

BONDINGS

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German Bishop “Not Happy” with Vatican Ban on Blessing Same-Gender Couples

By Robert Shine

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistry.org/blog

March 16, 2021

A top German bishop has expressed his disappointment with the Vatican’s recent statement banning the blessing of same-gender unions, suggesting the question is not settled.

Katholisch.de reported on comments by Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, who chairs the German Bishops’ Conference and has repeatedly stated his support for blessing same-gender couples. Bätzing said he was “not happy” with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s intervention in the debate over such blessings. The report continued:

“This gives the impression that the theological debate, which is currently being debated in various parts of the universal Church, including here in Germany, is to be ended as quickly as possible,” said the Bishop of the KNA. But that is not possible at all. ‘Because the discussion is intense and with good arguments in many places, and the theological inquiries about pastoral practice today cannot simply be put out of the way with one word of power,’ said Bätzing.”

Bätzing also released a statement on the website of the German Bishops’ Conference, saying (via Google Translate):

“In Germany and in other parts of the universal Church there have been discussions for a long time as to how this teaching and doctrinal development can generally be advanced with sound arguments – on the basis of fundamental

truths of faith and morality, ongoing theological reflection and also in openness to newer ones, results of the human sciences and the living situations of people today. There are no easy answers to questions like these.

“The Synodal Path, which the German Bishops’ Conference has initiated with the Central Committee of German Catholics, therefore endeavors to discuss the topic of successful relationships in a comprehensive way that also takes into account the necessity and the limits of church teaching development. The viewpoints put forward by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith today must and will of course find their way into these discussions.”

Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, a supporter of blessings for same-gender couples, commented, “We will continue to accompany all people in pastoral care if they ask for it, regardless of the life situation.”

Lay Catholics in Germany were more sharply critical about the Congregation’s ban on blessings, reported *Katholisch.de*:

“ZdK [Central Committee of German Catholics] President Thomas Sternberg expressed his disappointment with the document in a statement published on the Catholic Committee’s website. The note is part of a ‘sequence of disturbances of the Synodal Way’. The blessings remained a topic that is being discussed not only in Germany but elsewhere as well, Sternberg said. An advancement of Catholic teaching, as moral theologians have long been calling for,

should not simply be rejected. The catechism alone is not enough to justify it. Sternberg also criticized the ‘fixation on the sexual act’ in the note of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This



Bishop Georg Bätzing

is ‘shortening, inappropriate and no longer understood by believers’.

“The Catholic Women’s Community of Germany (kfd) sharply criticized the Vatican No. ‘We clearly reject the position from Rome published today, even though we know about the tension between church teaching and the reality of people’s lives,’ it said in a statement. . . ‘It is clear to us that we will continue on this subject in the Synodal Way.’”

But some bishops in Germany welcomed the Vatican’s ban, reported *Katholisch.de*. These included Bishop Rudolf Voderholzer of Regensburg and Bishop Stefan Oster of Passau, who suggested the question of whether to bless a same-gender couple was “leading to polarization,” and the Vatican’s intervention will help with “greater unanimity.”

Finally, in a further news development, *America* reported that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which issued the ban in a statement, had done so without wider consultation of the congregation’s members. Rather, “the matter was discussed only by a small group of some top C.D.F. officials,” before being proposed to Pope Francis for his approval.

In recent years, Catholics in Germany and Austria have been increasingly open to a discussion about such blessings. A number of bishops have even expressed support for offering some type of ritual acknowledgement of same-gender couples. Last year, a working document for the Synodal Way spoke positively of same-gender relationships, and the Archdiocese of Salzburg published a book on the topic of blessings. While the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did not provide a reason for why it released a *responsum ad dubium* on same-gender church blessings at this point, some commentators have speculated that it is because of the German-speaking church’s prophetic conversations.

And Bishop Bätzing is correct that this dialogue will continue. †

Vatican’s Ban on Blessing Same-Gender Couples An Impotent Decision

The following is a statement from Francis DeBernardo, New Ways Ministry’s Executive Director, in response to the Vatican’s ban on the blessing of same-gender unions.

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistry.org/blog

March 15, 2021

It is not surprising, but still disappointing, that the Vatican has responded “no” to the *dubium* about whether the church can bless same-sex unions.

divinely inspired and divinely supported and thus meets the standard to be blessed. They recognize that God has already blessed these unions, and that a ritual is simply a recognition of God’s blessing. New Ways Ministry has been promoting many creative ways that Catholic parishes have been supporting and celebrating same-sex couples.

A number of bishops have already raised the question of blessing lesbian and gay couples, and many priests in parishes are already celebrating such blessings. Catholics will continue to find

women in the Catholic Church is as alive as ever.

In 1968, the Vatican affirmed its opposition to artificial birth control. Today, according to the U.S. bishops’ own statistics, 96% of Catholic couples ignore this teaching.

People think that church teaching evolves at the top and filters down. That

is not how it works. The sense of the faithful is important and how the faithful receive a teaching affects the validity of such teaching. The Catholic faithful have already expressed their support of same-sex couples, and they will continue to do so. This decision changes nothing other than motivating more Catholics to support same-gender couples. †

Book on Black Lives Matter & Catholic Church Centers LGBTQ People

By Robert Shine

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistry.org/blog

February 22, 2021

The story of Black Lives Matter cannot be told without queer and transgender activists, who helped found and lead the movement since its beginnings in 2013. That is why it was so refreshing to see LGBTQ people centered repeatedly in a new book on the relationship between the movement for racial justice and the Catholic Church.

Olga Segura’s book, *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church*, was released this month by Orbis Books. From the very beginning, Segura is clearly intersectional in her approach to anti-racism as it relates to the church. Weaving her personal narrative as a woman of color closely linked to Catholicism, she examines the different ways the church relates to anti-Blackness. Building on the work of scholars like openly gay theologian Fr. Bryan Massingale and his seminal 2010 book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, Segura reads the signs of the times for 2021. She addresses how Catholics have been complicit in chattel slavery, racial capitalism, and other injustices. Throughout, Segura is honest about the church’s failings, in

particular the bishops, even today.

A strength of the book is Segura’s unwavering inclusion of LGBTQ people, specifically those queer and trans people of color who face compounded oppressions. She acknowledges truths that many Catholics involved in anti-racist work may be uncomfortable with or remain silent about. For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement explicitly aligns itself with and has been led by queer and transgender people. Two of its three founders are queer women, and some of the key leaders in the 2014 Ferguson uprising were LGBTQ people. But, she notes, “all the U.S. Catholic bishops have demonstrated an unwillingness to engage with the work of [Alicia] Garza, [Opal] Tometi, and [Patrisse] Cullors, the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement.”

Segura is particularly attentive to transgender marginalization, noting at different points how disproportionately trans people are affected by violence, sexual assault, incarceration, and police brutality. And she attributes such violence in part to church teachings on gender, stating that some non-Catholic activists “are stronger examples of intersectional Christian witness than many bishops in our church, who often contribute to the



This decision though is an impotent one because it won’t stop the movement to bless such couples, and, in fact, it will actually encourage Catholics in the pews and the many Catholic leaders who are eager for such blessings to happen to work harder in their support—and blessing—of same-sex couples.

Though Rome has now spoken on this issue, what the Vatican doesn’t realize is that the Catholic faithful are not satisfied with the answer that they gave. Catholic people recognize the holiness of the love between committed same-sex couples and recognize this love as

creative ways to bless the couples they love and support. If priests and pastoral ministers no longer feel they can perform such a blessing, the Catholic laity will step in and perform their own rituals, gestures, and words of support. The fact that this discussion is well underway ensures that it will continue. The toothpaste is out of the tube and it can’t be put back inside.

The Vatican issued a *dubium* in 1995 that the ordination of women was not allowed and that no discussion of it could happen. That strategy did not work, and the discussion of ordaining

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

Founded in 1977, New Ways Ministry is an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic LGBTQ 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 equality for LGBTQ persons.

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Parramatta Bishop Issues Pastoral Letter Against Proposed Anti-Transgender Law

By **Beth Mueller Stewart**
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
April 28, 2021

A bishop in New South Wales, Australia, has issued a pastoral letter opposing a proposed law that would ban discussions of gender diversity in school classrooms. The letter splits from that state's main Catholic education body, which has expressed its support of the bill.

Bishop Vincent Long of Parramatta issued the letter reinforcing that diocese's opposition to the Parental Rights Bill now before New South Wales' (NSW) legislature, and affirming that this opposition was rooted in Catholic values and did not diminish the key role parents play in their children's education. Long, who oversees the 80 Catholic schools in the diocese, wrote further:

"At issue is whether or not certain sensitive or challenging topics such as consent, sexuality, gender et cetera can be discussed in the classroom. Some have quickly made a judgment that our Catholic education system panders to dangerous ideology. I can assure you that we take all the vital questions of our culture seriously and reflect on them through the prism of Jesus' solidarity with the marginalised.

"As a Catholic community, we believe that all students – including those who identify as gender diverse – should have the opportunity to reach their potential, to learn with their peers and feel a sense of belonging in their school. The Bill prohibits the schools from affirming and supporting these children who are already at risk of marginalisation. We have to remember that at times the teachers are the only people these children might trust in helping them in these sensitive matters. By banning their discussion, the school community is unable to address unhealthy and discriminatory attitudes that may exist in their learning environment.

"[**Bold in original**] I emphatically reject the notion of gender ideology. What I advocate for is a compassionate, respectful, inclusive, Gospel-centred learning environment and a deep commitment to the wellbeing of all students, particularly those at risk. Their lives must not be made more intolerable by unjust laws such as elements of the 'Latham' Bill that I have articulated above."

Long also wrote that there was "nothing to fear" about dialogue with children, even if complex, because "we need to acknowledge and stand with those who are ostracised rather than consigning them to the margins of society."

According to *The Star Observer*, the Parental Rights

Bill would place a wide-range of restrictions on transgender students and staff:

"If it passes, teachers, counsellors and other school staff could face dismissal if they offered support or advice to transgender and gender diverse students. It would also leave transgender members of staff unable to speak openly about their gender identity. Parents would be allowed to withdraw their children from any class where LGBTQI+ issues were discussed."

The bill was introduced by Mark Latham, NSW's leader of the far-right One Nation party. *The Sydney Morning Herald* quoted Latham as saying this bill is about "re-establishing the primacy of parents in shaping their children's development and sense of identity."

Preceding Bishop Long's letter, the Diocese of Parramatta had submitted a comment to the legislature via its education office, which described Latham's proposal as "counter to promoting and respecting the human dignity of all" and "an unacceptable incursion into the professional judgement of Catholic schools and school systems." The best interests of children must prevail over parental "rights," wrote the education office.

Differing from that diocese, Catholic Schools NSW, which represents the majority of the state's 600 Catholic schools, stated its support of the bill in an official comment to the legislature. The organization said parental primacy

was paramount, but made a caveat that schools must still provide LGBTQI students with pastoral care.

Dallas McInerney, the Catholic Schools NSW chief executive, rejected claims that his position denied transgender people's existence:

"[It] is more focused on learning and curriculum and less on the culture wars or individuals. It is around what belongs in scholarship and school instruction and what doesn't."

Greg Whitby, the head of Parramatta's diocesan education office, clarified that Catholic Schools NSW is a separate organization from his own. "They cannot dictate a position; they can offer a position," he said.

Bishop Long's pastoral letter against the proposed law that would harm gender diverse people, especially youth, is a strong expression of how Catholic values should actually inform conversations about gender and sexuality.

Long recognizes transgender students' burdens and needs, and he is prioritizing them. Such an approach makes concrete the church's teachings on making a preferential option for marginalized people. Teachers, pastors, and parents who seek a caring and inclusive path for LGBTQ students in Catholic education should take from Bishop Long's letter not only strong arguments for doing so internally, but inspiration to be strong advocates in the public sphere, too. †



Bishop Vincent Long

The Eucharist: Gated Banquet or Public Feast?

By **Cristina Traina**
Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
April 27, 2021

American clerics have opened a new season of debate over whom pastors should include in the Eucharist, and once again same-sex marriage is at the center of contention. Two recent *America* essays—one by Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, the other by Fr. Louis Cameli of Chicago—appear to argue on opposite sides of the question.

Aquila, who has a long record of remarks and policies offensive to LGBTQ Catholics, holds that priests should be "gate-keepers," turning away all who are "obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin" (theoretical examples might be same-gender couples, or public officials who support the national suicide hotline) to protect them from damnation. Cameli rejects both rigid "gate-keeping" and *laissez-faire* "pass-giving," in which a priest "of a certain age" and with "a more liberal attitude,

inclines to 'just give' the sacraments to people upon request." He favors a conditional welcome: only because same-gender couples might not actually be committing the "manifest grave sin" of having sex, they can be admitted to the Eucharist.

Putting aside the terrible timing of his essay—many of us have fasted involuntarily from the Eucharist for over a year! —Cameli seems to intend his proposal to be good news. Yet he makes the same devastating errors as Aquila pastorally, with respect to the most basic Eucharistic theology, and with regard to same-gender couples.

Since they are both clerics, perhaps it is natural for both Aquila and Cameli to focus on the priest's canonical obligation, as if canon law were identical to Eucharistic theology or controlled the flow of God's grace in the gift of the sacraments.

Yet, as pastors they should begin by asking, how do we help all of our parishioners grow in grace? To be sure, both authors address this question eventually, but their first concern is their own

obligation to canon law, not their roles as symbols of Christ's welcome and as conduits of the Holy Spirit.



Pope Francis

(Continued on page 5)

'It is our duty to love and defend' LGBT Americans: Bishop Stowe breaks with U.S. bishops on the Equality Act

By Michael J. O'Loughlin
AmericaMagazine.org
March 25, 2021

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has made defeating the Equality Act a priority, citing concerns over religious freedom, at least one U.S. bishop has thrown his support behind the ban on discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, saying that fighting the measure sends the wrong message to L.G.B.T. Catholics and their families.

"LGBTQ people reflect the image of likeness of God, just as anyone else, and so it is our duty to love and defend them," Bishop John Stowe, the head of the Diocese of Lexington, Ky., wrote in a March 19 letter to Senator Dick Durbin and Senator Chuck Grassley, the two highest-ranking members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. "As a Catholic bishop, I hate to see any form of harmful discrimination protected by law and it is consistent with our teaching to ensure that LGBTQ people have the protection they need."

Bishop Stowe, one of about a dozen bishops who recently signed a statement in support of an effort to curb bullying against L.G.B.T. people, said in his letter, obtained by *America*, that he is "grateful for many LGBTQ Catholics who serve and lead their communities with distinction. Their perseverance, their grace, and devotion to the common good has made Catholic communities holier and has edified our nation."

He continued, "It is deplorable that, while LGBTQ persons contribute to our society in many ways, they can be denied basic protections in housing, employment, and in many other areas of life."

Last year, in a 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court said the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applied to L.G.B.T. workers when it comes to barring discrimination on the basis of sex. Civil rights groups have encouraged Congress to pass legislation following up on that decision. The Equality Act would prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and health care by making sexual orientation and gender identity protected classes.

Some Catholic critics of the legislation, including the U.S.C.C.B., say the bill would limit religious liberty by forcing faith-based institutions, including hospitals, schools and charities, to provide services that go against their religious beliefs. Last month, five bishops who lead U.S.C.C.B. committees wrote a letter to members of Congress urging them to vote against the Equality Act, arguing that provisions in the law would "discriminate against people of faith."

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York who heads the U.S.C.C.B. religious liberty committee, put it more sharply, writing in an essay on March 16, "The Equality Act seems to go out of its way to target religion."

"The Equality Act goes far beyond the noble desire to protect vulnerable people," he added. "It burdens consciences and severely curtails the rights of religious people to be free to practice their faith."

Twenty-nine states offer some protections for L.G.B.T. people, and the Equality Act would extend protections to all Americans. But the U.S.C.C.B. questioned if discrimination against L.G.B.T. people existed to such an extent that it warranted federal action.

In a briefing paper on the Equality Act, the bishops' conference said that Catholics support "appropriate" nondiscrimination measures for people "regardless of their sexual inclinations."

"However," the paper continues, "'LGBT' people are not subject to systemic discrimination on the scale that has historically warranted the creation of a new federal policy, such as was necessary when the Civil Rights Act was passed. Widespread patterns of segregation or denial of basic goods, services, or opportunities to people who identify as 'LGBT' are not evident."

"On the contrary, 'LGBT' people today are often held in high regard in the market, as well as the academy, local governments, and media. Some studies suggest that people who identify as homosexual earn higher incomes than the national average," it reads.

Other critics of the bill say that it could force Catholic hospitals and medical workers to provide services that go against church teaching.

The Catholic Health Association, which represents more than 2,200 Catholic health care entities, sent a letter to lawmakers on Feb. 24, urging nondiscrimination protections for L.G.B.T. people but expressing concern with the bill, saying it lacked sufficient con-



science protections and limited religious freedom by overriding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Mary Haddad, R.S.M., who heads C.H.A., wrote: "Certain services directly related to gender transition could present a potential conflict for some faith-based health care providers. The Equality Act could be found to mandate such services."

She said the Equality Act "lacks conscience protection language and precludes application of RFRA" and worries "there may be no opportunity to find a balance between the free exercise rights of health care providers and others with moral or religious objections to providing certain health care services and the ability of those who seek such services to receive them."

The bill maintains longstanding exemptions for houses of worship and other religious institutions—for example, they could limit employment to people who shared their faith's beliefs and could refuse to perform same-sex marriages.

But faith-based homeless shelters

and adoption or foster-care agencies that receive federal funding would not be permitted to discriminate against L.G.B.T. people. And it would be more difficult for a wide range of businesses to justify anti-L.G.B.T. discrimination, regardless of personal or religious beliefs.

That could mean that Catholic charitable organizations might not be eligible for government contracts, putting things like shelters, food pantries and adoption agencies at risk unless they comply with the law, the U.S.C.C.B. argues.

For his part, Bishop Stowe wrote in his letter that he understands fears about religious liberty. "I naturally must insist that the right to practice and live in accord with the teachings of one's faith must be protected and churches should not be forced to enact practices in violation of their tenets," he wrote. He added that he "cannot condone any expansion in abortion access or threats to the sanctity of life" but concluded that he "must be forthright in stating this, I do not believe that the Equality Act would compromise our beliefs on this matter."

In an interview with *America*, Bishop Stowe said, "it's a difficult thing to take a stance against what the USCCB published," but he said that after consulting with a number of theologians, ethicists and other church leaders, the question for him came down to: "How can we take a position against equality?"

Bishop Stowe said he understands the fears about how the bill could infringe on religious liberty should it become law. But he was uncomfortable with what message was being sent to L.G.B.T. Catholics by bishops working to block the Equality Act, especially in light of church teaching that prohibits "unjust discrimination" against gay and lesbian people.

"I wish we could influence the writing of the law in ways that would better protect everybody's interest," he said. "In this circumstance, I do believe that the provision of equal justice under law is more important." ✦

Two Catholic bishops assure transgender people: 'God resides in you'

By Madeleine Davison
NCRonline.org
March 31, 2021

A bishop, an archbishop and several other Catholic organizations and leaders released a letter March 31 with the Human Rights Campaign condemning discrimination and violence against transgender people and affirming their dignity.

"The defense of human dignity is one of our highest callings of our baptism," reads the letter, released first to NCR. "And we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do all that is necessary to end discrimination and violence."

Signatories of the letter, published on Transgender Day of Visibility, included Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky; Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Jesuit Fr. Michael Garanzini, president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities; and the leaders of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests and the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, which also signed the letter as organizations.

In 2020, the Human Rights Campaign documented at least 44 killings of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in the United States, the letter said. Most of the victims were Black or Latinx trans women, according to the Human Rights Campaign's website.

Trans women of color experience discrimination at the intersections of racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia, according to the campaign — meaning they are often denied safety,

housing, jobs, health care and other basic rights.

"It is critical that we as Catholic leaders and lay people, do everything we can to prevent any further discrimination or harm," the letter said. "This must start with more Catholic leaders underscoring the humanity of our dear neighbors."

The Catholic Church has its own history of discriminatory statements and actions against transgender people. In 2019, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education released a document called "Male and Female He Created Them." In it, the congregation attacked the intentions of transgender people and said the concept of a spectrum of gender identity would "annihilate the concept of 'nature'."

The document incorrectly conflated intersex and transgender identities, claiming that both are "efforts to go beyond the constitutive male-female sexual difference" that could "lead to a masculinity or femininity that is ambiguous."

The Catholic LGBTQ support group New Ways Ministry called that document "a harmful tool that will be used to oppress and harm not only transgender people, but lesbian, gay, bisexual people, too."

In the first months of 2021, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has opposed the Biden Administration's execu-

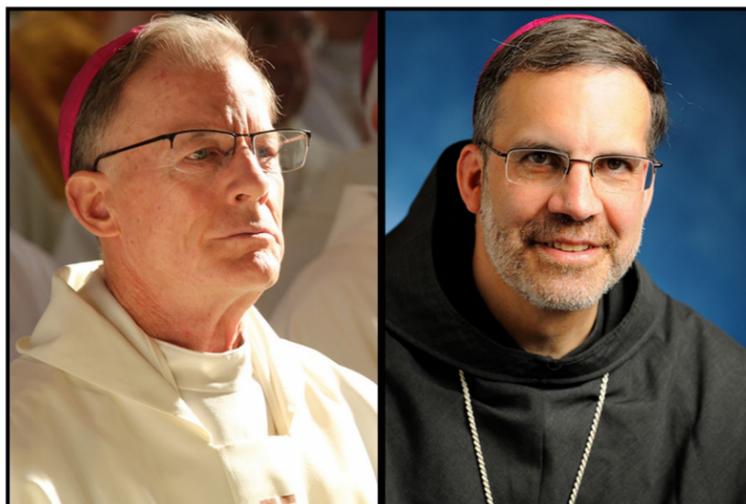
church spaces.

In the March 31 letter, however, Stowe, Wester and the other Catholic signatories emphasized that the Catechism of the Catholic Church says "every sign of unjust discrimination" against LGBTQ people "should be avoided." Catholics are commanded to "respect the full dignity and humanity in every individual," the letter's authors said. "That we might not understand an individual's experience, does not mean we are to discriminate against them, nor tolerate any form of discrimination they might endure," the letter said. "We are never commanded, neither in Sacred Scripture nor in Sacred Tradition, to discriminate against anyone, but instead to be stewards of justice and mercy."

The letter also quoted Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, which urged Catholics not to become indifferent to the suffering of other people.

"Instead we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering," the letter said, quoting Francis.

In a press release announcing the letter, Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said the moral leadership of the Catholic Church is "critical to the safety of our transgender



Archbishop John Wester, left, and Bishop John Stowe

order to protect transgender and other LGBTQ people from housing and employment discrimination and spoken against the proposed Equality Act, which would expand anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in federally funded programs, while eliminating religious freedom exemptions.

Some dioceses, such as the Diocese of Indianapolis, have policies that could ban transgender students from attending Catholic schools. And transgender Catholics have told NCR that they often experience discrimination and rejection in

LGBTQ-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities

Below is a list of known LGBTQ-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 LGBTQ Catholics, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ-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, St. Mary Magdalen
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
Manhattan Beach: American Martyrs
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
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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, San Roque
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
Woodland Hills: St. Mel

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
Waterbury: Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

Delaware

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

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Matthew Cathedral, St. Patrick

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
Pensacola: Cathedral of the Sacred Heart
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
Woodstock: Resurrection

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, Most Precious Blood, Blessed Sacrament, St. Anthony, St. Dominic, St. Athanasius
Columbia: St. John the Evangelist
Ellicott City: Resurrection
Gaithersburg: St. Rose of Lima
Hagerstown: St. Ann
Odenton: St. Joseph
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
Westford: Blessed Trinity
Whitinsville: St. Patrick

Michigan

Ann Arbor: St. Mary Student Parish
Detroit: St. Leo, Christ the King, Gesu Parish, Ss. Peter and Paul
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: 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

Berkeley Heights: Little Flower
Cherry Hill: Christ Our Light
Clifton: St. Philip the Apostle
Hoboken: Our Lady of Grace
Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of Assisi
Maplewood: St. Joseph
Marlton: St. Joan of Arc
Monmouth: Precious Blood
Pompton Lakes: St. Mary
River Edge: St. Peter the Apostle
South Plainfield: Sacred Heart
Turnersville: Sts. Peter and Paul

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family, San Felipe de Neri
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
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, St. Matthew
Durham: Immaculate Conception
Fayetteville: St. Patrick
Raleigh: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Raphael the Archangel

Ohio

Akron: St. Bernard
Centerville: St. Leonard
Cincinnati: 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

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

(Continued on page 5)



LGBTQ-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

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
Wilkesburg: St. James

Rhode Island

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

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
Mechanicville: Church of the Redeem-
er
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. James Cathedral, St. Joseph, St.
Mary's
Spokane: St. Aloysius
Tacoma: St. Leo

Wisconsin

De Pere: St. Norbert College Parish
Fond du Lac: Holy Family
Madison: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: St. Bernadette, Good Shep-
herd, 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
Grimston, Cleethorpes, Immingham:
Most Holy and Undivided Trinity
London: Church of the Immaculate
Conception (Farm Street Church,
Mayfair)
York: Bar Convent (Middlesborough
Diocese LGBT+ Ministry)

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 Spirituality
Center
Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholic

Minnesota

Minneapolis: Spirit of St. Stephen's
Catholic Community

Ohio

Dayton: Living Beatitudes Community

Oregon

Beaverton: Spirit of Grace Roman
Catholic and Lutheran Community
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

The Eucharist: Gated Banquet or Public Feast?

(Continued from page 2)

They weigh the possible scandal of admitting same-gender couples to Communion more heavily than the likely scandal of inhospitality, the sin that destroyed the biblical Sodom.

Second, as Pope Francis himself says, the Eucharist is not an invitation-only party with a bouncer. It is a public feast that heals "the diseases" of "evil and sins" and the wounds of "bitterness" with which we are all afflicted by showering us with the unconditional welcome of a lover.

The Eucharist "gives us Jesus' love, which transformed a tomb from an end to a beginning, and in the same way can transform our lives.... Every time we receive him, he reminds us that we are precious, that we are guests he has invited to his banquet, friends with whom he wants to dine. And not only because he is generous, but because he is truly in love with us. He sees and loves the beauty and goodness that we are."

In addition to healing our wounds and sins, Francis says, Eucharist strengthens us in our vocation of growth in the love and service to which we are all called.

"The Eucharist satisfies our hunger for material things and kindles our desire to serve. It raises us from our comfortable and lazy lifestyle and reminds us that we are not only mouths to be fed, but also his hands, to be used to help feed others."

Truly, to hold back these gifts from people who genuinely hunger for them is to block the circulation of God's love in the world.

Finally, both Cameli and Aquila believe that sexually active same-gender couples commit "manifest grave sin." But, Cameli argues, same-gender partners might simply be sharing a home as sexual celibates, and if so—"unless there are clear signs to the contrary"—they have a "right" to approach the Eucharist with "good and proper intentions."

Cameli's solution—offer Eucharist to same-gender couples who genuinely want it and don't publicly exhibit sexual involvement—completely ignores myriad same-gender couples' experiences of their own relationships. They too, and not just heterosexual couples, marry to enter the "freely chosen mutual belonging marked by fidelity, respect and care" that Pope Francis describes in the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

For both same-gender and heterosexual couples, "sexuality is inseparably at the service of this conjugal friendship, for it is meant to aid the fulfilment of the other." And same-gender couples, just like heterosexual couples, sometimes fail to guard against the wider culture's tendency to adopt a "use and discard" view of sex as "self-assertion and...selfish satisfaction."

Same-gender Catholic couples don't fail to discern the body and blood of Christ present in the Eucharist. They don't come forward to make a political statement. They certainly don't want to

receive a wink or a "pass" to sneak into Communion on the awkward premise that they might not be (but probably are) committing "grave, unrepentant sins" at home. They want to participate wholeheartedly in the Eucharist because their relationships are just as holy and worthy of celebration—and just as fraught and imperfect and in need of redemption—as those of straight married couples. The focus should be not on pass-giving, gate-keeping, or "rights," but on a wholehearted welcome to the table where *all* sinner-saints receive the free gift of God's grace and are empowered to do God's work in the world.

I sense that both Aquila and Cameli genuinely want to be good pastors. Perhaps because they fear that they themselves will be excluded from the infinite mercy and grace of the Eucharist if they welcome same-gender couples to the sacrament, they cannot believe that this mercy and grace extends to all. They guard the gate rather than opening the door. Sadly, their loss is ours. †

Bishops assure transgender people: 'God resides in you'

(Continued from page 3)

siblings" in a time in which trans people are in danger of life-threatening violence.

"This is a critical moment to come together united, propelled by our faith, and lift our voices to unequivocally say that transgender rights are human rights, and they must be protected," David said.

The letter also quoted St. Bonaventure's call to "contemplate God" in all of creation. Transgender people are part of this creation, the letter said.

"Transgender people have always been members of our local parishes and the witness of their lives... leads us to greater contemplation of God and the mystery of our faith," the letter said. "To our transgender siblings, may you always know that the Image of God resides in you, and that God loves you."

While few high-profile Catholic leaders have endorsed the Equality Act, Bishop Stowe is not alone.

Sister Simone Campbell, who wraps up her tenure of the social justice advocacy organization Network later this month, told *The Washington Post* that supporting nondiscrimination laws is a pastoral position even if it leads to organizational headaches.

"The frustration is, it seems to me we're being called to be more pastoral and less bureaucratic," she said. "My problem is: Why do you want to exclude? In my tradition, Jesus included everyone."

A report released March 23 by the Public Religion Research Institute says that a majority of Americans, including U.S. Catholics, support measures included in the Equality Act.

"The data is clear: the vast majority of Americans support LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections no matter where they live, the party they belong to, or the church they belong to," Natalie Jackson, director of research at P.R.R.I., said in a press release.

According to the report, which is based on a survey of more than 10,000 adults conducted in 2020, when asked if "you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose laws that would protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations, and housing," majorities of Hispanic Catholics (81 percent), white Catholics (77 percent) and other Catholics of color (74 percent) said they do.

Last month, the House of Representatives passed the Equality Act with a

mostly party-line vote. Republicans broadly opposed the legislation, with only three voting with their Democratic colleagues to pass the measure. On March 17, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the measure, though it is unclear when a vote may occur. At least one Republican senator, Susan Collins of Maine, has pressed for more religious exemptions.

Following the House vote, President Biden said in a statement, "The Equality Act provides long-overdue federal civil rights protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, locking in critical safeguards in our housing, education, public services, and lending systems—and codifying the courage and resilience of the LGBTQ+ movement into enduring law." †

Why the church should fight anti-transgender legislation

By Daniel P. Horan
NCRonline.org
April 14, 2021

Just because something is new to you does not mean that it is novel or a fad. As obvious as this statement is, sadly, too many politicians and religious leaders alike are responding to broader visibility and awareness of the reality and experiences of transgender persons with a performative sense of shock and alarm. This kind of reaction not only betrays their ignorance of the historical and scientific research on the longstanding reality of transgender identities, but these behaviors also have life-and-death consequences for trans people.

Regarding the inaccurate belief that transgender identity is "new" or some kind of "trend," scholars have demonstrated the falsehood of such claims. Mills College Professor Susan Stryker chronicles the history of transgender persons and the community's variable social visibility over the last two centuries in her 2017 book *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*. As Stryker illustrates in the book, the increasing recognition of the transgender community and broader representation in media and entertainment were only made possible by the heroic activism, networks and support over decades and centuries, which has not yet received adequate attention.

More recently, University of Pittsburgh professor Jules Gill-Peterson, writing last week in *The New York Times*, addresses acknowledgement of the reality of transgender children for at least the last century in stark contrast to the contemporary political arguments that this is a "twenty-first century issue." Gill-Peterson offers a fuller historical accounting in her 2018 book *Histories of Transgender Children*. Recounting this history is especially important today given the latest attacks on transgender girls and women in sports.

Care for and protection of the transgender community is a life issue. The targeting, attacking and harm caused to the trans community — as well as contributing to anti-transgender stigma — is a social evil and something Christians and all people of good will ought to resist.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, state legislators have introduced more than 80 anti-transgender bills since Jan. 1, making 2021 a record year for such discriminatory efforts. The proposed legislation covers a range of oppressive actions, including the prohibition of transgender girls and women from participating in school sports and prohibiting or even criminalizing gender-affirming care for some transgender persons. With so many legislative attempts to curb the civil liberties of transgender adults and children, one would assume that there must be some real problems that have surfaced in need of redress by the law.

However, the Human Rights Cam-

paign says, "These bills are not addressing any real problem, and they're not being requested by constituents. Rather, this effort is being driven by national far-right organizations attempting to score political points by sowing fear and hate."

The right-wing political interest in centering discriminatory legislation like what is currently proposed in at least 28 states, is fairly self-evident. In the wake of the 2020 elections, the Republican Party realized that it has little or nothing to offer that appeals to the majority of the population — including much of its electoral base — in terms of fiscal or political policy. Returning to its playbook of cultural warfare distractions (think of the racism of the "war on drugs" of the 1980s and '90s, the homophobia of the anti-gay-marriage legislation during the 2004 presidential campaign, or the anti-intellectualism and science skepticism of climate denialism, among others), the GOP has to select a new scapegoat, and the party's leaders and special interest groups have chosen some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Decades of gerrymandering have resulted in this evitable race to the ethical bottom. With certain congressional districts statistically a sure win for the Republican Party, the only serious threat to the reelection of many politicians is a primary challenge from the radicalized extreme right. What has resulted is the formation of an echo chamber that perpetuates the vilest talking points and conspiracy theories, which are then adopted by otherwise mainstream politicians out of a perceived sense of necessity to compete with their challengers.

As a result, the absurd becomes normalized, conspiracy becomes truth, and victims become enemies in this vicious circle of evil.

The flurry of gratuitous and dangerous legislative proposals, buoyed by increasing hate speech and transphobic attitudes, is a distraction from real problems like the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism, rising income inequality and global climate change, to name a few.

While I can understand such a desperate political ploy, as insidious as it is, what I have a harder time reckoning with is the persistence of transphobia and hatred perpetrated by self-identified Christians, especially by those in ministerial leadership.

Such was the case last summer when the Indianapolis Archdiocese announced new policies that could ban transgender students from attending Catholic schools in central and southern Indiana. Or, two summers ago when the Vatican's Congregation for Education released a truly reckless statement that conflated a number of discrete issues and generally lambasted what anti-LGBTQ activists like to

call "gender ideology," an amorphous and essentially meaningless phrase.

In October, Bishops Michael Barber of Oakland and David Konderla of Tulsa, chairmen of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Catholic Education and Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, respectively, signed a



Fr. Daniel P. Horan

letter addressed to then-Sen. Kelly Loeffler and U.S. Rep. Greg Steube expressing their support — and, tacitly, that of the United States bishops — for proposed legislation that targeted transgender girls and women in school and collegiate sports.

In January, several bishops issued a letter condemning the Biden administration's plans to extend nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ persons through executive action. The bishops' letter not only attacked protections for couples in legally protected same-sex civil marriages, but it also identified their opposition to civil rights protecting individuals on the basis of their gender identity.

While these examples of individual and corporate transphobia and anti-transgender activism on the part of church leaders represents the most contentious and visible public responses to increasing trans visibility in our communities, they are not the only Catholic responses; nor are they the *most Catholic* responses.

Last month on "Transgender Day of Visibility," celebrated each March 31 since 2009, the Human Rights Campaign released a joint letter with several "prominent Catholic leaders" — including two bishops, several Catholic organizations and some theologians — expressing support for transgender persons and explicitly condemning anti-transgender violence (full disclosure: I am one of the signatories). The letter draws from a range of Catholic sources, including the teachings of Popes John Paul II and Francis, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and St. Bonaventure, a 13th-century Franciscan theologian and doctor of the church.

The letter closes with these simple, yet powerful, lines: "Transgender people have always been members of our local parishes and the witness of their lives has led us to greater contemplation of God

and the mystery of our faith. To our transgender siblings, may you always know that the Image of God resides in you, and that God loves you."

There have been other constructive pastoral statements and resources, though they often do not receive the attention that the most vocal culture-warrior and transphobic church leaders garner. Such is the case with a recent pastoral resource published by the Catholic Health Association titled "Transgender Persons, Their Families, and the Church." As the small book explains, this is not a project of moral theology but is intended "for the use of Catholic ethicists, chaplains, priests, mission leaders, executives, health care providers and others who want to provide compassionate, quality care to trans persons and their families."

The collection of five first-person narratives is gathered from among those who were invited to speak to the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine about their experiences as Catholics who identify as trans, are raising trans children or have ministered to the trans community. Unlike the arrogance of those transphobic Catholic leaders and politicians who falsely insist that the visibility of trans people signals a "new trend," the preface to this Catholic resource states plainly and accurately: "It is likely that transgender people have always existed, but several recent events have brought them and their experiences into the spotlight."

In addition to these pastoral responses, rigorous scholarly efforts within the Catholic theological and ethical tradition have situated the reality of transgender persons within the Catholic context without antagonism. Such is the case with St. Norbert College theological ethicist Craig Ford, whose recent work has revisited the Catholic natural law tradition in light of the anti-transgender policies of some Catholic schools.

One might even look to my own recent work in theological anthropology, which demonstrates how there are other resources in the Catholic tradition and ways of thinking about human personhood that do not result in anti-transgender positions.

As politicians continue to spread transphobic messages, seeking to stoke fear in their constituents by scapegoating a community that is already tremendously vulnerable, church leaders need to stand in solidarity with our transgender siblings and their allies who have been advocating for basic civil rights.

It is also important to note that despite all the noise about so-called "gender ideology," there is no magisterial teaching on this subject. Bishops and other church leaders in the United States and abroad would do well to listen, learn and consult actual experts — especially transgender persons — before condemning something they clearly do not understand. Otherwise, whole groups of people will continue to be oppressed and more people will die. †

Book on Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church Centers LGBTQ People

(Continued from page 1)

daily violence faced by the most marginalized, particularly those in the LGBTQIA community." Segura writes at one point, "If we are a church that constantly screams it is pro-life, that it cares about human dignity, then we must care about the lives of transgender women, men, and children."

Birth of a Movement is not, however, simply a catalogue of the church's sins. Fundamentally, it is a hopeful read, ending with a chapter on "A Liberated and Resurrected Church." Segura's writing not only has urgency to it, but a sense that it is indeed possible for the church to overcome its racist history. In a concluding note, drawing on the work of theologian M. Shawn Copeland, Segura writes:

"We were to remember the pain but



Olga Segura

not fear it—for resurrection and liberation, [Copeland's work] demonstrated require us to fight to eradicate the very

ills most affecting our communities, from addiction to poverty to suicide.

"A world without these ills is a world without prisons, without police, without the very systems responsible for violence and inequity. The Catholic Church has a crucial role to play in the struggle for liberation."

One of Segura's suggested actions for racial justice is a step that advocates of LGBTQ equality are well versed in: dialogue and encounter. Several times she urges the U.S. bishops to meet with the Black Lives Matter founders, writing:

"By incorporating the work of Black, queer women, our church leaders can demonstrate that they want to create a church that vehemently condemns racism and white supremacy, centers and uplifts Black Americans, and truly believes that we 'are the image of the

Mother church.'"

The combination of her personal narrative, her exposition of the church's sins, and her belief that another church is possible makes *Birth of a Movement* essential reading. And the book is a clear challenge for LGBTQ Catholics and our allies, particularly those of us who are white.

Segura's solidarity with our cause is clear, and comes from her conviction that there is no liberation until all people are free of oppression. This truth means the work of racial justice must be intersectional with LGBTQ issues, something too many Catholics have avoided. But it also means our work for LGBTQ equality must necessarily be anti-racist, too. *Birth of a Movement* is both a good place to start for those new to such work and a helpful continuation for those already underway. †

Courageous Pastors Needed to Open Wider the Door “Amoris Laetitia” Left Ajar

By Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman.

Bondings 2.0
NewWaysMinistry.org/blog
April 14, 2021

Same-sex civil unions have been in the news following the release of Evgeny Afinevsky's documentary *Francesco*, documenting Pope Francis' impact on people throughout the world as a result of his many travels. In the film the pope offered a response to a letter he had received from an Italian gay couple asking him how they should live as a committed couple and raise their children in a church that judges their union and their sexual acts as “intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of.”

Homosexuals “are children of God and have a right to a family,” the Pope responded, soundly based on Catholic teaching. In the context in which Francis was speaking, the phrase “have a right to a family” may be understood in the sense that LGBTQ children should not be rejected by their parents, but it can also be interpreted to mean that they themselves have a right to have children by fostering or adoption. No Catholic who understands the Church's social teaching about the God-created equal human dignity of every person could doubt the truth of the statement of the human dignity of lesbian and gay persons.

Francis' support of same-sex civil unions is consistent with his statements regarding “irregular situations” in his

Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (AL). “It can no longer simply be said,” Francis teaches, “that all those in any ‘irregular’ situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace” (AL 301). That teaching seriously challenges the prevalent Catholic teaching that those living in “irregular” situations, like same-sex civil unions, and engaging in sexual intercourse, are living in a state of mortal sin. Although no official church document has ever cited this particular passage from Thomas Aquinas, Pope Francis cites one of the scholar's more well-known arguments and invites all to incorporate it into their pastoral discernment: “Although there is necessity in the general principles [such as treating people with human dignity, respect, and compassion], the more we descend to matters of detail the more frequently we encounter defects.... In matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all as to matters of detail but only as to the general principles.... The principle will be found to fail according as we descend into detail” (AL 304).

This argument is popularly stated as “the devil is in the details.” It is critical and instructive to discern both what Francis is saying and not saying here. He is clearly saying what he has always believed, namely, that homosexual unions are not to be thought of as in any way analogous to heterosexual marriages. He

is just as clearly not saying, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) said in 1975, that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and cannot be approved of.” As an empathetic and compassionate pastor, he argues,



Michael Lawler, left, and Todd Salzman

speaking of the CDF without naming it, that we “cannot feel that it is enough to apply moral laws to those living in ‘irregular’ situations as if they were stones to throw at people's lives. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to hiding behind the church's teachings, sitting on the chair of Moses and judging at times with superiority and superficiality difficult cases and wounded families” (AL 305).

Francis' writings and statements on

same-sex civil unions are hard to reconcile with the CDF's March 15, 2021 statement prohibiting Catholic blessings of same-sex civil unions, which claims that God “cannot bless sin.” The statement seems more an attempt by ecclesial conservatives to undermine Francis' compassionate perspective than an actual representation of his position. Francis' pastoral approach is not to judge with superiority and superficiality but to ask the hard questions about the details and circumstances of those living in “irregular” situations.

Pope Francis' “new pastoral methods” in AL, which require that “different communities will have to devise more practical and effective initiatives that respect both the Church's teaching and local problems and needs,” have opened the door for the organic development of Catholic doctrine. In one sense, his support for the legalization of same-sex civil unions puts him at odds with the official sexual doctrine of the Catholic Church. In another sense, it roots him firmly in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church that promotes human dignity, opposes all discrimination, and teaches that homosexual people “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.”

Pope Francis neither accepts nor promotes the marriage of same-sex couples in the Church, and his defense of their civil unions is aimed at protecting the dignity and rights of LGBTQ coup-

(Continued on page 8)

LGBTQ-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

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



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

Reactions to Vatican Ban on Same-Sex Blessings

3VolteGenitori Network (group of Christian parents with LGBT children), Italy:

"Yes, for us blessing means 'to say good things' and we can only say positive things about our children who are full of sensitivity and attention, at times even capable of bearing witness to faith and hope against all hope. . .

"Through their loving relationship, we see them flourish and fulfill the first and fundamental vocation of everyone: to be loved for who we are, to love oneself in order to be able to love others. This is the reality our eyes were able to see and witness in the lives of so many couples. This is the happiness of our hearts as parents! . . .

"If Mother Church does not have the 'power' to bless this love, we as parents, who are called to listen and support our children, can bless them today and always and we are ready to find a 'sacramental' to do so."



Marianne Duddy-Burke

sponsibility, under God's blessing, the church cannot refuse the blessing. . . We encourage all pastors in the Diocese of Aachen to publicly support their practice of blessing. For this they have the full support of a large majority of Catholics."

Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director, DignityUSA:

"The Vatican's denial of blessings to same-sex couples will exacerbate the pain and anger of LGBTQ Catholics and our families. This statement is hurtful to same-sex couples, and dismissive of the grace demonstrated by same-sex couples who live deeply loving and committed relationships. . . DignityUSA has been blessing and marrying same-sex couples for 50 years and is committed to gaining equal access to the sacraments for LGBTQ+ people."

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC):

"This document is indeed a reactionary cry in response to the fresh air that is filling the Church from those parishes and lay communities around the world where blessings for same-gender couples are already a factual reality."

Sister Jeannine Gramick, SL, Co-Founder, New Ways Ministry:

"The CDF's attempt to ban blessings for same-gender couples has backfired. Instead of ending the discussion about blessings, the Vatican has actually enlarged and enhanced the movement in the Catholic Church to affirm and welcome LGBTQ people, with more and more bishops and other church leaders speaking up and criticizing a decision which should never have been made."

Elton John, Singer/Songwriter:

"How can the Vatican refuse to bless gay marriages because they 'are sin', yet happily make a profit from investing millions in 'Rocketman' – a film which celebrates my finding happiness from my marriage to David? #hypocrisy"

Bishop Peter Kohlgraf, Mainz:

"I notice how many believing people are disappointed and hurt by this, by no means only those directly affected. I take this very seriously. I'm also worried about the topic. At the same time, I take this as a mandate and an incentive that we in the Diocese of Mainz increasingly develop pastoral offers and concepts for and in particular: together with homosexual people. And I am grateful to all those concerned who care to keep in touch with our church."

Bishop Josef Marketz, Gurk:

"For me, homosexuals are not second-class Christians, and of course I will always give them a blessing."

Fr. Bryan Massingale, Theologian:

"A God that can bless a house, a plane, a boat, but cannot bless love is a God we cannot believe in. This is not a question of sexual morality. . . It's a

question of what God we believe in."

"Every human being is born with this innate desire to love. . . For those who are oriented toward members of the same sex. . . to have it being described as inherently or innately sinful without any qualification, that is crushing."

National Network of Catholic LGBT Groups, Brazil:

"We are outraged, but we are not surprised, because in this document we see that face of the Church that Christ himself criticized so harshly in the doctors of the law of His time. . . This is the face of part of the Church, which falls, once again, into the empty legalism so often denounced by Christ."

Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck, Essen:

"We will continue to accompany all people in pastoral care if they ask for it, regardless of the life situation."

Esteban Paulon, President, Argentine Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals:

"Saying that homosexual practice — openly living sexuality — is a sin takes us back 200 years and promotes hate speech that unfortunately in Latin America and Europe is on the rise. That transforms into injuries and even deaths, or policies which promote discrimination."

The Pfarrer Initiative, Austria:

Call to disobedience 2.0: We will continue to bless same-sex loving couples

"In solidarity with so many, we will not reject any loving couple in the future who wants to celebrate God's blessing, which they experience every day, in a church-service. Reality has long since shown that same-sex couples connected in love can very well celebrate God's blessing in church. A state-of-the-art theology establishes this responsible practice.

We vehemently protest against the assumption that same-sex loving couples are not part of God's divine plan. Here an attempt is made to undermine the reality of creation with dogmatizing presumptions."

Fr. Tobias Schäfer, Provost of the Worms Cathedral, Germany:

"If the church has no authority to bless wherever people long for blessings: has it not given up on its own task? Blessing is not an instrument for moral judgment! It is the promise that God is there, that he goes with us. In good and difficult hours. . . I cannot and will not refuse to anyone.

"My opinion is: don't take Rome seriously and continue with pastoral care. There are more important things than such stupid papers!"

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Vienna:

"The question of whether one can bless same-sex couples belongs in the same category as the question of whether

this is possible for remarried or unmarried partnerships. And here my answer is relatively simple:

"If the request for the blessing is not a show, so not just a kind of coronation of an external ritual, if the request for the blessing is honest, it is really the request for the blessing of God for a life path, the two people, in whatever situation, try to make a go, then this blessing will not be denied to them.

"Even if, as a priest or bishop, I have to say: 'You have not realized the whole ideal. But it is important that you live your way on the basis of human virtues, without which there is no successful partnership.' And that deserves a blessing. Whether the right form of expression for this is a church blessing ceremony — you have to think about it carefully."

The Tablet, United Kingdom:

"With circular logic and brutal insensitivity, this brushes aside all the psychological, emotional and pastoral situations in which gay people may find themselves, and defines them solely by such intimate sexual relationships as they may be presumed to have engaged in. This is a stark reversal of the direction of travel under Pope Francis, who has, for the first time, made gay and lesbian Catholics begin to feel welcome in the Church. . . "Fortunately the CDF does not have the power to control God's grace. Pope Francis in his subsequent Angelus remarks sought to emphasize God's inclusive love for everyone, which was taken to indicate that he wanted to distance himself from the tone and content of the CDF's unhelpful intervention. Other senior figures in the Church have done the same. So there is movement. And it is not in the CDF's direction."

Cristina Traina, Theologian:

"There's a groundswell of support for same-sex couples within Catholicism that we're seeing. . . What we're seeing is not just the whim of the weak, but a deep-seated and broader response that is indicative of the Holy Spirit moving."



Cristina Traina

A statement by a working group at the University of Münster, and signed by more than 200 German theologians:

"If scholarly insights are disregarded rather than adopted, as is the case in these documents, the magisterium undermines its own authority."

"The text displays a paternalistic attitude of superiority and discriminates against homosexual people and their visions for their lives. We categorically reject this. Instead, we depart from the position that the life and love of same-sex couples is worth no less before God than the life and love of any other couple."

"In many parishes, priests, deacons, and lay ministers recognize homosexual people, which may include the offering of blessing ceremonies for same-sex couples and also reflecting on the appropriate liturgical forms of such celebrations. We expressly welcome these dignifying practices." ✦

The Association of Catholic Gay Pastors, Netherlands:

"We. . . declare that we will ignore the prohibition on speaking out about non-heterosexual relationships. We declare that prohibition un-gospel. And when two people (two men, two women, woman and man) want to bless each other and their families, we are ready at their request — and after the usual careful preparation — to offer that blessing also on their relationship."

Bishop Johan Bonny, Antwerp:

"I feel ashamed for my Church. I mainly feel intellectual and moral incomprehension.

"I would like to apologize to all for whom this *responsum* is painful and incomprehensible. Their pain for the Church is mine today.

"The document lacks scientific basis, theological nuance and ethical caution, in particular in the passage which states, 'That in God's plan there is no remotely possible resemblance or even an analogy between heterosexual and same-sex marriage.'

"I myself know gay couples, in civil marriages with children, who form a warm and stable family, and who also actively participate in parish life. Some of them are active full-time as pastoral or church employees. I am very grateful to them. Who has an interest in denying that no resemblance or analogy to heterosexual marriage is possible here?"

Cardinal Blaise Cupich, Chicago:

"...the understandable reaction among many to this response will be disappointment. This should prompt us in the Church and in the archdiocese to redouble our efforts to be creative and resilient in finding ways to welcome and encourage all LGBTQ people in our family of faith."

The Diocesan Councils of Aachen and Cologne, Germany:

"God loves and blesses all people.' 'If people want to place their partnership, which is based on love and re-

Courageous Pastors Needed

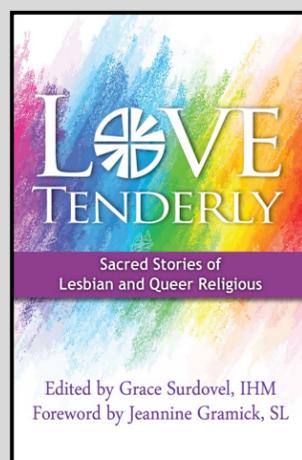
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les and also the rights and privileges of heterosexual marriage. He does, however, recognize and promote legal protections for human dignity in both civil and church law. His pastoral statements defending same-sex civil unions should be read as an attempt to balance those two realities in a way that promotes human dignity, welcomes members of the LGBTQ community into the Church family, and treats them with "respect, compassion, and sensitivity."

In AL, Pope Francis has pushed ajar

the door for the organic development of Catholic sexual teaching. It will require courageous bishops, pastors, laity, and LGBTQ individuals to work to push that door wide open and to let the light and truth of the gospel Jesus shine on antiquated, hurtful, and alienating church teachings on LGBTQ ethical issues. ✦

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