

National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM)
Statement in Response to: 2006 U.S. Bishops' Document: "Ministry to Persons with a
Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care"

November 22, 2006

The Board of Directors and Staff of the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries (NACDLGM) are saddened by the approval of the USCCB document "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination." While the statement acknowledges the need for ministry with homosexual persons, the guidelines were developed without consultation with bishops and pastoral leaders of existing local diocesan outreach ministries, and without consultation with lesbian and gay Catholics. They also ignored the insights of science on sexuality and the valuable contribution of the 1997 pastoral letter, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers."

We are especially disappointed that the guidelines, while recommending that "Church ministers listen to the experiences, needs, and hopes of the persons with a homosexual inclination to whom and with whom they minister," do not in fact reflect the real lives of gay and lesbian people, especially Catholics. The guidelines characterize homosexual persons as focused on sexual inclinations, tendencies, acts and behavior without reference to the integrity of the fuller lives of faith, love, commitment, service and spirituality of Catholic gay and lesbian persons.

For more than 25 years, diocesan ministries have welcomed in the Church gay and lesbian Catholics who understand and affirm their sexual orientation as intrinsic to their identity. It is profoundly sad that many of them and their families will be unnecessarily alienated by the tone of this document.

In calling them to public silence about their identity the Church would render gay and lesbian Catholics less than welcome as equals by baptism and would encourage deception and shame.

In accordance with the Mission Statement of NACDLGM, we urge individual bishops and the Bishops' Conference to "reflect on Sacred Scripture, reflect on Church teaching and pastoral practice, study the social and physical sciences, listen to and ponder the lived experience of lesbian and gay persons and their families," and to develop a truly pastoral and prophetic document on the place of lesbian and gay Catholics in their Church.

Founded in 1994, NACDLGM includes members from 55 Catholic dioceses and 130 parishes. Since 1997, when the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family issued their pastoral letter to parents and church ministers, *Always Our Children*, increasing numbers of dioceses and parishes have explored the development of such ministries.

Further information about NACDLGM can be obtained on the website www.nacdlgm.org.

end