

## **US Catholic Bishop Elections Signal Continued Targeting of Gay, Transgender People**

*Statement of Equally Blessed, November 16, 2010*

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The leaders of Equally Blessed, a coalition of Catholics working for justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, have issued a statement expressing deep concern over the outcome of the election of new leaders for the US Catholic Bishops Conference.

“The election of New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan and Louisville, Kentucky Archbishop Joseph Kurtz as President and Vice-President of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) sends an ominous message to LGBT Catholics and our families,” said Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry and an Equally Blessed member. “Both men have made strong statements against gay and transgender people. Indeed, for the past two years, Archbishop Kurtz has led the US Bishops' nationwide campaign against marriage for gay couples.”

“It is ominous because the bishops broke with tradition and did not elect this past year's vice-president, Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, as president, someone known to be more moderate on LGBT issues and signals that the bishops are targeting families with loved ones who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender,” said Nicole Sotelo, Program and Communications Director at Call To Action.

Marianne Duddy-Burke of DignityUSA, another Equally Blessed spokesperson added, “The selection of these two men as leaders of the US Bishops' Conference means it is more important than ever for Catholics who want our Church and world to be more welcoming and just for LGBT people to speak out and to act for justice. The majority of Catholics in the pews are supportive of LGBT people and issues, so this election is another example of how the hierarchy is out of step with the faith experience and ideas of Catholic people.”

“At a time when Catholics and the larger society have become so painfully aware of how anti-LGBT religious messages and personalities have contributed to youth suicide, we wish the bishops would have elected leaders whose records were not so damaging,” said Casey Lopata, Co-Founder of Fortunate Families. “As father of a gay son and as Catholics, we choose to tell our youth about Jesus' unconditional love for them.”

*Equally Blessed is a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people both in the church and in civil society. Equally Blessed includes four organizations that have spent a combined 112 years working on behalf of LGBT people and their families: Call to Action, DignityUSA, Fortunate Families, and New Ways Ministry.*