

BONDINGS

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Father James Martin, Advocate for LGBTQ Catholics, Received by Pope Francis

By Francis DeBernardo
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
September 20, 2019

Father James Martin, SJ, author of *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*, was received this morning by Pope Francis in a private audience at the Vatican.

Fr. Martin, whose book is based on the lecture he gave when he received New Ways Ministry's Bridge Building Award in 2016, has become a leading advocate for LGBTQ ministry in the Catholic Church. Since the publication of the book in 2017, he has been tireless in spreading the word about LGBTQ inclusion in the church's pastoral life.

This meeting with the pope refutes the unjustified barrage of criticism he has received from a minority of church leaders and other anti-LGBTQ sectors of the church. Even more so, it recognizes that Fr. Martin's approach to LGBTQ pasto-



Fr. James Martin talks with Pope Francis.

ral ministry, already praised by bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, has won the approval of the highest levels of the church. It is a clear signal that Pope Francis is calling the church to conversion away from the negative messages it has sent in the past about LGBTQ peo-

Besides recognizing Fr. Martin's ministry, this meeting is also an affirmation of the thousands of Catholics around the U.S. and around the globe who have been reaching out pastorally to LGBTQ people and their families in the ways that Fr. Martin has described in his book. This is a day of rejoicing for the many lay people, nuns, priests, brothers, deacons, theologians who have quietly and persistently, often in the face of harsh and insensitive criticism, continued to follow Jesus' command to reach out to all people, especially those marginalized and misunderstood. It is a day of celebration for LGBTQ Catholics who have longed

for an outstretched hand of welcome from the church that they love.

This meeting is one of the many ways that Pope Francis has been sending out the message that he wants the church to do *more* affirming pastoral initiatives with the LGBTQ community. Just this past weekend, it became known that the pope restored priestly functions to Fr. James Alison, a prominent, openly gay theologian. Earlier this year, the pope greeted a group of LGBTQ and ally pilgrims from the Westminster Diocese, England, who attended the papal audience in St. Peter's Square. He has met with a transgender Catholic man, received a gay former student along with his partner, invited and met with Bishop Jacques Gaillot, an advocate for LGBTQ people and relationships, affirmed the transgender ministry of an Argentinian nun, and wrote a friendly note to a group of LGBTQ Catholics which meets in Florence, Italy. In 2015, a group of New Ways Ministry pilgrims received VIP seats for the Ash Wednesday papal audience in St. Peter's Square. †

German Cardinal, Key Bishop Endorse Church Blessings for LGBTQ Couples

By Robert Shine
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
January 3, 2020

Two leaders of the German Bishops' Conference have offered support for church blessings of same-gender couples.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising stated in an interview that same-gender couples could receive a church blessing, reported *Katholisch.de*:

"According to Cardinal Reinhard Marx, homosexual couples can receive a blessing 'in the sense of pastoral care' in the Catholic Church. But no marriage-like relationship is blessed with this, he said in an interview with *Stern* on Monday. Marriage is also not possible. 'The sacrament of marriage is based on the faithful relationship between man and woman, which is open to children.'

"At the same time, Marx emphasized that homosexuals are welcome in the church. If people in same-sex relationships have been faithful for years and are there for one another, then the Church must not 'bracket out negatively' about this life and say that it was worth nothing. 'I get criticism for this from some sides,' said the Archbishop of Munich. 'Some say: It goes too far. Others: It doesn't go far enough.'"

With this latest statement, Marx, who is a close advisor to Pope Francis and chair of the German Bishops' Conference, has reversed his 2018 position against blessings for same-gender couple. At that time, Marx said the issue was not a priority for the German episcopate. But the topic has taken on new life as the German church begins its Synodal Way process to examine issues in church life, including sexual morality.

Elsewhere in Germany, Bishop Franz-Josef Bode of Osnabrück affirmed his support for church blessings a third time. *Novena News* reported:

"On the subject of pastoral care for gay couples, Bishop Bode was equally clear: the basic principle of love should be the moral-theological yardstick for all human relationships, including partnership and sexuality.

"We in the Church 'should approach this area [sexuality] more positively, closer to people and closer to life', insisted the bishop.

"Bode thereby hinted at the possibility of establishing official Church blessings for gay couples – in the line, at least, of recent suggestions of German Bishops' President Cardinal Reinhard Marx."

Bode, however, dampened expectations that the Synodal Way could lead to church blessings, warning that this issue

and the question of women's ordination are not an "all-or-nothing affair," but rather reform would "only come step-by-step and in synchrony with the world Church and with Rome." As vice-president of the German Bishops' Conference and leading the Synodal Way's working group on women, Bode has a key role to play in that process overall.

Bode first issued his support for these blessings in 2018, calling on the church to consider positive elements in same-gender relationships beyond just writing them off as gravely sinful. In January 2019, he repeated this support saying he was "sure that the category of blessing will play a role" in the pastoral accompaniment of LGBTQ people. Bode added at that time, "We must not always treat homosexuality from the point of view of serious sin." †

Austrian priest celebrates "liturgy of thanksgiving" for lesbian civil marriage

By Novena News
Novenanews.com
November 14, 2019

An Austrian priest has celebrated a "liturgy of thanksgiving" for two lesbians who are both believing Christians" and are in a civil marriage.

A spokesman for the diocese of Graz-Seckau confirmed November 11 that a series of photos on social media of the two women in wedding clothes came from a service conducted by Father Michael Kopp in St. Margaret's church in Wolfsburg.

"The basic question is if homosexual people can feel themselves at home in the Church," Thomas Stanzer told *kath.net* on Monday.

"Family spiritual advisor Michael Kopp answered 'yes' to this question," the spokesman explained.

Stanzer was careful to point out that the service for the two women's union

was "not a sacramental liturgy," due to the current Church ban on same-sex marriage.

But the spokesman did say that Kopp "celebrated a liturgy of thanksgiving with two civilly-married women who are both believing Christians and who had both found their way out of personal crises with the help of the Catholic Church".

Stanzer quoted as support for the service Pope Francis' 2016 apostolic exhortation on love in the family, *Amoris laetitia*.

"Every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (250) states," the spokesman affirmed.

"At the same time it is stated there that the partnership-like connection of two homosexuals cannot be equalled with marriage (251). Both of these things Michael Kopp has followed".

Photos of the thanksgiving liturgy for the two women were published to a Polish social media account before finding their way to ultraconservative Catholic websites, which quickly protested over the images' similarity to wedding photos.

One photo features the two women lighting a candle together before the altar, while another one shows priest Kopp with his hand raised over the couple in a blessing.

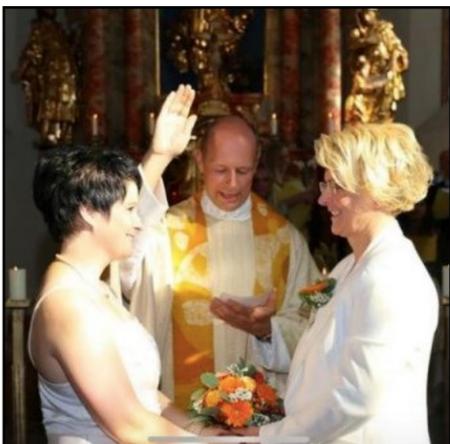
Other images feature details such as flower girls, family members and chairs with ribbons for the couple at the front of the church, as well as the two women holding hands, exchanging rings, embracing, and processing in and out of the service.

Suspensions aside, however, it is easy to believe the diocese's account of the service, and to see in the women's big smiles the relief that would come with finding a "way out of personal crises" with the Church's help.

Kopp, the pastor of St. Margaret's in

Wolfsburg, is well-known in Austria for the two cabaret acts he has written since being ordained in 1997.

Before he came to the diocese of Graz-Seckau in January this year, Kopp was a "family pastor" in the diocese of Gurk.



Fr. Michael Kopp blessing a lesbian couple during a liturgy of thanksgiving.



The couple lights the candle together during their liturgy of thanksgiving.

Earlier this year, Kopp said that family is "the root of every personal life existence."

The priest added that the concept of family embraces "every form of relationship among people in the most diverse constellations of common life." †

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

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

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

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Pope Francis Condemns Lesbian/Gay Persecution, Concerned About "Ex-Gay" Therapy

By Robert Shine
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
November 16, 2019

Pope Francis made two steps to further LGBTQ inclusion in the church this week: condemning the persecution of lesbian/gay people and meeting with a lesbian activist who works to end conversion therapy.

Addressing the International Association of Penal Law, the pope spoke of threats to common good that included a resurgence of "symbols and actions that are typical of Nazism," reported *America*:

"I must confess," the pope said, departing from his prepared remarks, "that when I hear some speeches, some person in charge of order or the government, I am reminded of Hitler's speeches in 1934 and 1936."

"They are actions typical of Nazism that, with its persecution of Jews, gypsies and people of homosexual orientation, represent a negative model par excellence of a throwaway culture and hate," the pope said. "That is what happened in that time and today, these things are reappearing."

Francis added, per *Crux*, "We must be vigilant, both

in the civil sphere and the ecclesial context, to avoid any possible compromise – which is assumed to be involuntary – with these degenerations."

New Ways Ministry welcomed the pope's statement, saying the papal words will "save lives, protect people from harm, help keep families together, and work towards eradicating hateful attitudes." The statement hopefully signifies a new direction for church leaders condemning anti-LGBTQ violence and persecution.

Also this week, Jayne Ozanne, a lesbian who is an Anglican and activist against conversion therapy, met with Pope Francis on Thursday. She celebrated Mass with the pope at his private chapel and had a conversation afterwards. *The Tablet* reported that Ozanne presented Francis with two items: a copy of *Just Love*, her memoir, and the report of a 2018 survey on faith and sexuality:

"In *Just Love* Ms Ozanne describes her own experience as a gay Christian, including the impact 'conversion therapy' had on her. She was hospitalised, and ostracised by many conservative Christians after she recovered and came out as gay.

"Ms. Ozanne told the Pope that she was a gay, evan-

(Continued on page 7)

A Father's Plea to Church Leaders About LGBT Issues

By Brian Cahill
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
December 29, 2019

I am the father of a gay son, and I was slow to learn how painful, denigrating, and debilitating were the constant legal, social, and religious reminders that he and those like him were not fully accepted members of the human community. In his memoir, *Hidden*, Richard Giannone writes about his experience as a young gay Catholic: "The lesson of alienation comes easily to a malleable, young consciousness and stays. The cumulative effect is toxic. The pain is insupportable."

My son also experienced this toxic effect and insupportable pain. He knew he was different, and he was frightened that others would discover he was different. He felt isolated even in his own family, with a father who, at the time, could not make him feel loved and safe, who could not tell him that being gay was not relevant in the eyes of a loving God. I thought as long as I loved him he would be okay. But I didn't have a clue how to talk to him about it. I didn't have a clue how much he would be on the receiving end of hate and ignorance in the world, hate and ignorance that continues to this day, hate and ignorance that for the most part derives from organized religion, hate and ignorance that is still virally present in the Catholic Church.

Today I am no longer groveling in guilt. I love my son and he knows it. I respect his intellect, his integrity, his endurance, his professional accomplishments, and his long-term committed relationship with his husband. However, I know the impact of my failure at a key time in his life. I also know that I am not alone, that my son is not alone, that there are thousands of families who have experienced the pain of this issue and thousands more who are currently experiencing it. So speaking for all of them on this feast day of The Holy Family, I want to shout to our Church leaders to review the viability of Church teaching when it comes to same-sex activity, to own at least partial responsibility for the hate and ignorance and pain that my son and countless others have had to overcome, and to examine whether this teaching is enhancing souls and is consistent with Jesus' message of love and inclusiveness.

In some ways the refusal of church leaders to tackle this issue is understandable. For one thing, many bishops do not seem to be bothered when LGBT individuals are on the receiving end of hate and discrimination. Moreover, discussions about LGBT issues can become instantly overheated. Just look at some of the negative responses to Jesuit Fr. James Martin's bridge building efforts. While some conservative Catholics have respectfully objected to Fr. Martin's approach, other Catholic voices, hiding under the banner of orthodoxy, have viciously attacked him, making it clear that they refuse to even approach his bridge. Their responses reveal the homophobia that is at the core of their advocacy for current church teaching on sexuality. But I refuse to give up hope that the Spirit can figure out a way to make our church strong enough to hold all the baggage both sides will have to carry over it.

The bottom line is that while Catholic leaders have to address all of the issues affecting the institutional church, including clericalism, the cover up of abuse, the diminishment of women, and insensitivity to LGBT issues, sooner or later they will also have to address the destructive, divi-

sive reality of an outdated theology of sexuality.

The resistance of bishops to review church teaching on sexuality is not based on the absence of thoughtful theological proposals. In *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, Mercy Sister Margaret Farley, a moral theologian at Yale Divinity School, argues that a review of sexual ethics is required because of major advances in psychology, gender and human behavior. She presents a detailed analysis of the justice norms that are required for morally accepted sexual relationships: do no harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice.

In *Sexual Ethics: A Theological Introduction*, Creighton University moral theologians Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler build on Farley's work. They argue it is impossible and irresponsible to ignore how experience and culture inform and influence responsible thinking about sexual behavior.

And finally, in *God and the Gay Christian*, Matthew Vines, a young gay evangelical, makes a biblical case for affirming committed same sex relationships. Vines declares, "When we tell people that their every desire for intimate, sexual bonding is shameful and disordered, we encourage them to hate a core part of who they are. And when we reject the desire of gay Christians to express their sexuality within a life-

long covenant, we separate them from our covenantal God, and we tarnish their ability to bear his image."

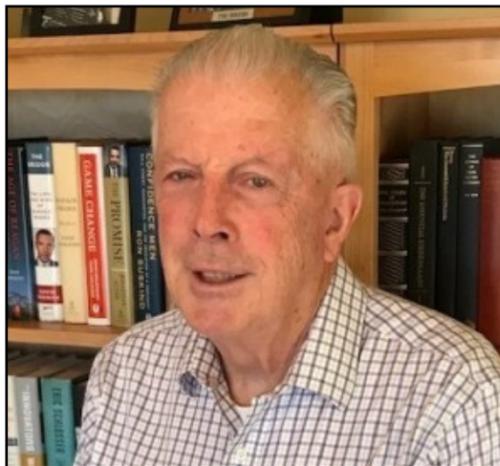
Revising church teaching is nothing new. Changes in the church's moral teaching are well documented in John Noonan's *A Church That Can Change and Cannot Change*. Noonan makes clear how the church changed its moral theology regarding slavery, usury and freedom of conscience without any retreat from the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

On this feast day that focuses on family life, I plead with our church leaders to look at LGBT issues. On behalf of my son and all his contemporaries, and on behalf of those who came before them and after them, please look at how doctrine keeps people in suffocating closets. On behalf of all the parents of gay, lesbian and trans children, please look at how doctrine is splitting apart families. On behalf of all nineteen-year old college students who are struggling with the decision to come out, and on behalf of all fourteen year olds who are feeling frightened, isolated, confused and threatened, please look at how doctrine is causing psychological and physical harm.

If our church leaders don't review their theology of sexuality, they will continue to unintentionally, but effectively, fuel the flames of hate and ignorance in the world. If they don't, they will continue to be burdened with an untenable teaching that mouths love and respect for gays and lesbians while at the same time it condemns them for acting on their natural gift to share love. If they don't, they will be actively encouraging the rapidly growing movement of young Catholics—and some not-so-young—giving up on the Church they have loved.

The teaching is toxic. The teaching causes real pain. The teaching is not consistent with Jesus' message of love and inclusiveness. ✚

Brian Cahill, is former executive director of San Francisco Catholic Charities and the author of Cops, Cons and Grace, A Father's Journey Through His Son's Suicide.



Brian Cahill

It's not about ethics, it's about how we imagine God

By Tom Roberts
The National Catholic Reporter
September 10, 2019

"I come to this conversation as a Black, gay priest and theologian." That was the opening line of Fr. Bryan Massingale's July 4 talk at [a conference day co-sponsored by the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics and] DignityUSA, a group that self describes as "Celebrating the wholeness and holiness of LGBTQ Catholics." DignityUSA also hosted a four-day gathering of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics, [a worldwide coalition of pro-LGBTQ Catholic organizations and individuals] prior to the conference.

As did others, I first perceived the talk as a public coming out. But as Massingale, a professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University, explained in an email exchange and a phone conversation, it really wasn't.

"I didn't do this because I felt the need for some grand announcement," he wrote in an email. "As I said in my reflection, the headline is not 'Priest Comes Out.' ... For many years I have been out and honest about my sexuality to those I love and who love me. Also, my orientation is not 'breaking news' to many others who know me more casually."

Whatever his intent, this distinguished scholar and author knew how to get our attention. His personal story of growing awareness and self-discovery is filled with the fury and anguish of someone answering a call to a vocation that, from the outset, simultaneously invites him to engage a deep yearning for God while setting him up for an inevitable rejection at the core of his humanity.

Massingale's headline for the talk was "The Challenge of Idolatry for LGBTQI Ministry," and that holds the key to the deepest part of his message. What's idolatry got to do with it? As much as God's got to do with it — and that's everything.

It was during an Ignatian retreat in 1982, just before his ordination as deacon, as he meditated on the first creation story in Genesis, that he "noticed that when creation was finished, there wasn't a single Black person. Nor were there any gay people. As I looked at humanity, at all those created in the image of God, there were none that looked like me. Or loved like me. There was nothing in crea-

tion that mirrored me." Or at least not as years of Catholic education had informed his imagination and his understanding of himself and of God. "My own prayer betrayed that I didn't believe it. I didn't believe that God could be imaged as Black. Or as gay. And certainly not as both simultaneously."

The heart of his insight is worth quoting at length:

"The major challenge we face as sexually minoritized persons is not a problem of sexual ethics. We tend to think, and we are told, that our problems in church and society stem from our non-conformity with the church's moral code. "But the church has a solution for that

issue. If you sin, you can go to confession. You receive forgiveness and absolution. ... Our deepest problem — the one that causes us the most pain, alienation, and self-estrangement — is that we've been told a false story about God and have been given false images of God. That's our problem.

"Underlying all of the struggles we endure around the world and the stories that we've heard

throughout this assembly — stories of being kicked out of parishes, ostracized from our families, and in general being not welcome — underlying all of these experiences is a story that Catholicism tells about itself.

"At the heart of this story is that to be Catholic is to be straight. 'Catholic' = 'straight.' Official Catholicism tells a story where only heterosexual persons, heterosexual love, heterosexual intimacy, heterosexual families — only these can unambiguously mirror the Divine. Only these are truly sacred. Genuinely holy. Only these are worthy of unreserved acceptance and respect. All other persons and expressions of love, family life, intimacy, and sexual identity are sacred (if at all) only by toleration or exception.

"In effect, we are told that we are 'afterthoughts' in the story of creation, not part of the original plan. In other words, we are 'children of a lesser god.' ... Yes, we certainly need to rethink our church's official sexual ethics. *But even more, we have to rethink God.*

"Imagine, those of us not burdened by such a limited God, what life would be like if our acceptance in the Catholic community were dependent on the tolerance of other human beings rather than



Father Bryan Massingale

on the assumption of God's unqualified love for us. Imagine if the image of God advanced by religious leaders excluded an element of your human identity that is intrinsic to who you are."

Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister, in speaking about the evolution of her thinking about God, says that what we believe about God — how we imagine God — "colors everything we do in the name of God. It forms everything we think about other people." Indeed, she notes, belief in God is really no big deal — it has happened endlessly throughout history. "It is the kind of God in which we choose to believe that in the end makes all the difference."

Women, understandably, provide some of the deepest new insights into reimagining the God of Catholic Christianity who emerged from centuries of formulation by a largely all-male, celibate, secretive culture.

In her book *Quest for the Living God*, St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson writes

that struggles to understand God in new ways have emerged in recent decades because of a variety of events and forces — such as trying to understand the evil of the Holocaust, a range of social justice issues and "from Christianity's encounter with goodness and truth in the world's religious traditions." What once was settled territory, the monarch (always male) whose relationship with humans was a series of transactions and of totting up good and bad on a cosmic balance sheet, is being surveyed anew and rebuilt.

"By idolatry," said Massingale, "I mean the pervasive belief that only heterosexual persons, loves, and relationships are standard, normative, universal, and truly 'Catholic.' That only these can mediate the Divine and carry the holy. That God can be imaged only as straight."

This puts the conversation in new territory. Massingale turns the question from "To what ethics do you subscribe?" to "Who is the God you believe in?" †

Priest's revelation helps me recognise my homophobia

By Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya
Spotlight.Africa
September 4, 2019

My first reaction when I read Fr. Bryan Massingale's *personal testimony* as a "black, gay priest and theologian" was to ask myself: Is he really coming out or is he just trying to be controversial?

Of course, it will draw attention — positive and negative — when a Catholic priest says: "I come to this conversation as a Black, gay priest and theologian. I am informed not only by my sexuality, my faith, and my study of the Church's ethical beliefs, but also by the traditions of Black freedom struggles in the US, struggles which, at their core, are matters of the soul and the spirit"

The question I asked myself was: Is he really gay? In my mental image, I "know" what homosexual people look like and how they behave. Fr Massingale, whom I met when he was in South Africa for the Winter Living Theology Series last year, did not look or behave like my mental image of gay people.

But soon, I found myself thinking: why am I even asking that question? What is it to me that Fr Massingale or anyone else in the world, is straight or gay?"

The uncomfortable answer is that it really is none of my business. The answer only serves to satisfy my base instinct to box human beings and validate them according to my own subjective prism of worthiness.

Until his declaration, I knew Fr. Massingale as a thought-provocative black priest who is not shy to call out whiteness and white privilege in society and in the church.

For that reason, as a black male who grew up in apartheid South Africa, I resonated with him. He understood and articulated my struggle. As a Catholic priest and theologian, he spoke of how I hope my own life will unfold.

When he spoke about racial justice, it didn't occur to me to question his motives because I am part of the "victimhood" he speaks and writes about. Until now.

Yet the moment I asked myself that first question, I transitioned from sharing his "victimhood" and became part of the "perpetratorhood." I questioned Fr. Massingale's motives. So much for thinking of myself as open-minded and a proud product of the liberation and contextual theologies that informed my poli-

tics for most of my life.

I do not assume to speak on behalf of anyone other than myself. Fr. Massingale's declaration of who he is asks me to look at who I am.

My hope is that at the end of my self-reflection, I am as liberated about my own bigotries around sexual orientation, as I suspected Fr. Massingale has been by owning his own truth. The truth, specifically knowing it, shall set us free, Jesus told us (John 8: 32).

I wish I could say that the question I asked of Fr. Massingale's sexual orientation arises only some of the time. It probably happens every time that individuals

do not fit into neat boxes of how straight men and women ought to be, as though there is a prescribed way of being man or woman. Unhappily, I do not always have the presence of mind to call myself to task when I ask this question and continue the heteronormative account of being human.

The net effect of what I wish I could put down to simple curiosity or voyeurism is harsh even for me to accept: I am a homophobe. If I were not a homophobe, another

person's sexual orientation would be as irrelevant as the shape of their ears or their star sign.

I can imagine that questions about his being a priest will arise. Again, I do not see how this is critical for two reasons. The first is that priests have taken a vow to be celibate and therefore forsake their sexual inclinations — whatever they might be.

Secondly, the President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), Bishop Sithembel Sipuka of Mthatha, speaking at the SACBC's bi-annual plenary session in Marianhill, KwaZulu-Natal in July, called out "the issue of priests with children, which unlike the rape of Sisters is something that often surface[s] in our Conference."

Bishop Sipuka also expressed concern for "a lot of talk about the active homosexual and lesbian relationships occurring among priests and nuns respectively."

I cannot see how any religious person who takes vows of chastity but does not keep them can argue that they are better or worse based on who they break those vows with.

Fr. Massingale has started a conversation that will go on for a long time. Nobody can know for sure how the story will end. For me and my homophobia, I hope to live out Pope Francis' simple yet powerful five words: Who am I to judge? †



Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya

Caribbean Archbishop Seeks Repeal Of LGBTQ Criminalization Law

By Robert Shine
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
October 26, 2019

An archbishop in St. Lucia has called for the Caribbean nation to reconsider its anti-LGBTQ law after a young man there died by suicide.

Archbishop Robert Rivas of Castries critiqued St. Lucia's law criminalizing homosexuality when a debate over LGBTQ rights in the island nation erupted earlier this year, reported *The Star*. The cause of this debate was the suicide of 17-year-old Gervais Emmanuel, who was believed to be gay. Justice Minister Hermandild Francis then suggested the criminalization law be reconsidered.

Following Emmanuel's tragic death, Rivas rebutted claims the Catholic Church opposes LGBTQ people:

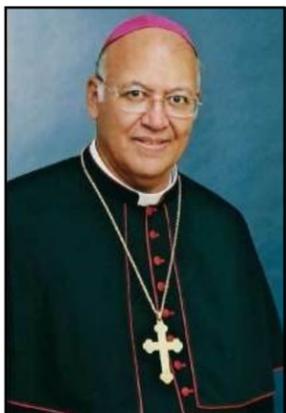
"Whoever said the church is

against [homosexuals] is probably misinformed about the church today. I have never said that in my preaching in Saint Lucia. I've been here eleven years and a

bishop for 29 years. I've never preached that, and I've never heard our archdiocese preach that." Rivas said the church "is learning and is listening." He then commented on the criminalization law:

"In so many developed societies . . . it has gone beyond debate. If it is a law that is distressful and it's not a law that has been serving its purpose the way it ought to have served its purpose in the past, then it has to be reviewed and updated as necessary. I hope that our governments

in the region will look at all the situations and do the right thing, but always maintaining a high standard of morals and values for our people." †



Archbishop Robert Rivas

LGBT-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities

Below is a list of known LGBT-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 welcomes LGBT Catholics, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in LGBT community events, or involvement with parents. For links to many of these parishes' websites, go to www.NewWaysMinistry.org/resources/parishes.

To recommend a community for the list, please email info@newwaysministry.org or call 301-277-5674. Parishes are listed first and intentional Eucharistic communities follow. If you learn that any of the places on this list are no longer LGBT-Friendly, please inform us of that, too.



PARISHES

Alabama

Decatur: Annunciation of the Lord
Montgomery: St. Bede

Arizona

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

California

Baldwin Park: St. John the Baptist
Berkeley: Holy Spirit Parish
Burney: St. Francis of Assisi
Carlsbad: St. Patrick
Camarillo: Padre Serra Parish
Claremont: Our Lady of Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Encino: Our Lady of Grace
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph-Mission San Jose
Fresno: St. Anthony Claret, St. Paul Newman Center
Goleta: St. Mark Univ. Parish
Hawthorne: St. Joseph (Spanish)
Hayward: All Saints
Huntington Beach: Sts. Simon and Jude
La Puente: St. Martha
Lemon Grove: St. John of the Cross
Long Beach: St. Matthew, Our Lady of Refuge
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, St. Anselm
North Hollywood: St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Patrick
Oakland: Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Columba, St. Jarleth
Oceanside: St. Thomas More
Orange: Holy Family Cathedral
Orangevale: Divine Savior
Palm Springs: St. Theresa, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Solitude
Pasadena: Assumption of the B.V.M.
Redondo: St. Lawrence Martyr
Redwood City: St. Matthias
Ross: St. Anselm
Sacramento: St. Francis of Assisi
San Carlos: St. Charles
San Diego: Ascension, St. John the Evangelist, St. Jude Shrine, Catholic Community of UC San Diego
San Dimas: Holy Name of Mary
San Francisco: Most Holy Redeemer, Old St. Mary Cathedral, St. Agnes, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Teresa of Avila
San Jose: St. Julie Billiart,
San Luis Obispo: Mission San Luis
San Ramon: St. Joan of Arc
San Raphael: Church of San Raphael & Mission San Raphael Arcangel
Santa Barbara: OL of Guadalupe
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
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, Our Lady of the Pines

Denver: St. Dominic, Christ the King, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Ignatius Loyola
Lafayette: Immaculate Conception
Lakewood: St. Bernadette
Littleton: Light of the World, St. Frances Cabrini

Connecticut

Guilford: St. George's
Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony
New Haven: St. Thomas More Chapel & Center

Delaware

North Wilmington: Holy Child
Wilmington: St. Joseph, Sacred Heart Oratory

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Matthew Cathedral

Florida

Cocoa Beach: Our Savior
Daytona Beach: Our Lady of Lourdes
Flagler Beach: Santa Maria del Mar
Ft. Lauderdale: Blessed Sacrament, St. Anthony, St. Maurice
Key West: Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea
Tampa: Sacred Heart

Georgia

Atlanta: Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

Idaho

Boise: St. Mary

Illinois

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

Indiana

Dyer: St. Maria Goretti
Franklin: St. Rose of Lima
Indianapolis: St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Gabriel the Archangel, St. Pius X

Iowa

Coralville: St. Thomas More
Des Moines: Holy Trinity

Kentucky

Lexington: Historic St. Paul Church, St. Peter Claver
Louisville: Epiphany, Cathedral of the Assumption, St. William, Our Lady of Lourdes



Louisiana

New Orleans: St. Augustine

Maine

Portland: Sacred Heart-St. Dominic, Our Lady of Hope
Saco: Most Holy Trinity

Maryland

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

Massachusetts

Amherst: Newman Catholic Center of UMass
Boston: St. Joseph, Paulist Center, St. Anthony Shrine, St. Cecilia
Brimfield: St. Christopher
Buzzard's Bay: St. Margaret's/St. Mary's
East Longmeadow: St. Michael
Medford: Catholic Community at Tufts University
Monson: St. Patrick
Newton: St. Ignatius
Provincetown: St. Peter
Sharon: Our Lady of Sorrows
Springfield: Sacred Heart
Whitinsville: St. Patrick

Michigan

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

Minnesota

Minneapolis: St. Frances Cabrini, St. Joan of Arc
St. Paul: St. Thomas More

Missouri

Kansas City: Guardian Angels, Holy Family, St. James, St. Francis Xavier
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, St. John Parish (Creighton University)

Nevada

Las Vegas: Christ the King, Guardian Angel Cathedral

New Hampshire

Merrimack: St. John Neumann
Pelham: St. Patrick

New Jersey

Cherry Hill: Christ Our Light
Clifton: St. Philip the Apostle
Hoboken: Our Lady of Grace
Keyport: St. Joseph
Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of Assisi
Maplewood: St. Joseph
Monmouth: Precious Blood
Pompton Lakes: St. Mary
River Edge: St. Peter the Apostle
South Plainfield: Sacred Heart
Tinton Falls: St. Anselm
Turnersville: Sts. Peter and Paul

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family, San Felipe de Neri
Esplanola: 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
Buffalo: St. Joseph University Parish
Deer Park: Ss. Cyril and Methodius
East Islip: St. Mary
Elmira: St. Mary
Fairport: Church of the Assumption
Henrietta: Good Shepherd
Ithaca: St. Catherine of Siena
Manhattan: Ascension, Blessed Sacrament, Holy Name of Jesus, St. Francis deSales, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Paul the Apostle
Pittsford: Church of Transfiguration
Rochester: Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica
Saratoga Springs: St. Peter
Schenectady: St. Luke
Syracuse: St. Lucy, All Saints
Utica: Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Historic Old St. John's
Wading River: St. John the Baptist
Wantagh: St. Frances de Chantal
West Islip: Our Lady of Lourdes
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, St. Francis de Sales
Cleveland: Blessed Trinity, St. Malachi, St. Martha
Columbus: St. Thomas More Newman Center, St. Francis of Assisi
Fairlawn: St. Hilary
Mentor: St. John Vianney
University Heights: Church of Gesu
Westlake: St. Ladislav
Wooster: St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

Oklahoma

Tulsa: St. Jerome

Oregon

Beaverton: Spirit of Grace
Portland: St. Andrew, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Phillip Neri, Downtown Chapel (St. Vincent de Paul), St. Ignatius

Pennsylvania

Danville: St. Joseph
Latrobe: St. Vincent Basilica
Philadelphia: Old St. Joseph, Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Vincent DePaul
Wallingford: St. John Chrysostom
Wilksburg: St. James

Rhode Island

Providence: St. Raymond
Warwick: Sts. Rose & Clement
Wickford: St. Bernard

LGBT-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

Tennessee
Memphis: St. Patrick, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Texas
Austin: Univ. of Texas Catholic Center
Colleyville: Good Shepherd
Dallas: Holy Trinity
El Paso: All Saints
Houston: St. Anne, St. Teresa
Odessa: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Plano: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Virginia
Arlington: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Glen Allen: St. Michael the Archangel
Mechanicsville: Church of the Redeemer Heart, Sacred Heart Parish
Roanoke: St. Gerard
Triangle: St. Francis
Virginia Beach: St. Nicholas

Washington
Seattle: Christ Our Hope, St. Benedict, St. James Cathedral, St. Joseph, St. Mary's
Spokane: St. Aloysius
Tacoma: St. Leo

Wisconsin
Fond du Lac: Holy Family
Madison: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: St. Bernadette, Good Shepherd, Prince of Peace, Trinity-

Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes
Wauwatosa: St. Pius X

Outside the U.S.

Canada
Montreal: Holy Cross, Saint-Pierre-Apôtre,
Ottawa: St. Joseph
Toronto: Our Lady of Lourdes

England
Bristol: St. Nicholas of Tolentino
London: Church of the Immaculate

Conception (Farm Street Church, Mayfair)
York: Bar Convent (Middlesborough Diocese LGBT+ Ministry)

Ireland
Dublin: Orlagh in the City

Northern Ireland
Belfast: Clonard Monastery Parish

South Africa
Johannesburg: Holy Trinity

INTENTIONAL EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES

Arizona
Scottsdale: Franciscan Renewal Center

California
Bermuda Dunes: St. Clare of Assisi
Pleasanton: Catholic Community of Pleasanton
San Diego: Mary Magdalene Catholic Community
San Francisco: Dignity/San Francisco

District of Columbia
 Communitas, Dignity/Washington

Florida
Tampa: Franciscan Center

Iowa
Coralville: Full Circle Small Faith Community

Maryland
Baltimore, Annapolis, Thurmont: Living Water Inclusive Catholic

Community
Greenbelt: Greenbelt Catholic Community

Michigan
Grand Rapids: Marywood
Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholic

Minnesota
Minneapolis: Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community

Ohio
Dayton: Living Beatitudes Community

Oregon
Portland: Journey and Koinonia Catholic Community

Pennsylvania
Drexel Hill: St. Mary Magdalene Community
Pittsburgh: Dignity/Pittsburgh

Virginia
Arlington: NOVA Catholic Community
McLean: PAX Community

Washington
Lacey: Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community

Wisconsin
Madison: Holy Wisdom Monastery
Milwaukee: Mary of Magdala, Apostle to the Apostles

Outside the U.S.

Ireland
Dublin: Orlagh in the City

Korea
Seoul: Alpha Omega Community



LGBT-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

Below is a list of known LGBT-friendly Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic institutions that have some type of LGBT student group, support group, ally group, program, or policy. If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to LGBT people, please contact New Ways Ministry. Phone: 301-277-5674; Email: info@newwaysministry.org.



Alabama
Mobile: Spring Hill College

California
Belmont: Notre Dame de Namur University
Goleta: St. Mark's University
Los Angeles: Loyola Marymount University, Mount Saint Mary's College
Moraga: St. Mary's College
Oakland: Holy Names University
Ranchos Palos Verde: Marymount College
San Diego: University of San Diego
San Francisco: University of San Francisco
Santa Clara: Santa Clara University

Colorado
Denver: Regis University

Connecticut
Fairfield: Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University
New Haven: Albertus Magnus College
West Hartford: Saint Joseph College

District of Columbia
 Georgetown University, Trinity University

Florida
Miami Gardens: St. Thomas University
Miami Shores: Barry University

Hawaii
Honolulu: Chaminade University

Illinois
Chicago: DePaul University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University
Joliet: University of St. Francis
River Forest: Dominican University in Illinois
Romeoville: Lewis University

Indiana
Hammond: Calumet College
Notre Dame: Holy Cross College,

St. Mary's College, Univ. of Notre Dame

Iowa
Davenport: St. Ambrose University
Dubuque: Loras College, Clarke University

Kentucky
Louisville: Spalding University, Bellarmine University

Louisiana
New Orleans: Loyola University

Maryland
Baltimore: Notre Dame of Maryland University, Loyola University of Maryland

Massachusetts
Boston: Emmanuel College,
Chestnut Hill: Boston College
Chicopee: Elms College
Easton: Stonehill College
North Andover: Merrimack College
Weston: Regis College
Worcester: Assumption College, College of the Holy Cross

Michigan
Detroit: University of Detroit Mercy, Marygrove College
Grand Rapids: Aquinas College

Minnesota
Collegeville: St. John's University
Duluth: College of St. Scholastica
Minneapolis: College of St. Catherine
St. Joseph: College of Saint Benedict
St. Paul: St. Thomas University
Winona: St. Mary's University of Minnesota

Missouri
Kansas City: Avila University, Rockhurst University
St. Louis: Fontbonne University, Maryville University,

St. Louis University

Montana
Helena: Carroll College

Nebraska
Omaha: Creighton University

New Hampshire
Manchester: St. Anselm College
Nashua: Rivier College

New Jersey
Caldwell: Caldwell College
Jersey City: St. Peter's College
Newark: Seton Hall School of Law

New York
Albany: College of Saint Rose
Brooklyn and Patchogue: St. Joseph's College
Bronx: Fordham University, Manhattan College
Buffalo: Canisius College
Loudonville: Siena College
New Rochelle: College of New Rochelle, Iona College
Poughkeepsie: Marist College
Rochester: St. John Fisher College
St. Bonaventure: St. Bonaventure Univ.
Sparkill: St. Thomas Aquinas College
Syracuse: LeMoyne College
Queens: St. John's University

Ohio
Cincinnati: Xavier University
Cleveland Heights: John Carroll University
Dayton: University of Dayton
Pepper Pike: Ursuline College
South Euclid: Notre Dame College
Sylvania: Lourdes College

Oregon
Marylhurst: Marylhurst University
Portland: University of Portland

Pennsylvania
Cresson: Mount Aloysius College

Dallas: Misericordia University
Erie: Mercyhurst College
Greensburg: Seton Hill University
Immaculata: Immaculata University
Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's University
Pittsburgh: Carlow University, Duquesne University
Radnor: Cabrini College
Reading: Alvernia University
Scranton: Marywood University
Villanova: Villanova University

Rhode Island
Newport: Salve Regina University
Providence: Providence College

Texas
Austin: Saint Edward's University
San Antonio: University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University, St. Mary's University

Vermont
Colchester: Saint Michael's College

Washington
Lacey: St. Martin's University
Seattle: Seattle University
Spokane: Gonzaga University

West Virginia
Wheeling: Wheeling Jesuit University

Wisconsin
De Pere: St. Norbert College
Madison: Edgewood College
Milwaukee: Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University

Outside the U.S.

Canada
Toronto: Regis College

Cardinal Helps Create Space for Rainbow Catholics in India

From *MattersIndia.com*

Mumbai
September 19, 2019

Recently India's Rainbow community celebrated the first anniversary of the reading down of Section 377 of the Indian Constitution, decriminalizing same-sex partnerships.

Rainbow Catholics and their allies in Mumbai were also gladdened when last October, Wendell Rodricks and Ruby Almeida of Quest UK, met with Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, to seek his blessings for a start of an outreach program to Catholic LGBT+ persons.

While the teaching of the Catholic Church is rooted in Scripture which states that "God created man and woman in His image and likeness" (Genesis 1:27), and leaves no room for recognition of the spectrum of LGBT+ persons, Pope Francis who is a very pastoral Pope with his ear to the ground, has tried to open the minds of Catholics to recognize the existence of LGBT+ persons and to reach out to them with compassion.

His famous response to a journalist's question on the subject, "Who am I to judge?" has opened a chink in the closed-door attitude towards the existence of LGBT+ persons.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, who is a member of Pope Francis' advisory committee, does resonate with the Pope's openness and it was reflected in the openness he showed to Wendell Rodricks and Ruby Almeida when he met them almost a year ago in Mumbai about outreach to this community in the Church in India.

However, the Catholic Church is clear that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. As it claims that the aim of marriage is procreation and can only take place with the union of a biological man and woman.

This strict teaching and closed-door approach of the Church, contrasts with

the lived experience of gay and lesbian Catholics, and has led to a lot of confusion for parents and even LGBT+ persons themselves about their status in the Catholic Church.

Our Secretary, Jiby Joyce points out, "Though same-sex relationship and marriage has been legalized in many parts of the world and LGBT+ rights have become part of the mainstream public dis-



Wendell Rodricks, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Ruby Almeida

course in ways that would have been unimaginable even a decade ago, yet discrimination against sexual minorities in India continues to be very strong. The force of judgements gets even harsher when religious groups and organizations project their homophobic attitudes towards Rainbow faith followers, rendering them vulnerable to attacks and at risk to mental stress and suicidal tendencies."

As a result, many Rainbow Catholics feel that we are not allowed to participate as fully as we can in the spiritual and sacramental life of the Church. Homophobia continues to influence many Catholic communities who fail to welcome and embrace LGBT+ Catholics as fully as they should.

Rainbow Catholics Mumbai (RCM), was formed following the meeting of Cardinal Gracias with Wendell Rodricks and Ruby Almeida.

"We set up this group to reach out to our alienated LGBT+ Catholic communities. As we approach our first anniversary we look forward to working with our Rainbow and Catholic allies to build bridges and platforms where the pastoral

needs and voices of our faithful LGBT+ Catholics are heard. Our greatest desire is that our Church becomes a welcome and inclusive space for all of God's children," affirms Ruby Almeida. We had a series of meetings and made connections with Rainbow groups in Bangalore and Kerala.

Though the group initially started in Mumbai, we have decided to call ourselves Rainbow Catholics India, with chapters in various regions of India. A Steering Group has been formed.

We have drawn up a broad and bold vision statement: "A Church with Unconditional, visible inclusion of Rainbow Catholics". Among the objectives is a determination to create awareness about LGBTQ+ Catholics by creating resources, gathering experiences, and having programs in the future. We seek to increase our outreach to all Rainbow Catholics in India to create safe spaces for us to express ourselves and seek support.

Rainbow Catholics India is still at a very nascent stage being the first organization of its kind that aims to create a safe environment for Rainbow Catholics in the Archdiocese of Bombay and the country to eradicate discrimination against our community.

We have created international affiliations with Quest UK, and the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC). A member of RCI Steering group has represented us at the GNRC 3rd Global Assembly in Chicago in July 2019 and another will represent us at the next Assembly of the International Catholic Reform Network (ICRN) to be held in Poland.

Our group has chalked out an ambitious plan comprising an Annual Conference, gathering resources both literary and theological to help create awareness and create safe spaces for Rainbow Catholics.

Our group is also cognizant of the fact that families of Rainbow Catholics play a significant role in bringing about their acceptance in the community. Hence, there is an important discussion underway to design strategies on how to work with parents and family members of Rainbow Catholics.

Our official Facebook page, @lgbtcatholicsspace, leverages the power of social media and utilizes this platform to spread awareness on Catholic LGBTQ+ issues through posts, online banners, votes and other social media campaigns. In the long run, RCI aims at having direct dialogue with the Catholic Church to encourage them to welcome LGBT+ persons. We can be contacted at jiby.secretaryrci@gmail.com

To sustain these efforts, RCI is committed to learn and share from other inclusive Christian groups, organizations and NGOs that are devoted to the promotion of Rainbow faith followers. We also hope to shed more light on Catholic thinking and belief through tapping into scientific research and findings on LGBT+ persons, so that the Catholic Church will grow towards our vision of inclusion irrespective of gender identity and expressions. ✦

Slovak LGBTQ Catholics See Hope Despite Church and State

By Kevin Molloy

Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
September 30, 2019

As LGBTQ Christians in Slovakia embrace their sexual and religious identities, the Catholic Church and Slovak political parties have been slow to embrace a welcoming attitude.

In a country that is predominantly Christian, with 66% of Slovaks identifying as Catholic, legal advances for the LGBTQ community have not been included in the left-leaning policies of the progressive parties in control of the government. Though some politicians have

publicly expressed support for LGBTQ rights—including the recognition of same-sex unions and legalizing adoptions by gay and lesbian couples—the government is reluctant to push changes that will rattle the Christian country.

Those who take a stand for LGBTQ rights are often met with swift condemnation from church authorities. When then-candidate Zuzana Čaputová expressed her personal opinion that "children were better off being adopted by gay couples than languishing in orphanages" in support of legalizing same-sex unions, some Catholic Church officials in Slovakia warned that voting for Čaputová would be a sin. As president,

Čaputová has since said that she will not push such controversial reforms.

During the presidential campaign, Catholic priests were openly backing Marian Kotleba of the People's Party Our Slovakia, a party *Balkan Insight* calls "homophobic, anti-migrant, and far right."

In 2014, the Slovak parliament amended the nation's constitution to afford the rights and recognition of a legal union only to a man and woman. Pope Francis came to the aid of those defending the amendment, offering his verbal support for their efforts. According to LGBTQ activists, it marked the first time in "Slovak modern history the Catholic Church [was] heavily involved in political campaign."

Public sentiment also ebbs and flows in Slovakia, regardless of the general consensus amongst its European Union neighbors. *Balkan Insight* reports:

"In a 2016 survey, 49 per cent of respondents said they would be bothered by a homosexual couple living next door to them, a drop of 13 percentage points since 1991 but 14 higher than in 2009.

"For 21 per cent it would be perfectly acceptable to have a gay or lesbian colleague at work, far lower than the EU average in 2015 of 63 per cent. That said, in a poll published in September this year, 57 per cent expressed support for same-sex unions."

Lost in the political deliberations between right and left, church and state, are the LGBTQ Slovaks who seek to live an authentic faith life in the only spiritual home they have ever known.

Slovak LGBTQ advocates see that Christian churches have made LGBTQ antagonism their main agenda. Martin Kovac said:

"The fight against LGBT has become the main agenda of most Christian churches in Slovakia . . . We want to show that Christianity can look different."

But LGBTQ Christians recognize this focus as a politicization of Christianity, incongruent with the central tenet of the gospel. This central tenet, says Juraj Variny, a member of Gay Christians, is love.

Martin Kolenic shared: "God would be terribly vicious if he were to create me as I am and didn't want to take me as I am, wouldn't he?"

"Christianity, as I understand it, is about love. It would be absurd if God said: 'Okay, all of you can feel love, except you.'"

This love can be the basis of a Christian church that looks different in Slovakia, one that recognizes the changing tide among the public and embraces love in all its forms.

To this end, Evangelical theologian Ondrej Prostednik sees a faithful at odds with the institutional church, and paints a grim picture of what that conflict means for LGBTQ advocates within the church:

"Inside the church there are many who support LGBT, but they keep silent. They are afraid of being isolated, stigmatized, or simply mistaken. In the church, you cannot be mistaken."

In solidarity with Prostednik, Variny, and all LGBTQ Slovaks, we, who can, must refuse to stay silent, refuse to allow fear to dictate our discourse, and refuse to allow ourselves to be mistaken. There is no mistake—fear and silence are not the gospel message. Our good news is love. ✦

Catholics protest treatment of LGBT refugees and asylum seekers

Independent Catholic News

Indcatholic.com
October 9, 2019

The LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council has expressed grave concern at reports of humiliating and insensitive lines of interrogation of LGBT+ asylum seekers by the Home Office.

The LGBT African Asylum Seeker Research Project Report describes inappropriate behaviour by Home Office officials, including suggestions to applicants that "it isn't possible to be gay and Christian," and references to Bible verses which have frequently been misused to justify homophobic abuse.

The report also raises concerns about the integrity of the application process, with refusals justified on the grounds that discrete individuals were unable to prove their orientation because they hadn't disclosed this to their families, or because of their dependence on non-LGBT+ friends.

The pastoral council said in a statement: "Having an LGBT+ identity is

normal and occurs in people of all faiths, all cultures and all ethnic groups. There are several LGBT+ Christian groups both in the UK and around the world, and the mere suggestion that it isn't possible to be both LGBT+ and Christian is wrong.

"The Home Office makes a valuable contribution to community safety and walks a difficult line in the course of fulfilling this duty. However, any harassing, humiliating or persecutory treatment on any account is unacceptable. It contravenes the principles of the UK's Human Rights Act, and is in violation of the Home Office's own responsibility to fight crime in all its forms.

"We urge the Home Office to issue a statement about these reports and, if they are true, to conduct an independent investigation into its practices and procedures." ✦

The LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council is the leadership team of the Archdiocese of Westminster's (London, UK) official outreach to the LGBT+ community.



Zuzana Čaputová

Church school teaching an ‘amazing’ experience, says transgender woman

By Rebekah Cilia
The Malta Independent
 September 9, 2019

A transgender woman described her experience teaching in a church school, as part of her university course, as “amazing” and said she did not have any negative experiences with either staff or students.

Amanda Cossai, 27, who started her transition into a woman two and a half years ago, said that “at first it was scary,” knowing she was being sent to a church school to complete her teaching practice.

At first, she was more worried about the staff than the student’s reaction, Amanda said in an interview with *The Malta Independent*. The staff were told beforehand that Amanda was transgender but when she got there they assured her that they want to take this as an opportunity to present something new to the students.

During her transition, Amanda said she felt she needed a complete change. She used to work in marketing before but now she is reading for a Masters in Teaching. She felt unhappy in her marketing job and wanted a job involving direct contact with people, having a direct effect on the person.

During her teaching practice, Amanda taught children aged 13 to 14 in the subjects related to business, including accounting and economics.

When you consider religious teachings, they always call for respect for one another, even for those who are different, Amanda said. Church schools, however, she noted, tend to lack diversity in terms of the students’ and staff’s backgrounds, who are not exposed to different cultures and people like her.

This school, however, wanted someone there to show the students and staff that being different is ok.

The students were very welcoming, Amanda noted, having decided prior that she would be open with them about being transgender from the first day she met them.

“It was the first thing I told them when I walked into the class. There was complete silence, I never heard that level of silence again,” Amanda said with a laugh. “I think they respected me a lot more being upfront.”

Amanda felt that if she had kept it hidden, she would not have built the same level of trust with her students. She also felt being upfront was important because students that age would have talked between themselves, asking if she was a man or woman.

“I wanted to show them that whatever they say would not bother me. I wanted to own my identity and I think it was very effective.”

When asked if the students asked her any questions, Amanda said not really, but they did end up talking about LGBT related subjects. She did comment that one of the students asked her what her name was before transitioning, which Amanda felt was too personal and did not want to answer.

She said that the question was probably innocent as the students are young and “it is something they will learn.” However, it did show that they took an interest.

At the end of her teaching practice, Amanda asked for feedback from the students and some did comment that they appreciated her being so open and someone even mentioned that they had an LGBT family member and that now they could relate better to them.

Students’ parents were more of a worry for Amanda as she says young people are more accepting. “I think it depends on the way you present yourself,” she added, saying that if you come across as a serious person then there should not be problems.

She does admit there could be parents who may be completely against the idea of their children having a transgender teacher but she says her goal is to change people’s perception, although teaching her subjects remains her priority.

Based on her experiences, Amanda does not fear discrimination when it comes to applying for a job, saying that she owns her identity and she has no problem answering any questions. She does

admit though, that church schools might be a bit more difficult to get into.

Although her experiences have been positive, she does have friends in the LGBT community who have worked in church schools who had “horrible” experiences. Amanda adds, although discrimination might be a worry for some, she would anyway not want to work in any place she was not accepted. . . .

Unrelated to the work environment, Amanda commented that she has had negative experiences with the general public. The issues she experienced, she believes, are not because she is transgender but because people are now seeing her as a woman.

Amanda recalls stories of men who have harassed her, adding that she has “experienced the loss of male privilege.”

She does, however, recall another story of two men who approached her and out of the blue asked her if she was a man. The question stunned Amanda, as she was not expecting it, and her immediate answer was no. She told them she had a boyfriend and they left.

“Nothing too bad happened but these were not things that happened before my transition,” Amanda noted. . . .

Asked if she thinks that transgender women are generally stereotyped sexually, Amanda said that things are changing. When she first started looking for information about being transgender, about 10 years ago, the image the media portrayed was sexualised. . . .

In the past transgender

people were considered as “freak shows” and something to laugh at, Amanda said, adding the issue is further perpetrated by drag queens, whom she supports. The public, however, makes no distinction between them and transgender women.

In general, the country is progressing, Amanda noted, and the laws do help because people are constantly being exposed to the subject. “However, it is not as good as it is made out to be.” . . .

Even as a child, Amanda always knew she was different. “I didn’t know what it was but I knew I was different.” Attending an all boy’s school was not easy since she always felt unlike the other boys.

Hitting puberty, the other boys started talking about girls and she could not understand why. When she was about 16, Amanda learnt what being transgender was and every time she came

across something related to the subject she would ask herself ‘am I like that?’.

Her reply would always be no because she felt it was too “extreme”, especially considering 10 years ago the perception of transgender people was very different. This went on for several years, but when she was 19 she was watching transgender people on TV and just broke down. . . .

Amanda did not know what to tell people or how to approach the subject. She was very afraid to tell her family because she did not think they would be supportive, although she hoped they would.

From that moment it was a year later when her mother found a letter she had written to her telling her about her wish. “It did not go well at all,” and her mother was totally against it.

Because of her mother’s initial reaction, it took Amanda about six years to start her transition. During these years, she experienced some very tough times, cutting out all of her friends because she refused to be seen as a male.

As years passed, her family started coming around and her mother, especially, started trying to understand. “She didn’t accept it but she understood it was something I needed.”

Amanda started seeing doctors, and in April 2017 she started her medical transition, taking testosterone blockers and oestrogen. “You have to be sure of your decision before taking the step because some of the changes are irreversible.”

The first time Amanda left the house dressed as a woman was petrifying, but another transgender friend was her support pillar during these times. “Having such a person made it a lot less scary and possible. I do not know where I would be without her.” †



Amanda Cossai

Story Behind the Pope’s Phone Call to Father James Alison

(Continued from page 8)

ple walked by me, in some cases with polite greetings, on their way to see the real show inside.

Suddenly I became aware of people treating me as though I was part of the real show inside. I had always assumed that the real witnesses were elsewhere. One reason I flaunt my ridiculous penchant for tall leather boots is so no one who actually knows me should take me seriously! And now the responsibility not to scandalize becomes greater. . . .

A final consideration: I was taken entirely by surprise when two long standing friends and a close relative quite separately wrote me very moving notes saying that they had had no idea what I had been through over these years, and asking my forgiveness for not having “been there” for me during those times. Which was baffling to me, since it hadn’t occurred to me to share the stuff I was going through in other than glib, throw-away lines, with anyone other than the shrinks who’ve helped me. So how could they have “been there”? Certainly nothing needed forgiving!

I began to realise that from 1995 I

had been slowly and deliberately facing down the entire canonical system for the clergy by attempting to speak truthfully as a gay man; and I had lost at every step of the way. . . .

And, of course, I failed at that too. And had it not been for what I consider the miraculous intervention of the Holy Father, I would have simply been another failed priestly statistic, chewed over

tlement, that carried me through: the sense that *of course* you stand up for what is right, and *of course* you’ll win in the end. A sense of entitlement which is, ludicrously out of proportion to the competence actually needed to see anything serious through. For I am the product of a school that has produced beives of British Prime Ministers (including, Lord have mercy, the current one), Generals, actors, and so on. So standing up to the Catholic clerical system with a mixture of stiff upper lip and humorous self-deprecation is pretty much par for the course.

The friends who heard my answer upbraided me, quite rightly, for that and told me that no, however much my education in the courts of the Pharaoh may have given me a head-start, what I had actually been given over those years was the gift of faith. And it is they who are right. Indeed I was being stretched by the tiniest glimpse of something true received, already, in my early adolescence: that ultimately the Catholic faith would embrace and include the gay heart; that the two held together give glory to God; and that it is better to die than to let go of that. †

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by a no-longer serviceable canonical system. . . .

Friends asked me: “How did you do it? How did you survive 25 years of wilderness?” My main answer: it was probably the (in)famous Old Etonian arrogance, or more accurately sense of enti-

Pope Condemns L/G Persecution, Concerned About “Ex-Gay” Therapy

(Continued from page 2)

gelical Anglican, and had grown up in a Church that told her ‘she could never be a wife, a mother or a grandmother,’ that she had tried to make herself straight through conversion therapy, and that treatments such as conversion therapy had an enormous impact on young people, leading many to consider suicide. She told the Pope that her prayer is ‘for everyone to know they are precious children of God, just as they are.’

“Asked by a translator whether he knew what conversion therapy was, Pope Francis said he did.

“Pope Francis then said to Ms.

Ozanne: ‘Please pray for me as I pray for you.’”

Ozanne said that “the warmth of [Francis’] welcome and his kindness showed the kind of pastor he really is.” It was a “very moving” meeting and “an experience I’ll never forget,” she added. *LGBTQ Nation* reported that for many years Ozanne, who has served on the Church of England’s Archbishops’ Council and the General Synod at various points, practiced celibacy for many years before coming out in 2015. She has become an LGBTQ activist since that time.

Pope Francis’ dual actions this week

to condemn the persecution of lesbian/gay people and, at least through Ozanne’s reports, express concern about conversion therapy crucially link Francis’ strong concern for human rights with LGBTQ people’s suffering. While the pope has changed neither church teaching nor discipline, his actions are a hopeful modeling to show other church leaders how they should be approaching LGBTQ issues. In both his public statement and private meeting this week, Pope Francis has advanced the causes of LGBTQ human rights and equality in the church. †

St. John Henry Newman: The First Openly Gay Catholic Saint?

By Francis DeBernardo
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
October 13, 2019

Blessed John Henry Newman is being canonized a saint in Rome today at a spectacular ceremony in St. Peter's Square. Is he the Catholic Church's first openly gay saint?

The answer to that question depends on your definitions of "openly," "gay," and "first."

Cardinal Newman is probably the most famous Catholic theologian of the late 19th century. Ordained as an Anglican priest, he studied and taught at Oxford University. His studies and prayer led to his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845, and he continued to write and teach on theology, though at this point as a defender of the Roman Church. His most famous works are *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (his autobiography), *A Grammar of Assent* (a treatise on logic and belief), and *The Idea of a University* (an outline for the study of the liberal arts for Catholic higher education). In addition to his theological acumen and creative forms of argument and persuasion, Newman is also known for being one of the premier stylists of the English language, having been a master of the periodic sentence, a verbal form where the writer composes an unusually long sentence so well that it seems amazingly natural.

Most recently, scholars have also begun to examine Newman because of the intense emotional relationship he shared with another priest, Ambrose St. John. During their lifetime, the two were inseparable, and, in fact, lived together. Newman described St. John as "my earthly light." They studied theology together in Rome, and were ordained together. Newman reflected on the quality of their relationship:

"From the first he loved me with an intensity of love, which was unaccountable. At Rome 28 years ago he was always so working for and relieving me of all trouble, that being young and Saxon-looking, the Romans called him my Angel Guardian."

Perhaps most significantly, the two requested to be buried in the same grave together. Their chosen epitaph for their tombstone: "Out of shadows and phantasms into Truth." When St. John died, Newman grieved:

"I have ever thought no bereavement was equal to that of a husband's or a wife's, but I feel it difficult to believe that any can be greater, or anyone's sor-

row greater, than mine."

Many traditionalist Newman scholars refute the idea that this was a gay relationship. Ian Ker, one of the foremost Newman scholars, says that the relationship was not homosexual because, by all accounts, the two were celibate. Ker also maintains that Newman wrote affectionately to both men and women, and he also notes it was quite common for men to request to be buried together. Other scholars believe that to call the couple gay is reading our own 21st century ideas into 19th century phenomena.

I agree that it is not right to interpret a past relationship in terms of today's modern awareness of homosexuality. We should not imagine that things of the past can be understood by modern values and concepts. But that's where we need to question what we might mean by "gay" and "openly." Ker believes that Newman and St. John were not gay because it is apparent that they were celibate. Ker's presumption then is that "gay" means "sexually active." Of course, that is a totally false idea. Of

course, the two men could be gay and have had a strong affectionate and intimate relationship without being sexually active, just as many gay men in the priesthood and religious life today maintain their promises and vows of celibacy. Many gay laity also live their lives by choosing not to be sexually intimate with someone. That doesn't make them less gay.

But Ker is wrong in another way,

too. Defending Newman's non-homosexuality by saying that the priest was affectionate in relationships with both men and women tries to explain away Newman's love for St. John by saying it was how he treated everyone. The presumption here is that there is something wrong with a man expressing affection for another man. What would be wrong with Newman loving St. John? Why can't men express love for one another?

While some people think that homophobia against gay men comes from a revulsion about male sex acts, I think that for many people the more horrifying and scandalous phenomenon is men being emotionally sensitive, tender, and affectionate with one another. Of course, such gentle and intimate responses by men are only a problem if one suffers from intense homophobia or believes in the enforcement of strict gender expecta-

tions that men should not be emotional and caring toward one another. In other words, what is wrong with men expressing love for one another?

The other issue about Newman's



St. John Henry Newman

Is John Henry Newman the Catholic Church's first openly gay saint?

The answer depends on your definitions of "openly," "gay," and "first."

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sexuality comes from our understanding of what it means to be "openly gay." In the 21st century world, there is an unspoken expectation afoot that to be "openly gay" means having made some very public statements about one's orientation and identity. But, that expectation should not apply to people in other eras. Though there is no public record or statements by either Newman or St. John about their sexual identities, I think the fact that they

lived together for so long and chose to be buried next to one another are very public statements about how emotionally and essentially close they were to one another. That is pretty "open" to me.

Finally, if we think of Newman as the first openly gay saint, we also have to look at what we mean by "first." Other canonized male saints like St. Aelred of Rievaulx and St. Augustine of Hippo both wrote effusively of emotional love between men, so maybe Newman isn't the first. Yet, I think a good case can be made for Newman being the "first openly gay" Catholic saint for the simple reason that we know so much more about him and his relationship than we do about the other examples. Less is in doubt about Newman than previous saints, mainly because the historical record is more accurate. From what I know (admittedly limited), I think the case for Newman's openly gay identity is the strongest.

But I think there's another reason to award Newman this honor. He was also a great believer in reforming the Roman Catholic Church. I will offer just two examples. In 2013, a Catholic bishop remembered Newman's attitude toward the Church. Australia's Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, a great voice for reform, recalled:

"Cardinal John Henry Newman, before he became a Catholic, wrote to a friend, 'There is nothing on this earth so ugly as the Catholic Church and nothing so beautiful.' We've all seen the ugliness, and abuse is one of the ugliest chapters of all, but I've also seen the beauty, mostly in all of the good people I've worked with over the years. I don't want to just walk away and leave that beauty behind. So I'll work to overcome the ugliness wherever I can."

That's a good reminder for all those who are working and praying to stay in the Catholic Church and to work to make it more equal and just for LGBTQ people.

And then there's the quotation from Newman which New Ways Ministry's co-founders, Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent, have cited often:

"To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often."

So, on this day of canonization for John Henry Newman, and for all days forward, let all who work and pray for making the Catholic Church a just place for LGBTQ people offer the following plea:

"St. John Henry Newman, pray for us!" ✚

The Story Behind the Pope's Phone Call to Father James Alison

By Father James Alison
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
December 27, 2019

Bondings 2.0 asked James Alison to share his personal reaction to the phone call he received from Pope Francis confirming his priesthood.

First, I "sat" with the knowledge of the phone call for over two years. I shared knowledge of it, of course, with a small group of friends, asking them to keep it to themselves for the moment, and I am humbled to say that they did me that honour. . . . I had promised the Holy Father extreme discretion, and I did not want to expose him to any more hatred than he was already receiving. I also waited because his final words to me were that he would look up my dossier and be in touch. I was pretty sceptical that this would happen (and it hasn't), not because I doubted his word, but because I can't imagine why he would spend any more of his valuable time on such an unimportant case, when the ten minutes he already gave me have set me up for life and beyond.

Additionally, there was (as far as I know) no witness to the conversation. It's possible Francis' secretary was with him when he called, but nothing while we spoke suggested that. And, though I was, as you can imagine, initially moved

and delighted by the call, and while it did give me a much-needed boost in my determination to carry on as a priest despite the Congregation for the Clergy's sentence, it is really only after it became public that I've felt its effect.

So what changed to make me feel entitled to let the call be more widely known? The key factor was something my former novice-master, the bishop who had taken my letter to the Holy Father and pleaded with him to sort out my situation, told me in May 2019. He had been with the Holy Father for a private audience to discuss an entirely different matter earlier this year. The Holy Father told him he had called me, describing the conversation to him in the same words as I had reported. Francis had thus deliberately created a witness to what he had done. It was this development that finally overcame any scruples I had about making the matter public.

It was also clear that Martel's book on gay priests in the Vatican and from the fact that the same book had taken a



Fr. James Alison

great deal of the wind out of the sails of the closeted homophobes who opposed him, that he needed no protection from worried little me! That, and the freedom with which he was organising the Amazon Synod convinced me that I would do him no harm.

And so I went public, offering the story to *The Tablet*, whose editor has been a friend for over thirty years and published my first book.

Only since going public have I become aware of a range of feelings and emotions associ-

ated with the call. The reaction of others has given me the beginnings of a narrative to work with those feelings. A sign is not a sign until it is a sign between people. The sign of priesthood is only a sign between and for people. And the knowledge of the Holy Father's confirmation comforts me by making me the comfort to others for which I was ordained.

One of the reactions that I've been working through is: "Oh, now I get to see whether all along I was just engaged in some violent personal rivalry with

Church teaching and doctrine. . . . I've often wondered, over the years, whether that had been what was driving me all along. And now the Pope himself had called my bluff! By letting me "win", he'd suddenly removed my obstacle. Would I now discover that the whole thing had been a self-serving mirror-fight? And that once freed from the struggle by the papal unlocking, there was nothing left, and that I would have no desire any longer to be a priest, a preacher, a theologian; that all those things had depended on the duel for their fuel?

I was immensely relieved to discover that whatever elements of mimetic rivalry may have driven me over the last twenty-five years or more, I am in fact held up by a genuine and wholesome desire to live and act as a priest who is at the same time a sinful gay man, one who is trying to give voice to the Gospel in the first person, and from that desire I am being born. . . .

Then something slightly more shocking happened. People were taking me seriously. I hadn't realised how much of me had accepted the 25 years-worth of being a canonical non-person as evidence that I was some sort of unwanted volunteer circus barker playing a limited melody outside the gates of the circus, wearing a sandwich board proclaiming that gay people are human too. And that peo-

(Continued on page 7)