

BONDINGS

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San Francisco Catholic school teacher comes out as transgender — and finds acceptance

By Jill Tucker
San Francisco Chronicle
May 12, 2016

Gabriel Bodenheimer could have lost his job when he recently came out as transgender to leaders of a San Francisco Catholic high school. Instead, in what some call a momentous step, the English teacher will remain at Mercy High, fully accepted as a man.

The announcement of support by an order of the Sisters of Mercy, which owns and operates the four-year college preparatory school for girls on 19th Avenue, offers a rare policy position on transgender rights from within an internationally respected Catholic order.

While there is no official Catholic policy or doctrine regarding transgender people, church leaders have addressed the issue, noting God created males and females and that anatomy defines identity.

"This is significant for us; we did not take this lightly," said Sister Laura Reicks, president of the 16-state region of the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community. "We feel because of our values, the choice was this, but that didn't mean it was easy."

Reicks said the decision aligns with Pope Francis' message of mercy and of treating every person with dignity. Yet the Pope has also criticized the idea that gender exists on a spectrum and doesn't necessarily match with birth sex, saying these theories don't recognize the order of creation.

The Sisters of Mercy decision, announced Wednesday, specifically reflects policy within the order's West Midwest Community, which sponsors or co-sponsors six high schools, including Mercy High in Burlingame and Cristo Rey

High in Sacramento.

However, it is likely to ripple through a growing national debate on transgender rights, including access to gender-specific facilities like bathrooms and locker rooms.

The order's leaders told staff, students and parents that the sisters prayed for guidance, and conferred with San Francis-



Gabriel Bodenheimer

co Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, but ultimately came to the only decision that aligned with their values.

Supporting the dignity of each person — regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identification — was paramount, Reicks said.

"We have not had any other teachers ask for any kind of coming out before," Reicks said. "This is just our way of continuing to live out what our founders of Sisters of Mercy had always said, that regardless of what type of prejudice or feeling in society, we have to take a higher road and look at the person and how we

can be supportive of each person."

Sisters of Mercy is a canonical religious order that reports to the Vatican. The broader organization sponsors dozens of schools across the U.S. and in four other countries.

Cordileone, who has drawn criticism for a rigidly conservative stance regarding

gay rights, neither condemned nor fully endorsed the decision in San Francisco. "Often in such situations a balance must be struck in a way that distinct values are upheld, such as mercy and truth, or institutional integrity and respect for personal decisions affecting one's life," he said in a statement. He emphasized that such decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, "allowing for prudential judgment."

Reicks said the decision exemplified an overarching position within the order to hire teachers without considering gender identification, race, religion or sexual orientation.

"Their personal lives are completely separate from their qualifications as teachers," she said. "We are concerned about the education of young women and we do not consider personal criteria when we hire the best person for each position."

Even so, the school's employment contract does require teachers to be familiar with and support the philosophy and

values of the school and to honor Catholic identity, regardless of personal faith.

Bodenheimer, who follows the Jewish faith, said he never sought to break ground in transgender rights.

"I love teaching at this school," he said, adding that after four years it was time to come out.

"It was very important to speak, and name myself, and not be silent," he said Thursday in a phone call between classes. "The response I got was tremendously positive."

Previously, Bodenheimer was known as Gadielle, though students called him Ms. Bodenheimer or just Bodenheimer.

But on Wednesday night, he received an email from a student — a simple, mundane note about rescheduling a meeting because of a doctor's appointment.

It started with, "Dear Mr. Bodenheimer."

"That was really a great moment," he said, noting that students, concerned about final exams, were largely unfazed by the announcement. "This is consistent with who I am. This is not some shocking information."

School leaders, however, told the community that counselors would be available to help students and staff members process the acceptance of Bodenheimer as a male rather than female teacher. In addition, an informal meeting for parents was scheduled for Thursday night.

"This is still being processed," said Diane Lawrence, board chairwoman for Mercy High, adding there had been no complaints from within the community so far. "We work with the girls on being respectful, respecting the dignity of others. In my mind, this exemplifies what we're teaching." ✦

Some hope, but not much joy for LGBT Catholics in Pope's new document

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
April 8, 2016

Statement of Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director, New Ways Ministry, in response to Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on marriage and family life, Amoris Laetitia.

While Pope Francis' latest document, *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), contains some hopeful passages, it does not inspire joy in LGBT Catholics and their supporters. As far as sexual orientation and gender identity issues are concerned, the pope's latest apostolic exhortation reiterates church formulas which show that the Vatican has yet to learn from the experiences and faith lives of so many LGBT Church members or their supporters. Though the pope calls for church leaders and ministers to be less judgmental and to respect individuals' consciences, he has not provided a new pastoral approach to LGBT issues or people.

On other family topics such as divorce and co-habitation, *Amoris Laetitia*, offers some hopeful advice—and if this advice were simply applied to LGBT issues, which would not be incompatible to do, this document would have been much more positive. Pope Francis calls for non-judgmental pastoral care, assisting people in developing their consciences, encouraging diverse pastoral responses based on local culture, and calling church leaders to be more self-critical. All these things, if applied to LGBT people and issues, could produce enormous positive change in the church.

Instead of listening to more progressive voices at the synods who called for greater understanding and dialogue with

the LGBT community, the pope simply repeated church condemnations of same-sex unions, adoption by lesbian and gay people, and the complexities of gender identity.

Most egregious is his repetition of the synod fathers' false claim that international aid to developing nations is dependent upon openness to marriage equality. No evidence exists for such a claim. Randy Berry, the U.S. Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI People categorically denied this claim last November during meetings with church officials at the Vatican to discuss the persecution of LGBT people globally.

Moreover, Pope Francis' one statement discussing pastoral care to families with lesbian and gay members is included in a section entitled "Casting Light on Crises, Worries and Difficulties." Such a classification reveals an assumption that LGBT topics are simply problems to be surmounted, and it does not recognize the giftedness and grace that occur when a family accepts and loves its LGBT family members.

While Pope Francis repeats church teaching condemning discrimination and violence against LGBT people, the fact that there is no elaboration of this teaching concerning countries that are criminalizing sexual and gender minorities makes these words ineffective.

Many in the Catholic LGBT community had great, but realistic, hopes for this document. While not expecting a blessing on marriage for lesbian and gay couples, many were anticipating that Pope Francis would offer an affirming message to LGBT people, and not the same ill-informed comments. Many were hoping for something more pastoral from this pope known for warm gestures and statements. Where is the Pope Francis who

embraced his gay former student and husband during his U.S. visit? Where is the Pope Francis who invited a transgender Spanish man for a personal meeting at the Vatican? That Pope Francis is hard to find in his latest text.

The two synods in 2014 and 2015, as well as the wide consultations among the laity which preceded them, served as the research for this new papal document. Unfortunately, as far as LGBT issues are concerned, there is nothing in *Amoris Laetitia* that indicates the great call for new approaches to these issues that occurred during these discussions.

Perhaps there is hope in the suggestion made by some bishops at the 2015 synod that the Vatican hold an entirely separate synodal discussion on the issues of sexuality and gender. While this document has a lot to offer on a variety of important family topics, it did not give adequate attention to LGBT family issues that deserve serious examination by church leaders.

Given the new general pastoral direction of this document, there is potential for further development in regard to LGBT issues. Much more faithful witnessing of LGBT Catholics and their supporters, as well as continued steps toward dialogue with Church leaders, will further this goal.

In one of the more hopeful parts of the document, the conclusion of chapter 8, Pope Francis actually calls for the continuation of such a dialogue:

"I encourage the faithful who find themselves in complicated situations to speak confidently with their pastors or with other lay people whose lives are committed to the Lord. They may not always encounter in them a confirmation of



Pope Francis

their own ideas or desires, but they will surely receive some light to help them better understand their situation and discover a path to personal growth. I also encourage the Church's pastors to listen to them with sensitivity and serenity, with a sincere desire to understand their plight and their point of view, in order to help them live better lives and to recognize their proper place in the Church."

Such dialogues can transform those in so-called "complicated situations," but they can also transform the Church's ministers and leaders. This process is a proven method for the development of doctrine in the Catholic Church. ✦

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Bondings is a seasonal publication designed to keep our subscribers informed of issues that pertain to LGBT people and the Catholic Church.

Founded in 1977, New Ways Ministry is an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic LGBT community and the institutional structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

New Ways Ministry seeks to eradicate prevalent myths and stereotypes about homosexuality and gender identity and supports civil rights for LGBT persons in society.

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Priest hits out at Church's 'nonsensical' doctrine on homosexuality

By **Tim Diacono***Malta Today*
March 1, 2016

The Catholic Church's doctrine on homosexuality is "nonsensical" and its stance against the proposed criminalisation of gay conversion therapy is flawed, Fr Rene Camilleri said.

"The Catholic Church's doctrine still refers to homosexuality in terms of it being an illness or a disorder," Camilleri said during an interview aired on Monday night's edition of *Reporter*. "Speaking like that in today's society is simply nonsensical."



Fr. Rene Camilleri

"My objection to this position paper is that it seems as though the Church still believes that it is possible to convert homosexuals, which is unacceptable to me."

The outspoken priest, who has in the past backed the rights of homosexual couples to adopt children, threw his weight behind the government's Bill, arguing that "we cannot accept the presence of gay conversion therapy on the market in this day and age."

Camilleri, the head of the Curia's secretariat for catechesis, criticised the Maltese Church's recent controversial position paper that took a stance against a Bill to criminalise LGBT conversion 'therapy'.

"The Church has long been accustomed to keeping silent on major national issues, but [Archbishop] Charles Scicluna's strategy is to request position papers on such issues so that the Church can take a stance."

He added that the Church's "technical" position paper left a lot of room for misinterpretation, such as when it claimed that criminalising conversion therapy would "make it a crime to assist paedophiles whose condition is manifested in same-sex behaviour".

"I have my doubts as to the paper's intended target audience, but if it was addressed to the general public, then mentioning paedophilia in such a delicate topic was always going to leave room for misinterpretation."

As the main guest on the programme, Malta Gay Rights Movement coordinator Gabi Calleja said that the Church's position paper indicates that it still favours heterosexuality over homosexuality.

"The Church's stance on homosexuality hasn't changed, and it still considers it to be an intrinsic disorder or even intrinsically evil," she told host Saviour Balzan. "Yet the very notion that a person's sexual orientation is a quality that can and should be changed goes against the experience of several LGBTI people who weren't converted, but rather grew to recognize their sexual orientation."

She argued that the Bill will not stop pastors or priests from attempting conversion therapy on consenting adults, but will rather prohibit professionals – such as doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists – from doing so.

"We believe that professionals should have clear ethical guidelines, and they should not be allowed to work on the principle that therapy can change somebody's sexuality."

When asked, Calleja said that the MGRM's next three lobbying challenges would be for full marriage equality, for the revision of the Embryo Protection Act, and for the extension of the Equality Act.

However, while she hailed relevantly recent legislation on civil unions and gender identity rights, she warned that society is not yet truly conducive to LGBTI people.

"Some people still find it difficult to come out, due to resistance from peers and family, and the word 'pufta' is still used as an insult in schools," she said. "Getting laws passed in Parliament is one thing, but implementing it in practice is another thing altogether." †

Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart gives green light to gay couples at Catholic school formals

By **Marika Dobbin***The Age*
Victoria, Australia
January 22, 2016

Students at Victoria's Catholic high schools who might be thinking of bringing a same-sex partner to their school formal have won support from an unlikely source.

Melbourne Archbishop Denis Hart has urged schools to be sensitive and respectful to students who wanted to invite a same-sex date to the biggest night of the year.

"These are quite often emotional situations and it's very important that we always have respect for the dignity of the human being involved," he said.

Archbishop Hart made the comments when Fairfax [an Australian news media organization] asked for his response to a previously unreported case at the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy.

A student at the girls school started an online petition on Change.org last year after being told by the Year 12 co-ordinator that she couldn't bring a female partner to the formal.

"I see no logical, just reason for this ban," the student, who has since sought anonymity, said.

"The Academy's mission statement places great emphasis on social justice, equality and respect for all people."

The petition received 1250 signatures and hundreds of comments in support.

The school responded by changing its stance to allow the student to bring a female date.

Archbishop Hart said he appreciated the school's turnaround and believed it had "shown great sensitivity in what is an unusual scenario".

"Students in a secondary school are growing up and in developmental stages where relationships are more like strong friendships and are not usually permanent, they are not in a situation where they are committing," Archbishop Hart said in a statement to *Fairfax Media*.

"The Catholic Church respects any relationship but always sticks quite firmly with its teaching that a relationship in the eyes of the church is heterosexual, between a male and female, and that is something we would always stand by."

Archbishop Hart was criticised last year for allegedly burying Jesuit Social Services's Not So Straight report, which had found widespread bullying and homophobic abuse of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students in Catholic schools, leading to high-levels of self harm, and

even suicide.

His comments come as many schools prepare to hold their formals next month, well before the stress of Year 12 exams begins.

Academy principal Sister Mary Moloney said it was a progressive and modern Catholic school that dealt with any issue or concern with an open mind.

"The philosophy of allowing students to choose whom-ever they wish to accompany them to our school formal will continue into the future," Sister Moloney said.

It has been eight years since Victoria's Education Department instructed state schools to allow gay couples to attend events together, because discrimination is unlawful under equal opportunity legislation.

In Tasmania, Archbishop Julian Porteus currently faces a test case brought by the state's Anti-discrimination Commissioner for distributing a pro-traditional marriage booklet called *Don't Mess With Marriage* to the families of students in Catholic schools.

Australia's largest youth-led organisation for LGBTI people, Minus18, welcomed Archbishop Hart's comments but said more needed to be done to make formals inclusive, for example, allowing trans- and gender diverse students to dress in the clothes they prefer.

Minus18's Tim Christodoulou said a school formal was an important event in a student's life but caused anxiety and fear for those who felt excluded.

"It's hurtful if you can't bring the partner you want to celebrate this milestone," he said.

"The result is that sometimes young people disengage from their education. Seeing this progress coming from the Catholic Archbishop is really promising but there's much further to go."

Last year, Brisbane's Anglican Church Grammar School told a boy to "keep with school tradition" and bring a female to his Year 12 formal. It had previously banned same-sex partners.

Students at St Mary's Anglican Girls School in Perth also rallied against their school on the same issue that year.

In 2010, Ivanhoe Girls Grammar forbade a 16-year-old from taking her girlfriend to its year 11 formal.

Executive director of Catholic Education, Stephen Elder, said such decisions were best dealt with by individual schools (rather than at a systemic level) where all local concerns and sensitivities could be taken into account.

"The autonomy provided to Catholic schools to act in the best interests of their students and families is one of the many elements that make Catholic education great." †



Archbishop Denis Hart

Former Kansas City church food pantry coordinator settles with diocese

By Brian Burnes
Kansas City Star
February 19, 2016

A former Kansas City church food pantry coordinator who contended she lost her job because her same-sex marriage became public settled her lawsuit this week with Catholic diocese officials.

The parties did not release the amount awarded to Colleen Simon, who brought the suit against the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

Her suit against the diocese and Bishop Robert Finn said her St. Francis Xavier Church supervisors knew she was a lesbian and married to another woman, and they had said her sexual orientation would not be an issue.

That was before an April 2014 article in *The Star* mentioned her marriage to the Rev. Donna Simon of St. Mark Hope and Peace Lutheran Church in Kansas City.

She was fired two weeks later, Colleen Simon said in her lawsuit. She sought unpaid wages, fringe benefits, compensation for emotional distress, punitive damages and attorney fees.

On Tuesday, Jackson County Judge Kenneth R. Garrett III dismissed one allegation of Simon's lawsuit. He would not consider, he said, the alleged fraud of the priests' statements to Simon regarding her sexual orientation and her employment

status because it "would impermissibly entangle the court in matters and decisions purely canonical."

Lawyers representing the diocese said that the fraud allegation was the primary claim of Simon's lawsuit and that Garrett's ruling signaled the diocese was free to



Colleen Simon (center) poses with New Ways Ministry's Francis DeBernardo and Sister Jeannine Gramick the day after her settlement was announced.

make its employment decisions without court interference.

"A church isn't obligated to employ those who act contrary to the church's teachings," said Erik Stanley, a lawyer with Alliance Defending Freedom, a Scottsdale, Ariz., nonprofit legal organization that assisted in the diocese's defense.

"The district court was on very firm constitutional ground to reject this attempt to drag the government into a church's theological decisions — the very line the First Amendment says the government cannot cross," Stanley said.

Garrett declined to dismiss questions

regarding whether the diocese had failed to issue a service letter detailing Simon's employment that met requirements called for under Missouri law and whether Simon's employment status qualified her for overtime pay when she

worked more than 40 hours a week.

"These unsettled ... issues are the province of the jury,"

Garrett wrote in his ruling.

The diocese did not want those matters discussed in court, said E.E. Keenan, a Kansas City lawyer representing Simon.

"For over a year and a half, the diocese fought hard to prevent Ms. Simon's

case from going to a jury," Keenan said. "We feel good that this judgment affirms the ability of church employees who are wronged to seek justice in our courts."

Simon's lawsuit asserted that during a May 2013 job interview, she had mentioned her sexual orientation to a priest at St. Francis Xavier and the priest had expressed no objection.

When another priest replaced that priest, Simon said, she notified him of her sexual orientation. Had he objected, she said, she wanted to look for work elsewhere. As a cancer survivor, she needed to maintain her job-related health insurance coverage.

But the priest had said, "It's OK," according to the lawsuit.

Simon had said Finn participated in her firing. Last month, Simon's lawyers voluntarily dismissed the fraud claim against Finn, Keenan said.

Although Simon initially wished to have her food pantry position back, Keenan said, for several months she has been employed at Journey to New Life, a nonprofit organization that assists former prisoners transitioning after incarceration.

"She is very excited and enthusiastic about that work," Keenan said.

"While it was certainly sad that she had to leave St. Francis the way she did, and she had hoped to go back, she now has moved forward." †

Massachusetts Catholic school, gay man settle discrimination lawsuit

By Astead W. Herndon
The Boston Globe
May 10, 2016

A man who lost a job offer from a Catholic high school when administrators learned he was in a same-sex marriage has received a settlement in the case, his lawyers announced Monday.

The settlement comes almost five months after a Massachusetts Superior Court judge ruled that Fontbonne Academy, an all-girls school in Milton, had discriminated against Matthew Barrett by rescinding its job offer for a food service position in 2013. School officials withdrew the offer after learning that Barrett had listed his husband as an emergency contact on an employee form.

The school had argued it was exempt from the state's nondiscrimination laws because of its religious beliefs, notably the Catholic Church's opposition to same-sex marriage.

The confidential settlement means the school will not appeal the December court

ruling, which legal specialists described as the first of its kind.

Barrett, 45, who will receive an undisclosed amount of money in the settlement, said he was thankful his legal ordeal is over.

"It's just a relief to have this off our shoulders," he said. "We've gone through a lot and we're happy it's behind us now. We just hope it doesn't happen to someone else."

Ben Klein, a lawyer with GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) who represented Barrett in the case, said the settlement means the ruling against Fontbonne Academy stands, creating an important legal precedent that bars employers from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation, regardless of religious conviction.

"This is a case that there was not a factual dispute about whether discrimination occurred, but whether they had a permissible reason," Klein said. "They do not."

Klein said he expected the case to

have broad and lasting implications.

"This is the first case in the country to rule that an employer has no religious justification for discrimination," Klein said. "Everyone deserves to be treated on their merits, and not based on whom they love or any other protective category."

In a statement, Fontbonne Academy said it was pleased that the lawsuit had been resolved.

"Fontbonne Academy expresses deep gratitude to Mr. Barrett for his willingness to come together with us in a spirit of conciliation, and wishes him well as the school moves ahead in its mission to foster educational excellence and social justice in an open and inclusive community," the school said in a statement.

In court filings, the school's attorneys had argued that hiring Barrett "would be inconsistent with both the teachings of the Catholic Church and its own policy that all employees are models for the students."

But in his ruling, Superior Court Judge Douglas H. Wilkins rejected that

argument.

"Requiring Fontbonne to retain a food service director who has done nothing more than list a same-sex husband as an emergency contact does not significantly and seriously burden Fontbonne's expressive situation," Wilkins wrote.

In December, the decision was blasted by the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts, which called it "a frontal assault on religious freedom" and "an appalling subordination of the First Amendment to the Massachusetts gay rights law."

But Klein said the ruling demonstrated that "discrimination cannot go unanswered."

"Matt had the courage to step forward and fight an injustice and the court ultimately vindicated him," he said. "We hope it's a message to others."

Barrett, who lives in Dorchester and was raised Catholic, said he's happy to put everything behind him.

"You can't discriminate and that's what they did," Barrett said. "That's why these laws are here: To protect us." †

Top Gay rights campaigner in UK speaks movingly about her Catholic faith

By Ian Dunn
The Scottish Catholic Observer
Glasgow, Scotland
March 14, 2016

The head of gay rights organisation Stonewall is not someone you would expect to find in the pages of *The Scottish Catholic Observer*. Current CEO Ruth Hunt is, however, a practicing Catholic and she is on a mission to break down barriers and foster better communication between religious groups and the gay community.

Ms. Hunt spoke to the SCO to mark lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) month, which this year had the theme of faith, religion and philosophy.

"I think at Stonewall we have often seen the idea that the faith community and LGBT community have to come to blows as something artificially constructed," she said.

"There are many LGBT people of faith and many LGBT people have lots of friends and family in faith communities. To think in terms of binaries and opposites is not helpful."

Ms. Hunt admitted she was surprised that people have been so interested in her own Catholicism.

"I was brought up Catholic, I believe in one Holy Roman Catholic Church," she said. "I believe it is where Christ is most accurately reflected. I feel at home there, I maintain a good relationship with the Church, I am pleased to be part of it."

She said she 'had my moments' of doubt but the Church was 'part and parcel of my life growing up' and when we had some difficult times in our family's life, when I was 12, 13 the Church became this very important thing that wrapped around us and supported us."

She said her study of medieval English at university and figures like Julian of Norwich had fascinated her and reaffirmed her Faith.

"I never felt the need to break away," she said. "In the past, when I didn't go I found I missed it, it provides community and creates a space that is very profound and spiritual for me."

Like Stonewall as a whole, she is an ardent supporter of gay marriage though says her organisation will always accept 'marriage within Churches is a matter for faith communities.' The Catholic Church wholly opposes same sex marriage, defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman open to bringing a family into the world.

As a Catholic Ms. Hunt says that gay marriage, like contraception, is something that many Catholics struggle with and that

these are 'live issues discussed in Catholic communities.'

"We respect religious freedom," she said. "It does concern me the way some opposition is expressed. I don't think it is Christian to be harmfully offensive. I think there's always room to disagree with compassion."

She says that while she knows some members of the gay community feel hostility to organised religion, her experience was quite different.

"Hearing the truth of people's testament is very important," she said. "In all my experience, I never felt excluded from the Church I attended, which can't have always been easy for them but never felt I wasn't welcome. A lot can be achieved if you start on the basis of love but it's difficult when people are utterly determined not to hear each other."

"I do meet people who have had different, difficult experiences though who've been damaged by being told to deny their sexuality, who felt rejected by God," she said. "That saddens me, and at Stonewall we often talk about the need for 'kind eyes,' when we listen to people."

While increased awareness of gay



Ruth Hunt

At L.A. Congress: transgender Catholics hope to build bridges in the Church

By Michael O'Loughlin

Crux

March 7, 2016

LOS ANGELES – Tens of thousands of Catholics descend on Los Angeles each winter to sharpen their ministry skills, partaking in dozens of workshops and seminars about liturgy, prayer, Bible, and parish life as part of the LA Religious Education Congress. With close to 40,000 participants, it's the largest annual gathering of Catholics in North America, a celebration of all things Catholic.

But event organizers this year took a cue from popular culture and included a new session, one that attracted a standing room only crowd of 750 people, nearly all of whom jumped to their feet for a sustained round of applause after talks from two young, committed Catholics.

The name of the session? "Transgender in the Church: One Bread, One Body."

The Rev. Christopher Bazyouros, the director of the office of religious education for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, said including the discussion in the program was an important first step for the Church in grappling with an issue that exploded onto the national consciousness last June when Caitlyn Jenner appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, announcing to the world that she is transgender.

"There aren't many places for Catholics to discuss these things that are thoughtful, intentional, and that gathers people who have had this experience," he said. "Many Catholics want information about this topic, they want things to help them understand this situation."

To that end, conference organizers invited two transgender Catholics to speak, both of whom were surprised and

gratified that they were included. And both used their presentations to urge acceptance by the wider universe of Catholics.

Anna Patti, a 23-year-old Michigan resident, told the crowd she didn't believe "God made a mistake" with her, as some have said of transgender people.

In an interview after her presentation, she said having the opportunity to speak freely about her struggles and her joys was "an unexpectedly affirming experience."

"I hadn't realized how silenced I felt within the Church," she said. "At Mass I always sit in the back row in the back corner, making myself as visibly small as possible. Here was the opposite, where people wanted to learn about an issue that is so often immediately condemned."

"It was beautiful," she said of the crowd's reaction.

Mateo Williamson, a 24-year-old medical student at the Jesuit-run Loyola Medical School in Chicago, described with joy his deeply Catholic upbringing, part of a family that included several priests and nuns.

After his talk, he said many young people thanked him for sharing his story about living as a transgender man in the Church.

"Pope Francis' charity, compassion, and call to mercy, it's changed the tone in the Church," he said. "He hasn't been explicit about trans people, and there's nothing in the Catechism, but there's been a change among people in general to understand something they maybe haven't encountered before."

Pope Francis has spoken out repeatedly against so-called gender ideology, but Patti said she doesn't interpret those comments as hostile to trans people. In

fact, she thinks the pope's remarks about gender not being just a social construct actually support the transgender community by pointing out that gender identity is innate.

While Catholicism doesn't have much to say about transgender issues, at least not at the level of Church teaching, there is still tension about how the Church should respond to its transgender members.

In Rhode Island, for example, a Catholic middle and high school came under fire after a group of alumni discovered transgender students were banned from enrolling. Once confronted, school organizers promised to take another look at the policy.

This kind of uncertainty about how well the Church is equipped to deal with the needs of transgender Catholics and their families is part of the reason event organizers included the session, as a way to launch a conversation by inviting people to share their personal stories.

"We were just going with the pope's desire to go out and encounter people, to hear their stories," said Bazyouros, the LA priest who oversees the Congress. "We decided to see what would happen if we hosted a session for people to share their stories."

"Sometimes issues are just these abstract things until you hear people speak about their journeys, and then you can begin to have a conversation," he said.

Patti said that her Catholic faith has been central in her own journey, but that the culture war threatens the Church's ability to help other transgender people.

"Catholic spirituality and the Catholic tradition can provide more nourishment, and also more sense into the trans experience, than anything else I've encoun-

tered," she said.

"On the other hand, I think especially in American Catholicism, the culture war has latched itself parasitically onto Catholicism and has turned it into a politics game," she said. "I think it makes settings that would otherwise be ideal for a trans person's development turns it into a coffin, into the worst place imaginable."

She said the Church also suffers from an image problem in the LGBT community, which turns some people off from exploring their faith.

"Honestly, I get judged for being Catholic because it's just assumed that to be Catholic means hating LGBT people, more so even than what is central to our faith, the Eucharist," she said.

Williamson said that he's had both good and bad experiences in the Church.

At Loyola, for instance, he's part of a group of students who meet for several hours each week to explore how Ignatian spirituality relates to medicine.

But last year, he said, he was hurt when his invitation from the White House to be one of 15,000 people on the South Lawn when President Barack Obama formally welcomed Pope Francis to the White House was criticized by the right as inappropriate.

"It was discouraging, because I'm trying to bring about this positive message," he said. "We don't want people to think that trans Catholics are a threat to the sanctity of any event."

The LA Congress workshop sold out quickly, and some of the audience, which included several priests, seminarians, and nuns, said the fact it happened at all gave them hope about the future of the Church.

✦

LGBT-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

Below is a list of known LGBT-friendly Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic institutions that have some type of gay/LGBT student group, support group, ally group, etc. If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to LGBT people, please let us know.



Alabama <i>Mobile:</i> Spring Hill College	Iowa <i>Davenport:</i> St. Ambrose University <i>Dubuque:</i> Loras College	Nebraska <i>Omaha:</i> Creighton University	Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's University
California <i>Belmont:</i> Notre Dame de Namur University <i>Goleta:</i> St. Mark's University <i>Los Angeles:</i> Loyola Marymount University, Mount Saint Mary's College <i>Moraga:</i> St. Mary's College <i>Oakland:</i> Holy Names University <i>Ranchos Palos Verde:</i> Marymount College <i>San Diego:</i> University of San Diego <i>San Francisco:</i> University of San Francisco <i>Santa Clara:</i> Santa Clara University	Kentucky <i>Louisville:</i> Spalding University, Bellarmine University	New Hampshire <i>Manchester:</i> St. Anselm College <i>Nashua:</i> Rivier College	Pittsburgh: Carlow University, Duquesne University Radnor: Cabrini College Reading: Alvernia University Scranton: Marywood University Villanova: Villanova University
Colorado <i>Denver:</i> Regis University	Louisiana <i>New Orleans:</i> Loyola University	New Jersey <i>Caldwell:</i> Caldwell College <i>Jersey City:</i> St. Peter's College <i>South Orange:</i> Seton Hall	Rhode Island <i>Newport:</i> Salve Regina University <i>Providence:</i> Providence College
Connecticut <i>Fairfield:</i> Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University <i>New Haven:</i> Albertus Magnus College <i>West Hartford:</i> Saint Joseph College	Maryland <i>Baltimore:</i> Notre Dame of Maryland University, Loyola University of Maryland	New York <i>Albany:</i> College of Saint Rose <i>Brooklyn and Patchogue:</i> St. Joseph College <i>Bronx:</i> Fordham University, Manhattan College <i>Buffalo:</i> Canisius College <i>Loudonville:</i> Siena College <i>New Rochelle:</i> College of New Rochelle, Iona College <i>Poughkeepsie:</i> Marist College <i>Rochester:</i> St. John Fisher College <i>St. Bonaventure:</i> St. Bonaventure University <i>Sparkill:</i> St. Thomas Aquinas College <i>Syracuse:</i> LeMoyné College <i>Queens:</i> St. John's University	Texas <i>Austin:</i> Saint Edward's University <i>San Antonio:</i> University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University
District of Columbia Georgetown University, Trinity University	Massachusetts <i>Boston:</i> Emmanuel College, Chestnut Hill: Boston College <i>Chicopee:</i> Elms College <i>Easton:</i> Stonehill College <i>North Andover:</i> Merrimack College <i>Weston:</i> Regis College <i>Worcester:</i> Assumption College, College of the Holy Cross	Ohio <i>Cincinnati:</i> Xavier University <i>Cleveland Heights:</i> John Carroll University <i>Dayton:</i> University of Dayton <i>Pepper Pike:</i> Ursuline College <i>South Euclid:</i> Notre Dame College <i>Sylvania:</i> Lourdes College	Vermont <i>Colchester:</i> Saint Michael's College
Florida <i>Miami Gardens:</i> St. Thomas University <i>Miami Shores:</i> Barry University	Michigan <i>Detroit:</i> University of Detroit Mercy <i>Grand Rapids:</i> Aquinas College	Oregon <i>Marylhurst:</i> Marylhurst University <i>Portland:</i> University of Portland	Washington <i>Lacey:</i> St. Martin's College <i>Seattle:</i> Seattle University <i>Spokane:</i> Gonzaga University
Hawaii <i>Honolulu:</i> Chaminade University	Minnesota <i>Collegeville:</i> St. John's University <i>Duluth:</i> College of St. Scholastica <i>Minneapolis:</i> College of St. Catherine <i>St. Joseph:</i> College of Saint Benedict <i>St. Paul:</i> St. Thomas University <i>Winona:</i> St. Mary's University of Minnesota	Pennsylvania <i>Cresson:</i> Mount Aloysius College <i>Dallas:</i> Misericordia University <i>Erie:</i> Mercyhurst College <i>Greensburg:</i> Seton Hill University	West Virginia <i>Wheeling:</i> Wheeling Jesuit University
Illinois <i>Chicago:</i> DePaul University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University <i>Joliet:</i> University of St. Francis <i>River Forest:</i> Dominican University in Illinois <i>Romeoville:</i> Lewis University	Missouri <i>Kansas City:</i> Avila University, Rockhurst University <i>St. Louis:</i> Fontbonne University, St. Louis University	Canada <i>Toronto:</i> Regis College	Wisconsin <i>De Pere:</i> St. Norbert College <i>Madison:</i> Edgewood College <i>Milwaukee:</i> Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University
Indiana <i>Notre Dame:</i> Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, Univ. of Notre Dame	Montana <i>Helena:</i> Carroll College		

Fr. Charles Curran addresses 'Pope Francis, Reform, and Moral Theology'

By Francis DeBernardo

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
May 9, 2016

In subtle but profound ways, Pope Francis is making great changes in church government, moral theology, and Catholic life. That's the opinion of Rev. Charles E. Curran, who shared his views on these topics in an April lecture entitled "Pope Francis, Reform, and Moral Theology," sponsored by New Ways Ministry.

The occasion for Curran's talk was the first Fr. Robert Nugent Memorial Lecture, honoring New Ways Ministry's co-founder who passed away in 2014. Curran described his friend, Fr. Nugent, as a "marvelous combination of pastoral, spiritual, and intellectual qualities." More than 150 attendees gathered at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center in Marriottsville, Maryland, to hear the thoughts of this important thinker who is the Elizabeth Scurlock Professor of Human Values at Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

"From the very beginning, it was obvious Pope Francis would be a reformer," Curran told the audience. The lecture analyzed Pope Francis in four movements: the significance of his style, the impact of his priorities, the desire he has for the church, and the impact he may have on moral theology.

From his first moments as pope, Francis' style has been shockingly different from his predecessors. He lives in two simple rooms and dines at the communal cafeteria, having shunned the papal palace. Curran was clear, though, that Francis' reforms are genuinely "more than just style." Pope Francis' shifted tone helps make clear his priorities.

These priorities refocus Catholic attention to structural injustices, Curran said. For example, Francis has highlighted the ways in which oppression of the poor is linked to environmental degradation. Included in these new priorities is a critique of the U.S. bishops' obsession with moral issues, such as marriage equality and contraception.

Pope Francis' priorities include eccle-

sial reform, too, Curran suggested. The lecturer pointed towards papal efforts towards church decentralization, including the two synodal assemblies on family held in 2014 and 2015. Prompted by Pope Francis' appeal for honest discussions and undaunted by fear of chaos or confusion, bishops openly disagreed with one another at these meetings, Curran noted. These occasions were the first time since Vatican II that bishops openly disagreed with one another. Curran said that the church must be realistic about differences of opinion and learn to live with diversity. The lecturer also cited Francis' frequent quoting of episcopal conference documents in his environmental encyclical *Laudato Si* as a sign that the pope is promoting decentralization.

But reforming structures is not the only or even main way Pope Francis seeks to reform the church. Curran said the pope is reaffirming the essential role the baptized faithful play in church life, especially for evangelization and for the *sensus fidelium*—the reception of doctrine. Church teaching should emerge from the bottom, he suggested. Church practice should be informed by the poor and hurting people of the world among whom the church must be present. For Francis, Curran noted, everyone has a teaching role because he affirms that the Holy Spirit is present in all.

Regarding moral theology, Curran said Pope Francis has explicitly said on multiple occasions that the church's moral teachings are not what is most important about the faith. Having described himself as a loyal son of the church, Francis will not change moral teachings, Curran noted. In view of this reality, Catholics who seek

developments in Catholic teaching should be realistic because, according to Curran, the Catholic Church has an almost impossible unwillingness to admit that its teachings have ever been wrong. Even when the church reversed its teaching on religious liberty at Vatican II, there was no admission that a change had taken place.

Pope Francis instead seeks a pastoral-oriented approach to moral questions, Curran said. While admittedly insuffi-

weakness for Pope Francis and said that, as a structural issue, it cannot be solved by conscience and will therefore be very hard to change.

A vigorous question period followed the lecture. One attendee asked Curran about the future of church reform efforts. He responded that, unlike previous centuries, in an era of instant communication and globalization the church, if it wants to be relevant to the world, cannot wait centuries to change. Curran said, too, that, in the long run, the church has an important and appealing message for young people who are concerned with social issues.

The National Catholic Reporter, in its coverage of the lecture asked a similar question of Bob Shine, social media and young adult coordinator at New Ways Ministry. He agreed with Fr. Curran that the church was in a "new period of openness," adding:

"We can't get obsessed with the rules; we have to ask how we're bringing people to Jesus in the reform movement. It's going to mean a big revamp of how things exist if we're taking the needs of the communities who are coming to dominate our church seriously."

"I think the greatest opportunity we have right now to create permanent and sustainable change is that [Francis] is creating space for lay Catholics to take ownership for our church."

Fr. Curran's participation in the church as a theologian and as a priest has greatly contributed to church reform already. His academic career laid foundations on which moral theologians have built new theologies informed by contemporary knowledge. His challenge to unjust church structures as early as the 1960s remains a powerful witness for our church. And as this lecture revealed, Fr. Curran continues to turn his powerful and humane intellect to issues important to the church and to the world. Pope Francis would do well to read Curran's new book, *Tradition and Reform: Perspectives on Catholic Moral Teaching*. ✚



Fr. Curran answers a question from the audience.

cient, this method can create space for further progress. Curran acknowledged that because Francis proceeds in this way, there will be disappointment, but "nonetheless, Francis has left the door ajar." Though the pope's apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* had not yet been released at the time of this lecture, Curran identified rightly the re-emphasis Pope Francis has placed on conscience. The ultimate decision a Catholic makes should be made in the person's conscience, Curran said, not by one's parish priest. In a related note, Curran called for the church to reform the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that it will be more viable by resonating with people's needs.

Appeals to conscience may resolve a number of challenging moral questions, but they cannot resolve every ecclesial problem, Curran noted. He identified the issue of women in the church as a major

Massachusetts Catholic bishop offers apology to women, gays

By Michael O'Loughlin

Crux

February 11, 2016

If you've ever felt unwelcome at Church because of your gender, race, or sexual orientation, a Massachusetts bishop has a message for you: I'm sorry.

Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski of Springfield used the occasion of Ash Wednesday to mark Pope Francis' Jubilee of Mercy by apologizing to and seeking reconciliation with Catholics in Western Massachusetts.

Rozanski, sent from Baltimore to lead the 217,000-member diocese in 2014, said that ongoing fallout from the clergy sexual abuse scandal, shuttered and merged churches, and less than welcoming parishes have caused a rupture between the Church and some of the faithful.

He says he is seeking forgiveness.

"There are many people hurting in our Catholic community from the pain caused by our past failings as a diocese, as well as the grievous actions of some who ministered in our church," he wrote in a pastoral letter on evangelization. "The reality of this pain is that it still echoes many years later, as was given witness in our recent diocesan survey."

Through that survey, completed by 3,000 local Catholics, Rozanski said he learned that some Catholics don't feel welcome in churches and thus stop participat-

ing in the faith.

"Still there are others who have distanced themselves because they feel unwelcomed. The reasons here can vary, but key among them are race and cultural differences, a sense of gender inequality as well as sexual orientation," he wrote.

"Others have been treated unkindly, impatiently, or rudely by clergy, religious, ministers, and staff of parishes — all which is unacceptable."

"I ask your forgiveness," he continued.

He said parishes "must be inviting and energetic environments, founded both in our traditions but also the reality of everyday life," and urged local Catholics "to evangelize those who were once, but are no longer with us."

"We need you, we need your presence, your gifts and your talents. We need you to

complete our community, to enrich it, to make it better and more effective," he wrote.

He quoted one of the people who took part in the diocesan survey, who wrote, "The gay community feels that they aren't welcome. They don't want to espouse another religion; therefore, they don't attend church at all. Hopefully, a special outreach could be done to them."

Rozanski said that revitalizing the diocese through evangelization would be a "daunting task," but urged Catholics "to walk beyond our parish boundaries, with-

out fear, to demonstrate the faith we celebrate in liturgy takes form in the reality of the world around us."

Rozanski opened the letter by asking several questions about love and forgiveness, urging Catholics to look to Pope Francis as an example of how to love like God, who "looks beyond our faults and failings and loves us just as we are."

Pope Francis launched the Jubilee of Mercy in December, opening a special holy year during which Catholics are en-

couraged to go to confession and walk through designated holy doors in churches in order to have their sins forgiven. The pope has made mercy and forgiveness the hallmarks of his papacy.

"Do you believe in a God who loves you?" Rozanski asked. "Do you believe in a God who forgives? Are you able to offer forgiveness to those who have hurt you? Are you able to ask forgiveness from them?" ✚



Bishop Mitchell Rozanski

New Ways Ministry's Eighth National Symposium
Justice and Mercy Shall Kiss:
LGBT Catholics in the Age of Pope Francis
April 28-30, 2016
Chicago, Illinois

Plenary Speakers:

LISA FULLAM, Associate Professor, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley
LESLIE GRIFFIN, Professor of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas
BRYAN MASSINGALE, Professor of Theological and Social Ethics, Fordham University
FRANK MUGISHA, Executive Director, Sexual Minorities Uganda

Workshop sessions will examine such issues as: transgender and intersex identity, LGBT church workers, lesbian/gay members in religious life and the clergy, LGBT youth, parish outreach programs, and family issues.

Pre-Symposium Retreat on Spirituality & Social Justice led by
Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director, NETWORK

For more information, contact:

New Ways Ministry

4012 29th Street

Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712

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In Louisville, Kentucky

Supreme Court gay couple's headstone design hits dead end

By Martha Elson

Louisville Courier-Journal
May 19, 2016

Among headstone images at St. Michael's Cemetery in Germantown that depict golfing, fishing, playing basketball and baseball, riding motorcycles, #BBN (Big Blue Nation), race cars and numerous interlocking wedding rings, Michael De Leon and Greg Bourke didn't expect their design for a headstone showing rings and the Supreme Court building to stand out.

Then there's also the twin spires at Churchill Downs.

"You see all kinds of things...that are totally unrelated to any church teaching or any church symbolism," Bourke said.

The gay couple, who were married in Canada in 2004 and live in St. Matthews, were among the petitioners in the legal case that resulted in the historic June 26

natural symbol to include on their headstone, along with the ubiquitous wedding rings.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville didn't see it that way, and a politely worded letter to De Leon and Bourke from Catholic Cemeteries executive director Javier Fajardo thanks them for their patience but said, "We cannot approve the depiction of the Supreme Court building and the use of wedding rings."

Otherwise, their request to be buried side by side and the rest of the design with their names, a cross and other standard information was deemed acceptable. They were asked to let Fajardo know if they wanted to submit a new design for review.

A Catholic cemetery is a "sacred place" where "the signs and symbols of our Catholic faith are displayed with pride and reverence," the letter said.

"Inscriptions on grave markers are permitted so long as they do not conflict with any teaching of the Church. Your proposed markings are not in keeping with this requirement."

De Leon and Bourke, both 58, belong to a group called Catholics for Fairness that held a news conference with the theme "Freedom to Bury" along with the Fairness Campaign Wednesday outside St. Michael, 1153 Charles St., to call attention to what they consider to be an unjust situation. State Rep. Jim Wayne, a supporter of the group, also was present. *The Huffington Post* posted a story Tuesday about the headstone

controversy.

"We feel like we've been dealt with unfairly," Bourke said. Their design is "not any more outrageous than other things," he said. "It's very modest, not over-sized and not in a well-trafficked part of the cemetery."

At the same time, Bourke said the Archdiocese is exempt from the local Fair-



Michael De Leon, front left, and Greg Bourke, back right, with their two children outside the U.S. Supreme Court



The rejected gravestone design.

ruling in which the Supreme Court said states must allow gays and lesbians to marry and that states much recognize those marriages.

So to them, the high court building -- "one of the great icons of American democracy," Bourke said -- seemed like a

ness Ordinance that prohibits discrimination against members of the LGBT community, and the "Archdiocese has every legal right to do what they're doing," Bourke said. "We have no protection whatsoever in a situation like this."

They hope to set up a meeting with Archdiocese officials to try to reach a compromise but haven't taken action yet. They had submitted their design in October, after consulting with an Archdiocese employee, not realizing that it would be subject to review by a higher authority. They thought it was "like picking out countertops," Bourke said.

But "bells and whistles went off" when months went by before they received a response, in the form of the March 30 letter. The "appropriateness" of any inscription or symbol is determined by the cemeteries' director in consultation with the "proper Church authority," the letter said.

De Leon said he and Bourke are "planners and look ahead" and wanted to spare their two children any extra expense and trouble later. Bourke's parents already have their memorial headstones in place three rows from where he and De Leon bought a plot last year, Bourke said.

"We just want to show support for

Greg and Michael in their efforts," Chris Hartman, the Fairness Campaign's executive director, said in an interview. Hartman said they all have been involved in an "ongoing public battle" for years with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz over the issues of LGBT rights, and he cited the decision not to allow Greg Bourke to continue to be a Boy Scout leader because he is openly gay as another example.

Bourke and De Leon "might have a more receptive audience with the Vatican than with the Archdiocese."

Bourke and De Leon are longtime members of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in St. Matthews and they were named 2015 "Persons of the Year" by the *National Catholic Reporter*, an independent weekly newspaper based in Kansas City, Mo. De Leon works in information technology at General Electric, and Bourke is a consultant for Humana.

Bourke said the treatment they received with regard to the headstone design is not consistent with "the moderating tone we Catholics have enjoyed lately from Pope Francis." At the press conference, he said it felt like "deliberate retaliation against my family" and asked, "Is that what Jesus would do?" †

Pope calls for conscientious objection to officiating at same-sex ceremonies

By Francis DeBernardo

*Bondings 2.0*NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
May 21, 2016

For the first time since Italy's Parliament approved a civil unions bill for lesbian and gay couples two weeks ago, Pope Francis has commented about the issue of legally recognizing same-sex relationships.

In an interview with *La Croix*, a French newspaper, Pope Francis said that Catholic public officials should be excused from officiating at same-gender union ceremonies if they have a conscientious objection to such relationships. The following is an English version of the interview on the newspaper's website:

"In a secular setting, how should Catholics defend their concerns on societal issues such as euthanasia or same-sex marriage?"

"Pope Francis: It is up to Parliament to discuss, argue, explain, reason [these issues]. That is how a society grows.

"However, once a law has been adopted, the state must also respect [people's] consciences. The right to conscientious objection must be recognized within each legal structure because it is a human right. Including for a government official, who is a human person. The state must also take criticism into account. That would be a genuine form of laicity.

"You cannot sweep aside the arguments of Catholics by simply telling them that they 'speak like a priest.' No, they base themselves on the kind of Christian thinking that France has so remarkably developed." [boldface emphasis is in the original text]

Pope Francis made similar remarks about the conscience decisions of government officials on his plane ride home from his U.S. visit in September 2015. The issue also came up during the same visit when the brouhaha developed over his unplanned and secretly orchestrated meeting with Kim Davis, the Kentucky clerk who refuses to perform same-sex marriages.

Francis' exhortation on conscience would ring truer if he would call on church officials to respect the consciences of LGBT people who have discovered that living in a committed same-gender relationship or transitioning to their true gender is the most authentic way to follow the call of God. They, too, should be welcomed into the Christian community, which unlike employment, is not simply an economic form of association.

News that Pope Francis will visit Ireland in 2018 for the World Meeting of Families, provides him a golden opportunity to meet with recently married Catholic gay and lesbian couples to learn of their experiences and of the formation of their own consciences. Such an encounter would surely prove educational for the pontiff, who has shown an un-pope-like curiosity to learn more about the real lives of people.

Such an education would also serve well for Cardinal Antonio Bagnasco, the president of the Italian bishops conference, who recently said that the civil unions bill equates gay and lesbian relationships with marriage. What the cardinal fails to recognize is that there is a great difference between the Italian civil unions law and marriage law, and that LGBT advocates, while glad for the civil unions bill, also lamented the fact that such unions were not on a par with marriage. Robert Mickens, a seasoned Vatican observer in Rome, noted in a *Commonweal* dispatch:

"... [A]ctivists that have been fighting for civil unions, and especially those who continue to call for gay marriage, say the new law is far from satisfactory. They are upset that Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi watered down the

original bill to appease conservative members of parliament who closely follow the bishops' directives.

"One of their biggest complaints is that a so-called 'stepchild adoption' clause, which would have allowed people in civil unions to adopt the biological child of their partner, is not in the new law. Family court judges will decide on a case-by-case basis."

Francis' call to conscience would also sound truer if he would begin a more honest and open conversation about sexuality in the Church. Mickens writes:

"The Italian hierarchy, which presides over a Church where every honest person knows a large percentage of the clergy are homosexually-oriented men, has done everything to perpetuate their country's longstanding hypocrisy regarding gay people.

"Thanks to their efforts, especially to enforce deeply conservative views on family life in Italian society, many people in this country have been trapped into leading double lives. They get married, have children and some—some—secretly find sexual intimacy or a relationship with other people of their same sex. Or they join the 'celibate' priesthood and do the same.

"Italy's new law has opened the door to a more honest conversation in a changing society. And hopefully it marks the beginning of the end of one of the great Italian hypocrisies."

Yes, far from being the end of civilization, the marriage equality debates and laws have been an opportunity for people to live more authentically and freely. †

New Ways Ministry's blog

Bondings 2.0*The best way to keep up on the latest Catholic LGBT news and opinions!**Updated daily!**Share your ideas with others!***NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com**



PARISHES

Alabama

Decatur: Annunciation of the Lord
Montgomery: St. Bede

Arizona

Chandler: St. Andrew
Glendale: St. Thomas More
Mesa: St. Bridget
Phoenix: St. Matthew
Scottsdale: St. Patrick
Tucson: St. Cyril of Alexandria,
Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Pius X,
Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Odilia

California

Berkeley: Holy Spirit Parish
Burney: St. Francis of Assisi
Carlsbad: St. Patrick
Claremont: Our Lady of Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Encino: Our Lady of Grace
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph-Mission San Jose
Goleta: St. Mark Univ. Parish
Hawthorne: St. Joseph (Spanish)
Hayward: All Saints
LaPuente: St. Martha
Lemon Grove: St. John of the Cross
Long Beach: St. Matthew
Los Angeles: Blessed Sacrament,
Christ the King, Mother of Good
Counsel, St. Camillus Center-LA
USC Medical Center (Spanish),
St. Agatha, St. Paul the Apostle
North Hollywood: St. Jane Frances de
Chantal, St. Patrick
Oakland: Our Lady of Lourdes
Oceanside: St. Thomas More
Orange: Holy Family Cathedral
Pasadena: Assumption of the B.V.M.
Ross: St. Anselm
Sacramento: St. Francis of Assisi
San Carlos: St. Charles
San Diego: Ascension, St. Jude Shrine
San Francisco: Most Holy Redeemer,
Old St. Mary Cathedral, St. Agnes,
St. Dominic
San Jose: St. Julie Billiart,
St. Martin of Tours (Emmaus
Community)
San Luis Obispo: Mission San Luis
San Raphael: Church of San Raphael &
Mission San Raphael Arcangel
Santa Barbara: OL of Guadalupe
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
Simi Valley: St. Rose of Lima
Spring Valley: Santa Sophia
Stanford: Catholic Community at Stan-
ford University
South Pasadena: Holy Family
Valinda: St. Martha
Vernon: Holy Angels Catholic Church
of the Deaf
Walnut Creek: St. John Vianney
West Hollywood: St. Ambrose,
St. Victor
Whittier: St. Mary of the Assumption

Colorado

Arvada: Spirit of Christ
Avon: St. Edward
Colorado Springs: Sacred Heart
Denver: St. Dominic, Christ the King,
Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Lafayette: Immaculate Conception
Littleton: Light of the World,
St. Frances Cabrini

Connecticut

Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony

Delaware

North Wilmington: Holy Child
Wilmington: St. Joseph

Gay-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities

Below is a list of known gay-friendly Catholic parishes and intentional Eucharistic communities. Thank you for helping us add to this growing list! If you are aware of a parish or community that is welcomes LGBT Catholics, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in LGBT community events, or involvement with parents. Parishes are listed first and intentional Eucharistic communities follow. For links to many of these parishes' websites, go to www.NewWaysMinistry.org

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Matthew Cathedral

Florida

Daytona Beach: Our Lady of Lourdes
Flagler Beach: Santa Maria del Mar
Ft. Lauderdale: St. Anthony,
St. Maurice
Kissimmee: Holy Redeemer
St. Petersburg: Holy Cross
Tampa: Sacred Heart, Christ the King

Georgia

Atlanta: Shrine of the Immaculate
Conception

Idaho

Boise: St. Mary

Illinois

Berwyn: St. Mary of the Celle
Chicago: Immaculate Conception,
St. Clement, St. Gertrude,
St. Gregory, St. Peter, St. Sylvester,
St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thomas the
Apostle, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our
Lady of Mt. Carmel,
Old St. Patrick
Clarendon Hills: Notre Dame
Country Club Hills: St. Emeric
Evanston: St. Nicholas
Inverness: Holy Family
Johnston City: St. Paul
Morton Grove: St. Martha
Oak Park: Ascension, St. Catherine of
Sienna-St. Lucy
Schaumburg: St. Marcelline

Indiana

Indianapolis: St. Thomas Aquinas

Iowa

Coralville: St. Thomas More

Kentucky

Louisville: Epiphany, Cathedral of the
Assumption, St. William

Louisiana

New Orleans: St. Augustine

Maine

Portland: Sacred Heart-St. Dominic
Saco: Most Holy Trinity

Maryland

Baltimore: Corpus Christi,
St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius,
St. Matthew,
St. Vincent dePaul
Columbia: St. John the Evangelist
Gaithersburg: St. Rose of Lima
Hagerstown: St. Ann
Severn: St. Bernadette

Massachusetts

Boston: Paulist Center, St. Anthony
Shrine, St. Cecilia
East Longmeadow: St. Michael
Newton: St. Ignatius
Provincetown: St. Peter
Sharon: Our Lady of Sorrows
Springfield: Sacred Heart

Michigan

Ann Arbor: St. Mary Student Parish
Detroit: St. Leo, Christ the King, Gesu
Parish
St. Ignace: St. Ignatius Loyola
Westland: Ss. Simon and Jude

Minnesota

Minneapolis: St. Frances Cabrini,
St. Joan of Arc

Missouri

Kansas City: Guardian Angels,
St. James
St. Joseph: St. Francis Xavier
St. Louis: St. Cronan, St. Margaret of
Scotland, St. Pius V

Montana

Billings: Holy Rosary, St. Pius X

Nebraska

Omaha: Holy Family, Sacred Heart

Nevada

Las Vegas: Christ the King,
Guardian Angel Cathedral

New Hampshire

Merrimack: St. John Neumann
Pelham: St. Patrick

New Jersey

Keyport: St. Joseph
Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of
Assisi
Maplewood: St. Joseph
South Plainfield: Sacred Heart
Tinton Falls: St. Anselm

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family,
Shrine of St. Bernadette
Espanola: Sacred Heart of Jesus

New York

Albany: St. Vincent DePaul
Baldwinsville: St. Augustine
Bellmore: St. Barnabas the Apostle
Bellport: Mary Immaculate
Binghamton: St. Francis of Assisi
Brooklyn: St. Andrew the Apostle,
St. Boniface, St. Athanasius,
St. Augustine, Immac.Heart of Mary
Deer Park: Ss. Cyril and Methodius
East Islip: St. Mary
Elmira: St. Mary
Fairport: Church of the Assumption
Henrietta: Good Shepherd
Manhattan: Holy Name of Jesus,
St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul the
Apostle, Church of the Ascension,
St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis de
Sales
Pittsford: Church of Transfiguration
Rochester: Blessed Sacrament,
St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica
Syracuse: St. Lucy, All Saints
Utica: Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
Historic Old St. John's
Wading River: St. John the Baptist
Wantaugh: St. Frances de Chantal
Westbury: St. Brigid

North Carolina

Charlotte: St. Peter
Durham: Immaculate Conception
Fayetteville: St. Patrick
Raleigh: St. Francis of Assisi

Ohio

Akron: St. Bernard
Cincinnati: St. George-St. Monica,
St. Robert Bellarmine
Cleveland: Blessed Trinity,
St. Malachi, St. Martha
Columbus: St. Thomas More
Newman Center
Fairlawn: St. Hilary
Mentor: St. John Vianney
University Heights: Church of Gesu
Westlake: St. Ladislav
Wooster: St. Mary of the Immaculate
Conception

Oregon

Beaverton: Mission of the Atonement
Portland: St. Andrew, St. Francis of
Assisi, St. Phillip Neri, Down-
town Chapel (St. Vincent de Paul)

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia: Old St. Joseph,
Old St. Mary, St. John the
Evangelist, St. Vincent DePaul

Rhode Island

Providence: St. Francis Chapel,
St. Mary's
Wickford: St. Bernard

Tennessee

Memphis: Cathedral of the
Immaculate Conception

Texas

Colleyville: Good Shepherd
Dallas: Holy Trinity
El Paso: All Saints
Houston: St. Anne

Virginia

Arlington: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Richmond: Cathedral of the Sacred
Heart, Sacred Heart Parish
Roanoke: St. Gerard
Triangle: St. Francis
Virginia Beach: St. Nicholas

Washington

Seattle: Christ Our Hope, St. Benedict,
St. Joseph, Prince of Peace
Newman Center
Tacoma: St. Leo

Wisconsin

Madison: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: Good Shepherd,
Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe

Canada

Montreal: Holy Cross
Ottawa: St. Joseph
Toronto: Our Lady of Lourdes

England

London: Church of the Immaculate
Conception (Mayfair)

INTENTIONAL EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES

Arizona

Scottsdale: Franciscan Renewal
Center

California

Orange: Koinonia
Pleasanton: Catholic Community of
Pleasanton

Colorado

Colorado Springs: Benet Hill Monastery

District of Columbia

Communitas

Florida

Tampa: Franciscan Center

Maryland

Catonsville: Living Water Inclusive
Catholic Community
Greenbelt: Greenbelt Catholic
Community

Michigan

Grand Rapids: Marywood
Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholics

Minnesota

Minneapolis: Spirit of St. Stephen's
Catholic Community

Oregon

Portland: Journey and Koinonia
Catholic Community

Virginia

Arlington: NOVA Catholic Community

Washington

Olympia: Holy Wisdom Inclusive
Catholic Community

Wisconsin

Madison: Holy Wisdom Monastery

To add your faith community to our list, please contact New Ways Ministry at info@newwaysministry.org or call 301-277-5674.

LGBT pilgrimage to 'Ireland: Land of Rainbows and Wedding Bells'

By Bob Shine and Francis DeBernardo
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
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New Ways Ministry's recent pilgrimage to Ireland brought showers of blessings to the two dozen participants who made the trip. One of the biggest blessings was the opportunity to learn firsthand about LGBT ministry, welcome, and advocacy in Ireland at this time.

Sister Jeannine Gramick, New Ways Ministry's Co-Founder, was the planner and spiritual leader of this journey, entitled "Ireland: Land of Rainbows and Wedding Bells." Ireland was selected not only for its strong Catholic identity, but because in 2015 it became the first nation in the world to enact marriage equality by popular vote. As the pilgrims learned from their visits and meetings with church leaders and LGBT advocates, the Catholic movement for LGBT equality is strong in the Emerald Isle.

Throughout the trip, the pilgrims received warm Irish welcomes from several communities of religious men and women, while also visiting sites important to the LGBT community.

The day we arrived, the Redemptorists welcomed us for Mass and a "cuppa" tea, scones, and soup at their Esker Monastery outside the town of Athenry. Fr. Tony Flannery, a leader in Ireland's church reform movement, was on hand with his brother Redemptorists to introduce us to the many ways his community is building a more inclusive church. Fr. Brendan O'Rourke presided at Eucharistic liturgy for the group.

We encountered the Redemptorists three more times on our trip. We celebrated Mass at their parish church in Cherry Orchard, a low-income neighborhood of Dublin. Fr. Adrian Egan discussed contemporary social problems facing this low-income area before offering a prayer that we "keep in mind anyone who, for any reason, feels on the edges and excluded."

Redemptorist Father John J. Ó Riordáin guided the pilgrims prayerfully through the historic site of Glendalough, the monastery founded by St. Kevin in the sixth century. As we walked from place to place around the grounds, Fr. Ó Riordáin offered not only historical background, but also some Celtic prayers and poems appropriate to the various settings. Our trip there ended with an outdoor Mass by the side of one of Glendalough's stunning lakes.

In Belfast, we visited the beautiful Clonard Monastery with a sanctuary dominated by an image of Jesus with outstretched arms—a symbol that all are welcome to the parish. Fr. Noel Kehoe, the pastor, told us in greeting.

While at Clonard, which also is the city's main center for reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant citizens, the pilgrims were educated about these peace efforts by Pádraig Ó Tuama, an openly gay Catholic man. He said the Redemptorist monastery is known well for being a safe space to many, including LGBT people, because here, "You know you didn't have to lessen your dignity." Ó Tuama is

also the leader of the Corymeela Community, an Irish spirituality center, which includes LGBT people and sponsors a retreat for pastoral ministers involved in LGBT ministry.

In Dublin, we visited the home of one of that city's most well-known Catholic daughters: Venerable Mother Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy. At the Mercy International Center on Baggot Street, we were warmly welcomed by Sister Mary Kay Dobrovlny, a U.S. sister who provided us with information and inspiration about Mercy's origins. At Mass in the Center's chapel, one of our pilgrims, Susanne Cassidy, the Catholic mother of two gay sons and a Mercy Associate, shared the impact that Mother McAuley's witness had on her own life and LGBT ministry. We adjourned, as always, for a comfortable cup of tea afterwards.

In Kildare, the pilgrims visited Solas Bhríde (Light of Brigid), a spirituality center and hermitage opened just last year. The three Brigidine Sisters—Sr. Mary Minehan, Sr. Phil O'Shea, and Sr. Rita Minehan—who oversee the ecologically-built center said the purpose of their ministry is to "unfold the legacy of St. Brigid and its relevance for our time." St. Brigid, abbess of a double monastery (one part for men and one part for women) in Kildare, is a great inspiration to the Irish people for taking care of the environment.

At the spirituality center, we visited the garden to see a new statue of St. Brigid by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz. The statue was commissioned by Fr. Dennis O'Neill, a Chicago priest who is pastor of St. Martha parish, Morton Grove, which is an LGBT-friendly parish.

At the Whitefriars Street Church, a Carmelite parish in Dublin, the pilgrims gathered to pray at the shrine of St. Valentine, an altar which holds a small casket containing the relics of this famous saint who is so connected with love and relationships. Sister Jeannine offered a reflective reading of St. Paul's famous discourse on love, found in 1 Corinthians 13, while we prayed for all our relationships—past, present, future.

On the same day, we gathered for a photo, not prayer, at the statue of Dublin's famous author, Oscar Wilde, the beautiful Merrion Square park. Wilde was jailed for being a gay man and for writing of "the love that dare not speak its name," about which he said during his trial, "It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection."

One evening, six members of Gay Catholic Voice Ireland (GCVI) joined the U.S. pilgrims for a conversation about the reality of being an LGBT Catholic in Ireland. GCVI is a group convened "to en-



Pilgrims gathered among the monastic ruins at Glendalough.

sure that the voice of LGBT Catholics is heard in the debate on homosexuality both inside and outside the Catholic Church." It had high visibility in the debate preceding Ireland's 2015 referendum on marriage equality, about which members spoke extensively during the meeting with pilgrims.

GCVI members each told their personal stories of coming to terms with their sexual orientations. While some were "out" to all people, others experienced the need to be more self-protective.

Beyond achieving marriage equality's passage, the referendum provoked a national conversation on LGBT equality, said GCVI members. Discussing the referendum gave voice to positive attitudes that had been unspoken for years in Ireland.

The referendum brought to light that a social transformation had already taken place in the country. Explaining what the campaign was like, one GCVI member said: "[I asked people,] Please will you vote to make me equal? It felt completely crazy because why should we have to ask. But you shouldn't underestimate the transformational effect it had. Suddenly, lots and lots and lots of conversations were being had."

Families could finally be open about LGBT members, and parents could acknowledge gay children when congratulating them on the referendum's success.

One GCVI member said, in this way, "marriages are prophetic happenings facilitating conversations." This was true for even the oldest sectors of the church, too. Another GCVI member said:

"When I think of church, I think of my 93-year-old dad, a daily communicant, who called my 24-year-old nephew prehistoric because the young lad opposed marriage equality."

GCVI members said the referendum also highlighted the power of personal storytelling. All spoke about knocking on their neighbors' doors and making phone calls, telling their stories and listening to stories from their friends. There was even one national campaign which asked youth to call their grandparents and urge them to vote "yes." Appeals were made to Ireland's radically egalitarian sentiments, a product of the 1916 Rising and Republican movement for national independence, which was quite inclusive for its time, as the Republic of Ireland came to be.

All unanimously agreed that one of the most touching parts of the referendum was learning about the masses of Irish emigres returning to their home just to vote for marriage equality. In the end, 62% of Irish voters approved marriage equality, with all but a single county being supportive (and the difference in that county was less than 1,000 votes).

On the last day of their pilgrimage, the U.S. travelers joined the All Are Welcome Mass community at the Carmelite

Priory in Dublin. This monthly Mass and social provides a particular welcome to LGBT people, family members, and friends. It was established and is still supported by the city's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin. While Martin opposed marriage equality in last year's referendum, his conciliatory manner during the debate and afterwards, as well as his frequent affirmations of LGBT people, helped maintain a relationship with the LGBT community.

After a joyful Mass celebrated by a Jesuit priest, at an altar decorated with a rainbow flag, the pilgrims met with the Mass regulars for tea and conversation. We heard from four Irish parents who have gay or lesbian children. Each movingly told the story of their child's coming out and spoke about their relationship to the Catholic Church.

One parent said Ireland's church has undergone a paradigmatic cultural shift away from its authoritarian past. He said that forty years ago, if you asked an Irish Catholic what they thought about an issue, they would likely begin, "The Church says. . ." and that was the end of the discussion. This ecclesial influence is no longer the case.

Members of All Are Welcome also spoke about their experiences of working for the passage of the marriage referendum. Parents were moved by how supportive their family members and Catholics generally turned out to be. One ally in the group spoke about campaigning with a "Catholics for Marriage Equality" button on his lapel, and the simple power that simple slogan had in shaping conversations. He explained that he received those buttons from Sr. Jeannine Gramick, who last year gave them the remaining buttons which were left over from the U.S. state campaigns for marriage equality.

One member said that when an anti-marriage equality letter was read at Masses, his 92-year-old father refuted the position by saying, "We know which way we're voting." The man's grandchildren, after having same-gender marriage explained to them, were completely nonchalant about it.

Amid this conversation, representatives from the reform group We Are Church Ireland presented Sr. Jeannine Gramick with a painting of an inclusive Last Supper to honor her efforts seeking LGBT equality in the church.

But the work for equality and inclusion in Ireland is far from over, the speakers agreed. While the referendum campaign brought about great advances, cultural homophobia in society, and especially in certain church institutions, lingers.

With the U.S. and Ireland achieving national marriage equality within just about one month of each other, the pilgrims and the Irish hosts agreed that our communities have much in common. Sharing struggles and victories helped to strengthen those common bonds across our great geographical distance.

To view more photos from the pilgrimage, visit New Ways Ministry's page on Facebook.

To receive information about future pilgrimages, please send an email to info@NewWaysMinistry.org or phone 301-277-5674. †



Statue of St. Brigid of Kildare, Solas Bhríde, Kildare



Monastic ruins at Clonmacnoise