

# **Priest, Dignity Washington fundraiser David Pichette dies at 81**

‘Generously shared his time, resources and spiritual gifts’

by Lou Chibbaro Jr

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to become a grant writer for nonprofit organizations and who for many years became involved with the LGBTQ Catholic organizations Dignity Washington and Dignity Northern Virginia, died June 27 from complications associated with pancreatic cancer at a hospice in Boynton Beach, Fla. He was 81.

A write-up about Pichette's life published in the Dignity Washington Bulletin and prepared by Dignity Washington Vice President Peter Edwards says that among Pichette's activities related to the two Dignity groups was to celebrate Sunday mass for the groups' members in his role as a priest.

The Dignity Washington write-up says Pichette and his life partner, Gene Vollmer, were also beloved, active members of the D.C.-based Catholic group *Communitas*.

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write-up says about Pichette's involvement with the Dignity groups and Communitas.

“Workwise, Dave transitioned to being a nonprofit professional specializing in grant writing for nonprofit organizations,” according to the write-up. “Over the years, he assisted many smaller nonprofits in obtaining grants to continue their mission. Dave’s strong work ethic continued his effort to help several nonprofits right until he entered the hospital,” Edwards says in his write-up.

“Dave was instrumental in helping Dignity Washington with several fundraising drives,” the write-up says. “The most successful effort raised money to pay off the Dignity Center mortgage and put the overall Dignity Washington finances on a sound footing.”

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Among those who point to Pichette’s support for LGBTQ Catholics and for the LGBTQ community are Sister Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of New Ways Ministry, the Mount Rainier, Md., based national group that advocates for LGBTQ Catholics, and Francis DeBernardo, New Ways Ministry’s current executive director.

“I admired Dave’s incredible grasp of history, his deep involvement in the life of the church, and his sense of responsibility as a citizen,” Gramick said. “Even more, I appreciated his sense of fairness and justice for all,” she said. “Of course, he was especially concerned about the rights of LGBT people, and he will be sorely missed by those who knew him,” Gramick told the Blade.

DeBernardo called Pichette a “great priest,” among other things, because of his friendliness and his understanding of people’s pain and suffering from his own experiences.

“He knew that the greatest thing that gay people needed from the church was affirmation of their identities,” DeBernardo said. “And he knew that the

greatest thing that the church needed from gay people was their forgiveness.”

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In his write-up on Pichette for the Dignity Washington Bulletin, Edwards says Pichette and his partner Vollmer moved to Miami around the time of Pichette’s retirement, but that the two made annual summer visits to the D.C. area and to a cabin the two had bought in West Virginia.

“During their annual trips north, they would frequently travel in from West Virginia to attend Mass at both Dignity Washington and Dignity Northern Virginia,” Edwards wrote. “Dave was a radiant and energetic person, with words of cheer and humor and good will toward everyone.”

Edwards' write-up says that Pichette's partner Vollmer preceded Pichette in death. The write-up says a funeral Mass for Pichette was held on July 9 at Holy Redeemer Church in the Liberty City section of Miami. A burial was scheduled to take place at a family plot in upstate New York, where Pichette was born and raised, on Aug. 5.