

His Holiness Benedict XVI
The Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City State
Europe

Berlin, May 7, 2011

Dear Holy Father

LGBT Christians appeal to Your Holiness to pay attention to human rights

We appeal to Your Holiness to condemn acts of violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people, and for Your Holiness' co-operation in lifting the penalisation of homosexual acts worldwide. Silence from Your Holiness is interpreted by people engaged in violence, torture and murder as consent to their actions.

For example, in January 2011, David Kato, an activist for the rights of LGBT people, was brutally murdered in Uganda. Violence, torture and murder of LGBT people happen often in various parts of the world, and their perpetrators are often convinced that they comply with the will of the Roman Catholic Church. This belief was compounded by the fact that, in December 2008, the Holy See refused to support the United Nations declaration on sexual orientation and gender identity. This declaration included a paragraph calling upon States to ensure that sexual orientation or gender identity may under no circumstances be the basis for criminal penalties, in particular executions, arrests or detention.

Furthermore, we appeal to Your Holiness to provide clear information to all Christians concerning the passages of the Bible that are used to justify these abhorrent actions. As with the passages supporting slavery, the verses advocating the killing of persons engaged in same-sex sexual activity must not be interpreted literally.

There is still pressure from some Roman Catholic clergy on LGBT Christians to undergo "reparative therapy" in order to change their sexual orientation. This strategy, and an official Church demand for LGBT people to live in sexual abstinence lead to many life tragedies, including suicides and severe forms of depression as they try to be obedient to the church's teachings and heroically follow them.

However, according to modern studies in psychiatry and psychology, sexual orientation cannot be changed, such attempts usually lead to serious psychological damage. Also life in celibacy cannot be demanded from those people who do not have a personal call to it.

LGBT Christians cannot be denied their fundamental right for a relationship with a beloved person, regardless of gender.

As science has testified that homosexuality is a variant of sexuality, we appeal that this scientific knowledge is included in the teaching of the church.

Consequently we appeal to Your Holiness to make sure that it is no longer preached that homosexual people must undergo therapy, but they are entitled to pursue their lives in a loving and faithful relationship.

The personal and social benefits are: a happy life, mental health, ability for fruitful work and for bringing support to others. Otherwise, life often turns into a sad existence, with a series of unsuccessful psychological and psychiatric therapies, loss of belief in God, humanity and love. This result is frequently described in letters and testimonies of LGBT Christians.

Worldwide, many lesbian, gay and transgender people live in relationships based on love, fidelity and mutual interest. Just like in mature heterosexual relationships - love is first a spiritual experience, and secondarily a physical one. Unfortunately, due to stigmatisation and lack of knowledge, the concept of homosexuality is associated by many people only with physical love.

Referring to the statement of Your Holiness in December 2008 about the protection of humanity as an ecosystem like a tropical forest, we can say that LGBT people are a less common species, permanently represented in the ecosystem. And as we know, every species is important and needed to ensure the balance God created.

We appeal to Your Holiness to reconsider the Church's position on same-sex and transgender relationships and support these relationships being accepted and blessed in the Church.

We appeal to Your Holiness to cease to urge Catholics' to vote against the law authorising same-sex relationships.

Same-sex and transgender relationships are not dangerous for traditional family existence but in fact support and enhance marriage and family values. LGBT people constitute a small percentage of each population, and their number remains constant.

The lack of acceptance of young LGBT people both in their families and by the Church almost always causes problems in the development of their personalities. The effects of this are often dramatic and are seen in their desperate attempts to enter heterosexual marriages, or disguise their sexual orientation and attempt a life in a seminary or a monastery, not necessarily because of personal vocation.

For these reasons, creating a safe and friendly atmosphere for 'coming out' is important for each society.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that homosexual persons should be treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Respect and sensitivity should be given to everyone regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. If this was truly the case then compassion would not be necessary. Homophobic behaviour and opinions are especially painful when perpetrated by Christians - both clergy and laity, and are not in keeping with showing respect.

God bless Your Holiness

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(Co-Presidents of the European Forum of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Christian Groups on behalf of the member Groups)

Members of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups:

Adverta Evangeliska Draudze (Latvia), The Anglican Clergy Consultation (UK), Arcus (Finland), Associació Cristiana de Gais i Lesbianes de Catalunya (ACGIL) (Spain), AG (Arbeitsgemeinschaft) Schwule Theologie e.V. (Germany), "C+H" (The Lesbian and Gay Christian Group of Geneva) (Switzerland), Changing Attitude (UK), Church of St Cornelius (Ukraine), CoOL (Christliche Organisation von Lesben): (Switzerland), Courage (UK), La Communauté du Christ Libérateur (Belgium), David & Jonathan (France), Drachma (Malta), Riks EKHO (Sweden), Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians (UK), Faith and Rainbow (Poland), FELGBT-The Spanish Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (Spain), Ganymedes (Slovakia), Gei Kristlaste Kogu (Estonia), Gruppo del Guado, (Italy), Gionata (Italy), Gruppo Varco-Refo (Italy), HomoDiversus (Moldova), Homosexuelle und Glaube, Wien (HUG) (Austria), HuK (Germany), Labrystheia, Netzwerk Lesbischer Theologinnen in und nach der Ausbildung (Germany), Landelijk Koördinatie Punt groepen kerk en homoseksualiteit, (Netherlands), Lesben und Kirche, Ökumenische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Germany), Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (UK), Lesbische und Schwule Basiskirche Basel (Switzerland), Light of the World (Russia), Maria und Martha Netzwerk, (Germany), Metropolitan Community Church, European District region 4, Metropolitan Community Church Region 5 (România), Netwerk Mirre (Nederlands), Netzwerk Katholischer Lesben (Germany), Nuova Proposta (Italy), Open Church Group (Norway), Projekt Schwul und Katholisch in der Gemeinde Maria Hilf or PSK Maria Hilf, Frankfurt (Germany), Quest (UK), Roman Catholic Caucus in the LGCM (UK), We for Civil Equality (Armenia), Werkverband van Homotheologen (WHT) (Netherlands), Werkverband van Katholieke Homo - Pastores (WKHP) (Netherlands), Zwischenraum (Switzerland)

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