homosexuals in the Local Church. The weekly Masses were established by the resource committee called for by the guidelines. In 1994, the Diocese of San José participated in the founding of NACDLGM and remains involved as a diocesan member of the association.

The Sept. 22-25 conference in San José will feature an opening session followed by a reception with San José Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, four plenary sessions and 18 workshops.

Plenary session speakers include social critic Greer Gordon, MSW who will set the tone for the conference at the opening; theologian Father James Alison, whose topic will be "Learning to Speak from a Position of Strength"; and sociologist Father John Coleman, SJ, who will summarize recent sociological studies of homosexual ministry. A multi-cultural panel will be moderated by Dr. Manuel Fimbres, professor emeritus, College of Social Work, San José State University, who serves as a member of the Diocese of San José Pastoral Resources Committee for Ministry with Gays and Lesbians. The panel will discuss "Intersections of Culture, Religion and Sexuality."

“At Work in the Vineyard” provides an opportunity for developing ministry at all levels in the Local Church, drawing on many area speakers to present workshops dealing with social justice, youth ministry, parish ministry, Church teaching, spirituality and Scripture.

Several workshops will be presented in Spanish with special attention to the concerns and needs of the Hispanic community. A workshop for clergy will focus on the place of preaching from the perspective of ordained ministers in Catholic gay/lesbian ministry. A panel of local Protestant pastoral ministers will present examples of best practices in gay/lesbian ministry in diverse Christian communities.

Local workshop presenters include Kevin Dincher who serves on the diocesan Pastoral Resources Committee; Father Jon Pedigo, pastor of St. Julie Billiard Parish, San José; Father Kevin Joyce, Director of SpiritSite; and Jesuit Father Michael Zampelli, Dr. Jean Soto and Gregory Dale Schultz of Santa Clara University.

Terrie Iacino, Episcopal Director of the Office of Pastoral Ministry, encourages parishes, local organizations or businesses to help sponsor the conference by underwriting parts of it. “Financial support would be most welcome,” she said, “along with parishioners who volunteer to help with registration, logistics and translations.” Interested supporters or volunteers may call Iacino’s office at (408) 983-0120. Conference registration fees vary for NACDLGM members, non-members and students.

Registration is available for the whole conference or for individual days. For the lowest fees, register before 8/25/05.

See registration and conference information and register on-line at the Association’s website, [www.nacdlgm.org](http://www.nacdlgm.org) or contact NACDLGM for a registration brochure by telephone at (510) 849-8281, by e-mail at [office@nacdlgm.org](mailto:office@nacdlgm.org), or by U.S. Mail at 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709.