

Noting with urgency the words of St. John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* that, “every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh, is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church’s very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature,” (*Evangelium Vitae* 3) we, Bishops, religious and lay leaders of the Roman Catholic Church join with the Human Rights Campaign in calling for an end to the epidemic of violence against transgender individuals.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “every sign of unjust discrimination” against LGBTQ people “should be avoided.” We are commanded to respect the full dignity and humanity in every individual, and to be people of justice, mercy and compassion. 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. 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.

It should alarm all Catholics that [individuals who are transgender experience disproportionate rates of discrimination, harassment and violence](#) -- violence that is often fatal, and that overwhelming affects Black and Brown individuals. Last year, at least 44 people in the United States were the victims of this fatal violence. It is critical that we as Catholic leaders and lay people, do everything we can to prevent any further discrimination or harm. This must start with more Catholic leaders underscoring the humanity of our dear neighbors.

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

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, writes that, “we cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering.” (*Fratelli Tutti* 68). It is our Catholic duty to affirm the dignity of transgender people and to defend them from harm.

St. Bonaventure wrote that, “we are led to contemplate God in [all creation].” This is no less true of our transgender siblings. Transgender people have always been members of our local parishes and the witness of their lives has leads 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.

Faithfully yours,

Individual Signatories

Archbishop John Wester, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, NM

Bishop John Stowe, O.F.M. Conv., Diocese of Lexington, KY

Fr. Michael Garanzini, SJ, President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Tom Chabollah, President, Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Fr. Bob Bonnot, Executive Director, AUSCP
Fr. Louis Arcenaeaux, C.M., Secretary, AUSCP
Fr. Neil Pezzulo, H.J.D.

Organizational Signatories

Association of U.S. Catholic Priests
Jesuit Volunteer Corps