



Living Our Lives, Living Our Faith

FOR RELEASE – 15 August 2023

Pope Francis congratulates Acceptance, an Australian LGBTQ+ Catholic group on its 50th anniversary

Acceptance, the world's second oldest LGBTQ+ Catholic organisation, is delighted to have received a special message of congratulations from Pope Francis in June on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

Pope Francis' greetings were both a surprise and a delight to Acceptance members, their families and supporters across Australia.

An Acceptance representative stated that "None of us expected such a greeting, but Pope Francis is such a wonderful Pope, why were we surprised?" "His welcoming, pastoral and caring interaction with LGBTQ+ people, extending back to his time as Archbishop and Cardinal in Argentina, is a powerful signpost and his greetings on our 50th anniversary reinforces his genuine concern for those marginalised in the Church".

The congratulations came via Sister Jeannine Gramick, an American nun who has ministered with the Catholic LGBTQ+ community since 1971 and maintains contact with Pope Francis. Sr Jeannine told Pope Francis about the Acceptance group in Australia and its 50th anniversary this year. Pope Francis asked Sr Jeannine to convey to Acceptance his personal congratulations.

In a recent message to Acceptance, Sr Jeannine said Pope Francis told her to pass on his "happy greetings at this time of your anniversary" and to advise that he was praying that Acceptance members would every year "grow closer in love with our Lord Jesus Christ".

Since its founding in 1973 in Sydney by the late Garry Pye, Acceptance has been an advocate for LGBTQ+ Catholics, worked closely with other Catholic groups seeking an inclusive and welcoming Church, supported persons living with HIV/AIDS and made submissions to the Australian Plenary Council and the global Synodal process underway.

Acceptance stated that "The greeting from Pope Francis is a significant milestone for Acceptance in Australia and the wider LGBTQ+ Catholic community. It reflects a message of welcome, inclusivity, compassion and acceptance, affirming the important role Acceptance has played in supporting LGBTQ+ people of faith over the past five decades".

Acceptance has written to Pope Francis to express its deep gratitude for his warm and encouraging message and the support it provides to continue its mission of providing a welcoming ministry of LGBTQ+ Catholics, affirming their dignity and Catholic faith.

"We are humbled and grateful for Pope Francis' greetings on our 50th anniversary," said Fr Claude Mostowik, former National Coordinator of Acceptance. "His message of support and recognition validates the importance of our work in creating a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ individuals within the Catholic community. This milestone inspires us to continue our advocacy, fostering understanding, and promoting dialogue between LGBTQ+ people of faith and the Church."

Benjamin Oh, Chair of Rainbow Catholics Interagency Australia, said, "Pope Francis' greetings serve as a powerful affirmation of the resilience and contributions of LGBTQ+ Catholics in our society and church. Celebrating Acceptance's 50th anniversary is a momentous occasion for the entire Rainbow Catholic community."

Acceptance will continue to celebrate its 50th anniversary over the coming year with a series of events and initiatives to further raise awareness, encourage dialogue and promote understanding within and beyond the Catholic community.

Acceptance has communities in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Perth. Acceptance continues to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ Catholics to celebrate their faith and know that they are part of God's family. With the Pope's congratulations on its 50th anniversary, Acceptance looks forward to continue working with allies and supportive parish communities creating a welcoming space across the Australian Catholic Church.



For further information, please note the below contact email addresses:

- Acceptance Sydney: info@gaycatholic.com.au
- Acceptance Melbourne: melbourneacceptance@gmail.com
- Acceptance Perth: acceptanceperth@gmail.com