



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

POPE FRANCIS, WE RESPECTFULLY ASK YOU TO:

Protect Secular Employees From Unlawful Discrimination

LGBT people have devoted years, even decades, to serving Catholic communities as teachers, leaders and role models. They have made a conscious choice to work within the Catholic Church because they strongly believe that a Catholic education prepares young people to be responsible, caring, respectful citizens devoted to the common good. Their work is far more than just a job – it is a reflection of their core Catholic values.

- **Distinguish Religious Liberty from Discrimination**

The right to free exercise of religion is fundamental. The freedom to worship -- or not -- without fear of government intrusion is a core American value. This religious liberty, as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, has allowed Catholics and other people of faith to practice their religion freely throughout the nation's history. Our Christian tradition teaches us that every human being is created in the image of God. According to the Catechism of the Church, every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. In practice, this should extend to the basic necessities for living a good life which includes adequate employment, healthcare, housing, and education.

- **Reverse morality clauses, which harm all Catholic workers**

The new "morality" clauses proposed in employee contracts by U.S. Dioceses and Archdioceses stand in stark contrast to the message of inclusion being promoted by Pope Francis. By imposing what amounts to an anti-LGBT purity test, the hierarchy is closing the door on dedicated professionals, many of them faithful Catholics, both LGBT and non-LGBT, whose moral codes do not embrace discrimination.

Embrace Church Inclusion of Diverse Families

Love is shown more in deeds than in words. – Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, teaches us that we all are called to lovingly serve one another, without qualification. Too many LGBT Catholics and their loved ones feel abandoned by the Catholic Church hierarchy, unwelcome and judged by ecclesiastical regulations that simply do not align with the Catholic values by which we strive to live. This must end. While Catholics are among the most welcoming and embracing of all people of faith, the hierarchy is doing terrible damage by mercilessly wielding discriminatory policies against faithful Catholics.

- **End Harm to LGBTQ Youth**

Rejection on the basis of religion is the main reason LGBTQ youth are driven away from their homes and families. According to the Williams Institute, 40 percent of the homeless youth served by agencies identify as LGBT. At the heart of the problem is the continued Catholic teaching that LGBT people are "intrinsically disordered," which goes against the call to love and serve one another.

- **Extend the Sacrament of Baptism to Children of LGBT parents**

The Church continues to find ways to injure and discount our families and our children. Denying the sacrament of Baptism to our children is denying them the basis of Christian life, and the door that gives access to other sacraments.

- **Extend the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick to Openly LGBT Catholics**

Through the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, the Church carries out Jesus' mission of compassion and healing. In 2014, Fr. Brian Coelho denied D.C. resident Ronald Plishka, 63, last rites after he revealed he was gay. Canon Law of the Catholic Church stipulates that priests are to instruct the faithful, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, on the benefits of this sacrament and how Christ and his Church are concerned for them, not create more hardship and distress for those who are ill or dying.

Speak Out Against Marginalization and Criminalization of Vulnerable People, Including Those Living with HIV and AIDS

Unless we train ministers capable of warming people's hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointment, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey. – Pope Francis

- **Recognize the Criminalization and Persecution of LGBT People Worldwide**

At least 75 countries criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relationships. As many as 10 countries punish same-sex conduct with the death penalty. Moreover, three countries have so-called "anti-propaganda" laws that prohibit the freedoms of speech and association of LGBT activists and allies. These laws lead to widespread persecution and imprisonment of LGBT people. In addition, they promote stigma and provide tacit approval for violence and discrimination against LGBT people, including discrimination that leads to adverse health outcomes, obstacles to accessing education, and barriers to economic empowerment.

- **Reverse Church Teaching on Condom Use to Curb HIV Transmission**

We know HIV-related stigma negatively affects prevention and care. The Catholic teaching associating condom use with promiscuity increases that stigma and poses a major public health risk. The Church's policy not only hampers the availability of condoms in the Global South but leaves hundreds of millions exposed to infection. Even Catholics in the pews disagree with Church's approach — a 2014 poll by Univision reported that 79% of Catholics around the world support the use of contraception.

- **Praise Catholic Nations Showing Leadership on LGBT and Human Rights**

A majority of Catholics around the world live in countries that have taken steps to protect and recognize the human rights of their LGBT communities. Six out of 10 countries with the largest Catholic populations have adopted anti-discrimination laws, and four have adopted hate crimes protections. More than 50 percent of the world's Catholic population lives in these 10 countries. None of these countries have laws criminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults or limiting the freedoms of speech or associations of LGBT advocates or allies. Moreover, four of these countries recognize the relationships of same-sex couples as marriages.

- **Clearly Affirm the Human Rights of LGBT People Worldwide**

There is a gulf between the mixed messages of the Pope and where Catholic people stand when it comes to the human rights of LGBT people. By affirming that LGBT rights are human rights, His Holiness would send a strong and unambiguous message that criminalization laws and violence against LGBT people have dangerous outcomes for society and deprive LGBT people of their human rights. The moral authority of the Church hierarchy has immense potential to save lives by supporting the human dignity of LGBT people.