

Manifesto

#outinchurch - For a Church without Fear

It's us! There has been much talk about us. Now we speak for ourselves.

We are full-time, part-time, voluntary, potential and former employees of the Roman Catholic Church. We work and are involved in school and university education, in catechesis and education, in care and treatment, in administration and organisation, in social and charitable work, as church musicians, in church administration, and in pastoral care.

Our identities include lesbian, gay, bi, trans*, inter, queer, and non-binary.

Our group is diverse. It includes people who have courageously and often single-handedly dared to come out in a church context in the past. But it also includes people who have only now decided to take this step and those who cannot or do not yet want to take this step, for various reasons. What unites us is that all of us have always been part of the church and help shape it today.

Most of us have had many experiences of discrimination and exclusion - also in the church. The Church's teaching authority claims, that we are incapable of "correct relationships"¹ to other people, that we fail to be fully human because of our "objectively disordered"² tendencies and that same-sex relationships "cannot be recognized as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God."³

Academic insights in theology and the human sciences mean that such statements are no longer acceptable or even debatable. They defame queer love, orientation, gender and sexuality and devalue our personhood.

Such discrimination is a betrayal of the Gospel and counteracts the Gospel mission of the Church, which is to be "a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity".⁴

In view of this situation, we don't want to remain silent any longer. We demand a correction of misanthropic doctrinal statements - also in view of worldwide church responsibility for LGBTIQ+ human rights.

And we demand a change of the discriminatory church labor law, including all the degrading and excluding formulations in the church's regulations for employees.

Up to now, many of us could not live openly with our gender identity and/or sexual orientation in our church profession or environment. Labor law entails a threat of consequences, up to and including the destruction of our professional existence. Some of us know situations in which bishops, vicars general or other administrators have forced them to keep their sexual orientation and/or gender identity secret. Only on this condition have they been allowed to

¹ E.g. Congregation for the Clergy: The Gift of the Priestly Vocation. Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis, 2016, Nr. 199.

² E.g. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons, 2003, Nr. 4; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, Nr. 2357.

³ Responsum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to a dubium regarding the blessing of the unions of persons of the same sex, 15.03.2021.

⁴ II. Vatican Council, Lumen gentium, Nr. 1.

remain in church ministry. This has established a system of concealment, double standards, and dishonesty. It has numerous toxic effects, shames people and makes them sick; it can have a negative impact on one's personal relationship with God and on one's personal spirituality.

Everyone in the Church, especially bishops in their leadership roles, have a responsibility to create a culture of diversity so that LGBTIQ+ persons can carry out their professional work and live their vocation in the Church openly and without fear, and be valued in the process.

Sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as the open avowal of this, and entering into a non-heterosexual relationship or marriage, must *never* be considered a breach of loyalty and, consequently, an obstacle to employment or a reason for dismissal. LGBTIQ+ persons must have free access to all pastoral vocations.

Further, the Church must express in its rites and celebrations the fact that LGBTIQ+ persons, whether living alone or in relationship, are blessed by God and that their love bears manifold fruits. This includes *at least* the blessing of same-sex couples who ask for such a blessing.

With all these demands we are going public together. We do this for ourselves and we do this in solidarity with other LGBTIQ+ persons in the Roman Catholic Church who do not, do not yet, or no longer have the strength for this. We do this in solidarity with all people who are subject to stereotyping and marginalization through sexism, ableism, antisemitism, racism and any other form of discrimination.

But we also do this for the church. For we are convinced that only action in truthfulness and honesty does justice to what the church is supposed to be there for: the proclamation of the joyful and liberating message of Jesus. A church that carries at its core the discrimination and exclusion of sexual and gender minorities must ask itself whether it can appeal to Jesus Christ in support of such a state of affairs.

Life designs and life experiences of queer people are manifold places of knowledge of faith and places of discovery of divine activity. We are convinced, and our experience tells us, that our diversity makes the church richer, more creative, more humane and more alive. As committed Catholics, we want to bring our life experiences and our charisms into the church on an equal footing and share them with all Christians and non-Christians.

For a new start, it is essential that church leaders take responsibility for the countless unfortunate experiences LGBTIQ+ people have had in the church, come to terms with the church's history of guilt, and meet our demands.

The fight for equality and against discrimination must not be left to marginalized minorities alone. It concerns everyone.

With this manifesto we are championing a free coexistence and cooperation in our church, based on the recognition of the dignity of all. We therefore invite everyone, especially those with responsibility and the church leaders, to support this manifesto.

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