

BONDINGS

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A nun's secret ministry brings hope to the transgender community

By Nathan Schneider
Al Jazeera America
March 2, 2014

The following are excerpts. To read the entire article, go *Al Jazeera America* using this link: tinyurl.com/lw2tv1q.

Maureen Osborne's mind started to wander. This was 2001, at a conference of the organization now called the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which took place that year in Galveston, Texas. Several hundred people filled the room. Another panel, another question-and-answer period. Osborne is a Philadelphia-based psychologist, and at the time more and more of her therapy practice was focusing on patients struggling with gender identity. There was a lot to take in at these panels, not all of it useful. And then something caught her attention.

"I heard, without looking or seeing, a woman's voice," she remembers. "She was publicly apologizing to all the transgender people in the world for the damage done to them by the Catholic Church." Though not trans, Osborne had grown up Catholic and felt damaged by the church herself.

Osborne's head turned. At the microphone where people were asking questions, there was a small woman with a determined posture, prominent cheekbones and close-cropped dark hair beginning to gray. Her intonation betrayed a drawl. She went on to say that she was a nun, and had begun ministering in the trans community and had come to the

conference to learn how to be better at it. There was a standing ovation.

"I was speechless," Osborne says.

Call this nun Sister Monica, though that's not her real name. At the request of her congregation, her name can't be used here. Nor can the congregation be named; U.S. women's congregations have been under fresh scrutiny from the Vatican in recent years, in part because of the allegedly "radical feminist themes" in their theology. But more than any theology, it was encountering the lives of transgender people that turned this sister into a radical. . . .

Monica has welcomed trans people into her home for retreats, and helped them to pray, and taken them out to dinner dressed, for the first time in public, according to the gender they know themselves to be. She often stays in touch with them for years on end. "Her basic message," Osborne says, "is to let them know that they are loved by God and that they are meant to embody exactly who they are." . . .

Monica has healed souls and saved lives. Yet the leadership of the Catholic Church she serves acts as if her ministry doesn't exist. When she began working with the trans community in the late 1990s, Monica could confidentially say, when asked about the official



Ms. Wright, a former star athlete and Vietnam War fighter pilot, was one of the first people in the transgender community to work with Sister Monica. Photo: *William Widmer for Al Jazeera America*

Catholic position, "Nothing, yet." She counted that as a blessing. If the church did declare something, given its track record with lesbian and gay issues, it was not likely to make transgender lives any easier.

Then, one morning in January 2003, Monica turned on her computer to find frenetic emails appearing from trans Catholics she knew around the country. They linked to an article on the *Catholic News Service* website: "Vatican Says Sex Change Operation Does Not Change

a Person's Gender." Her friends begged to know what this meant for them.

The article told of a document that had been produced in 2000 and sent "sub secretum" — secretly — to church leaders around the world about how to handle cases of sexual transition. The document reportedly counsels that the sex stated on baptismal records should not be changed for trans people, whether there is surgery involved or not. Transsexuals cannot validly enter into marriage. On the basis of mental instability, they shouldn't be considered for religious orders. Their condition is to be treated as a species of psychosis, above all; the document did nevertheless allow that reassignment surgery might be morally licit if needed to treat an especially far-gone patient. . . .

A harder blow to the Catholic trans community came a few years later, just before Christmas in 2008. In the midst of a holiday reflection on the highlights of his year and the nature of the Holy Spirit, Pope Benedict denounced what he called the "manipulation" of human sexuality. He likened those who contradict a strict gender binary to those who burn down rain forests. Then in 2012, again at Christmas, Benedict took up the subject once more. "People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity," he said. Media headlines announced another attack on the trans community — even if it's trans people who struggle more than anyone to live according to what they take as their given nature. Again Benedict compared his perception of the "new philosophy of sexuality" with environmental destruction.

At the time, Mateo Williamson had just arrived in Florida to undergo gender-confirming surgery. He is a college student (double-majoring in Spanish interpretation and microbiology) who transitioned two years ago, and he met Monica soon after that. Williamson grew up in a strenuously Catholic family, an altar server since he was 8. He loves his faith and wants to keep loving it, though his parents and priests haven't always made that easy. They taught him to feel that wanting to pick up a football was not just unladylike, but a grave sin. The news of Benedict's speech brought childhood horrors flooding back. . . .

James Whitehead is a theologian who teaches at Loyola University in Chicago. In recent years he and his wife, Evelyn, a

(Continued on page 6)

Tweet the Pope to save LGBT people around the world!

By Bob Shine

Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
January 23, 2014

A world of humanity is mobilizing around the #PopeSpeakOut Twitter campaign to persuade Pope Francis to speak out against the growing tide of anti-LGBT laws around the globe. The campaign is launching today! *Bondings 2.0* encourages all of its readers who use Twitter to participate.

The campaign organizers are New Ways Ministry, The Fellowship Global, and a growing number of co-sponsors. It offers a positive action that people can take to respond to the dangerous new wave of anti-LGBT laws and policies in countries such as Nigeria, Russia, Uganda, India, and Jamaica.

"By sending tweets to the pope, we want to move him to speak out against these laws, many of which have been supported by Catholic leaders and people in these nations," said Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry. "We were amazed and gratified when Pope Francis said 'Who am I to judge.' Now we need a powerful, faith-based statement from Pope Francis to support the freedom and lives of our LGBT sisters and brothers."

Pastor Joseph Tolton, Executive Director of The Fellowship Global said, "People of faith and hope from all traditions will tweet the Pope to urge him to make a pronouncement to the world to 'Do no harm!' The rising tide of draconian

laws to criminalize LGBT people and their supporters allow vigilantes to rape, beat and kill people who are suspected of being LGBT with impunity. This must stop!"

It will be incumbent on all of us, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, to help spread the word about the campaign so that the pontiff hears from people from all over. We are heartened by the fact that the papal nuncio in Uganda was pre-disposed to reject that nation's anti-gay bill and that Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the archbishop of Mumbai who is one of the pope's closest advisors, has spoken out strongly against India's anti-LGBT action. These signs indicate that there is a good chance the pope will, with the right encouragement, speak out, too.

The campaign has established a website, NoMoreTriangleNations.com, as a resource and headquarters for the campaign. "Triangle Nations" is a reference to the pink triangle assigned to gay men in Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust.

New Ways Ministry is a 37-year old national Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for LGBT people and the wider church community and civil society.

The Fellowship Global is a partnership with circles of Christian clergy and LGBTI people in the African Diaspora to express a faith perspective supporting the social, legal, and moral inclusion of all people regardless of sexual orienta-

tion or gender identity.

Here are some sample tweets that can be used:

- *First Russia, then Uganda, last week Nigeria, now ask @pontifex to say "No More Triangle Nations!" <http://ow.ly/sSuiY> #PopeSpeakOut
- *Ask @pontifex to call on Christians to love LGBTQ individuals, not legislate their extinction. #nomoretrianglenations
- *.@Pontifex Urge heads of state to respect human dignity. NO MORE TRIANGLE NATIONS! #PopeSpeakOut
- *In the wake of anti-gay legislative measures made in #Nigeria & #Uganda, we urge @pontifex to speak out against such unchristian prejudice
- *As Catholics, we are saddened by our fellow Christians who attack the global #LGBT community. We will speak out, join us and share.
- *.@Pontifex As a voice for the voiceless please publicly condemn anti-gay laws! #PopeSpeakOut
- *.@Pontifex Please condemn Uganda's anti-gay bill as you defend human rights for all! #PopeSpeakOut
- *.@Pontifex Please urge Nigeria to stop arresting gay and trans people! Please save lives! #PopeSpeakOut
- *.@Pontifex Stop the unjust legal discrimination of gay/lesbian/trans people. Speak out against anti-gay laws around the world #PopeSpeakOut
- *.@Pontifex Call Christians around the world to love gay people not legislate their extinction #PopeSpeakOut +

BONDINGS

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

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

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

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Signs of openness on LGBT and marriage issues from two European church leaders

By Francis DeBernardo

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com

February 11, 2014

Two European prelates have made statements recently which point, once again, toward a more open discussion of LGBT and marriage issues, topics which will be discussed at October's Synod on Marriage and the Family.

In Ireland, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin acknowledged that some people in the church have used doctrine "in a homophobic way." The *Irish Times* reported that the archbishop made these comments in a discussion about the upcoming national referendum in Ireland about the legalization of same-gender marriage:

"Discussions have to be carried out in a 'mature' way so that people can freely express their views, while at the same time being respectful and not causing offence, he said. He said that in general he believed it was the person who was offended who defined what being offended is.

"Anyone who grew up in Ireland would have told jokes that were pointed at the gay community; at Travellers [gypsies]; it is part of the culture we grew up in, but we have to grow out of it," he said. He said church teaching was that marriage was between a man and a woman, exclusively, but that this approach did not exclude gay people from celebrating their union by a different means."

The *Independent* quotes Martin as saying further:

"God never created anybody that he doesn't love."...

"Speaking to the *Irish Independent*, the senior cleric said this meant that 'anybody who doesn't show love towards gay and lesbian people is insulting God. They are not just homophobic if they do that - they are actually Godophobic because God loves every one of those people'..."

"He added: 'We all belong to one another and there is no way we can build up a society in which people are excluded or insulted. We have to learn a new way in Ireland to live with our differences and for all of us to live with respect for one another.'"

According to *RTE*, a leader of Ireland's Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) was disappointed that the archbishop did not address pressing issues facing the LGBT community there, but affirmed his statements about the damage that cultural attitudes can cause:

"GLEN's Brian Sheehan described it [the archbishop's comment] as 'a missed opportunity' to tackle the role of

the church and church teachings in creating what it said were 'some of the difficult realities for lesbian and gay people in Ireland today.'

"However, he welcomed Dr Martin's acknowledgement of the impact that a culture, which still has homophobia as part of it, has on those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender."

Meanwhile, Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna made some surprising statements about the hierarchy's

views on marriage, at the time of the Austrian bishops' ad limina with Pope Francis. The *National Catholic Reporter* stated:

"In several interviews shortly before leaving Vienna, Schonborn advocated a more rational, down-to-earth approach toward family relationships. 'For the most part, the church approaches the [family] issue unhistorically,' he said. 'People have always lived together in various ways. And today, we in the church tacitly live with the fact that the majority of our young people, including those with close ties to the Catholic church, quite naturally live together. The simple fact is that the environment has changed.'

"Schonborn said he regretted that the Austrian bishops haven't dared to speak out openly on necessary church reforms in the past. They haven't had the courage to address the need for greater decentralization

and to strengthen local churches' responsibilities, he said. 'We were far too hesitant. I beat my own breast here. We certainly lacked the courage to speak out openly.'"

Schonborn had high praise for the work and message of Pope Francis, and said he sees the promise of change occurring in the church:

"Schonborn said he was convinced that far-reaching church reform was on the way, 'but it will not be achieved through big words and programs but through people like Pope Francis.' One could already see that the pope has become a role model, Schonborn said. 'The atmosphere is changing and his behavior is making itself felt,' he said. What impressed him most about the pope was his charisma. 'You can feel his inner devotion to God from which his compassion, his warmth and his infectious sense of humor emanates,' the cardinal said."

Though U.S. bishops have not yet embraced the new era of Pope Francis, it seems that some of our European church leaders are, in fact, taking steps toward a new era of less judgement and more discussion and openness of the reality of people's relational lives. ✦



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

Standing Up For Gay Catholics Vigil Counters 'Courage' Training

By Chrystal A. Proxmire

PrideSource.com

April 20, 2014

When Tom Nelson and Linda Karle-Nelson learned that Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Detroit was holding classes on how to minister to potential LGBT members of congregations by asking that they be celibate, the couple knew they had to do something. They rallied supporters through various inclusive faith-based organizations and held a prayer vigil in front of the church. The Nelsons also went inside for the class.

"Friday was for clergy and Saturday was for parents, educators and therapists," Karle-Nelson said. "We had 20-25 people each day doing a peaceful prayer out front. We had very positive signs and a very positive message 'standing on the side of love.'"

Among the LGBT-positive people of faith were people from groups such as Call to Action Michigan, Fortunate Families, Inclusive Justice and Affirmations Faith Alliance. The aim of these groups is to create change from within religious institutions. Their philosophy of inclusion is different than what was taught at the Courage workshops last weekend.

Judy Lewis, coordinator of Affirmations Faith Alliance explained that, "Their teaching is basically 'we can't change the sexual orientation, but we can ask people to tell gay parishioners to be celibate.'"

Nelson nearly lost his gay son to suicide. He has seen first-hand the pain rejection can cause. Now he is very active in support groups for parents and organizations that fight to create change from within. Karle-Nelson, who he met in PFLAG, has a gay son of her own and an equal

passion for standing up for LGBT rights.

"The reason Linda and I go to these things is because it is important. In our work with PFLAG and Fortunate Families we see the consequences first-hand. They are blind to how it affects LGBT people when they judge and discriminate.

"We see broken families. We see kids that are close to suicide and in depression. We see families that are torn apart. A large number of homosexual people do not come out of the closet."

Nelson shared the story about a young man who came out to his mother, and the mother took some time to collect her thoughts. She ultimately chose her faith over the child. "Think of the suffering for both of them. The anguish the mother feels about her son, and the son about his mother. This is the fear instilled by the Catholic doctrine. They refuse to see the consequences," he said.

When the Nelsons went to the class, they found themselves in a group of over 100 people. They listened to the psychologists talk about how homosexuality is not natural, and that it is the result of childhood trauma or bad parenting. "They hold antiquated beliefs," Nelson said. "They had a psychologist there, supposedly he was, but he was ludicrous. The church is living in the dark ages." Such views contradict every major health and psychological organizations' stances on being LGBT.

Karle-Nelson was dubious of the church's good intentions. "We felt like these kinds of classes are because the conservatives and churches are laying the groundwork to strike out against marriage. They know its coming and they want to get the word out through the churches in case it goes to a vote," she said. ✦

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Why Catholics should affirm civil marriage equality

By Francis DeBernardo

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com

April 15, 2014

A new theological argument in favor of Catholic support for civil same-sex marriage is being published today on *Bondings 2.0*. The article is written by Professor Lisa Fullam, an associate professor of moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California.

Entitled "Civil Same-Sex Marriage: A Catholic Affirmation," Prof. Fullam's essay uses the Catholic intellectual tradition to argue that support for civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples is in line with our church's best ideas about marriage, civil society, and church-state relations. It deserves a full and thoughtful reading by all who are concerned with these issues.

The problem with the current Catholic debate on civil marriage, according to Fullam, is that it is both too broad and too narrow. In the article's abstract, she states:

"Too broad: civil same-sex marriage is sometimes described as parallel to same-sex marriage in the Church. Too narrow: some Catholic contributions to the discussion have centered on reproductive capacity, ignoring Catholicism's rich tradition which values marriage beyond procreation." The essay is divided into three sections:

- a discussion of how Catholic thought understands civil law;
- a critique of magisterial statements in the public debate about marriage;
- an enumeration of reasons why Catholics might work for marriage equality.

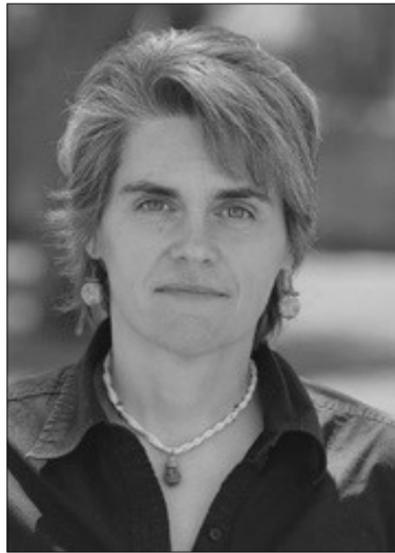
Fullam's essay is both theologically

rich and relevant to contemporary lives. For example, her working definition of the traditional concept of "natural law" begins with a full accounting of human nature, which she defines as:

"...the capacities and potential excellences of the human creature, seen in the light of the best knowledge available to us—biological, psychological, sociological, philosophical (including theological,) spiritual, artistic, historic (including personal experience), etc. Natural law is sometimes

confused with the biological functions of human bodies, but this misunderstanding fails to consider human nature in this fuller sense, that we are rational and creative discerners of meaning, seeking to grow in virtue, aided by the grace of God. To see how the natural law guides us in a given situation is to think deeply about how the question before us is best resolved for the flourishing of ourselves and our societies."

Among the most thought-provoking part of the essay is her critique of magisterial arguments against same-sex marriage, including those from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body." By basing her argument in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, which



Professor Lisa Fullam

acknowledged that marriages served both unitive and procreative ends, Fullam shows how leaders like the U.S. bishops have narrowed down the Council's teaching on marriage:

"According to the bishops, the 'communion of persons' of *Gaudium et Spes* is revealed in the procreative capacity of couples: while the Council taught that non-procreative marriages are still marriages, the

USCCB roots the unitive end of marriage in the procreative possibility of heterosexual marriage."

In the last section, Fullam shows how the magisterium's focus on procreation leads to many inconsistencies in their approach to civil marriage and family life. For example, she notes the situation of adoption:

"Those who raise children not biologically their own are reaching beyond a reproductive imperative to a spiritually resonant act of profound devotion. They make a great contribution to the common good. To base the social value of marriage on the potential for biological procreation would be to ignore the generosity of adoptive parents, and to render their families somehow unnatural or second-class. This would be a fundamental injustice to those families, and

an odd reversal of Christian tradition that emphasizes caring for those in need."

And she ponders what other civil laws might be needed if a view of marriage that has procreation as its definition were to take hold in secular society:

"Unless we are willing to redefine civil marriage in reproductive terms—perhaps automatically divorcing couples who do not reproduce in a reasonable amount of time, for instance, or denying marriage to women of a certain age or those who are sterile by choice or by happenstance—in denying civil marriage to same-sex couples, we discriminate against them precisely because they are homosexual, a form of unjustifiable discrimination that is contrary to Catholic social teaching."

Fullam's essay gives solid, theological underpinnings to the hopes of so many Catholics whose consciences have told them that marriage equality for lesbian and gay couples is a matter of justice. By grounding her thought in both Thomas Aquinas and the Second Vatican Council, Fullam shows just how Catholic an argument for marriage equality can be. Reading through this essay will help all those who often find themselves challenged by Catholic opponents to marriage equality. And it will also give them a deeper understanding and appreciation of our Catholic faith and intellectual tradition. †

Read the full text of
**"Civil Same-Sex Marriage:
 A Catholic Affirmation"**
 by Lisa Fullam

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com

German theologians critique church teachings, propose new sexual understanding

By Joshua McElwee

National Catholic Reporter

January 14, 2014

Two groups of noted German theologians have bluntly outlined how church teaching does not align with the concerns or lifestyles of most European Catholics in response to a Vatican questionnaire on Catholics' attitudes on issues like contraception and same-sex marriage.

Church sexual teachings, say the representatives of the Association of German Moral Theologians and the Conference of German-speaking Pastoral Theologians, come from an "idealized reality" and need a "fundamental, new evaluation."

"It becomes painfully obvious that the Christian moral teaching that limits sexuality to the context of marriage cannot look closely enough at the many forms of sexuality outside of marriage," say the 17 signers of the response, who include some of Germany's most respected Catholic academics.

The theologians also propose that the church adopt a whole new paradigm for its sexual teachings, based not on moral evaluations of individual sex acts but on the fragility of marriage and the vulnerability people experience in their sexuality.

The theologians are responding to a Vatican request last October that bishops worldwide prepare for a 2014 global meeting of Catholic prelates by distributing a questionnaire on family topics "as widely as possible to deaneries and parishes so that input from local sources can be received."

Pope Francis has called the meeting of bishops, known as a synod, for Oct. 5-19, 2014. The meeting will focus on "Pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization."

The questionnaire, sent from the Vatican's office for the Synod of Bishops, asked the individual bishops' conferences

to question their populations on topics that sometimes have sharply divided the church, like the Catholic teaching prohibiting the use of artificial contraception and the possibility of a divorced Catholic to remarry or receive Communion.

The analysis of the questionnaire by the German theologians comes amidst a continuing dispute between the heads of the German bishops' conference, Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, and the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal-designate Gerhard Müller, over how the church should treat divorced Catholics.

Last year, the Germans announced a plan to allow divorced Catholics to make a "responsible decision in conscience" to receive sacraments after consulting their priest. Müller rebuked the plan in October in a 4,600-word article in the Vatican's semi-official newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, saying the "entire sacramental economy" could not be swept aside by an "appeal to mercy" on the matter.

The theologians released to NCR on Sunday an English language translation of their document, originally published in German at the end of last year.

The theologians begin in their document by responding to nearly every question in the questionnaire, outlining how or why official church teaching is sometimes not followed.

In response to a question regarding the church's teachings on the value of the family, for example, the theologians respond that the church's teachings are "practically not accepted" and "often lacks in [their] relation to experience."

Continuing on that subject, the theologians also state that people "are not satisfied when the Church proposes only celibacy and marriage as legitimate

forms of life."

"In the light of the Gospel, the question should be examined whether other forms of life could be relieved of the verdict of sin," they state.

"It becomes painfully obvious that the Christian moral teaching that limits sexuality to the context of marriage cannot look closely enough at the many forms of sexuality outside of marriage..."

In response to questions on whether Catholics who divorce understand the church's process of granting annulments, the theologians state that for most persons who divorce the process is "irrelevant."

"For most persons concerned the declaration of nullity of the marriage is irrelevant because they do not perceive the nullity of their marriage, but rather its failure, and because they hope for a life beyond this failure," they state.

"Thus the Church's canonical practice with regard to marriage does not replace their own responses to situations in which, after the failure of a seriously lived marriage, a perspective of hope is opened up in the shape of a new partner."

Responding to questions on the church's prohibition of artificial contraception, the theologians state that "even the most committed Catholics don't perceive their practice of artificial con-

traception as a conflict with their involvement in the Church which might lead to changes in their sacramental practice."

Moving to their proposal for a new paradigm of evaluating sexual acts, the theologians say the church needs to appreciate the nakedness and vulnerability people experience in their sex lives.

They state that such a paradigm would have at least three dimensions:

A caring dimension to "protect that which is fragile." Marriage, the theologians state, "could then be understood as an institution that protects this fragility, not as an institution of obligation."

An emancipatory dimension that "opens new perspectives when vulnerability has become violation."

"As an emancipatory ethics, Christian sexual ethics has to take the side of those who lose in relationships, the ones who are left and hurt to the core," they state. "It rejects all forms of sexual violence."

A reflexive dimension that "accepts vulnerability and counters the banalization and routinization of sexuality."

"As a reflexive ethics of vulnerability, Christian sexual ethics know the ontological value of vulnerability," they state. "The joy of intimacy can be experienced only when it is possible to be vulnerable without being violated."

Among theologians' signing the German statement are Antonio Autiero, an emeritus professor at the University of Munster; Karl-Wilhelm Merks, an emeritus professor at the University of Tilburg; and Eberhard Schockenhoff, a professor at the University of Freiburg.

The document was translated into English on the theologians' behalf by Stephanie Knauss, an associate professor of religious studies at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. †

New 'religious' group just as deadly as the ones that preceded it

By Joan Chittister
National Catholic Reporter
March 9, 2014

Here's the problem with religion. You never know which religion you're going to meet: the "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" kind or the "Get thee behind me, Satan" kind.

You have to be very careful not to confuse one with the other. Your very life could depend on it.

The golden-rule types take people into the center of the community; the get-out-of-my-sight kind keep people out of it. One kind of religion embraces those who are different from themselves; the other excludes those who are different, the ones who are not like them: blacks if they're white; Jews if they're Christian; women if they're men.

Some people have lived restricted lives and even died at the hands of those who sought to restrict them -- some for trying to eat at white lunch counters or sitting down on buses; some for having ancestors in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago; some for serving soup that was cold or not ironing the shirts right.

The important thing to remember is that it doesn't really matter how the transgressions were defined. What matters is that the arguments in defense of doing it were always the same: God didn't want mixed races, or God wanted women to obey men, or God wanted Jews punished because the Romans crucified Jesus. Go figure.

And we forswore them all and thought we had learned something.

Until, lo and behold, we now discover that we have a new group developing, just as deadly, just as "religious" as the ones

that preceded it. This new group made its first great public move in Arizona last month, just after the country in a great sweeping gesture of goodwill voted against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Most disconcerting, perhaps, is the fact that this group's power grab was as bold and shocking as the exclusionists before them. It was done as if we never learned anything from all our previous attempts to exclude multiple other groups before this -- Native Americans, women, the Irish, Eastern Europeans, anyone who fell outside the pale in the past.

This time, they wanted to discriminate against people in the name of "religious freedom" -- read lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. They wanted public businesses that had been formed under the auspices of state law for the sake of public commerce to have the legal right to refuse to serve patrons who seek the services promised to the public under those same laws.

It was a matter of "religious freedom," they said. A business owner could refuse service to those whose lives offended his/her religious beliefs. It was a personal matter, they argued, a matter of private conscience.

But the argument is not all that simple.

The state that gives businesses tax breaks and public security protections and requires quality control of goods and services for the sake of the public good has the right to require that those services be available to the public. Or forget the tax breaks and the public police and fire protection and the legal

recourse to protection of that business under the law.

After more than a century of segregation, people across the country stood up to refuse another century of shuntings in the name of God.

We have all watched our gay children committing suicide to avoid the bullying and social discrimination that dogged their lives. This time, Arizona said, "Enough of that."

We all see young gay women and men doomed to lives of rejection and ridicule for choices not their own, and people everywhere are beginning to say no to that.

We all remember Matthew Shepard's beaten and bloodied body hanging cruciform on a farm fence in the name of the one whose own crucifixion was due to his defiance of exclusion. And courageous people are now saying "Never again" to that.

So now, the exclusionists whose "religion" defies the very principles of the God who created the others as well as themselves are working again to sequester and silence those who are other than themselves. And all for simply wanting to share the services the rest of us take for granted in the public square.

So if they get the right to do those things, what will the future look like for the rest of us?



Joan Chittister, OSB

Well, if this new kind of exclusion becomes standard, beware of your own social fragility. If your Mormon grocer finds out that you drink, you may never be allowed in the store again. Or your Jewish restaurant owner finds out you eat pork. Or your Muslim gas station owner does not approve of women drivers. Or your Catholic pharmacist figures out that you take birth control pills. (Don't worry, Viagra will apparently be allowed.) Just a thought.

"Oh, nonsense," do I hear you saying? "Those things couldn't possibly happen."

I hope you're right. I just want to remind you that people have been killed because they were Jewish, or black, or women -- or gay. So why not again? Why not here? Why not, if it's all legal?

From where I stand, I would caution against complacency about this issue. After all, there are already other states with movements to write "moral" discrimination into law under the guise of "religious freedom," among them, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah.

After all, the next time, you may be what someone considers "morally offensive to their deeply held religious convictions." Just as were Jews, Catholics and blacks to the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. Or gypsies to the Nazis. Or now, homosexuals in Uganda. All of them by very religious people, they tell us. The other kind. ✦

Gay-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

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



- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Alabama
<i>Mobile:</i> Spring Hill College</p> <p>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</p> <p>Colorado
<i>Denver:</i> Regis University</p> <p>Connecticut
<i>Fairfield:</i> Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University
<i>New Haven:</i> Albertus Magnus College
<i>West Hartford:</i> Saint Joseph College</p> <p>District of Columbia
Georgetown University, Trinity University</p> <p>Florida
<i>Miami Gardens:</i> St. Thomas University
<i>Miami Shores:</i> Barry University</p> <p>Hawaii
<i>Honolulu:</i> Chaminade University</p> <p>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</p> <p>Indiana
<i>Notre Dame:</i> Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, Univ. of Notre Dame</p> | <p>Iowa
<i>Davenport:</i> St. Ambrose University
<i>Dubuque:</i> Loras College</p> <p>Kentucky
<i>Louisville:</i> Spalding University, Bellarmine University</p> <p>Louisiana
<i>New Orleans:</i> Loyola University</p> <p>Maryland
<i>Baltimore:</i> Notre Dame of Maryland University, Loyola University of Maryland</p> <p>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</p> <p>Michigan
<i>Detroit:</i> University of Detroit Mercy
<i>Grand Rapids:</i> Aquinas College</p> <p>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</p> <p>Missouri
<i>Kansas City:</i> Avila University, Rockhurst University
<i>St. Louis:</i> Fontbonne University, St. Louis University</p> | <p>Montana
<i>Helena:</i> Carroll College</p> <p>Nebraska
<i>Omaha:</i> Creighton University</p> <p>New Hampshire
<i>Manchester:</i> St. Anselm College
<i>Nashua:</i> Rivier College</p> <p>New Jersey
<i>Caldwell:</i> Caldwell College
<i>Jersey City:</i> St. Peter's College
<i>South Orange:</i> Seton Hall</p> <p>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> Sienna College
<i>New Rochelle:</i> College of New Rochelle, Iona College
<i>Poughkeepsie:</i> Marist College
<i>Riverdale:</i> College of Mount St. Vincent
<i>Rochester:</i> St. John Fisher College
<i>St. Bonaventure:</i> St. Bonaventure University
<i>Sparkill:</i> St. Thomas Aquinas College
<i>Syracuse:</i> LeMoyne College
<i>Queens:</i> St. John's University</p> <p>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</p> <p>Oregon
<i>Marylhurst:</i> Marylhurst University
<i>Portland:</i> University of Portland</p> | <p>Pennsylvania
<i>Cresson:</i> Mount Aloysius College
<i>Dallas:</i> Misericordia University
<i>Erie:</i> Mercyhurst College
<i>Greensburg:</i> Seton Hill University
<i>Philadelphia:</i> Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's University
<i>Pittsburgh:</i> Carlow University, Duquesne University
<i>Radnor:</i> Cabrini College
<i>Reading:</i> Alvernia University
<i>Scranton:</i> Marywood University
<i>Villanova:</i> Villanova University</p> <p>Rhode Island
<i>Newport:</i> Salve Regina University
<i>Providence:</i> Providence College</p> <p>Texas
<i>Austin:</i> Saint Edward's University
<i>San Antonio:</i> University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University</p> <p>Vermont
<i>Colchester:</i> Saint Michael's College</p> <p>Washington
<i>Lacey:</i> St. Martin's College
<i>Seattle:</i> Seattle University
<i>Spokane:</i> Gonzaga University</p> <p>West Virginia
<i>Wheeling:</i> Wheeling Jesuit University</p> <p>Wisconsin
<i>De Pere:</i> St. Norbert College
<i>Madison:</i> Edgewood College
<i>Milwaukee:</i> Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University</p> <p>Canada
<i>Toronto:</i> Regis College</p> |
|---|--|--|--|

Seattle high school administers 'a vaccine against faith'

By **Jamie Manson**
National Catholic Reporter
January 9, 2014

Pope Francis, we've learned by now, likes to speak in metaphors. Some of his figures of speech have become so compelling that they land on the lips of Catholics around the world within hours after he says them and are quoted with the solemnity of a time-tested aphorism.

Priests should be "shepherds who have the smell of their sheep."

If the church doesn't find "new balance," it "is likely to fall like a house of cards."

The church is a "field hospital after battle."

Priests who receive poor formation become "little monsters."

As captivating as they are to the religious imagination, Francis' metaphors have also proven vulnerable to misinterpretation. Such was the case this weekend after the publication of a report on a speech the pope gave in November to 120 leaders of the Union of Superiors General, the main international umbrella group for communities of religious priests and brothers.

In the course of the address, Francis rightly pointed out the new pastoral challenges that have come with ministering to children whose parents are divorced, divorced and remarried, or in same-sex relationships.

Reflecting on the story of a "very sad little girl" who was troubled because she felt unloved by her mother's fiancée, Francis asked the male religious, "How can we proclaim Christ to a generation that is changing?" Then, answering his own question, he replied, "We must be careful not to administer a vaccine against faith to them."

In Italy, where the Democratic Party just announced that support for the legal recognition of same-sex unions would be part of their electoral platform, Francis' figure of speech was quickly decoded as a sign of papal support for civil unions.

Like so many of Francis' metaphors, this one, and its very progressive interpretation, went viral.

That was until Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro, author of the report on Francis' address, set the record straight.

Arguing that Francis' words are being twisted by Catholics on both the left and the right, Spadaro offered a helpful corrective. "Mercy doesn't mean justifying sin, but tenderly reaching out to the humanity for which Christ went to the Cross," he explained in a front-page essay in Italy's newspaper of record, *Corriere della Sera*.

Spadaro, who is rumored to be the Vatican's next chief spokesman, clarifies a point that has caused much confusion in the general perception of Francis' understanding of same-sex relationships. Francis believes gays and lesbians should be treated with compassion and welcome, but he will continue to insist that same-sex relationships are sinful.

Spadaro's rendering of Francis' beliefs is right on target, and LGBT Catholics and those who support them would be wise to hear Spadaro's words as if they'd come from Francis himself.

Francis upholds the church's doctrine, a teaching he even reaffirmed in his now legendary "Who I am to judge?" statement: While the condition of homosexuality is not in itself a sin, same-sex acts are sinful. This is why he still refuses to sanction civil unions or same-sex marriage.

In his latest metaphorical lesson on how to treat the children of same-sex parents, Francis instructs church ministers to be compassionate and welcoming enough toward gay and lesbian parents that their children will not have an aversion to the faith.

What Francis may come to realize is that, especially when it comes to the new generation's understanding of same-sex relationships, treating same-sex couples with mercy will not be enough to constitute what they see as true justice. Mercy implies that a sin has taken place. But more and more Catholics are realizing that same-sex relationships should not be treated like sin, but rather with full equality.

The overwhelming support of young adult Catholics for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons has been well documented by polls and Pew research studies. But these statistics have come to life in Seattle, where students at Eastside Catholic School are

participating in an ongoing protest over the firing of beloved vice principal and coach Mark Zmuda.

Zmuda is one in a string of lesbian and gay Catholic school employees who have been fired for seeking equal protection under the law through a same-

"What Francis may come to realize is that, especially when it comes to the new generation's understanding of same-sex relationships, treating same-sex couples with mercy will not be enough to constitute what they see as true justice."

sex marriage. Though the school insists that Zmuda resigned, the former vice principal charges that not only was he fired for marrying his partner but, in a great twist of Catholic irony, he was even told by school officials that he could be reinstated if he divorced.

In response, Eastside students have organized a movement against of the school's decision, demanding answers and accountability from Eastside's administration. In a remarkable show of solidarity, students from neighboring Catholic high schools having joined in what has been named the "Keep Mr. Z 2013" crusade.

Last weekend, about 100 students gathered across the street from Seattle's St. James Cathedral, offering a list of challenges to Eastside Catholic administrators and the archdiocese.

"[T]he continued mistreatment of the gay community within the Catholic Church is unbecoming of the Gospel message we are all called to recognize. We will continue to write letters, lobby Church officials, and use any other means at our disposal to respectfully work toward our ultimate goal of changing the discriminatory attitudes regard-

ing homosexuality in the Church," they said in a statement.

When Zeena Rivera, a student on the picket line, was asked what she would say to Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain (yes, the same archbishop overseeing the reform of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious) if he came across the street to speak with protestors, her response was telling:

"I'd ask him: Why are you doing this? Why is this in any way related to what it means to be Catholic? I've been Catholic for the past 17 years. I don't see that this falls in line with Catholic teachings of how to live."

These Catholic high school students are genuinely perplexed over why the institutional church continues to regard same-sex relationships as sinful and unworthy of equal treatment. They are not alone. Ask your average high school teacher or college professor in a Catholic educational setting, and most of them will tell you that the majority of students agree with the kids at Eastside.

Francis' question is a good one: How can the church proclaim Christ to a generation that is changing?

These students are demonstrating clearly that it will take more than treating gay and lesbian Catholics as sinners in need of mercy to ensure that they do not receive a vaccine against their faith.

Some vaccines are administered in a series of three shots. If the archdiocesan and school officials continue to stonewall these students, they will, in effect, be administering the first immunity-building shot.

The second shot will come if the institutional church refuses to hear their voices and listen to their experiences of same-sex couples. (The new generation grew up on the Internet, so the idea of not having one's voice heard is not only unfathomable, it's utterly foreign.)

The final shot against the faith will come if the students are faced with a church that views the same-sex relationships of their beloved family, friends and teachers as sins in need of mercy rather than relationships that deserve dignity, respect and protection equal to heterosexual couples. †

Jesuit priest endorses students 'making a mess' in Seattle

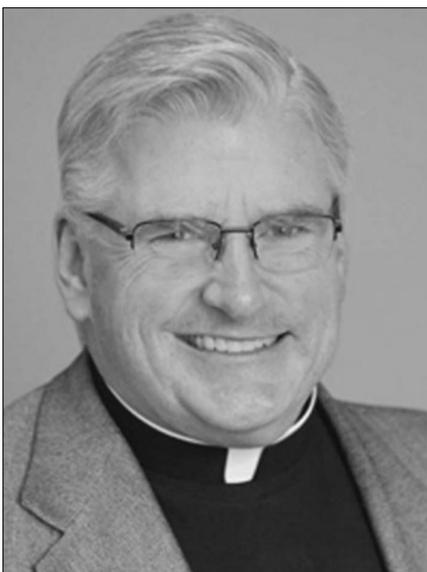
By **Bob Shine**
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
January 18, 2014

#KeepMrZ2013 is a movement of high school students in Seattle organizing for their gay vice principal fired for marrying his husband. Now one more voice is speaking out in support of these youth. Father John Whitney, SJ, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Seattle, spoke about the students from Eastside Catholic High School in his homily earlier this week. He begins by describing the conflict in early Christianity about whether to accept Gentiles as members or only Jews, and he reflects on how this controversy was resolved:

"We must imagine the scene: the Church, still subject to occasional bouts of persecution and yet growing feverishly among both Jews and Gentiles alike, faces a great conflict—how are Gentiles to be admitted into the community?..."

"What is most amazing about this moment in the Church is how the community comes to decide, together, what is to be done. There is debate and disruption, but it is not seen as division; rather, it is the way the Holy Spirit is working within the community. Further, this debate is grounded on human experience, and not on tradition or on the power of office. Rather than beginning with Scripture—with the Torah or the Prophets—the community begins with the experience of the faithful: with the testimony of Peter, Paul,

and Barnabas—none of whom claim special authority in the face of the communal discernment, but all of whom, instead, simply testify to the way in which they have seen the Gentiles touched and filled with the grace of the



John Whitney, SJ

Holy Spirit....Here is diversity without division, complexity without separation, debate and dissent without the need for punishment or condemnation. In listening for the living Spirit of Christ Jesus, the Church begins by listening to the sinners and seekers who are his body in

the world.

"I have thought often of this scene in Acts, over the last year, and especially as I have listened to Pope Francis speak of the need for "uproar" by religious, or call young people to make "a mess" in their dioceses. Like many, I have been refreshed and renewed not by some great doctrinal changes, but by the absence of fear expressed in the words of the Holy Father; by his trust in the workings of the Holy Spirit and his passion for courageous acts of faith—even acts that risk error or end in failure. For Francis, it seems, the timidity of tightly held borders, the safe-harbor of accepted opinion and doctrinal purity risks a greater sin—a greater loss to the Church—than the dangerous paths of love and welcome..."

"In the last few weeks, the students of Eastside Catholic High School, and their companions from other schools in the area, have given us an example of the kind of passionate discernment, motivated by the Gospel, that characterizes an important dimension of Catholic education—and, indeed, should characterize our faith both in and out of school. Regardless of the particulars of this situation (and personnel issues may have complexities I do not know), these students have spoken up as products of Catholic education, as women and men motivated by the Spirit and by their own experience of grace. Though it is a painful time, their teachers and their parents

should be proud of the Gospel spirit that has been planted in these young hearts. Likewise, we in the broader Church should be grateful for the mess these young people bring, and should listen with compassion and openness to the Spirit that moves within them. Their love, their gentleness, their quest to make of the Church "the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people," demands more than the silence of authority; it demands communion and engagement with the Church—i.e., education, direction, dialogue—since their spirit is a sign of the Church and is life-blood for the Church. May we engage, with fearless love, at the side of our younger sisters and brothers; and may we trust in the God whose Church we are all becoming." †

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NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com

A nun's secret ministry brings hope to the transgender community

(Continued from page 1)

psychologist, have devoted themselves to understanding the transgender experience in Catholic terms. They had been studying lesbian and gay issues for years, and as they sought out trans people it struck them how familiar the arc of their lives seemed.

"This is the same old story," he says. "The kind of transition that trans people are talking about is very similar to the journey of faith through darkness and desert that people have been making for thousands of years." He has found, in his teaching and writing, that when he describes trans experience to Catholics in terms of a spiritual journey, a light goes on, and they get it.

Hints and echoes of what we now speak of as gender transition lie scattered throughout Christian tradition. An Ethiopian eunuch is the first person baptized in the Book of Acts, and the third-century theologian Origen castrated himself after reading Jesus' remark about those "who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Stories of ancient ascetics recall women "surpassing" their gender through spiritual advancement, or by simply disguising themselves as men. In the Middle Ages, St. Joan of Arc was executed for refusing to stop cross-dressing; legends circulated of a female pope, also named Joan, who was also killed for gender-bending. Medieval mystics sometimes referred to Jesus as a mother and saw visions of milk dripping from his breast. The Catholic Church as a whole, led by a hierarchy of costumed men, is traditionally referred to as She and as the Bride of Christ.

The resonance goes beyond appearances. "Catholic tradition is all about the dignity of the human person," says Edward Poliandro, an advocate for LGBT Catholics and their families in New York City. "Transgender people have a particular prophetic mission just to live and to challenge society simply by saying, 'I'm a person.'"

Monica was a Louisiana beauty in high school, well attested to by her photo albums. Once a blind woman on a bus said she could tell how she looked just by how the driver talked to her. She was the only girl in her class whose post-graduation plan was a convent. Friends and family weren't sure what to make of her choice. The boyfriend she went to prom with — not the handsomest in town, but the best dancer — waved goodbye as her parents drove her off to the rustic novitiate.

Monica has a lesbian sister and a gay brother, but she's rarely more emphatic than when asserting her own straightness: "I could pray 12 hours a day until I'm pink, purple and blue, and that ain't gonna give me a single lesbian thought." What

ing their daughter with her. In Wright's youth she was a star athlete and flew F-4 fighter planes in the Vietnam War, but now she sees all that as compensating for the feeling she'd had since childhood of being in the wrong kind of body. Back in Catholic grade school, when she

Maybe nothing could be — transgender existence has already taken too much of a toll.

She wields the word "pastoral" as a compliment — a term Pope Francis also uses to describe his call for church renewal. A pastoral priest, says Monica,



Sr. Monica (back to camera; not her real name) speaks with Dawn Wright (left) and Courtney Sharp, two members of the transgender community, in New Orleans, LA, on Feb. 22, 2014.

Sister Monica helps provide spiritual support to many in the transgender community.

Photo: William Widmer for Al Jazeera America

wanted to play on the girls' playground, a priest told her she could go to hell for that. He paddled her to make the lesson stick. Beginning with her stint in the Air Force, there were suicide attempts. You name it — plastic bags, slit wrists, pills. She'd go to doctors and they'd say not to tell anyone the real reason because the backlash would ruin her life; she'd go to priests and they'd tell her she'd go to hell if she tried to live as a woman. She stopped going to mass. "I felt that somehow if I went into a church there would be a flaming arrow over my head pointing me out as a sinner," Wright says.

A mutual friend introduced her to Monica. Soon, again feeling close to suicide, she stayed at Monica's house for a weekend retreat. The moment she remembers most is when Monica started to sing. Her singing voice is excellent, honed by a lifetime in church choirs, and she doesn't hesitate to use it around the kitchen table. The words were from a song by the singer Libby Roderick, but that night they seemed to be borrowed by God: How could anyone ever tell you you were anything less than beautiful?

"My heart opened up, and I felt there was a chance for me," Wright says. "Monica, I think, really saved my life."

"recognizes that he doesn't understand everything perfectly — he seeks to help people face their challenges, whatever they are." Maybe there doesn't need to be startling about-face like Ayatollah Khomeini's; maybe the church doesn't need to fold the latest gender theory into the catechism. It would be enough, perhaps, for leaders of the church to listen, to hear transgender voices out and to act as if there is some truth to be found in their experience.

Bishops have confronted her outright. In their offices and on their stationery she has endured lectures about everything from doctrine to identity politics from men who insist that "homosexual" is the only acceptable word to use for lesbians and gays. They have warned each other about her. At times she has had to let them believe she's doing "just" lesbian and gay ministry, which at least they have some concept of. Her superiors have required her to pass up chances to write articles or be quoted by reporters because they're afraid of what the hierarchy would do if she went public.

But her trans community doesn't necessarily demand more of her. They mostly tell her to protect herself, to do what she must to make sure she'll be able to keep on being available to them. "One of the things that makes her even more significant," Mateo Williamson says, "is that she has faced persecution just for reaching out to people like me." Yet, for her, that's not enough. In the inability to speak out, she feels traces of the dysphoria, the deep incongruence, that trans people feel about their assigned gender. It's not just a frustration or annoyance; it's a kind of death.

The first-ever Catholic trans conference in the United States took place one Saturday last November at a suburban convent in Towson, Md. About 35 people attended, mostly older women, sitting together in a room with a crucifix on one wall facing another wall of stained glass. The morning's presentation was by a psychiatrist who works with gender-variant patients at Children's Hospital. In the afternoon there was a talk by Hilary Howes, a middle-aged businesswoman who converted to Catholicism after her transition at age 40, almost two decades ago.

The conference was organized by New Ways Ministry. The organization began in 1977 to advocate for LGBT Catholics, but it had begun to turn its attention to the T only recently. Over the course of the day there were hints of how transgender experience might be poised to deepen even something as old and venerable as the Catholic faith.

While Urbano Navarrete's canon law article accepts only the body's testimony to a person's sex, trans people, whether religious or otherwise, often talk about what they go through as a spiritual journey. One hears it again and again.

Yet Howes cautioned, "It's a beautiful spiritual journey, but if you don't have to go through it, please don't."

Howes told the story of her life as a parable, a tale of a girl born with a penis and expected to live like a boy. "She died a little each day." The girl grew up into a man, married a woman and became a father. Yet the dying continued. She decided to reveal herself, at last. Her wife and daughter stuck with her through it all. With the help of hormone treatments, father and daughter went through puberty together.

As the parable caught up with the present, Howes turned to a discussion of the hierarchy's official position, or lack thereof, and the basic comfort she feels in her church, and in her faith, day to day. "I make a good spokesperson because I'm disarmingly normal," she said.

She'd observed over the years that liberal Catholics — the kind likely to be friendly toward LGBT rights, the kind likely to be in the room — often feel uncomfortable with the masculine language Catholic tradition tends to use for God: Him, Father, Lord. Some prefer to discard those words altogether. But Howes had noticed that the old-fashioned words have never really bothered her.

With her dimples hinting at a sly smile, she said, "I suppose it's because I know that a father can also be a woman."

The day was full of epiphanies. A white-haired woman declared that she'd never again ask, upon meeting a baby, "Is it a boy or a girl?" — one might need to wait and find out. Some who were already familiar with transgender terms and categories were trying to wrap their heads around the genderqueer label that increasingly resonates with young people — not one gender or the other so much as somewhere in between, or both, or neither. A grandmother at Monica's table heard that some people have used the neutral pronoun "sie" rather than "he" or "she," and announced that that's how she'd be referring to God from then on.

"The trans issue is in the Catholic community now where the lesbian and gay issue was in the late '70s," estimates Sister Jeannine Gramick, one of the founders of New Ways Ministry. Although bishops continue fighting the rising tide of gay marriage across the United States, she feels that the sympathies of lay Catholics have for the most part been won over to the side of lesbian and gay rights. Now, supporters of New Ways Ministry want to learn more, and they've asked for programs on trans issues.

For decades Gramick has spoken boldly on behalf of the queer community and has been censured mightily for it; where Monica agonizes about whether or not to speak, Gramick simply does so and then deals with whatever blowback comes from the hierarchy. Where Gramick has advocated, Monica has internalized.

There is a passage in the constitution of the congregation Monica joined as a teenager that she especially identifies with: "Our desire is to be available and receptive servants, alert to God's voice and the needs of God's people, willing to have our very lives shaped by responding to these needs." Our very lives shaped. Perhaps debilitatingly so — to the point that a metaphor turns into a jaw condition.

And this eats at her. "I am silent while trans people are being killed," she says, clenching her shoulders as if holding an invisible weight. "They're being murdered and committing suicide, and I'm silent!" When she's worked up like this Monica can flash a gaze that makes her eyes seem steely and certain, until they fill with tears. And then a saying from St. Catherine of Siena comes to mind, turning her anger to a duller sadness. She recites it: "Preach the truth as if you had a million voices — it is silence that kills the world." ✚



Sister Monica and Dawn Wright hold hands. The tattoo on Ms. Wright's wrist was added to cover a scar from a failed suicide attempt.

Photo: William Widmer for Al Jazeera America

helps her identify most closely with the LGBT community are the experiences of isolation she has known in her own past — such as when her mother didn't understand her decision to enter religious life, or a period when her fellow sisters turned against her because she wasn't Chicano like them.

Among the first people Monica ministered to was Dawn Wright. When they met, Wright was in her 50s and had recently transitioned. Her wife had left, tak-

That's a testimony one hears a lot from Monica's trans friends. Studies suggest that around 40 percent of transgender people have attempted suicide.

Much is similar in the stories of people Monica has "companions," as she puts it. What she said and did turned their lives around. They improved; they could see glimpses of the love she insists God has for them. But others, whatever she says, never seem to hear. Her words and prayers aren't enough.

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 known as welcoming to lesbian/gay Catholics, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in gay 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 NewWaysMinistry.org.



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 the Assumption
Diamond Bar: St. Denis
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: Blessed Sacrament, 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: Old Mission of San Luis Obispo
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 Stanford 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: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacred Heart
Denver: St. Dominic, Christ the King, Mount Carmel
Fort Collins: Blessed John XXIII
Genessee: St. Frances Cabrini Shrine
Highlands Ranch: Pax Christi
Littleton: Light of the World, St. Frances Cabrini

Connecticut

Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony

Delaware

North Wilmington: Holy Child
Wilmington: St. Joseph

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
Naples: St. John the Evangelist
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 Mt. Carmel, Old St. Patrick
Country Club Hills: St. Emeric
Evanston: St. Nicholas
Johnston City: St. Paul
Morton Grove: St. Martha
Oak Park: Ascension, St. Catherine of Sienna-St. Lucy
Schaumburg: St. Marcelline

Indiana

Evansville: St. Mary
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
Prince Frederick: St. John Vianney
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
Kalamazoo: St. Thomas More
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. Francis Xavier, 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

Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of Assisi
Maplewood: St. Joseph
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, Immaculate 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
Pittsford: Church of the 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 the 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, Downtown 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

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
Wauwatosa: St. Pius X

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

Pleasanton: Catholic Community of Pleasanton

District of Columbia

Communitas

Florida

Tampa: Franciscan Center

Iowa

Iowa City: Full Circle

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

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.



When the law is a crime

By the Editors
America Magazine
March 10, 2014

With five now-famous words, “Who am I to judge?” Pope Francis offered a fresh embodiment of the Catholic teaching that homosexuals “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.” Tragically, we live in a world where people are not only judged harshly for their sexual orientation but are also targeted and punished for it. In Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni recently signed a bill that criminalizes and punishes “the promotion or recognition” of same-sex relationships. A first offense could result in a prison sentence of 14 years; repeated offenses could result in a life sentence. Nigeria had already enacted a law that prescribes a 10-year prison sentence for those who “directly or indirectly” make a “public show” of a homosexual relationship. The law also punishes those who are even marginally affiliated with gay clubs or similar organizations.

These laws have led to scores of arrests and have precipitated a wave of violence—often ignored by police—against anyone even suspected of being homosexual. The laws are so vague that anyone can be accused of being gay solely because of their speech, dress or friendships. Gay and lesbian people in these countries are living under a sword of Damocles, constantly afraid that they may be discovered and persecuted at any moment. Many are driven to despair, even

suicide. It is clear that many factors have contributed to this situation: a deep-seated fear that homosexuality constitutes a mortal threat to society, a too-literal and highly selective interpretation

of the Bible, popular African opposition to a neo-colonial imposition of “Western” liberal values and the interests of cynical politicians who want to strengthen their hold on power.



African citizens demonstrating in favor of LGBT rights.

of the Bible, popular African opposition to a neo-colonial imposition of “Western” liberal values and the interests of cynical politicians who want to strengthen their hold on power.

It is especially disturbing that such legislation is immensely popular in predominantly Christian countries like

Uganda, where 40 percent of the population is Roman Catholic and the Catholic bishops have sent mixed signals about the legislation. When the bill was first considered in 2009, Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga of Kampala, speaking

of Jos, Nigeria, meanwhile, has praised President Goodluck Jonathan for his “courageous and wise decision” to sign the new law in that country.

Christian concern for preserving the traditional institution of marriage cannot justify these excessive and punitive measures, which extend far beyond simply codifying a definition of marriage. It is not inconsistent, therefore, to support traditional marriage and to oppose these measures, which are unjustifiable assaults on the human rights and inherent dignity of gay and lesbian people. Lest anyone be led to believe otherwise, supporters of traditional marriage have, in fact, a special obligation to loudly denounce any unjust discrimination against homosexuals.

The church’s vigorous support for traditional marriage, moreover, must be accompanied by advocacy for the human rights of gays and lesbians in equal measure. This is required by the church’s own teaching. Indeed, a growing number of Catholic leaders have offered unqualified support for the decriminalization of homosexuality. In December 2009, the delegation of the Holy See to the United Nations said the church opposes “all forms of violence” and “discriminatory penal legislation” against gay persons. That same month, according to a diplomatic cable published by WikiLeaks, Cardinal Antonelli Ennio, then-president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, said that Catholic bishops in Uganda “or anywhere should not support the criminalization of homosexuality.” Most recently, on Jan. 29, an editorial in *The Southern Cross*, the newspaper of the bishops of South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland, urged Catholics in Africa “to stand with the powerless” and “sound the alarm at the advance throughout Africa of draconian legislation aimed at criminalizing homosexuals.”

We add our voice to this swelling chorus. Pope Francis has described gay people as “socially wounded” because “they feel like the church has always condemned them.” Catholics must examine how we contribute, perhaps even inadvertently, to a culture of fear and shame. In a field hospital after battle, a basic responsibility of the caregivers is to “do no harm.” The church must oppose violence against gay persons and should strongly advocate for the decriminalization of homosexuality. No one should be subject to a criminal penalty simply for being gay. If laws like these do not constitute the “unjust discrimination” against gay people that the church rightly denounces, then what possibly could? †

Cardinals’ ignorance of homosexuality will lead to violence and human rights abuses

By Michael O’Loughlin
Advocate.com
February 5, 2014

Sometimes ignorance on a topic is to be pitied, and the best response to it is not anger, but an effort to educate the person with more accurate information. But we must not forget that ignorance can cause great damage because it can blossom into attitudes and policies which lead to violence and human rights abuses. The public statements of two Catholic leaders recently illustrate these principles.

In Spain, Cardinal Fernando Sebastian, who is the retired archbishop of Pamplona, gave an interview to *Diario Sur* newspaper in which he called homosexuality a “defect” that can be cured. New York’s *Daily News* reported on the Spanish interview:

“Homosexuality is a defective manner of expressing sexuality, because this has a structure and a purpose, which is procreation,” he said in an interview to *Diario Sur*.

“A homosexual who can’t achieve this (procreation) is failing,” he added, before saying, ‘Our bodies have many defects. I have high blood pressure.’

“Ignorance may be pitied, but it cannot be tolerated. Too many lives hang in the balance.”

“Sebastian said it was ‘a defect I have to try and correct in whatever way I can.’

“To say that homosexuality is a defect is not an insult: it helps because in many cases of homosexuality it is possible to recover and become normal with the right treatment.”

Such comments betray the depth of the ignorance which is obviously at work in the minds of many church leaders. It is shocking and pitiable, and it helps us to see why church teaching and practice is so harsh on LGBT issues. This ignorance needs to be corrected, not only for the cardinal’s sake, but for the sake of LGBT people throughout the world.

A case which shows how lack of understanding LGBT issues can be harmful

came out in the headlines in the African nation of Nigeria, which last week enacted a law which outlawed same-sex marriage and also outlawed the establishment of gay and lesbian organizations. Soon after the law was signed, Nigeria’s Cardinal John Oniyekan stated that he supported the measure. According to PMnewsNigeria.com:

“The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal John Oniyekan, has commended Nigeria’s Federal Government for its uncompromising stand on the anti-gay law in spite of criticisms from a section of the international community.

“Oniyekan, briefing newsmen on activities to mark his 70th birthday in Abuja on Friday, said Nigeria, being an independent country, should stand firm on its culture, tradition and morals.

“The church accepts people as they are, we condemn homosexuality, Nigeria is an independent country and we do not beg for food.”

The cardinal, like many in Nigeria, have framed the issue of homosexuality as one where Western liberal nations are trying to impose their values on African culture, hence his comment about not begging for food. But the cardinal seems ignorant of the basics of Catholic social teaching which respects the dignity, equality, and liberty of all people—even those with whom one might disagree. While he certainly has an obligation to respect Nigerian culture, he also has an obligation to defend Catholic principles on basic human rights.

Bishop Hassan Kukah of Nigeria’s Sokoto Diocese also publicly supported the new anti-gay law.

One needs to ask if these bishops have learned nothing from history. Whenever laws have restricted people’s freedoms or viewed certain groups as second class citizens, it doesn’t take long for violence and human rights abuses to occur. Nazi Germany and Jim Crow America spring quickly to mind. Laws which restrict freedom or create second class categories give people permission to enact hateful acts. When religious leaders voice their support of such laws or promote misguided theories about people’s lives, they not only give permission for people to commit

hateful acts, but, in fact, they encourage such behavior.

Pope Francis has indicated a more respectful attitude toward LGBT people than any of his predecessors had ever done. Some people have wondered how he will put that attitude into practice. One way he can begin is by educating bishops, cardinals, and other church leaders about the basic facts of sexual orientation and the basic principles of Catholic social teaching. Without such education, their ignorance will fuel violence and human rights abuses against LGBT people.

Ignorance may be pitied, but it cannot be tolerated. Too many lives hang in the balance. †

Catholic bishops in Nigeria 'Thank God' for anti-LGBT laws

By Michael O’Loughlin
Advocate.com
February 5, 2014

Catholic bishops in Nigeria are congratulating the president for successfully pushing legislation that imposes 14-year jail sentences for gay people who marry, and punishes any gathering of LGBT people in that African nation, placing those who run LGBT organizations in jail for a decade.

Ignatius Kaigama, archbishop of the Middle Belt region of Jos, told SaharaTV that Catholic bishops in Nigeria “thank God that this bill was passed,” and in a letter sent to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, called the law “a courageous one and a clear indication of the ability of our great country to stand shoulders high in the protection of our Nigerian and African most valued cultures of the institution of marriage.”

The letter slammed what Kaigama believes are outside forces trying to bring marriage equality to Nigeria:

“We commend you for this courageous and wise decision and pray that God will continue to bless, guide and protect you and your administration against the conspiracy of the developed world to make our country and continent,

the dumping ground for the promotion of all immoral practices, that have continued to debase the purpose of God for man in the area of creation and morality, in their own countries.”

The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a union of one man and one woman, and its affiliates have been among the most vocal opponents of marriage equality in the U.S. and around the world. In hopes that Pope Francis may be more open to defending the dignity of LGBT people than his predecessors, some lay Catholics are encouraging the 77-year-old Argentine to speak out against oppressive legislation like Nigeria’s. Notably, Catholic doctrine also teaches that LGBT people are to be treated with dignity and respect, a sentiment Kaigama tried to express.

“As a priest and by my Christian values it not a crime to be gay or heterosexual,” Kaigama told SaharaTV. “I will treat [a gay person] with great understanding and love, with great compassion.”

With a population equally split between Christians and Muslims, the 170 million-person nation has experienced religion-fueled violence over the past several years. †