

# Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for Persons who are LGBT

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## Advent Solidarity with LGBTQ Youth

10 11 2010

Fortunate Families

FORUM

Sharing information with those seeking justice for our LGBT daughters and sons

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This past weekend, Mary Ellen and Casey Lopata were in Milwaukee to represent Fortunate Families and Equally Blessed at the 2010 Call To Action Conference. Equally Blessed is a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people both in the church and in civil society. Equally Blessed consists of Call To Action (CTA), DignityUSA, Fortunate Families and New Ways Ministry.

The press release below was issued November 8, 2010 expressing disappointment at the Bishops Conference failure to speak out on the recent rash of gay suicides. Handouts with suggested actions we can all take during the Advent season were distributed to conference attendees. These actions are to show our support for LGBT persons – especially in this time of increased public awareness of gay suicide. You may find some of the suggestions to be great ideas for your own families or local ministries.

Thanks for your always-wonderful support.

Linda Karle-Nelson

President, Fortunate Families

The Press Release

For Immediate Release  
November 8, 2010

Catholic Bishops Silent on Gay Suicides,  
2,000 Catholics and Four Catholic Organizations Issue  
Anti-Bullying Statement: “We stand on the side of love.”

(Milwaukee, WI) The largest annual gathering of progressive Catholics met this weekend for the Call To Action conference and issued a statement in conjunction with Equally Blessed, the pro-LGBT Catholic Coalition, against bullying in light of the recent rash of suicides among gay youth:

We cannot wait for the Catholic bishops to issue a statement on behalf of our children. Instead, as Catholics we stand today and say “no” to the bullying that our youth experience. We say “no” to the culture of violence that promotes this bullying and we say “no” to the statements of Catholic bishops that fuel this culture of violence against our vulnerable young people. Instead, as people of faith, we say “yes” to standing with our youth and dedicating ourselves to building a culture of love in our churches and our world so that every child—no matter if they are gay or straight—will know they are beloved and that God is, indeed, a God of love.

-Statement of Equally Blessed Coalition and Call To Action Conference Participants

“We cannot wait for the Catholic bishops to have a change of heart,” said Jim FitzGerald, Call To Action Executive Director. “Our children need to know that our hearts are with them. That is why today we are announcing a call for Catholics to wear rainbow ribbons at masses during Advent, the liturgical season preceding Christmas, to show our gay youth that we stand on the side of love.”

“A month has gone by since the media broke the news about a series of gay suicides, but the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has failed to issue a single statement regarding these tragic, preventable deaths,” said Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA. “It is the bishops’ discriminatory rhetoric which denigrates those not fitting the heterosexual stereotype that perpetuates a culture where youths are bullied for being who God created them and, sadly, sometimes pushes them to attempt suicide. Gay youth are three times more likely to commit suicide than their peers.”

A week from today, the U.S. bishops are scheduled to meet in Baltimore to hear a presentation from its own “Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage” which works to deny marriage equality and has prompted the bishops to spend millions of dollars to discriminate against LGBT people. The Ad Hoc Committee, despite its name, has become central to the Conference of Bishops and its committee members include top bishops from dioceses including Washington, DC and Los Angeles (see list below).

“Jesus said ‘let the little children come to me’ but each time a bishop issues a statement or supports a campaign against gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people, he is pushing our children away—and potentially pushing them over the edge to suicide,” said Mary Ellen Lopata, Co-Founder of Fortunate Families and mother of a gay son. “The church teaches that all children are gifts of a loving God. This is about saving children’s lives and there are no exceptions.”

“The church justice movement—working for justice in society and the church—is essential in these times because justice cannot stop at the church door,” said Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry. “What is said from the pulpits on Sundays affects what happens every other day of the week. We have the obligation as Christians to profess ourselves as people, not of hate, but of love and our youth need to hear it now more than ever.”

###

Dioceses Whose Bishops Sit on the USCCB’s Ad Hoc Defense of Marriage Committee:

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Archdiocese of Louisville (chairman)  
Archbishop Donald Wuerl, Archdiocese of Washington  
Bishop Salvatore Cordileone, Diocese of Oakland  
Bishop William Lori, Diocese of Bridgeport, CT  
Bishop Gabino Zavala, Archdiocese of Los Angeles

## The Advent “Action Suggestions”

This Advent season, join the progressive Catholic movement in wearing a rainbow ribbon to church as a public symbol of justice and solidarity with our LGBT youth in this time of increased awareness about youth suicides.

Do you feel called to do more for our youth? Here are some other ways you can make a difference:

- > Pledge to have a conversation about LGBT justice issues with a family member, colleague, neighbor, member of your parish or faith community, or with a public official (<http://glaad.org/talkingabout>).
- > Volunteer for an LGBT organization, maybe one that works with LGBT or questioning youth.
- > Help create a safe space or anti-bullying policy to support LGBT youth in your local school or faith community.
- > If you know a Knight of Columbus, ask them if they know how their money is being spent on anti-gay campaigns.
- > Help pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act (<http://www.hrc.org/issues/12142.htm>).
- > Adopt a bishop this season and make a contribution in his name to an LGBT rights organization and then send a letter to the bishop letting him know of your gift (<http://www.cta-usa.org/justchurch/bishopslist/>).

To stay connected, order ribbons\* or learn more, visit [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org) or our websites at [cta-usa.org](http://cta-usa.org), [www.dignityusa.org](http://www.dignityusa.org), [www.fortunatefamilies.org](http://www.fortunatefamilies.org) and [www.newwaysministry.org](http://www.newwaysministry.org)

\*Information about ribbon and safety pins:

If you're looking for a place that carries the rainbow ribbon in bulk, try [http://www.artisticribbon.com/rainbow\\_stripe\\_ribbon.htm](http://www.artisticribbon.com/rainbow_stripe_ribbon.htm)

The preferred size is 7/8". A 100 yard roll costs about \$27 plus shipping. Several places on the web sell safety pins in bulk. The size needed is #1, in either brass or silver. Just google safety pins bulk. This is the way to go if you think you'll need over 1000, or if you can share with other groups in your area.

For small quantities, you should be able to find rainbow ribbon and size #1 safety pins at most craft or fabric stores.

Cut the ribbon on the diagonal, // about 1.5 inches long. Attach safety pin.

If people ask why you're wearing the pin you can explain simply that it is a symbol of hope and a sign of your love and caring for all God's children, including God's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children. And you can give them a copy of the statement below:

I wear a rainbow because . . .

I believe that the rainbow is a symbol of a promise from God.

I believe we are all God's children, and have an inheritance in that promise.

I believe that wearing it reminds those who would deny my child a place at God's table that they don't own the guest list.

I believe that wearing it gives hope to a gay youngster that there are adults who can love him/her.

I believe that wearing it gives parents an open door to talk to me about their gay children; and that leads to affirmed and healthy children.

I believe that it starts the conversation with those who are ignorant of the struggles of gay folk.

So, if you see me in your communion line with a rainbow cross, or pin, or peace sign; I would hope you realize that wearing the pin is my way of reaching out to the marginalized, and reminding them that they are welcome, loved.

When I serve as extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, I wear it to remind me not to judge anyone who comes forward, but instead to share with them the table of the Lord.

We are all God's children, God loves us all.

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"I'm proud to be a Listening Parent in support of Fortunate Families.  
Check out the Listening Parents Network at <http://fortunatefamilies.com/listen.htm>"

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## [Coming Out Day, October 11, 2010](#)

7 10 2010

### **National Coming Out Day Prayer Reflection/Service Monday, October 11, 2010**

#### **Read John 11: 1-45**

#### **A Reflection:**

"And Jesus wept, (John 11:35)." Many of us know this verse as the shortest verse in the Bible. What we should know is the biblical context of this verse. Jesus' beloved Lazarus had died and now Jesus was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions. Translators have problems with this kind of "love," often calling it "philio," brotherly love or "agape," a disinterested love like the love of God. But what we see here is our God who is hardly disinterested but moved to the core of his being, body, soul, and spirit, with love and with loss. But Jesus faces the tomb anyway, and weeps.

And Jesus weeps, today! In the month of September, 2010, several gay youth committed suicide and as much as our society and religious authorities strive to silence us about their rights and dignity as human persons or their imposed lack of dignity, rights and respect, Jesus still asks: "Where have you laid him, (v.34)?" We have to go too. Seth Walsh, in sixth grade, from Tehachapi, California, had just "come out" to his mother and school, went to his backyard at home and hanged himself unable to cope with the barrage of bullying. Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers University Freshman jumped off the George Washington Bridge after a sexual encounter with another man was broadcast online by his roommate. Billy Lucas, a 15 year old from Greensburg, Indiana, hanged himself on Sept. 9 after being bullied constantly. Asher Brown, a 13 year old from the suburbs of Houston, Texas, shot himself after "coming out." He too, was a victim of taunting at his middle school. His parents complained but the school failed to take action. Suicide among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons is a disturbing trend. According to a recent survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, nearly 9 out of 10 gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth suffered physical or verbal harassment in the year 2009 from taunts to beatings. One classmate of Seth quoted

several taunts meted out to Seth. “You should kill yourself. You should go away. You’re gay, who cares about you?” And there is Jesus weeping at the tomb of his beloved children. Are we there with Jesus? Weeping, too?

Dear beloved Lazarus there’s more to your story. Jesus invokes God’s name so that we, the community around these tombs can believe in the way, the truth and the life of the world. Jesus, shouts: “Lazarus, come out! (v.43)” Bound from head to hands, to toe, Jesus then instructs us, “Untie him and let him go free, (44).” We are a community of people steeped in the Love of God through Jesus, not hate speech or acts. Many of us who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender daily hear the sexual innuendos, slurs, taunts and experience bullying and it only increases and gets worse. To the point were our own political and religious leaders violent rhetoric against same-sex marriage and words such as homosexual behavior is “objective disordered toward evil,” binds us all up in fear to the point of taking our own lives. When will the escalation of this violent rhetoric stop and when will we again respond in love with all our brothers and sisters. As we stand before their tombs. What can we do?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” We, the Precious Blood stand with Jesus as he is crucified daily as he is bullied and taunted, left to die on the cross valueless and without any dignity. Next Monday, October 11, as well as being Columbus Day, is also, National Coming Out Day for the Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, and transgender community. National Coming Out Day was founded on Oct. 11, 1988 by Robert Eichsberg and Jean O’Leary marking the anniversary of the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons rights. Since then this day has been commemorated as a day to let all people see us, who we are, people they already like, know, respect and love who happen to be persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. Use this prayer service this day for yourself or for a group of people who choose to gather and celebrate the wondrous diversity of the People of God. Call your loved ones by name who have “come out.” And untie the bonds of hatred and violence that keep our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender brothers and sisters from experiencing freedom. Hear Jesus call out to you, Come out and leave that which binds you to death.

Around the tombs of Seth, Tyler, Billy, Asher, and many multitude of persons not named who traverse death because of a loss of hope, on Monday, let us be people who bring hope and love. Let’s weep no more and “come out” and bring life to all Jesus’ beloved ones.

*Fr. David S. Matz, CPPS, October 7, 2010*

Reflection: How have I participated in the sexual innuendos, slurs, bullying and violence towards LGBT persons, youth and adults, by action and inaction? How can I speak and live the command of Jesus, “untie him and let him go free?”

### **Prayer for the Community gathered around LGBT persons**

O God our Creator,

We praise you, for it is you who have made us.

We thank you that we are so wonderfully made.

We marvel at our human dignity and diversity.

Help us to know how to express the gift of sexuality you have given us.

Help us to stay in right relationship with you and with all others

for this is where justice reigns, where peace, justice, truth and love meet.

On this day, let us all “come out” of hatred, fear and ignorance,

and celebrate the marvelous gift of creation you have imbued in us all.

May we respect and reverence all your children as created in your image and likeness.

In Your name, we pray.

### **Prayer for Coming Out**

Creator God, I am learning things all the time.

It is a gift to get to know you and your world, your beautiful creations.

I am also getting to know myself,

and I am discovering I am attracted to members of my gender – other girls (or boys).  
 Sometimes the things I feel are strong and deep.  
 Sometimes it even feels like love.  
 Sometimes I feel scared about these feelings.  
 Sometimes I feel wonderful about them.  
 I know that I am your creation,  
 and you have given me a wonderful gift in my orientation.  
 I pray for your supporting presence as I become more comfortable with my feelings.  
 I pray for your guidance,  
 that I may know when it is the right time  
 for me to let other people know about this part of me.  
 I pray for your supporting presence if I should be rejected,  
 knowing that you, God who created me, will not reject me,  
 that you will affirm me as part of your beautiful creation.  
 In you I trust, Amen.

### **Parent's Prayer**

God you are the creator of the universe.  
 You created all that is.  
 You made the animals, and the fish and the birds,  
 you created humanity.  
 You created me  
 and you created the miracle that is my child, whom I love deeply.  
 I/We have just learned that s/he is gay.  
 I/We don't know why you created her/him this way  
 Help me/us not only to accept him/her  
 but to fully embrace and love him/her for who he/she is  
 I/We ask for your presence during my/our own journey with my/our daughter/son.  
 I/We also ask for your presence  
 and special protection with my/our child on her/his journey in this world,  
 which can sometimes be so cruel,  
 especially to one so different.  
 I/We ask your blessing on my/our family.  
 Amen.

### **A Friend's Prayer**

Loving Spirit and Friend,  
 my friend (name) is coming out as gay.  
 I ask for you to be present with my friend,  
 to help him/her know that s/he is loved – by me, by you, and by others.  
 Guide my friend as s/he comes to terms with his/her identity.  
 Protect her/him from the cruel things people may say or do;  
 surround him/her with support and with your love.  
 Amen.

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## **[An Open Letter to the Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church](#)**

18 05 2010

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE HIERARCHY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH REGARDING THE PASTORAL CARE OF GAY AND LESBIAN PERSONS

As Catholic pastors, we have become increasingly disturbed by the tone and, in some cases, content of documents and statements from the Vatican, bishops' conferences and individual bishops on issues categorized under the heading of "homosexual" or "gay/lesbian." We respect the teaching authority of the Church. Because of this, we find particularly troubling the increase in the use of violent and abusive language directed at any human person. Such language is inappropriate. This is especially so when addressing members of the community of the faithful. These divisive and exclusionary statements from the Church are contrary to sound pastoral practice.

The life journey in faith is unique and sacred, including the personal integration of sexuality and spirituality. Condemnations leveled at sincere Catholics attempting to make sense out of their journey are inappropriate and pastorally destructive.

As priests and pastors we are speaking out to make clear that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are all members of God's family, brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus and deserving of the same dignity and respect owed any human being. Recognition of the inalienable dignity of the human person is the only path toward justice and reconciliation. We affirm the goodness of all homosexual persons. We root ourselves in the U.S. Bishops' statement "Always Our Children." Additionally, we re-affirm the understanding of the goodness of the human person as put forth throughout the papacy of Pope John Paul II. Further, we want to state clearly that ministering to and with our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters is mutually beneficial, as is all ministerial activity. Pre-judging where any believer's journey will take them is inappropriate. Walking with them, as we do with our heterosexual brothers and sisters, is the appropriate Christian response.

In the recent past, individual bishops, bishops' conferences and the Vatican have assumed a tone of such violence and abusiveness toward these sons and daughters of the Church, we can no longer remain silent. Has any other group of people within the Body of Christ been so assaulted and violated by such mean-spirited language? Examples from the most recent Vatican document show all too clearly the demonization of these children of God, referring to homosexuality as a "troubling moral and social phenomenon," "a serious depravity," "the spread of the phenomenon," "approval or legalization of evil," "grave detriment to the common good," "harmful to the proper development of human society," "intrinsically disordered." Does anyone consider this vile and toxic language invitational?

For many gay and lesbian Catholics, this most recent series of attacks has forced them, out of self-respect and self-love, to withdraw from active participation in the Church and question how they can remain members of a Church they experience as abusive. It is not possible to minister to and with the needs of our homosexual brothers and sisters with language of this tone as a foundation.

The Catholic Church is most catholic when it is inclusive and embracing, and least reflective of the gospel of Jesus when it is exclusive and rigid. For this reason, we also want to affirm the many pastoral and positive statements by certain bishops and bishops' conferences (e.g. "Always Our Children").

The Church's theology, including her moral teaching, is always in dialogue with the broader lived experience of her members, which shapes and rearticulates the ancient deposit of faith. We encourage a new atmosphere of openness to dialogue which includes the lived experience of many Catholic members. We recognize the blessings of countless homosexuals in a variety of relationships. We believe their experiences must be listened to respectfully.

While we do not know the reasons for the increasingly violent and abusive language, we deplore it as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ and ask that it stop immediately. Furthermore, we request that all those in official positions of teaching authority in the Church refrain from any more statements directed AT the gay and lesbian members of the Body of Christ, and instead begin an earnest dialogue WITH those same members of the Body of Christ.

For our part, we pledge to treat all who seek to continue their faith journey with us with respect and dignity, regardless of their sexual orientation.

We join the countless men and women, heterosexual and homosexual, who seek justice, mercy and compassion in and through the Catholic Church.

We extend an invitation all who share our concern to duplicate this letter, sign it, and send it to their pastor, local bishop, National Bishop's Conference or the Vatican.

(Parish names are listed for identification purposes only.)

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Rev. Daniel Cassidy  
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Rev. Dennis Condon  
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Rev. Donald Headley  
St. Mary of the Woods  
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Rev. Robert P. Heinz  
St. Alphonsus Liguori  
Prospect Heights, IL

Rev. Michael Herman  
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St. Clement  
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Rev. John Hoffman  
St. Teresa of Avila  
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