



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, June 4, 2023

June is LGBTQ Pride Month: Equal Justice & Equal Opportunity

More than 50 years ago, members of the gay community in New York City led the Stonewall uprising. Sparked by transgender women of color, they raised their voices not only in the name of equality, but in defense of their own right to live.

As the legislative effort to erase transgender people from public life has gained momentum, we have witnessed a surge of bills seeking to deny access to basic healthcare, legal recognition, education, bathrooms, athletics, or the right to openly exist in public schools. 2023 marks the fourth consecutive record-breaking year for total number of anti-trans bills considered in the U.S. (Mercy Justice Team, 3/31/23)

“All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society.... In the words of the U.S. bishops, “The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race....” (From *Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*, Catholic Charities Office for Social Justice)

In May 2022, Fr. James Martin received correspondence from Pope Francis in response to questions he said he commonly hears from L.G.B.T, Catholics and their families, especially related to hateful and homophobic comments. In reply, Pope Francis urged L.G.B.T. people to view negative experiences in the church not as rejection by the institution but as unfortunate encounters with individuals. “The church is a mother and calls together all of her children.” (*America*, May 9, 2022)

A Public Religion Research Institute survey from 2016 has shown that **negative messages about L.G.B.T.Q. issues are one of the most significant reasons that Catholics leave the church**, and they do so in greater proportions than in any other religion.

In an informal survey by DignityUSA, L.G.B.T.Q. people were asked, “Have you ever felt uncomfortable or directly discriminated against in a Catholic church or event?” Seventy-two percent said yes. But issues of prejudice against L.G.B.T.Q. people, especially young people, are not just matters that affect church attendance; they are truly life-and-death issues, often leading to homelessness and suicide.

These statistics should make us want to approach our L.G.B.T.Q. brothers, sisters, and siblings with the same “closeness, compassion and tenderness,” to use Pope Francis’ words, with which God approaches them. **As ever, looking at the example of Jesus—who always took the side of those who were rejected, marginalized, isolated, mocked, beaten, or abused—can help us move ahead.**

(Above statistics excerpted from James Martin, S.J. “Why should the church reach out to L.G.B.T.Q. people? Some shocking statistics can answer that.” *America*, August 2, 2021)



“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
— Audre Lorde