



SEPTEMBER 26, 2016

GNRC NEWSLETTER N°3

Catholic LGBTI News around the world

It's been a long time! Hasn't it? Our last Newsletter was released on May 2016, but there have been many things that have happened in the LGBTI Catholic world since that date.

- The Pope made two important statements, first in June, [Christians should apologize to LGBTI people](#), and then in July, about [Gender Identity teachings on schools](#), and we, as GNRC, responded to him. Not stopping there, we think it's a good time to talk about [inclusion of Transgender and Intersex people in the Church](#).
- With deep sadness at the tragic News of the Orlando Shootings last June, we wrote a [letter directed to the Orlando Community](#) and started a [Signature Campaign](#) to express our sorrow and solidarity. We called on our LGBTI Catholic community to share their respects and commiserations through [vigils and masses](#).
- World Youth Day arrived, end of July, and we considered this a perfect opportunity to give visibility to [the lives of LGBTI people, especially Catholics, in Poland](#). At the midst of this event, the LGBTI Christian group Wiara i Tecza developed a [Young Pilgrim's Haven](#) and one of the GNRC youngest member had the chance to share with us his [WYD pilgrim experience](#).
- The Pride parades of 2016 was celebrated around the world and many of our members joined it, you can see the images of them all on the [Pride 2016 Gallery](#). In the case of Italy, they decided to manifest their presence and visibility through a media campaign called [#CHIESAASCOLTACI "Church, listen to us"](#). In Australia a Mass of Apology for LGBTI people was celebrated in mid-August. This positive and wonderful event was followed by some negative and reactionary wave of interventions in public affairs, led by local Bishops, in Latin America. Other News from the LGBTI Catholic world during the past months can be seen in a [summary on the GNRC website](#).
- The GNRC – Steering Committee (SC) held an open nomination and election for its office bearers' roles on July 2016. Ruby Almeida and Michael Brinkschroeder were elected as [Co-Chairs of the GNRC](#) so we wish them the best for managing the GNRC but we know that they will need a lot more of help to keep building our network.

IMPORTANT REQUEST (details in Page 15): Right now [we need your assistance and support](#) for legal advice regarding a country for incorporation of the GNRC and technical/graphical/editorial help for the Media and Communications team for the future and brand New GNRC website. So, if you have expertise and knowledge on the legalities of incorporating an organization then please make contact with us via email at michael.brinkschroeder@web.de . If you have skills and expertise on technical aspects of websites, then contact us via email at rainbowcatholicassembly@gmail.com .

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WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK TO ALL OUR MEMBERS THAT CONTRIBUTED IN THE CONTENT SUPPLY OR TRANSLATION OF THE GNRC NEWSLETTER N°3!

Transgender and Intersex people are invited to the table of the Church

The unique and rich gifts of LGBTI people for the Church comes from the diversity of Sexual Orientations as well as Gender Identity.

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Transgender (T) and intersex (I) persons, same as lesbians (L), gays (G) and bisexual (B) people, do not choose their gender identity. Gender identity is discovered, not chosen. Human nature has proven to be more diverse than the usual definitions of heterosexuality and the connection between gender and the biological sex recognized at birth. If we want to fully understand the definition of Gender Identity, we must also know the meaning of being a transgender or intersex person:

- **Gender Identity:** Refers to each person's internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve a personal decision, due to gender dysphoria, for a modification of bodily appearance and/ or functions by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including name, dress, speech and mannerisms.
- **Transgender:** Relates to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth.
- **Intersex:** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male bodies.

Most transgender and intersex people walk the same path of coming out, like that of LGB people, so the idea of a "choice", with all the risks and potential rejections that involves the process, is hardly an option but indeed the result of a long inner and personal process. If schools or any other institution taught that gender is a choice, as the Pope argued in a meeting with Polish bishops during the WYD in July, then indeed, the curriculum would have to be changed. The hard work and efforts towards the inclusion in the society of transgender and intersex people, in school education programs on gender identity, are not part of a postmodern trend or a biased lobby that searches to review the traditional teachings of the Church or to destroy the fabric of society. When the Pope makes references to the erroneous concept of *gender ideology*, he creates confusion and misunderstanding inside and outside the Church.

The reality of transgender and intersex persons has been a part of humanity's history from the beginning; evidenced in artistic, literary and numerous other representations in many cultures and religions around the world, whether Christian or not, e.g. America, Polynesia and Southeast Asia. The major difference is the current available research and evidence, based on serious biological, psychological and psychiatric studies, that supports the idea that a person's gender identity might differ from his or her biological sex at birth.

We understand the big advances and signals shown by Pope Francis, regarding visibility and acceptance for LGB Catholics (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual), inside the Church. Sadly, transgender and intersex Catholics, and their families have not yet received the same treatment - despite the Pope's meeting with a transgender man from Spain at the beginning of 2015.

For example, to believe that inclusive educational policies will make children or teenagers believe "that everyone could choose their own sex" is an erroneous reading and understanding of scientific evidence and

interpretation of what transgender and intersex people are. Bullying, depression and suicide, especially among teenagers, is tragically high among transgender persons (41% higher compared to other teenagers of a similar age). Therefore, addressing this topic in schools has to be the very place to attempt to protect young, vulnerable lives. Messages like the one released by the Vatican, only add to the pain and isolation of TI Catholics, reinforcing prejudices and discrimination in countries or regions where the Church has sometimes even supported or been a silent witness to the persecution and criminalization of LGBTI people and their families.

The life of a transgender woman in the Church



Joleen J. Mataele leading the morning prayer during the Ways of Love Gathering in Rome in October 2015

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Joleen J. Mataele is a Catholic transgender woman from Tonga whom we all had the pleasure to meet during the inaugural meeting of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. For many people, she is a living example of the diversity and richness that LGBTI people could bring to the Church. Usually the LGBTI Catholic movement is led by gays or lesbian, so her presence among us provided a new and holistic perspective of what full inclusive pastoral care should be for everyone.

During the 4 days' event, she gave witness of the LGBTI Catholic reality in her home country and played an active role in leading morning prayers, mass and kept up the energies for everybody during the pressing agenda of the event. She considers herself as a Fa'afafine, which is how Tongan society describes transgender women. *"In my country the concept that your male and female role should be consistent with your biological sex came with western colonialism. For us your gender expression is something natural that effectively is discovered through your life's journey and is mostly respected and accepted by our traditional culture"*, says Joleen when asked about how it is to be a transgender woman in Tongan society.

She is a dedicated activist as Chairperson and Co-Founder of the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network (PSDN), Advisor and Founder of the Young Catholic Transgender Association (YCTO), Public Relation Officer of the Catholic Women's League Committee (CWLC) and the Choir Conductor in the Nuku'alofa Parish Youth. "I'm more than an activist. I consider myself also an entertainer, singer and a lover of the life that God has blessed me with. If we are here, together, to bring fresh new air to the Church, we should be happy", she says

whenever people ask her about her natural charisma and personality. She also said that there is no problem for a LGBTI person to join in the regular aspects of Catholics pastoral life in Tonga. "When we celebrated a Vigil to honor the Orlando shooting victims, there were many members of our LGBTI pastoral care group there as they are also part of the Catholic Youth, which is one of the major organizers".

"I'm also the proud mother of 5 children. Each different and unique. I know and understand how it feels to be someone who is not part of the standard gender identity models, especially when I'm out of my homeland, but that doesn't restrict me of being a Catholic, woman and mother", she concluded.

New Hopes for Inclusion

Even if the transgender and intersex scenario for TI Catholics seems delayed, compared to the LGB Vatican or Catholic agenda, there are many people who are raising their voice for advocacy and inclusion. Most of the traditional sexual diversity pastoral care groups are moving from their initial definition of LGB Catholics to LGBTI Catholics. This responds to the full understanding that sexual orientation and gender identity diversity are part of the same route of inclusion and justice on the Church. The presence of transgender and intersex members is still very limited, especially in Western countries, as their stories of suffering and discrimination deeply assigned to them from early stages of life and which are frequently linked, directly or not, to the Church.

Another reason is that only a few religious men and women from the hierarchy have provided direct pastoral care for them. They themselves declare *"gender identity is something that we don't speak of or discuss on the seminary as we do with other subjects like homosexuality. It was a whole new world for me when the first transgender person came for guidance and pastoral care assistance"*, says Father Pedro Labrin SJ from Chile. But good news are coming from priests and nuns who are expressing their empathy for inclusion of transgender and intersex people in the Church. Along this lines, priests and nuns like Father Bryan Massingale from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee have made strong statements such as *"The Church must not abandon transgender Catholics!"* on August 2016 to express their support and empathy for TI Catholics.

Currently on the frontier line there are even religious, men and women, that are openly taking on this personal challenge. The testimony of Sister Monica Astorga, a Carmelita Descalza Nun in the Neuken County of Argentina is a living testimony of this. She has been blackmailed, due to her public support for transgender women, but she still claims *"The one who is making a mess in here is Me"*, referring to a talk she had with Pope Francis on 2015.

We earnestly hope and pray that the Church will show more mercy and respect for TI people. We also wish to express our readiness to support the Church in this process. We willingly desire to share real life stories and testimony of transgender and intersex Catholics and their families. They will inform and advise us about their faith, lives, identity, suffering and hope, all in the spirit of the Pope's Apostolic Exhortation.

We would like to recall that the Church is the "House for Everybody" and this includes our transgender and intersex siblings in faith. We are all on the same search for recognition, inclusion and justice in our Church. We walk the same path for a more truthful merger between our faith and our sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Note: Even though intersex people are mentioned several times in this article, this article is focusing on trans-people and can't do full justice to the complexity of issues that intersex people can have with their gender identity.

The GNRC expresses sorrow and solidarity with the LGBTI community in the US

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We are not far from the pain and sense of incomprehension, that overwhelm us all as LGBTQI people, in these difficult days of grief and a search for hope. For us, LGBTQI Catholics and our families, it is difficult to reflect on and to rationalize an event that took so many lives in Orlando. This situation reminds us of our human limitations and the search for God's mercy in such moments in which anger and sadness often are our natural and honest reactions.

We consider all people our brothers and sisters. Believing in God or not, professing a particular religion or not. We are people that work for inclusion and justice in society or the Church, and as such, we join the grief of the LGBTQI community in our belief that we are all children of the one God, whether Muslims or Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews or believers of any other faith. We are all made of the same substance, recalling that the first statement of all religions is that LOVE, above all is fundamental. Praying for the victims, their families and friends has been constant in our local LGBTQI Catholic communities in the days after the mass shooting. You can see how deeply we have been touched through the many expressions of support, through prayers, Masses, letters and articles, inside and outside the United States. In particular, our members at [New Ways Ministry](#) and [DignityUSA](#) who have done some great, committed work communicating our shared feelings and inner thoughts, since the shocking events of Orlando became public.

Even during these dark days, not only lay people but also our Catholic leaders have made public their solidarity and empathy in ways that we have never seen before. The words from many Bishops, like Robert McElroy of San Diego pledging "*I stand with you*", encourage us to keep working. We have hope that through education, ecumenical dialogue and the sharing of our life experiences we'll make a change in the society and the Church, where still too often we find people who express and justify homophobic attitudes. Pope Francis called, in his recent document "*Amoris Laetitia*", to be more welcoming and inclusive and to reject all kind of expressions of violence towards LGBTQI people. Such a statement from Pope Francis reinforces that peace is not just the absence of violence, but also the presence of justice. Our commitment and will, as GNRC, is to walk down that path in Orlando and wherever LGBTQI people suffer from violence, discrimination and victimization, be it in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Oceania or Africa.

May the Peace and Love of God be constantly present and visible in all of us.

Orlando Vigils and Masses Album

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics called their Members, at the beginning of July 2016, to request for their living testimony of faith for the Orlando Shooting Attacks. We would like to thank to all the people and groups that contributed in the development of this [Album](#). If you or your group want to be part of it, please do not hesitate to send pictures via email at rainbowcatholicsassembly@gmail.com. They may include complementary information such as: date, group name, allocation and any inspirational idea or feeling you shared on that date.

GNRC WYD Special - Part I: Better Climate around LGBT in the Polish Church

Without any spectacular breakthrough, the World Youth Day still brought a tangible climate change over the presence of LGBTI in the Polish Church

[English](#) / [Español](#) / [Français](#) / [Italiano](#) / [Portugues](#)



By **Marcin Dzierżanowski** – Polish journalist, activist of Polish Christian LGBTQ Group [Wiara i Tęcza](#) (Faith and Rainbow).

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"Pope Francis preaches the Gospel, and the Gospel is for everyone. The World Youth Day is an open formula, homosexuals are also invited to take part", stated Fr Piotr Studnicki, the spokesperson for Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, several days before the Pope's arrival to Poland. Cardinal Dziwisz, long-time closest associate of Pope John Paul II in the Vatican and Metropolitan of Krakow after the Pope's death, holds a special place in Poland. It is thanks to his efforts Krakow became the host city for the World Youth Day 2016.

It is little wonder therefore that the words of Cardinal Dziwisz's spokesperson spread like a wildfire through the whole media world of Poland. In Poland, the statement that would have not caused so much stir in Western Europe or the US, came as a bombshell. Until now, the Polish hierarchs have not spoken of LGBT in a positive way or have acknowledged the presence of homosexuals, bisexuals and transgenders among the faithful children of the Church. Quite the contrary, the last several years have seen a series of exceptionally unfavourable declarations of the Church's representatives regarding LGBT, in most cases framed in the context of fighting the so-called '*gender ideology*'. Unfriendly atmosphere in the Church is amplified by the unhealthy political climate. In terms of legal status of LGBT, Poland seems to be stuck right in the middle between East and West of Europe. While LGBT organisations have been operating freely, there is still no legal recognition of same-sex unions. Situation is aggravated by late last year's assumption of power by the right wing resorting to National-Catholic rhetoric.

Against such background, any form of inviting or welcoming homosexuals at the World Youth Day by the Polish Church seems to be a glimmer of hope. Undoubtedly, this results from the work of the [Wiara i Tęcza](#) (Faith and Rainbow) Group of Polish LGBTQ Christians that has been actively advocating for the improvement of the situation of LGBT in the Church in Poland since the announcement of the Family Synod by Pope Francis. One of the aspects of that activity was gathering responses of some 130 Catholic LGBT from all over Poland regarding their situation in the Church. A summary of these responses was delivered to the representatives of the Polish Episcopate. Members of Faith and Rainbow have also met several bishops, including the aforementioned Cardinal Dziwisz and his two auxiliary bishops. One of those hierarchs was Bishop Damian Muskus, the general coordinator of the preparations for the World Youth Day in Krakow.

That meeting had to do in particular with the preparations for the major youth event. At the initiative of *Faith and Rainbow* together with the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, an LGBT Pilgrims' Haven opened during the WYD. Over several days in one of Krakow's cafes, volunteers hosted an informational and pastoral point where homosexual, bisexual and transgender pilgrims could pray together, watch the broadcasts of the central celebrations with the Pope and share their life experiences. The programme included meetings with priests and psychologists, workshops, discussions, movie screenings and worship, both Catholic and

ecumenical. Special guests of Haven were pastor Jim Mulcahy, Eastern Europe coordinator for the U.S.-based Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, Brendon Fay, human rights activist and filmmaker from New York and dr Michael Brinkschröder, catholic theologian and sociologist from Munich, activist of the "European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups".



"World Youth Days gather people every couple of years in one of the world's major cities. Until now, the only WYD where a safe space initiative for LGBT pilgrims was organized was Cologne 2005. We thought it would be a good idea to do something similar in Poland", explains Misha Cherniak, one of the project's coordinators. "Bp Damian Muskus was informed of our plans and noted them in a friendly manner. Yet, as he advised us, there was no chance of including our project into the official WYD programme".

"Over the six days of the Haven's operation, we have had between 50 and 60 visitors", says Artur Barbara Kapturkiewicz, one of the co-founders of Faith and Rainbow who was also actively involved in the Haven project. "We were very happy to see so many quite young pilgrims. For many of them this was the first occasion to share their problems of reconciling their faith and being an LGBT person. Besides Poles, we have welcomed pilgrims from Germany, England, Russia, China and Canada. Our visitors were particularly interested in the lecture on the non-discriminating reading of the Scripture or the workshop on Divine Mercy. We also celebrated the Eucharist together", says Artur Kapturkiewicz. "We have enjoyed the pastoral care of friendly Roman Catholic priests and ministers of other Christian denominations", he adds.

Unfortunately, the expectations of some in the LGBT community that the Pope would apologize for the sins against homosexuals, bisexuals and transgenders never materialized. Even though he spoke extensively of excluded and marginalized persons, he failed to mention LGBT explicitly. Yet, in his last homily speaking of Zacchaeus he noted three barriers that a believer has to overcome on the way to Christ. These words are remarkably relevant for LGBT.

The first of these obstacles is *smallness of stature*. The Pope said that sometimes "we don't feel big enough, because we don't think ourselves worthy". The second obstacle is *shame*. Zacchaeus "knew that, in trying to climb that tree, he would have become a laughingstock to all. Yet he mastered his shame, because the attraction of Jesus was more powerful". The third and the final obstacle that the Pope listed was the *resistance of the people around Christ*. "It was the grumbling of the crowd, who first blocked him and then criticized him: How could Jesus have entered his house, the house of a sinner!", said the Pope.

For the Faith and Rainbow Group of Polish LGBT Christians, the experience of the World Youth Day and the LGBT Pilgrims' Haven open during the WYD was in fact an act of surmounting that third barrier. Judging by the high interest that the pilgrims and the media took in the project and by the generally positive tone of most of ecclesial commentators, Faith and Rainbow overcame this challenge quite successfully.



Wiara i Tecza (Faith and Rainbow) is a group of Polish LGBTQ Christians, their families and friends. Changing awareness inside church, WiT works for increasing tolerance—and thereafter acceptance—in the entire society, as well as for supporting kindness among people. Most of the members are of Roman Catholic denomination, but WiT welcomes Christians of any denomination—in ecumenical spirit. WiT also invites people, who are in search of their faith, who are agnostic or atheists, for community and dialogue.

GNRC WYD Special - Part II: LGBT Pilgrim's Haven in Krakow

English / Español / Français / Italiano / Portugues



By Michael Brinkschroeder – *German theologian, activist of German Catholic LGBTQ group Homosexuelle und Kirche (Homosexuality and Church), GNRC Steering Committee Co-chair and member of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups.*

During the World Youth Day, the Polish group “Wiara i Tęcza” (Faith & Rainbow) has organized an “LGBT Pilgrim's Haven” in Krakow. The meeting point was located in the lovely cultural centre “Ogniwo” in the Jewish quarter. The LGBT Pilgrim's Haven, co-organised by the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, was not included in the official program of the World Youth Day although Wiara i Tęcza made several attempts in this direction. However, the interest of national and international media was very high and brought a lot of attention to the issue. The police was guarding the entrance, because there were serious threats before the event, but fortunately nothing happened.

The program contained documentary films from Brendan Fay (Dignity, New York) about John McNeill and Mychal Judge, lectures from Jim Mulcahy (USA/Ukraine) about spirituality and relationship and from Michael Brinkschroeder (Germany) about “Queer Reading of the Bible”. A creative workshop lead by Marcela Kościarczyk (Poland) on “God's Mercy” built the bridge to the theme of the World Youth Day and the Holy Year.

A workshop on “Queer Catholic Activism” started with input from Anna Kuliberda from a German Catholic Youth Federation who started a blog with few other LGBT Catholic youths and earned a lot of attention when they distributed stickers during a pilgrimage of their diocese. Eros from China presented his work as a gay Catholic missionary in Beijing and Shanghai where he started LGBT Catholic groups. Recently, he has collected stories of Chinese LGBT Catholics (in China and surrounding countries) and is going to publish them in a book. Michael Brinkschroeder presented the initiative for a monthly Queer Catholic Service in Munich.



During the Pilgrim's Haven meeting we enjoyed the presence and expositions from Michael Brinkschroeder (Germany), Marcela Kościańczuk (Poland), Marcela Kościańczuk (Germany) and Eros Shaw (China).

The following discussion in small groups brought some interesting results about the spiritual needs of LGBT Catholics: Most important was the access to role-models and the encouragement to come out of the shadow. Some were asking that priests should not hide themselves behind an official doctrine, but tell their own, personal opinion about LGBT issues. But on the other hand it was asked, if the spirituality should come from the church or from us? One response to this question was, that we should understand spirituality which awakens and nurtures activism as a Catholic form of spirituality.

Altogether, the LGBT Pilgrim's Haven with all its opportunities to talk and learn from each other was a huge success and definitely a good and much needed example for such a nurturing Catholic LGBT spirituality.



Since its foundation in 1977, the Eucumenical Working Group Homosexuelle und Kirche (Homosexuals and Church) has been working for full participation of LGBTQ in social and church life. As a community of witnesses of the liberating biblical message, it campaigns for the abolition of prejudices and discrimination against LGBTQ in churches, for the full professional equality with cisidentic heterosexual men and women, against discrimination against HIV-positive people and AIDS patients, for spaces for LGBTQ spirituality, and for the recognition of Christians in the LGBTQ community.



The European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups is an ecumenical umbrella organisation of 46 member groups. It was initiated in 1982 by the French Catholic priest Emile Letertre. The Forum started only with gay Christian groups. Since the end of the 1990s, lesbian women become very active in the Forum and the name was changed to "lesbian and gay Christian groups". Now the European Forum recognizes bisexual and transgender Christians in its name, as well.

GNRC WYD Special - Part III: A Young Pilgrim Experience

Universality, Unity and Inspiration were three values that the WYD assistant Eros Shaw found in his trip to Poland.

English / Español / Français / Italiano / Portugues



By Eros Shaw – Chinese missionary, activist of the Chinese Catholic LGBTQ Group China Catholic Rainbow Community (CCRC), GNRC Steering Committee member and participant of the China Rainbow Witness Fellowship.

I participated in the World Youth Day from its beginning and till its end, including all the preparatory activities during the previous week, from July 19th – 31st in Warsaw. Considering that this was my first WYD, there were a few points that had a profound impression on me.

- The first one was the Universality of the Church/ Let's remember that this is the original meaning of the word Catholic, where so many young people from different nations gathered in one place with no boundaries of race, gender or sexual orientation! About 1.5 million people attended the Pope Francis' closing mass, according to the Vatican Spokesman Father Federico Lombardi, so I couldn't stop wondering how many LGBT people were among them.
- The second point was Unity. Many of the assistants came from countries or regions with internal/external geopolitical conflicts, but the Catholic young people gathered there shared in the basis of a common faith and prayer. This is the thing that touched me the most. I'm a young pilgrim from mainland China, but I had the great chance to spend time with brothers and sisters from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.
- The third and last one was how Inspirational it was for me was to meet so much people expressing their love for God, their devotion for the Virgin Mary and respect for the Pope. In China, we Catholics, are a minority compared to the other Christian churches or religious practices, and so I often hear criticism and negative voices about us. The fraternity in Krakow fueled my beliefs for my personal mission, with so many lovely, young people united and on the same path.

I also participated in a LGBT friendly Café, organized by Wiara I Tecza, with Michael Brinkschroeder and Anna Kuliberda from Germany. There we shared the experiences of our LGBT Catholic local communities which was followed by a panel discussion. Even with so many people visiting Krakow we only had 20 assistants, many of them bravely carrying their WYD backpacks. This is a reminder of how much work we still have to do

for Visibility and Inclusion of LGBTI people in the Church. I had a Gay Catholic friend from Hong Kong in the WYD that couldn't join us because he was afraid of the exposure. Anyway, having had such a amazing opportunity to participate makes me feel really grateful.



China Catholic Rainbow Community (CCRC) is an inter-regional mutual aid organization for Chinese Roman Catholic LGBT people. They provide counseling and spiritual companionship for LGBT Catholic believers.



China Rainbow Witness Fellowship (CRWF) is a LGBT Christian fellowship grounded in love and faith. The fellowship was established in 2009 in Beijing, with further groups established in Shanghai and Hangzhou.

#CHIESAASCOLTACI : "Together let's find a place where we meet and get to know each other"

Cammini di Speranza's Communication/Advocacy campaign for the year of Jubilee of Mercy.



By **Andrea Rubera** – Italian journalist, activist of the Italian Catholic LGBTQ Group Cammini di Speranza and GNRC media collaborator.

English / Español / Français / Italiano / Portugues

On the eve of the Family Day*, Cammini di Speranza, the first National Italian Association of LGBTI Christian, took its first steps towards launching #chiesaascoltaci ("Church, listen to us"), a campaign of real life stories, directed at a Church home for everyone, and which could be able to ensure harmony, dignity and equality within the Catholic Church itself and society.

#chiesaascoltaci is a storytelling campaign that each week of the year of the Jubilee of Mercy presents a story or a cause launched by not only LGBTI Catholics, but also by their parents, relatives and friends. It is addressed to the whole church, because it aims to finally make it a house of inclusion and acceptance for everyone.

Meet a few Cammini di Speranza's brothers and sisters calling "*Church, listen to us*" in its Gallery.

The central idea of the campaign is to rediscover the public squares, not just the real ones but also the virtual ones, offered by social networks, as places to meet. This at a time when it seems that the logic of barricades and ideological opposition is the only way for people to behave or respond.

In the year of Jubilee of Mercy, it seems clearly possible that in the light of this Mercy every person, every story, every emotion should find a space with equal dignity, equal respect and without prejudice.

Pope Francis invites us to build bridges and we are here to pick up this call. We want pastors to acknowledge our "smell of sheep" on their clothes, a smell that has been carefully avoided for so many years.

Each chapter of the campaign includes a photo portrait by Simone Cerio, a well-known Italian photographer who offered his art to give a visual to the written story/campaign/cause.

Julia writes to the Pope in the first chapter of the campaign: *"Pope Francis, God does not make mistakes, but for many Catholic people those who live homosexual lives, they are as an objective error. Yet, if I were not a lesbian, my faith would be dull because it is my homosexuality that led me to make a spiritual quest and to try to live in Christ. If I were not a lesbian I would not have known the fear of being judged and then I would not have learned respect for what we do not know. If I were not a lesbian I would not know love because it is the Lord who sent me the person I love. Pope Francis, in my opinion God does not make mistakes: He made me a "different" person because he knew that for me it would have been the path to happiness. And He also knew that diversity is wealth for the whole Catholic Church, the "universal" church for all".*

The campaign will be active until the end of the Jubilee of Mercy, on Twitter and Facebook through Cammini di Speranza's social networks accounts.

* Family Day, an event organized by some fundamentalist Catholic and right wing associations, that took place on January 30th 2016 at Circo Massimo in Rome to protest against the Civil Union Bill that was being discussed at the Italian Parliament at the time and has now finally become law.

For information and contacts about Cammini di Speranza:

Website: www.camminidisperanza.org Mail: info@camminidisperanza.org

Twitter: [Cdisperanza](https://twitter.com/Cdisperanza) Facebook: [Cammini di Speranza](https://www.facebook.com/Cammini-di-Speranza)

Tags: #chiesaascoltaci #camminidisperanza

Spokesperson: Andrea Rubera (cel: [+39 335 7510922](tel:+393357510922))



Cammini di Speranza is an association of Christian people, from various backgrounds, paths, age, sexual orientation and gender identity all engaged in welcoming anyone interested to study issues regarding faith and homosexuality to promote respect, dignity and equality of LGBTI people within the churches and society.

Simone Cerio was born in Pescara in 1983. He has specialized in photojournalism and multimedia story telling. After writing many reports in several countries, in 2014, he completed an assignment in Afghanistan, in cooperation with Emergency ONG, which was exhibited all around Italy to illustrate the history of the first Italian graduate student to finish his studies in a war territory. Winner of the Perugia Social Photo Fest 2014 and of the Ong category of Fotografia Etica of Lodi Festival. Simone also contributes to important national and international magazines such as Vanity Fair, Il Corriere della Sera, Donna Moderna, Gioia, Alibi, Rogue, His Life China, Russia Behind the Headlines, Shutr, Internazionale, D La Repubblica, Panorama. For more information, visit www.simonecerio.com

GNRC-SC Office Bearers Election

The GNRC - Steering Committee (SC) held an open nomination and election for its office bearers' roles on July 2016.

English / Español / Français / Italiano / Portugues

After months of working together, once we have developed a clearer organizational structure and definition of office bearers' roles, as tasked by our assembly gathered last October 2015 in Rome, the GNRC - Steering Committee (SC) finally held an open nomination and election to have those roles properly filled. The election was a very organic, collegial and assertive process, as we were all quite focused on how to support each other in our strengths and gifts, in order to further develop our Global Network to grow. We are a community in action, but we also join in prayer.

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Just a short summary to what amount of work we have put in together so far:

- We have had 6 SC committee meetings which each time derived into meetings in 3 separate subcommittees: Organizational Development, Next Assembly & Funding and Communications & Public Relations
- We have since issued 4 Press Releases: on the *GNRC Foundation* (October 2015), about the *Catholic Exhortation "Amoris Laetitia"* (April 2016, complemented by a 4 pages extended response), our *Call to Pope Francis to condemn all LGBTQI Hate and Violence* (June 2016, followed by a support and solidarity letter to the Orlando LGBTQI Community) and on the Pope's apology to Gays (June, 2016), alongside 2 Newsletters (January and May 2016), all in multiple languages to assure the accessibility for all.

For all this, we coordinated work and meetings across 7 global time zones, that requested us in different hours of the day, beyond the countless informal meetings and work groups across time and place. It's been a miracle! It is obvious that we wouldn't have been able to do this without each other, without the input from the Assembly; your affirmation, contributions, thoughts and prayers have been the thing that has kept it all going.

So here is the outcome of the election of the Executive Team for the GNRC:

- Co-Chairs:



Ruby Almeida



Dr Michael Brinkschroeder

- **Ruby Almeida** (Quest, UK) is from India and was a Media Lecturer and worked at London Metropolitan University and West Thames College and is now a Freelance Trainer, and Chair of UK Catholic LGBTI group Quest.
- **Dr. Michael Brinkschroeder** (Homosexuelle und Kirche, Germany) is a German theologian and sociologist, working for the Ecumenical Working Group "Homosexuelle und Kirche". He was founder of the "Study Group Gay Theology" ("Schwule Theologie") and of the Queer Catholic Service in Munich. He was Co-Chair of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups 2011-2015 and coordinates its Catholic advocacy activities.
 - Secretary: **Benjamin Oh** (Acceptance, Australia)
 - Treasurer: **Chris Vella** (Drachma, Malta)
 - Communications: **Fernando González** (Padis+, Chile)

We wish them all the best for managing the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics!

As part of contingency planning, to ensure ongoing executive function if an office bearer had to be absent, deputy roles were also nominated and elected from the Steering Committee: Deputy Secretary: **Tim Smyth** (Acceptance, Australia) / Deputy Treasurer: **Joseanne Peregin** (Drachma, Malta) / Deputy of Communications: **Eros Shaw** (CCRC, China). We work closely as a team, and we would not be able to function wholly and properly, without the awesome work, hearts and minds of our Steering Committee members **Francis De Bernardo** (New Way Ministry, USA) & **Georgina Adhiambo** (Vowek, Kenia).

Kindly continue to hold us all close in your thoughts and in your prayers, as we too offer our prayers for our brother and sisters, friends and colleagues around the world who risk so much of themselves, to bring about the kingdom of God that celebrates justice, peace and love for LGBTI Catholics and our loved ones.

We would like to thank too all the responses and feedback, after the election process, from all the different groups and individuals part of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics.

Best regards,

GNRC Steering Committee

Ben – Eros – Fer – Geo – Jos – Tym – Mic – Rub – Chris – Fran

The GNRC needs you!

The *GNRC* needs your help for legal assistance and support of the New *GNRC* Website.

[English](#) / [Español](#) / [Français](#) / [Italiano](#) / [Portugues](#)

Call for Legal Advice: Country of Incorporation

The Steering Committee has started considering which country would be most appropriate for the purpose of GNRC for incorporation. Therefore, we are looking for legal advice from a lawyer who has expertise in the areas of international law and non-profit law (including at least countries as Italy, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands et al.). It would be great if this legal expertise could be given pro bono, but if payment is needed we would take this into consideration as well. **Contact:** michael.brinkschroeder@web.de

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Call for Web Support: GNRC Web 2.0 development team

We are building a Website and Social Media Strategy group for the development of the 2.0 version of the GNRC Website. If you have technical skills on web designing or you are a specialist with experience on social media content management, please get in contact with us. Web and graphical designers, journalists, editors or other skilled people are welcome to join this team. The support for this team will be pro bono but we know that the improvement of the GNRC network is the best of payments!

Contact: rainbowcatholicsassembly@gmail.com

GLOBAL NETWORK OF RAINBOW CATHOLICS 2016 ®

Website: www.rainbowcatholics.org

Mail: rainbowcatholicsassembly@gmail.com

Twitter: *GNRCatholics*

Facebook: [GlobalNetworkofRainbowCatholics](#)

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) brings together organizations and individuals who work for pastoral care and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) people and their families. The Network works for inclusion, dignity and equality of this community in the Roman Catholic Church and society. The GNRC was founded in October 2015 at the Rome conference, "Ways of Love", with 80 participants from 30 countries. To date, the GNRC represents 25 groups of LGBTQI Catholics, their families and friends from all continents.