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March 18, 2009

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Gay Catholic Groups Condemn Pope's Statements in Africa on Condom Use

Leaders of DignityUSA, New Ways Ministry and Call To Action—three groups that support gay rights in the Catholic Church—spoke out to condemn the Pope's comments that implied that using condoms could increase the incidents of HIV/AIDS.

Marianne Duddy-Burke, DignityUSA's Executive Director, said, "The Pope's statement that '...the distribution of condoms...aggravates the problems' is amazingly insensitive to all the people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa. A 2006 United Nations report confirms that, 'Sub-Saharan Africa remains the worst-affected region in the world. In 2005, there were 24.5 million in sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV. Globally, 64% of all people living with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa.' This UN study goes on to cite Zimbabwe as a country that had a 2% decrease in HIV/AIDS due to condom use and deferral of sex by young people.

"Numerous medical studies prove that proper use of condoms greatly reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS. This includes the wives and partners of HIV positive men who have relations with their husbands or partners infected by HIV/AIDS—whether by choice or coercion. DignityUSA has long called on the Vatican to acknowledge the importance of educating people on the proper use of condoms, and to support making them widely available as a way of saving lives of vulnerable people around the world."

Nicole Sotelo, Communications Director of Call To Action, said, "Catholics throughout the world understand that condoms save lives. We must stop making orphans of children throughout the world because of misinformation. To

this day, the Vatican bans the use of condoms by Catholics. This is just morally wrong."

Francis DeBernardo, Director of New Ways Ministry, added, "Once again, the Pope's use of discredited beliefs endangers people across the globe. This is a violation of the deepest values of the Catholic faith. We urge Catholics to express their concern about the Pope's stance on condoms directly to the Vatican, and to support organizations providing medically appropriate information and resources to people with or at risk of becoming infected with HIV."

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Call To Action (CTA) is a Catholic movement working for equality and justice in the Church and society. An independent national organization of over 25,000 people and 53 local chapters, CTA believes that the Spirit of God is at work in the whole church, not just its appointed leaders. Visit our website at www.cta-usa.org.

DignityUSA is the nation's foremost organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics, as well as their families, friends, and supporters. Founded in 1969, the group has members and Chapters throughout the United States.

New Ways Ministry is a 32-year-old Roman Catholic bridge-building ministry of justice, education, and reconciliation for lesbian/gay Catholics and the wider church community.