

BONDINGS

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Belgian bishop advocates church recognition of gay relationships

By John A. Dick
National Catholic Reporter
December 30, 2014

Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp, Belgium, has called for ecclesiastical recognition of gay relationships, according to an interview published in *De Morgen*, a Belgian newspaper, on Dec. 27.

The official teaching that the Catholic church can recognize only male-female committed relationships has to change, Bonny said.

"There should be recognition of a diversity of forms," he said. "We have to look inside the church for a formal recognition of the kind of interpersonal relationship that is also present in many gay couples. Just as there are a variety of legal frameworks for partners in civil society, one must arrive at a diversity of forms in the church... The intrinsic values are more important to me than the institutional question. The Christian ethic is based on lasting relationships where exclusivity, loyalty, and care are central to each other."

Bonny made headlines in September when he issued a letter to the Vatican in preparation for the Synod on the family in October. At that time, Bonny stressed that the church urgently needs to connect with contemporary society, showing more respect for homosexuality, divorced peo-



Bishop Johan Bonny

ple and modern kinds of relationships.

"In his or her life," he said, "everyone has to deal with relationships, friendship, family, and children's education. We should not deny that dealing with these issues within the church has brought injuries and traumas. Too many people were excluded for a long time."

Bonny said the open-minded spirit and pastoral focus of Pope Francis have given him the courage to speak out about issues that are important and pressing for today's believers.

Will the church at some point give

its blessing for gay and lesbian couples?

"Personally, I find that in the church more space must be given to acknowledge the actual quality of gay and lesbian couples; and such a form of shared-life should meet the same criteria as found in an ecclesiastical marriage," Bonny said. "... And we have to acknowledge that such criteria can be found in a diversity of relationships and one needs to search for various models to give form to those relationships."

Bonny stressed that the man-woman relationship has a special place in the Christian tradition.

"This relationship will continue to retain its own particular sacramental character and liturgical form," Bonny said. "But this particularity does not have to be exclusive nor does it have to close the door on a diversity of relationships whose inner qualities the church can acknowledge."

"Indeed, we need to seek a formal recognition of the kind of relationship that exists between many gay and lesbian couples," he said. "Does that recognition have to be a sacramental marriage? Perhaps the church could much better reflect on a diversity of forms of relationships. One has the same kind of discussion about civil marriages. In Belgium the same model (for civil marriag-

es) exists for man-woman relations as well as for same-sex relations."

Later in his interview, Bonny stressed openness, the need for further reflection and the danger of getting wrapped up in a complex ideological discussion. He stressed as well that he is a strong advocate for recognizing a diversity of relationships that arise from serious reflection on practical pastoral realities.

Professor Rik Torfs, canon law expert and rector of the Catholic University of Leuven, warned that one should not minimize Bonny's approach.

"Do not underestimate the significance of this," he said. "Bonny advocates a change from principles long held as unshakable, something no bishop could have done under the dogmatic pontificates of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI."

Bonny has a doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. In 1997, Cardinal Godfried Danneels and the Belgian bishops appointed him rector of the Belgian College in Rome; and in 2008 he was appointed the Bishop of Antwerp. Most observers see him becoming the next archbishop (and cardinal) of the Malines-Brussels archdiocese, when the incumbent, Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard, offers the pope his letter of retirement, at age 75, in May. †

New Ways Ministry's response to Belgian bishop's statement

December 30, 2014
Mount Rainier, Maryland

New Ways Ministry strongly applauds Bishop Johan Bonny's call for ecclesiastical recognition of lesbian and gay couples. This is the first time in known history that a Catholic bishop has made such an explicit call for same-gender couples to receive recognition and affirmation that is equal to that of heterosexual couples.

His request is based on the fact that the moral qualities of faithfulness, loyalty, and care which characterize lesbian and gay couples are the very same principles which characterize the unique form of heterosexually married couples. These

principles are the same ones which the majority of Catholic theologians today say should be the basis of the Church's sexual ethics, instead of basing these ethics on a procreative standard and an outdated concept of male-female complementarity.

Bishop Bonny's statements are the first time a Catholic bishop has explicitly called for ecclesiastical recognition of same-gender couples, but it is not the first time that a bishop has shown support for such ideas. In the 1990s, Bishop Jacques Gaillot of Evreux, France, was removed from his diocese, in part because he blessed a gay couple's relationship. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, a re-

tired auxiliary bishop of Sydney, Australia, has called for the Church to revamp its sexual ethics in a more progressive way, and in a way which would open the possibility of recognizing and blessing same-gender relationships. Many bishops and other church leaders have recently been calling for legal recognition of same-gender couples, though none has gone so far as to ask for recognition from the Church for these couples.

Gay and lesbian Catholics and their supporters will surely welcome Bishop Bonny's call, as they have made this same call for many decades now, though previous papacies have tried to silence

it. It comes at a time when the entire Church is focused on the idea of marriage and family as we discuss these issues in this year between the synods on marriage and family. Bishop Bonny's statements will have a profound effect on this discussion because he is raising an idea which has too long been suppressed, but which many in the Church have desired. He gives voice to a major segment of Catholicism which has previously been voiceless.

Courage breeds courage. Let's pray that other bishops will follow Bishop Bonny's example and speak out for recognizing the holiness in the committed relationships of lesbian and gay couples. †

LGBTQ children in Catholic families: A deacon's view of Holy Family Sunday

By Deacon Ray Dever
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
December 28, 2014

On this first Sunday after Christmas, the Church observes the feast of the Holy Family. And with that observance inevitably comes reflection on the nature and meaning of the Catholic family today. Many within the Church still seem to hold an idealized and increasingly inaccurate vision of what a Catholic family looks like, in spite of the growing diversity of the families that comprise the people of God. As one who would count my own family among that diversity, the topic of Catholic family holds considerable personal interest for me.

In the fall of 2013, at the beginning of our son's sophomore year at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, he came out

as transgender. In doing so, she became one of only three openly trans* students at Georgetown at the time. This happened just a few weeks after the now famous Pope Francis interview that made "Who am I to judge?" part of our vernacular. And with those events, my family found ourselves plunged into all the questions and issues that Catholic families with LGBTQ children face. [Editor's note: The term "trans*" is used as a "catch-all" word for the diverse forms of gender identities (other than the traditional male/female binary) that exist in humanity.]

In our case, there was at least one notable difference. Besides being a husband, father, and professional engineer, I'm a permanent deacon in the Catholic Church, having been ordained in 2009. When the topic of married clergy

comes up, many Catholics are taken aback when they're told that the Church already has married clergy, mostly in the person of the approximately 18,000 permanent deacons in the US. I can't imagine what they would think if they realized there are Catholic clergy whose families include LGBTQ children!

Our journey has probably not been very different than the journey of any family with an LGBTQ child. It really began with our daughter descending into a deep depression during high school. We would learn more about depression and mental illness, about suicidal ideations and self-injurious behavior, about therapists and antidepressant medications than we ever could have imagined or wanted. That journey would eventually lead to questions of gender identity that were inti-

mately connected with her mental health struggles.

When our daughter came out, my wife and I experienced the full range of thoughts and emotions that any parents do in that situation – shock at the news, a lack of understanding of gender issues, conflict with what the Church teaches about human sexuality, confusion and guilt about what we should do as parents, profound sadness at what felt like the loss of our son, fear and worry for what the future would hold for her. There were arguments, sleepless nights, and prayers – lots of prayers.

We slowly came to the realization that we hadn't lost the person who had been our son. In fact, in many respects we got our child back, as she embraced her gender identity and emerged from the depths

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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.

New Ways Ministry

4012 29th Street
Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712
(301) 277-5674
Info@NewWaysMinistry.org
NewWaysMinistry.org
NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com

More work for LGBT and allies before next synod

By Sister Jeannine Gramick, SL
GlobalSistersReport.org
October 22, 2014

In the mid-1990s, the U.S. bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life drafted a pastoral document addressed to parents who have lesbian or gay children. During the many revisions of the document, Bishop Joseph Charron of Des Moines, who chaired the committee at the time, appeared before the 60-member Administrative Board of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to present the draft. He returned from one such meeting very discouraged. The board had gutted a section of the document that spoke about the role of conscience in making complex decisions. In frustration, he complained that these men had no understanding of what it meant to show pastoral understanding in the face of difficult life situations.

That's how I felt when I heard the news that the bishops at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family backtracked on the cordial tone of the interim document released after the first week of discussions. Do these bishops know what it means to show a pastoral face? Wasn't this synod called to discuss "pastoral issues?" LGBT persons and their allies did not make excessive demands. They were seeking some kind words of welcome.

This is the welcome they heard in the interim draft, released one week after the Synod began: "Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community" and they "want to encounter a Church which offers them a welcoming home." The draft spoke of "accepting and valuing their sexual orientation" and of homosexual couples who offer "valuable support" to each other and "mutual assistance to the point of sacrifice." These were the words of a revised English translation of the interim text, which made the English reading smoother.

This was not the kind of revision called for by Cardinal Raymond Burke. He claimed that the original paragraphs represented a minority view and had caused confusion among the faithful. Cardinal Burke and other conservative bishops were calling for substantial change in the text, and they finally got it.

The two paragraphs of the final document dealing with LGBT persons are titled "Pastoral attention towards persons with homosexual orientations." The only pastoral note in these two paragraphs is the judgment that lesbian and gay persons "must be accepted with respect and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided." These words are a trivial substitute. They merely repeat phrases from the 2003 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that condemned same-sex unions.

Unfortunately, the final document removes all the language that expressed the cordial welcome the church needs to extend. Are we a church that follows the law of love (Jn. 13:34) or a church that confines people to the letter of the law (Gal. 2:16)? In his closing address to the Synod, Pope Francis cautioned against "hostile rigidity," or a "letter-of-the-law" mentality. Because Pope Francis wants to keep the dialogue going, he said that the three

paragraphs in the interim draft that failed to pass by a two-thirds vote would be part of the continued discussion and debate during the coming year.

As we move ahead to the Ordinary Synod on the Family in October 2015, LGBT Catholics and their allies have a lot of work to do. It is the work of conversations and discussions with our bishops. Now is the time for LGBT Catholics, their parents, and friends to raise their voices and tell their stories to church leaders.

I am reminded of a story told by Bishop Joseph Sullivan of Brooklyn before his tragic death last year in an auto accident. In one of his conversations with New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Bishop Sullivan mentioned that the language used in church documents or public statements from bishops is often perceived as harsh and unfeeling by LGBT people and their friends. Cardinal Dolan responded that the people he hears from tell him the language is not severe enough.

How can we expect our church leaders to open their hearts to conversion if we do not provide them with stories for their ears to hear? How can we complain that bishops are insensitive to what LGBT people suffer if we do not take the time to dialogue with them?

I saw the effect of such dialogue at work during the Synod. While in Rome, I met Joseanne and Joseph Peregine, who represented the parents' LGBTI group from Malta. The parents' group sent a letter to Bishop Mario Grech of Malta, the President of the Maltese Episcopal Conference, in early 2014 and followed up with a series of meetings with their bishops. Bishop Grech said that their meetings were very helpful and forwarded their letter to the Secretariat of the Synod. During the Synod, he called the church to be more understanding and accepting of LGBT Catholics.

At an international conference of LGBT Christian groups that met in Rome just before the Synod opened, I also met almost a dozen members of PADIS, a group of gay, lesbian and bisexual Catholics in Chile that are part of the Christian Life Community (CLC), formed by the Jesuits. They too had written a letter to Pope Francis and the bishops of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family. They were in Rome for some high level meetings with Jesuit superiors to promote the welcome of LGBT persons in the church.

It is time for each of us to write a letter or ask for some dialogue time with our bishop. The "culture warriors" are continually phoning, writing letters or meeting bishops to communicate their opinions. It is time for our bishops to understand that these attitudes represent a minority view. The bishops need to hear from the progressive members of our church.

There is one more letter I feel we should write. It is a letter to Pope Francis, asking him to appoint some LGBT persons and couples as official observers to the Extraordinary Synod so that the bishops can hear personal testimonies of the faith life of LGBT Catholics. I remember the colorful banner that some members of the National Coalition of American Nuns unfurled in St. Peter's Square in 1994 during the Synod on Religious Life. "No speaking about us without us," the nuns said. It may be time to do what the sisters said. ✦

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A GIFT TO THE POPE — As Christmas shoppers scurried about and tried to come up with gifts for everyone on their list this year, they may have wanted to take a lesson from this European politician who recently met with Pope Francis. *Gay Star News* reported:

"The rainbow could be seen as representing two main concepts: the gay rights movement and a 'blessing' from God. So one lesbian politician thought of the perfect gift to give to Pope Francis: a rainbow scarf.

"Austrian Green MP Ulrike Lunacek, the gay Vice President of the European Parliament, gave the leader of the Catholic Church his early Christmas present yesterday (25 November).

"Today I handed Pope Francis a rainbow scarf for gays, lesbians, and for peace," Lunacek proudly said."

That's an idea for all those on your "nice" list, and, perhaps, even for some of the "naughty" folks who still don't accept equality! After all, as the Christmas carol says, this is the season to "don we now our gay apparel" !

Synod final report disappoints, but significant progress is made in the process

By Francis DeBernardo

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
October 18, 2014

The synod's final report significantly backtracks on LGBT issues from the draft released earlier this week, but the synod's process and openness to discussion provides hope for further development down the road, particularly at next year's synod, where the make-up of the participants will be larger and more diverse, including many more pastorally-oriented bishops.

It's very disappointing that the Synod's final report did not retain the gracious welcome to lesbian and gay people that the draft of the report included. Instead, the bishops have taken a narrow view of pastoral care by defining it simply as opposition to marriage for same-gender couples. Additionally, their further comment about supposed "international pressure" to accept same-gender marriage selfishly views the hierarchy as the victims, not LGBT people who receive unjust and oppressive treatment by governments, church, families, and society.

Pastoral care should focus on LGBT people as total human beings, many of whom have suffered significant alienation and personal harm, and not just as sexual



beings. Pastoral care should also focus on the gifts that LGBT people bring to the Church, something that the earlier draft highlighted.

One major error the bishops made in the final report was to quote the Vatican's 2003 document condemning same-gender marriage, which referred to adoption by gay and lesbian couples as a form of "violence" toward the children. Such language is pastorally harmful and destructive to any welcome to lesbian and gay people.

It's important, however, to keep two things in mind. First, the paragraphs on homosexuality which did not receive the required 2/3rds vote, and which were

more welcoming of LGBT people, failed by only a handful of votes, indicating significant support from a majority of bishops. Second, this report is not the final word, but as a Vatican spokesperson explained, it is still a working document which

will be discussed in the coming year.

What was good about this two-week long meeting? The real value of this synod is that it has started the discussion among the hierarchy on LGBT issues which has been going on for decades among the lay people and theologians in the Church. The bishops began to catch up, and I don't think that the discussion will stop here, but will only continue, with more promising outcomes for LGBT people and their families in the future.

It is not surprising that the paragraphs on lesbian and gay people proved to be among the most controversial of the synod's proceedings. The paragraphs

on homosexuality were among those that received the lowest affirmative votes. This result shows that there is still much to be examined and explored on LGBT issues in the Church. Let's hope and pray that at next year's synod, the bishops will invite lesbian and gay people and couples to give their personal testimonies, so that the bishops can learn firsthand about their experiences of faith and love.

More importantly, this synod revealed that there are some strong voices for LGBT equality and for change in church teaching, something which was not known clearly before the meeting. Now that these voices have been bold enough to speak, more bishops who think like them will surely follow their example. The biggest problem in the Church up to this point has not been lack of support among the hierarchy on LGBT issues, but lack of courage for those bishops to speak out what they truly think. The silence has ended. Nothing will be the same.

Between now and next year's synod, the discussion in the Catholic Church—at all levels—on LGBT issues, as well as other issues of family and sexuality, will be more open and robust than it has ever been. That is a *very* good thing! †

And yet...

By Francis DeBernardo

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
October 19, 2014

I was a teenager when the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would have made gender equality the law of the land, was defeated. The outcome was difficult to accept because after a strong campaign for passage of the amendment, it ended in a narrow defeat. I always remember the lead sentence of a magazine article, which summed up the mixed emotions of coming so close, but ultimately being defeated, by using only two words: "And yet."

"And yet" is exactly how I feel this weekend, after a week of anticipating that the synod of bishops would do the right thing and approve its draft statements which were so welcoming of lesbian and gay people. Certainly, the final negative outcome was disappointing. And yet.

And yet, the welcoming statements in the final report only lost acceptance by a handful of votes that would have been needed to achieve the required 2/3rds majority. Similarly, the votes for the more restrictive language, which was approved, did so also only by the most narrow of margins, showing significant opposition to this approach.

And yet, we caught a rare glimpse of the fact that there are many bishops who are speaking out for changes in the ways that the Church approaches LGBT people.

And yet, we witnessed an unprecedented week where discussion and disagreement among the hierarchy was evident in the media.

And yet, we saw how ready and willing Catholic people are to accept changes in the Church on a variety of marriage, family, and sexuality issues.

And yet, we have a pope who seems willing to push for a more inclusive and welcoming Church.

John Allen, a veteran Vatican observer, commented on the closeness of the votes in a *Crux.com* article which looked at how the final report addressed the issues of homosexuality and divorce/remarriage:

"Paragraphs on those two points were the only items that failed to receive a two-thirds majority of the Synod of Bishops in voting on its final document. While there's no magic to the two-thirds threshold in this sort of Vatican ballot, the results clearly reflect a divided hierarchy on both issues.

"Despite considerably more cautious language, both items drew significant 'no' votes: The paragraph on gays and lesbians had a vote of 118-62 and that on the divorced and remarried drew 104 in favor and 74 opposed.

"A Vatican spokesman said that means they did not reflect 'a strong consensus of the entire synod.'"

Joshua McElwee of *The National Catholic Reporter* summarized Pope Francis' final address to the synod, in which he stressed his oft-repeated message of inclusive welcome:

"Referencing a talk he gave the synod when it began its work Oct. 6, Francis said 'it was necessary to live ... with tranquility and also with interior peace because the synod takes place with Peter and under Peter and the presence of the pope is the guarantee for all.'

"The task of the pope is to guarantee the unity of the church; to remind pastors that their first duty is to feed the flock — feed the flock — that the Lord has entrusted to them and try to search to welcome — with fatherhood and mercy and without false fears — the lost sheep,' he said.

"Then, saying, 'I made a mistake,' Francis corrected himself: 'I said welcome. Go find them!'"

Those of us who advocate for LGBT equality in the Church can be glad that we heard words this week from Munich's Cardinal Reinhard Marx that change in the Church is obviously something that can happen. *The National Catholic Reporter* carried some of his comments:

"Addressing a key question raised by the Synod of Bishops on the family, a German cardinal said Friday that church doctrine can change over time.

"The church's doctrine, Cardinal Reinhard Marx said, 'doesn't depend on the spirit of time but can develop over time.'

"Saying that the doctrine will never change is a restrictive view of things,' Marx said at a Vatican press conference Friday.

"The core of the Catholic church remains the Gospel, but have we discovered everything?' he asked. 'This is what I doubt.'"

Marx was specific about LGBT issues, too:

"Marx said: 'homosexuals are not

condemned by the church for their sexual orientation.'

"Making a difference between gay couples who have monogamous relationships for decades and gay persons who are promiscuous, Marx continued: 'I cannot simply say that everything is black or everything is white.'

"We cannot say that since you are homosexual, you cannot experience the Gospel,' Marx said. 'This is impossible to me.'"



Cardinal Reinhard Marx

Vatican Radio summarized other points made by Cardinal Marx, under a headline that "Pope Is Seeking Input to Take Church Forward":

"Cardinal Marx from Munich noted that in Germany many committed Catholics are asking how the Church can be more inclusive of those who are divorced and remarried or living in homosexual relationships. Exclusion is not the language of the Church, he said, insisting that Catholics must move away from a 'black and white... all or nothing' vocabulary. While there are significantly different perspectives at the Synod, according to a bishops' cultural experiences or personal encounters, the cardinal said Pope Francis is seeking input that can take the Church forward, open new doors and discover new possibilities for bringing the Gospel to men and women today. The Pope did not invite us to two Synods, he remarked with a smile, to hear us simply repeat what we've always been saying!"

As with many situations in life, we can choose between looking at the glass as half-empty or half full. A half-empty approach to the news of the final report might focus only on the fact that the

positive messages on gay and lesbian people did not get approved. But a *CNN.com* headline shows a half-full perspective. The headline reads "Catholic bishops: No agreement on gays and lesbians." Similarly, a *New York Times* article on the report carried this headline: "No Consensus at Vatican as Synod Ends."

This perspective highlights the fact that though traditionalists may have had the votes in this round, the experience of the synod points to the fact of significant disagreement on how to approach LGBT issues. That's a hopeful point.

On Friday, October 17th, the day before the report was issued, *The New York Times* editorialized about the experience of the synod, and they offered this hopeful conclusion to their opinions:

"The synod did not call for doctrinal changes on birth control. But it said — perhaps in a euphemistic effort to seem less than absolute on the subject — that what is required is 'a realistic language that is able to start from listening to people.'

"Beyond specific issues, a welcome tone of conciliation and outreach defined the synod report, as in the recognition that gay Catholics yearn for 'a welcoming home' in the church. In this and other ways, the synod marks a hopeful beginning of what undoubtedly will be a difficult but fascinating worldwide debate on the future of the modern church."

Even with Saturday's disappointment, it is still important to remember that we have already seen a "fascinating worldwide debate on the future of the modern church," and that it will very likely only become more fascinating in the coming months.

Today, we say "And yet." But, as we look toward next year's synod, we can say, "And yet, possibly..."

I'm reminded this weekend of another famous "And yet" statement. When Galileo was forced under the threat of execution to deny his claim that the earth moved around the sun, and not the other way around, it is said that immediately after his recanting, he whispered under his breath about the earth, "*Eppur si muove.*" "And yet, it moves." May we all have the fortitude and confidence of Galileo as we continue on with this important discussion in the Church. †

'The Church must welcome all of her sons and daughters'

By Archbishop Wilton Gregory

The Georgia Bulletin (Atlanta)

October 16, 2014

It took a while before our calendars could all sync, but finally the meeting took place about six weeks ago. From my point of view, it was well worth the wait. I had a superb encounter with about 10 simply wonderful folks who came from five or six of our parishes. They are members of a larger group of individuals who belong to many other parishes, but who find a common bond in the fact that they are parents of gay and lesbian children.

Like parents everywhere they love their children, and like faithful Catholics they also love our Church. Yet

they also are deeply troubled to feel that our Church does not love their children, and therein is the conflict that fills and saddens their hearts.

As parents, they have all faced and accepted the reality of having a child who has openly shared their sexual orientation with them in trust and in the hope of being lovingly received as a son or daughter. As devoted parents, they obviously reacted with concern that their child's revelation would become the source of hurt and discrimination. They know that it too often does bring rejection and insult to a child that they love and cherish.

What they hope for now is that our Church will become more loving and understanding of the worth and dignity of

their children.

These wonderful people asked the Archbishop if he could love their children with the same compassion and understanding that the Lord Jesus embraced those He encountered as living outside of the social and religious norms of his time.



Archbishop Wilton Gregory

I assured them that not only could I respect and love their children, I was obliged to do so by the same Gospel mandate that governs the entire Church.

Our conversation included a personal description of the young people represented by these parents. Some of them brought photographs, and many spoke of their children with

tears. These young men and women were raised in Catholic homes, some attended Catholic schools, and many were very active in parish activities.

Their parents then spoke of the hostile environment that many of them encountered from the Church. The language that the Church uses in speaking of their sexual orientation is often unwelcoming and condemnatory. These parents said repeatedly that their children do not feel welcome in the faith of the Church in which they were raised.

I assured them that the Church must welcome all of her sons and daughters—no matter what their sexual orientation or life situation might be—and that we have not always done so with a spirit of

compassion and understanding. I spoke of the distinction that our Church makes between orientation and behavior, which admittedly needs reexamination and development.

The severity of some of our moral language occasionally suggests that certain members of the Church are superior to others. St. Paul reminds us that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)."

I encouraged this group to continue to meet and pray together. I will ask one of our deacons with a child who is gay to

serve as my liaison with them. I invite any pastor who has been in conversation with parishioners who might face some of these same challenges to refer them to this group. I will celebrate Mass in November for the group at their fall retreat, and I will continue to support them, as they remain very much in my heart, as do their children.

I ask all of us to pray for them and their children that we might together discover ways to draw them closer to the heart of the Church—where they belong and where there is always room. †

A deacon's view of Holy Family Sunday

(Continued from page 1)

of depression. All the creativity, humor, empathy, and intelligence that make her an exceptional person are still there and are shining through stronger than ever. And I'd like to think that the acceptance of her immediate and extended Catholic family have played some part in that positive transformation.

However, family support for LGBTQ children is obviously not the rule, and is often problematic for Catholic families in particular, given the mixed and often confusing messages they hear from the Church regarding LGBTQ issues. A few months ago I had the privilege of visiting with the LGBTQ Resource Center and the Catholic chaplain's office at Georgetown. While I was surprised and gratified by the warm welcome that I received as an interested, supportive parent of an LGBTQ student, I was saddened to hear that I was the exception and that there were far too many stories

of families rejecting their LGBTQ children and of causing tremendous pain and family divisions.

While I am certainly not qualified or authorized to speak for the Church on LGBTQ issues, I have been commissioned by the Church through ordination to proclaim and to preach the Gospel. And if one thing is crystal clear in the public ministry and teachings of our Lord, it is that everyone is included in His love and mercy and forgiveness, and that we are all called to do the same. For those Catholic families with LGBTQ children that are struggling with what they should do, I would suggest that they look to the Holy Family. Look to the love embodied in the Incarnation, a love like no other, and embrace your children. As the Church calls us to do first and foremost, follow your conscience, love one another, and especially love your children. †

Deacon Ray Dever serves at St. Paul Catholic Church in Tampa, Florida.

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
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<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> |
|---|--|--|--|

Gay groups to march in St. Patrick's Day parade as a ban falls

By Marc Santora
New York Times
September 3, 2014

The organizers of the New York City St. Patrick's Day parade said on Wednesday that they were lifting a ban on openly gay groups marching under their own banner, bringing to a close more than two decades of bitter protests and controversy that thrust an annual celebration into the national gay rights debate.

The decision is a striking reflection of the evolution of gay rights in the city and in American society, and is a measure of changing attitudes in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Every year, the parade kicks off with a Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, the most prominent Catholic church in the country, and the policy of banning gay groups from marching has long been seen by gay rights advocates as a reflection of the church's hostility.

In recent months, Catholic officials have tried to emphasize the church's acceptance of gays and lesbians as individuals, while defending the church's opposition to same-sex marriage. That rhetorical shift has been embraced by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, who will serve as grand marshal for the parade next year.

"I have no trouble with the decision at all," Cardinal Dolan said at an evening news conference announcing his appointment as grand marshal. "I think the decision is a wise one."

The parade organizers' retreat comes after years of mounting political and corporate pressure, and as many states have legalized same-sex marriage. Soon after taking office in January, Mayor Bill de Blasio, a Democrat, said he would not march as long as gay groups were banned. And since the beer giant Guinness pulled its financial support for the most recent

parade, other businesses have threatened to withdraw their support.

The pressure to make a change continued to mount as preparation began for next year's parade, according to several people involved in the negotiations. The change in policy was first reported on Wednesday by *The Irish Voice*.

Most notably, the organizers faced pressure from employees of NBCUniversal, which broadcasts the festivities and whose contract expires in 2015, to show that the parade was inclusive. The first group to march in next year's parade under a gay banner will be OUT@NBCUniversal — a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employee resource group.

On Wednesday morning, the organizers said that the NBC employees would be the only gay group permitted to march in the 2015 parade and that other groups would have to apply for 2016. But on Wednesday night, John L. Lahey, the vice chairman of the parade, said other gay groups could still apply to march in next year's parade, but warned that space was already tight.

Even before the Declaration of Independence was signed and the Constitution was drafted, the Irish gathered on the streets of New York to honor St. Patrick, the fifth-century missionary who is the patron saint of Ireland and of the Archdiocese of New York.

As the city's Irish population grew, the parade grew with them. By the 1990s, tens of thousands of marchers and spectators converged every March

to transform Fifth Avenue into a sea of green swaying to the plaintive wail of bagpipes.

But cultural divides were tearing the city apart two decades ago, as the gay rights movement, spurred by the AIDS crisis, pushed for greater equality and acceptance.

Thousands of people demonstrated in December 1989 outside St. Patrick's Cathedral over statements by Cardinal

say to me and others, 'You're not as good as these other Irish people,' has been very, very painful," Ms. Quinn said. "That is now coming to an end."

For years, organizers said the ban was meant to avoid politicizing the parade. But on Wednesday, they acknowledged that it had had the opposite effect.

"Organizers have diligently worked to keep politics — of any kind — out of the parade in order to preserve it as a single and unified cultural event," the organizers said in their statement. "Paradoxically, that ended up politicizing the parade."

Bill O'Reilly, a spokesman for the organizers, said the parade was "remaining loyal to church teachings."

The change in policy comes at a time when the tone from the Vatican is also changing.

Last summer, Pope Francis signaled a shift in how Catholic leaders talk about homosexuality when he was asked about his views on gay rights. He replied, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

Still, there were some who condemned the decision to lift the ban and the endorsement of it by Cardinal Dolan, who is the archbishop of New York.

"It is a shameful and sinful capitulation by the parade organizers and Cardinal Dolan," Pat Archbold wrote in an opinion piece published by the *National Catholic Register*. "If a parade that is meant to honor a great saint is being used to promote a sinful agenda, it should be canceled rather than allow it to be used in such a way."

But even some past defenders of the ban seemed willing to accept the change.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, said that as long as any group was eligible to march under a banner, and the rules were applied equally, "there should be no controversy."

Mr. de Blasio greeted the change cautiously. This year, he refused to march, becoming the first mayor in 20 years to boycott the parade.

When asked on Wednesday if the decision to lift the ban meant he would participate, Mr. de Blasio said he needed more details. "It's a step forward," he said. "But I need to know more before I can tell you how we're going to handle something six months from now."

Sarah Kate Ellis, the president of the gay rights group GLAAD, said that two decades of steady pressure had forced the change.

"It's about time," Ms. Ellis said. "Discrimination has no place on America's streets, least of all on Fifth Avenue."

Irish Queers, a leading advocacy group for gay and lesbian Irish-Americans, said that lifting the ban was a good first step but that it hoped wider participation would be allowed.

"We welcome this cracking of the veneer of hate, but so far Irish L.G.B.T. groups are still not able to march in our community's parades," the group said in a statement. "The fight continues." ✦



NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio boycotted the Fifth Avenue parade, and instead marched in the St. Pat's for All parade.

John J. O'Connor on abortion, homosexuality and AIDS.

In 1990, New York's Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization petitioned to march and was denied.

The next year, Mayor David N. Dinkins believed he had reached a compromise by having a group march with an existing delegation. But some spectators pelted the gay marchers with insults and threw beer cans, two narrowly missing the mayor.

"I knew there would be deep emotions, but I did not anticipate the cowards in the crowd," Mr. Dinkins, a Democrat, said at the time. In 1992 and 1993, he boycotted the parade.

But the organizers had the firm blessing of the Catholic Church and the backing of the courts.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor, capturing the sentiment at that time, declared that "political correctness" was not worth "one comma in the Apostles' Creed."

As the court battles raged, the parade committee found itself overwhelmed with legal fees and almost went bankrupt, an experience that one committee member said only served to harden sentiments.

Other cities that stage St. Patrick's Day parades, notably Boston, have also found themselves fighting over who is allowed to participate. In 1995, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of Boston parade organizers who banned gay groups from marching.

In recent years, tensions have eased a great deal. But even as gays gained wider cultural acceptance, the parade refused to change.

Christine C. Quinn, the former speaker of the City Council and a lesbian who has long fought to have the policy changed, said the ban had been a personal affront.

"To have the parade point a finger and

Boston's Cardinal O'Malley: LGBT church worker firings "Need to be rectified"

By Bob Shine
Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
September 15, 2014

In a one-to-one conversation following a public speaking engagement, Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley said that the firing of church workers because of LGBT issues is a situation that "needs to be rectified," becoming the first prelate to speak against this trend.

Earlier in the evening, the cardinal publicly spoke positively of the need to include and minister to the LGBT community in light of Pope Francis' new vision for the church.

O'Malley's public appearance on Thursday, September 11th, was at a launch event for *Crux*, the *Boston Globe's* new website for "all things Catholic." The program was held at the Jesuit-run Boston College. O'Malley was part of a panel of experts discussing the papacy of Pope Francis.

At the end of the event, after the crowd had dissipated, I had the opportunity to thank Cardinal O'Malley one-on-one for his compassionate remarks earlier in the evening about the LGBT community.

As we spoke, the cardinal told me that we must first convince people we love them before talking about the Ten Commandments. I pointed out that it has been hard to convince LGBT Catholics and their allies of this love when so many church workers have had LGBT-related employment disputes with Catholic schools and parishes. Responding to my comment, Cardinal O'Malley said this trend was a situation that "needs to be rectified."

O'Malley also indicated that not all church positions require a Catholic marriage. Most of the employment disputes involved same-sex couples legally marrying, announcing an intention to marry, or publicly acknowledging a long-term com-

mitted relationship.

Earlier, in a period when panelists answered audience questions, Cardinal O'Malley answered a question which I had submitted:

Given Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy and welcome, can we expect improved pastoral care and inclusion for those who are LGBT, especially when almost 20 US church workers have been fired in 2014 for their sexual orientation, gender, or marital status?

The cardinal's answer is in full below:

"I think the Holy Father's notion of mercy and inclusion is going to make a big difference in the way that the church responds to and ministers to people of homosexual orientation. The Holy Father is talking about reaching out to the periphery and very often this is a group that is on the periphery. It is not necessarily that the church is going to change doctrine, but, as somebody said, the Holy Father hasn't changed the lyrics, but he's changed the melody. I think the context of love and mercy and community is the context in which all of the church's teachings must be presented, including the more difficult ones. The same could be said about abortion and so many others. It is only when people realize that we love them that they will be open to hear the truth we want to share with them."

Other panelists that evening were Hossfman Espino of Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry, John Allen, Jr. of *Crux*, Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard University, and Robert Christian of *Millennial*.

Cardinal O'Malley's inclusive statements are typical of his merciful leadership style in Boston, leadership which led Pope Francis to appoint him to a unique papal advisory council of eight

(Continued on page 6)

Gay Equality in Parade

September 4, 2014
New York Times

To the Editor:

Lifting the ban on lesbian and gay organizations in the St. Patrick's Day Parade is one more step toward the full equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Catholic circles. Too often, Catholics are told that the church cannot change its practices and policies about lesbians and gay men. The parade committee's decision shows that even long-held and deeply entrenched prejudices can be overcome.

This decision is a victory not only for lesbian and gay groups but for all Catholics, and indeed for all Americans. It not only recognizes the contributions of lesbians and gay men, but it also liberates others from paralyzing prejudices.

Like St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland, the parade committee members are driving the worn and self-defeating anti-gay prejudices out of their own hearts and organization.

FRANCIS DeBERNARDO
Mount Rainier, MD

Gay Catholics find 'whisper of hope' in growing ministry

By Annysa Johnson
Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee)
October 18, 2014

John is a cradle Catholic, born and raised in the faith. His suburban parish, where he is active in the music ministry, is the one place where he has always felt a sense of belonging, of community and purpose. But when he began coming out as a gay man two years ago, he feared he might lose all of that.

John still feels welcome in the church. That's due in part to his parish priest, but also to a cadre of faithful who gather regularly to pray and explore what it means to be part of the body of Christ, regardless of one's sexual orientation.

John takes part in monthly meetings of Gay and Straight in Christ, a ministry founded at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Menomonee Falls that has expanded to at least three other parishes in the Milwaukee area.

"The Gay and Straight in Christ ministry has been a huge help for me," said John, who asked to be identified only by his first name in deference to his wife, who has struggled with the revelation that he is gay. "They make you feel that you can still be part of the church and that there are people who are supportive, even if the hierarchy and individual people aren't."

Gathered for a Synod on the Family in Rome, Catholic bishops issued a report this week calling on the church to welcome gay and lesbian people, saying they have "gifts and qualities to offer the Christian community."

But on Saturday the bishops failed to approve even a watered-down section on ministering to homosexuals that stripped away the welcoming tone of acceptance contained in the draft document earlier in the week.

The earlier report drew criticism from theological conservatives, who saw it as a

retreat, a betrayal even, from the church's teachings that homosexual acts are sinful and that marriage is a sacrament reserved exclusively for the union of a man and woman. Cardinal Raymond Burke, former bishop of La-Crosse, has been a vocal proponent of Catholic teaching that homosexuality is "objectively disordered," and on the eve of the synod said in an interview that gay sex is "always and everywhere wrong, evil."

Many Catholics struggle with that. More than half, 54%, favor same-sex marriage and only a third consider homosexual behavior a sin, according to the Pew Research Center.

Programs such as Gay and Straight in Christ are an effort to reach out to those many see as wounded and marginalized by the church.

"It's always made me angry that when we sing 'All Are Welcome,' it's clearly not the case," said Deacon Bill Goulding, who leads the Gay and Straight meetings at St. Mary Catholic Faith Community in Hales Corners. "It is so against the inclusive, loving Jesus I grew up to know. And when I hear people use an image of Christ to be exclusive, I just can't be silent."

These kinds of ministries are consistent with church teachings on human dignity and conscience, and efforts by Pope Francis to balance church doctrine with mercy and compassion for the "messiness of people's lives," said the Rev. Bryan Massingale, who teaches moral theology at Marquette University.

"They are witnessing to the totality of our Catholic teaching, not just teachings on sexual acts ... but on the dignity of the person who is loved by Christ regardless of their behavior."

Like the synod, they offer a "whisper of hope" for those who have felt shunned by the church, said Fred Hang, a former priest and gay man who now worships in an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation —

though he concedes for some it is too little too late.

"The community is extremely spiritual," he said. "Under all of that anger and hurt there is a tremendous hunger for God."

'Educating ourselves'

Gay and Straight in Christ was founded at Good Shepherd in 2004 by Ann Castiglione, a lay minister whose godson is gay, with support from its former pastor and fellow parishioners. She's been invited to speak at parishes across the archdiocese, and at least three other programs are up and running — at St. Mary, St. Joseph Parish in Graf-ton and Our Lady of Lourdes on Milwaukee's southwest side.

"At the beginning, it was a lot more about educating ourselves," Castiglione said. "It took awhile to attract anyone from the LGBT community. But they are coming more and more, some regularly, some just a few times to get the support they need."

Straight people come, she said, "to learn and give their support."

The St. Mary program, started almost three years ago, "has really exploded" to include as many as 20 regulars, including several who identify as LGBT, Goulding said.

During the monthly sessions, which begin and end in prayer, Goulding leads participants through a discussion of issues often around the intersection of faith and sexuality — discussions that inevitably touch on the tension between church authority and church teachings on the role of an informed conscience.

Last month they read about Sister Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of the faith-based LGBT advocacy group New Ways Ministry, and about a Manhattan

parish that celebrated the 44-year union of a lesbian couple in its bulletin.

"It raised some discussion about, wow, how can we push the envelope here?" Goulding said. "How can we be more out as a faith community?"

Leaders are careful not to contradict church teaching, though it's clear some struggle with it.

Whether sexually active gay people are receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist in their home parishes appears to be a matter of conscience. Priests and Eucharistic ministers don't appear to be policing them, any more than they do Catholics who use contraception, remarry without an annulment or don't go to confession.

"When people come up for Communion, we don't ask them if they're having sex, any more than we ask

about their views on the death penalty or abortion," said Deacon Sandy Sites, parish director at Good Shepherd, where he says its "big tent" approach is drawing new members at a time when many parishes are in decline.

Sites' commitment to the ministry is informed not just by his faith but by his personal experience watching his brother — a former seminarian and gay man — die of AIDS in 1986. The care provided by his brother's partner — "one of the most profound acts of love" he's ever witnessed — has led Sites to ask the same question posed by Pope Francis when asked about gay priests: Who am I to judge?

"What we are saying is that you are welcome here. Your story is between you and your confessor and God," Sites said. "I don't care who you are. When it comes to the teachings of Christ, it's not about the sin, it's about the person." ✦

Boston's Cardinal O'Malley: LGBT church worker firings "Need to be rectified"

(Continued from page 5)

cardinals, positioning him as the American prelate closest to the pope. O'Malley himself was considered to be a papal candidate before Francis' election, and one resigned Catholic priest listed Boston's cardinal as the most gay-friendly of the candidates.

What struck me most last Thursday was the cardinal's willing admission that terminating church workers due to their sexual orientation or marital status is indeed problematic. Catholic prelates have, at best, remained silent, and, at worst, supported discriminatory actions, in the more than forty public instances where a church employee left over LGBT issues. Cardinal O'Malley's statement that these firings "need to be rectified" is an episcopal echo of the tens of thousands of Catholics and people of faith who have long stood by mistreated LGBT and ally church workers. Regular readers of *Bondings 2.0* will recognize that even as the resignations and firings increase, so too do the rallies, petitions, and online outreach in solidarity with fired teachers like Barb Webb, Olivia Reichert and Christina Gambaro.

I hope Cardinal O'Malley will use his prominent position to help end situations where LGBT and ally church workers face discrimination and exclusion. It could be a major step in incarnating a church where all are truly welcome. As it is, the cardinal's kind words and frank admission are a wonderful start — and for them, I am most grateful.

Cardinal O'Malley is the first bishop to acknowledge that these employment actions are a problem. Let's hope and pray that he will not be the last. ✦

St. Matthew parish broaches topic of 'coming out' for parents, gay Catholics

By Maria Wiering
Catholic Review (Baltimore)
October 24, 2014

"Coming out is a journey for the whole family," a Catholic mother of a gay son said Oct. 12.

She and her husband shared their family's story at St. Matthew Parish in Northwood as part of a nine-person panel discussion called "When a Family Member Comes Out."

Moderated by Father Joseph L. Muth Jr., pastor of St. Matthew and Blessed Sacrament in Baltimore, the panel included three gay Catholics, two sets of parents of gay adult children, and a pastoral counselor from Loyola University of Maryland.

Each panelist shared his or her experience, including how coming out as gay affected their relationship with family members and the Catholic Church.

About 50 people attended the two-hour event, which included a question-and-answer session. Attendees asked for advice on personal situations, including navigating conversations with family members.

"People find themselves in a confusing place because they have a faith that allows them to be strong in the face of adversity, but they sometimes have a church that's been challenging them about how they should see their family members who are gay," said Father Muth in an interview after the event.

The panel discussion coincided with National Coming Out Day, Oct. 11. It was an extension of LEAD, St. Matthew's

LGBT ministry. The 3-year-old organization hosts monthly meetings. Its members have marched twice in Baltimore's Pride Parade.

Panelists candidly described realizing they or their children were gay and initially fearing the judgment of others, especially people at their churches. Some panelists maintained strong family relationships. Others, such as John, felt rejected and hurt. A gay Catholic and St. Matthew parishioner who asked his last name not be printed, John shared his experience of feeling shunned by his Catholic parents, who insisted on years of therapy. He spent time in seminary, and also participated in Courage, an apostolate for gay Catholics that focuses on helping its members live celibately.

Over the years, John's relationship with his parents has repeatedly frozen and thawed, he said. At times they refused to allow him to use "we" or "our" to refer to his then boyfriend, now legal husband; other times they met the two for dinner.

"To live with that tension, it's incredibly difficult," he said.

"No matter the amount of fuss you put up, it's not going to change that they're gay or lesbian," John added, speaking to parents of gay children. "There's a hyper-focus on (being) gay as the worst sin. That's hard to shake off. For me, it's been a process."

The panel was held in the middle of the 11-day Synod of Bishops on the family in Rome, where topics included

pastoral responses to gay relationships. Midterm and final reports suggested disagreement among bishops over the kind of welcome gay Catholics should receive in the church.

Despite the church's insistence that its marriage teaching will not change, several panelists stated support for church sanctioning of gay marriage. All three of the gay panelists were civilly married to same-sex partners. Several explicitly rejected Catholic teaching that marriage is reserved for a one-man-one-woman relationship, and that all non-married Catholics, including those who are gay, are "called" to celibacy.

Father Muth said that he's spoken with people who feel positive about the synod's potential outcomes on homosexuality.

"The church teaching may or may not change at some point down the road — that's not something I can do anything about — but the initial step to people who have felt rejected and put aside for many years is to create an atmosphere of welcome," he said.

That atmosphere also encourages gay Catholics to tell their stories, he said.

"I think through that storytelling, people begin to see how hurt people have been and how they've turned away from the church," he said. "With the church's whole emphasis on this new evangelization, this is a real opportunity to reverse the attitude — to have a more welcoming, compassionate, listening attitude, to tell people they can be included." ✦



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: 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

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. 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
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, 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, St. Francis de Sales
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

Virginia

Arlington: NOVA Catholic Community

Washington

Olympia: Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community

Wisconsin

Madison: Holy Wisdom Monastery

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Zero Tolerance: Why Catholics must condemn anti-gay violence

By Celso Perez
America Magazine
December 8-15, 2014

The recent assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family has brought renewed attention to Catholic approaches to gay and lesbian persons. During the synod, church leaders discussed pastoral and theological perspectives regarding the place of homosexual persons in the church, and church teaching vis-à-vis homosexuality.

Despite a significant opening in dialogue, the synod discussions made relatively little mention of the violence that sexual and gender minorities regularly face in communities around the world. (In this essay I use the term sexual and gender minorities as a shorthand to refer to all individuals who identify as something other than heterosexual or cis-gender.) Sadly, violence is still a lived reality for Catholics and non-Catholics who fail to conform to certain expressions of sexuality or gender. International entities like the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have noted alarming rates of physical aggression against these individuals. Additionally, in at least 76 countries, laws still criminalize particular expressions of sexuality and gender. These laws often make people vulnerable to prosecution by the state, as well as to attack and persecution by members of the public.

Growing awareness of such discriminatory practices underscores the importance of having Catholics reiterate a message of care and nonviolence toward these individuals when discussing issues of sexuality and gender. As church leaders have noted, these calls are consistent with Catholic doctrine on the dignity of all human beings. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls on Catholics to treat “homosexual persons” with “respect, compassion and sensitivity.” The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s letter “On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons” (1986) mandates respect for the intrinsic dignity of each person in word, in action and in law and condemns violence against homosexual people.

Positive Shifts

Since his election in March of 2013, Pope Francis has repeatedly voiced his concern for the most vulnerable people in society. In his first apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” the pope emphasized the need to “draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ.”

Pope Francis seems to have been applying this concern for the vulnerable to his treatment of sexual and gender minorities. In summer 2013, when asked about gay priests in the church, the pope famously replied, “If someone is gay and seeks the Lord with good will, who am I to judge?” In a subsequent interview published in America, he elaborated on these remarks, emphasizing the need to love and accompany gay people, not categorically reject and condemn them.

Other church leaders have more explicitly spoken out against the physical violence and harassment experienced by sexual and gender minorities. Last summer, for instance, the Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya, Archbishop Charles Daniel Balvo, stressed that while the church does not approve of homosexual conduct, it recognizes and respects everyone’s individual dignity. In the wake of growing reports of anti-gay violence in parts of Africa, the archbishop said that “homosexuals should be defended against violation of their dignity and human rights; they are human beings like any one of us.” In Brazil, the Peace and Justice Commission of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, a group composed of both lay people and clergy, strongly condemned the alarming number of attacks against sexual and gender minorities reported in the country.

Others have spoken out against laws criminalizing sexual acts. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, archbishop of Mumbai, has openly criticized India’s anti-sodomy law. After India’s Supreme Court reinstated the law, the archbishop was quoted as saying that the church “is opposed to the legalization of gay marriage, but teaches that homosexuals have the same dignity as every human being, and condemns all forms of unjust discrimination, harassment or abuse.” According to the archbishop, this includes the criminalization of consenting sexual acts between people of the same sex, because the church “has never considered gay people criminals.”

Bishop Gabriel Malzaire of Roseau, Dominica, and Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Pontifical Council on Peace and Justice, have made similar comments regarding the criminalization of sodomy in Dominica and Uganda, respectively. Bishops in South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland and Ghana have called on Catholics this year to stand with the powerless in the face of draconian legislation being passed around the African continent.

Numerous Catholic communities have also embraced sexual and gender minorities, creating a safe space for them in the church and in society at large. In the United States, for instance, an unofficial survey by Catholic groups found over 200 “gay-friendly” parishes across the country. U.S. priests have reported growing acceptance of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (often grouped together under the acronym LGBT)—particularly among younger parishioners.

Keeping Consistent

The meaning and scope of unjust discrimination against homosexual persons is still subject to debate in Catholic circles. But church teaching suggests that, at a minimum, this includes a need to

refrain from and condemn violence against people on account of their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender expression. As Catholic leaders have noted, this includes the criminalization of consenting sexual behavior among adults.



Cardinal Oswald Gracias, archbishop of Mumbai, has openly criticized India’s anti-sodomy law.

homosexual people, including discriminatory penal legislation that undermines the inherent dignity of the human person.

Church Failures

Despite these positive examples, many Catholic leaders and communities have ignored or seemingly contravened the church’s stated position toward sexual and gender minorities.

In Cameroon, for example, human rights organizations have routinely reported on citizens who are arrested and prosecuted simply for “being gay”—ostensibly determined by their dress, mannerisms or personal tastes. Organizations that work to defend the rights of sexual and gender minorities face horrific attacks. Last year, a well-known human rights activist, Eric Lembembe, was brutally tortured and murdered.

Proud Record

January 5-12, 2015
America Magazine

To the Editor:

America’s proud record of opposing repressive laws that target lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people was once again on display in Celso Perez’s cover story, “Zero Tolerance: Why Catholics Must Condemn Anti-Gay Violence” (12/8). For several years, I have followed the horrifying trend of criminalizing LGBT people in nations around the globe. From my observation, America was the first Catholic periodical to criticize such laws in an editorial (January 2012) and strongly repeated the condemnation of these measures again in February 2014.

Mr. Perez gets to the crux of the matter when he notes that Catholic leaders’ silence about anti-LGBT legislation or, worse, their implicit and explicit support of such measures often sparks prejudiced attitudes that fuel violent acts against LGBT people. The U.S. bishops, in their 1994 pastoral letter “Confronting a Culture of Violence,” identified this dynamic when they condemned the “slow-motion violence of discrimination.”

Catholic bishops around the world are often the strongest and most vocal critics of same-gender marriage initiatives. They say they feel compelled to speak out because of church teaching on marriage and procreation. Yet, despite the fact that church teaching equally condemns discrimination and violence against LGBT people, bishops too often remain stonily silent about such matters. Why do bishops feel it is permissible to speak on the sexual ethics part of church teaching about LGBT people and not the social justice part?

FRANCIS DeBERNARDO
Mt. Rainier, MD

In 2008, at the U.N. General Assembly, the Vatican representative publicly stated that it “continues to advocate that every sign of unjust discrimination towards homosexual persons should be avoided and urges states to do away with criminal penalties against them. Governments should do away with unjust criminal penalties.”

Although the statement did not give examples of these unjust criminal pen-

alties, the Vatican spokesperson pointed out that they include “not only the death penalty, but all violent or discriminatory penal legislation in relation to homosexuals.” At a United Nations side event in New York in 2009, the Holy See reiterated its opposition to all forms of violence and unjust discrimination against

Since 2006 politicians in Nigeria have debated a series of statutory measures that would criminalize same-sex civil marriage, impose harsh penalties on same-sex couples and even criminalize participation in a group that advocates the rights of sexual and gender minorities. Earlier this year, in a letter to President Goodluck Jonathan on behalf of the Nigerian Catholic Church, Nigerian clergy praised a new law that imposes severe criminal penalties on public displays of affection between people of the same sex as “courageous and wise.” Nigerian church leaders have made no effort to condemn violent attacks against sexual and gender minorities after the law was passed earlier this year.

In Uganda the Catholic Church has wavered in its position on a similar bill. In December 2009 Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga opposed Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which initially proposed the death penalty for same-sex sexual acts. Archbishop Lwanga called the bill “at odds with Christian values” like “respect, compassion and sensitivity.” At the time the Holy See also condemned the bill as unjust discrimination. In June 2012, however, a coalition of Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox churches asked the Ugandan parliament to speed up the process of enacting a version of this same bill.

The Ugandan bill was passed in early 2014. It contained provisions calling for more severe sanctions against people who engage in homosexual acts, including life in prison. The bill also criminalized related offenses like the promotion of homosexuality and the “attempt to commit homosexuality.” Human rights groups reported an escalation in evictions, violence and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities after the bill became law.

Rather than condemn these attacks, several Ugandan bishops categorically supported the legislation during their Easter homilies. Some came close to tacitly endorsing—or at least excusing—acts of violence. Archbishop Lwanga has more recently published a manuscript noting the need to respect and care for homosexual people, yet as of this writing, the Ugandan church as a whole has done little to condemn the abuses that sexual and gender minorities face. While the 2014 law was struck down by Uganda’s Constitutional Court in August, Ugandan lawmakers have proposed a similar bill, which they intend to pass before the end of the year.

In the Caribbean, the archbishop of Kingston, Jamaica, Charles Dufour, has also refused to condemn both the endemic violence sexual and gender minorities face in Jamaica and the Jamaican government’s criminalization of private sexual acts between consenting adults. In recent years, human rights organizations, the Organization of American States, the U.S. State Department and other governments and organizations have criticized this violence. Beatings, police brutality, torture and murder of people in sexual and gender minorities are commonplace.

The statements and actions of church leaders have a profound impact on the social environment in which people belonging to sexual and gender minorities live. Church leaders need to distinguish between morally condemning certain acts and relationships and implicitly or explicitly condoning violence and persecution. The failure to do so not only contravenes church teaching, but contributes to a climate of hostility that threatens lives. In the upcoming year, the Synod of Bishops will continue to discuss the church’s family pastoral practices. As church leaders continue to discuss the morality of same-sex unions and whether homosexuals are to be welcomed into the church, they would also do well to condemn clearly and categorically the violence that sexual and gender minorities face in communities around the world. †