

# BLESSINGS, DIGNITY, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INCLUSION



**Fiducia Supplicans:  
 an important step**



**Pope Francis accepts a  
 book from Drachma**



**The African Corner**

## What's in store?

In this edition, we reflect on the Vatican's statement on blessings for couples in irregular relationships, revisit the Paris Olympics' controversial opening ceremony, and share the experiences of parents of gay and trans children. We also cover the Latin American Youth Ministry meeting in Paraguay and the Pope's meeting with an activist against LGBT+ criminalization in Uganda. Finally, we introduce "The African Corner," a new section featuring news and insights from the continent.

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# The Corner reach

Gathering voices

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In this edition we introduce our new regional section dedicated to Africa, where we will share important news, perspectives, and developments from across the continent. Our anonymous reporter, committed to bringing these stories to light, will offer insights into the challenges and triumphs of the African Catholic community, particularly in the context of inclusivity and diversity. We are excited to open this new chapter and welcome our readers to engage with these vital issues that shape the faith experience in Africa.





## Fiducas Supplicans

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On December 2023, the Catholic world was shocked, amazed, dismayed, and delighted in equal measure with the Vatican's statement on blessings for couples in irregular relationships. This is a blessing for the individuals in a relationship and not a blessing for the relationship itself, and it is certainly not the sacrament of marriage.

This development, focusing on blessing individuals rather than couples, has prompted a range of responses worldwide. In the GNRC community, where many members and Co-Chairs are in same-sex relationships, this announcement holds particular significance. It's seen as a recognition of faith and love, albeit with an understanding that it stops short of blessing the unions themselves.

Internationally, reactions are varied. German bishops have been supportive, embracing this change as a step forward. In the USA, opinions are split, reflecting the country's broader cultural and religious divides. The UK's response has been

more subdued, adapting without much fanfare. Contrastingly, the stance in Africa is diverse. North African bishops, particularly those in the Regional Episcopal Conference of North Africa (CERNA), have shown support, focusing on discernment and pastoral care. This contrasts with other African regions, where the reception has been less favorable.

Personal accounts, like that of Jason and Damian, a married gay Catholic couple who received a blessing, add depth to this discussion, illustrating the impact on real lives and relationships. Their story, shared in the Outreach article (see GNRC Statement link), reveals both the joy and the complexity inherent in navigating faith and identity within the Church's evolving stance.

Critics argue that while the move is a step in the right direction, it falls short of fully recognizing and affirming same-sex relationships. Theological debates continue, with some viewing the decision as a meaningful gesture of acceptance, while others see it as a compromise that fails to address underlying doctrinal issues.

This announcement by the Vatican opens up essential dialogues about inclusivity, faith, and love within the Catholic community. It's a reminder of the ongoing journey towards understanding, acceptance, and love in diverse faith communities.

[GNRC Statement](https://rainbowcatholics.org/same-sex-blessings/)

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/same-sex-blessings/>

[Vatican statement](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html)

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_dcf\\_doc\\_20240402\\_dignitas-infinita\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html)

[New ways ministry article](https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/04/16/cardinal-welcomes-new-transgender-negative-vatican-document-and-more-reactions/)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/04/16/cardinal-welcomes-new-transgender-negative-vatican-document-and-more-reactions/>



## Olympics controversy

The Paris Olympics have just finished and we have been amazed by the awe and wonder of what the human body and spirit can achieve. However, the opening ceremony caused huge consternation among the hierarchy of the Church with a short tableau that many thought was a recreation of The Last Supper. There have been many artistic and sometime challenging recreation of The Last Supper which have never faced the level of angst such as this, mainly because LGTQIA+ performed in it. Critics within the Church have expressed discomfort with the portrayal, viewing it as a distortion of a sacred image. However, some voices have pushed back against this criticism.

*"Jesus would eat with drag queens; bishops criticizing the Olympics should do so too"*  
(New Ways Ministry)

*"perception and interpretation vary greatly, and what some see as offensive, others see as a powerful statement of inclusivity"* (Drachma)

The controversy surrounding the ceremony is emblematic of the ongoing tensions regarding LGTQIA+ inclusion, of the importance to focus on the broader messages of love, acceptance, and unity that are central to our Christian faith.

### New Ways Ministry

[https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/07/30/jesus-would-eat-with-drag-queens-bishops-criticizing-the-olympics-should-do-so-too/?fbclid=IwY2xjawEXNmleHRuA2F1bQIxMQABHX0Ce-efTnUjc1CZ91ViETs1EDJB-baj0egsyeyi5DZ8P4Mvf1g2r83kzw\\_aem\\_4Vhwp-sa\\_p-1GeTs8SOC8w](https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/07/30/jesus-would-eat-with-drag-queens-bishops-criticizing-the-olympics-should-do-so-too/?fbclid=IwY2xjawEXNmleHRuA2F1bQIxMQABHX0Ce-efTnUjc1CZ91ViETs1EDJB-baj0egsyeyi5DZ8P4Mvf1g2r83kzw_aem_4Vhwp-sa_p-1GeTs8SOC8w)

### Drachma

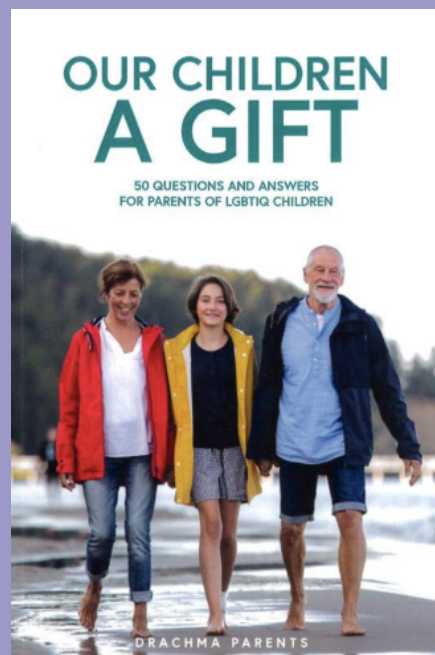
[https://timesofmalta.com/article/perception-interpretation.1096062?fbclid=IwY2xjawEXNnutleHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHaTw4IF77qBOhynhlG0utR7uzlO3aQ7W71lmyLgZCr9rcSDedDSEiZu5Fg\\_aem\\_RRNoTZskNZPIOKLnuRZS0Q](https://timesofmalta.com/article/perception-interpretation.1096062?fbclid=IwY2xjawEXNnutleHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHaTw4IF77qBOhynhlG0utR7uzlO3aQ7W71lmyLgZCr9rcSDedDSEiZu5Fg_aem_RRNoTZskNZPIOKLnuRZS0Q)

## The Pope and the book

A group of parents of gay or trans sons and daughters who have already faced these and many other questions offer their replies – based not just on books but also on their own experiences, their struggles and pains, their gains and discoveries. They invite you to discover an important truth: that this experience, even though shocking at first, can help you grow as a person and as a parent, and teach you what it really means to love your son or daughter unconditionally. And if you are a believer this can also be a moment of grace that will strengthen your faith! You will discover that our sons and daughters are indeed a gift!

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/pope-francis-meets-gnrc/>

LINK



THE POPE WAS PRESENTED WITH THE BOOK IN JANUARY 2024

# CELAM Conference

The culmination of a process

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Latin American Meeting of National Representatives of Youth Ministry (ELARNPJ) in Paraguay, an event of the Latin American youth ministry, part of CELAM (Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council).

This meeting was attended by bishops, priests, nuns, and laypeople responsible for national youth pastoral actions from the 22 episcopal conferences of each country in Latin America. Our participation had an immense and very positive impact. Our commitment to youth ministry and the creation of safe and welcoming spaces for young LGBTIQ+ people remains firm, and this meeting has been a significant step on our path towards reconciliation and full inclusion in the ecclesial community.

LINK

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/t86m>



# Retirement of Tonio Ortiz

From the Board

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Antonio has served on the GNRC Board since 2019, first as the Latin America Regional Representative, and then as the Regional Coordinator. He led the coordination of our 2022 Global Assembly in Mexico City, put together a strong organising team, and arranged for our reception as Honoured Guests at a Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a very special and memorable experience for all. Antonio led the development and analysis of the survey of GNRC Members' feelings about and hopes for the Synod that was conducted over the summer of 2023 and helped lead the 2024 Synod listening sessions GNRC sponsored, especially the Spanish-language session, and ensured that our reports represented the perspectives of our entire membership. Antonio has been a great leader for GNRC. We are all better for his service, and wish him the best.



## Malta Board meeting in July 2024

### Highlight

For the first time in its history the GNRC Board was able to meet in person for a four day meeting to discuss and plan a strategy for the future of the organisation. The venue was the Mount Saint Joseph Retreat House near Mosta. Board member Paolo Alaqua joined us on line and all the sessions were very professionally facilitated by Chris Pett from Dignity USA. We look forward to sharing some exciting news about GNRC soon.

## Meeting the Bishop of Malta

26<sup>th</sup> July

During our long hours of work each day on GNRC work, the Board were honoured to meet with Mgr Joseph Galea-Curmi, Auxiliary Bishop of Malta at Archbishop's Curia in Floriana.



Ruby Almeida, Susanne Birke, Marianne Duddy Burke, Mgr. Galea-Curmi, Chris Vella, Victoria Rodrigues, Chris Pett.



The meeting was very cordial and the bishop made all of us feel very welcome. We were given the opportunity to talk about our various perspectives on Trans issues, about the importance of Pride, the dire realities of our communities in many countries in Africa and in Asia Pacific, as well as the difficulty to get our voices heard at the Synod in Rome. Bishop Galea-Curmi listened to each of us with great empathy and the meeting ended with a prayer. We left with a real sense of hope and shared belonging of our faith and in our mission to advocate for our community.

*Save The Date for the Next  
GNRC Assembly*

*21st - 25th August 2025  
Madrid, Spain.*





## The end of criminalization in Uganda

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC), which brings together Catholic organizations across the world that work for good pastoral care and justice for LGBTI people, applauds Pope Francis for meeting with Ugandan LGBTI Civil Rights activist Clare Byarugaba. The group says, “We hope and pray that the stories she brought him about how the country’s Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 is impacting the Ugandan’s lives moves him to continue to press for the decriminalization of gay and transgender identities.”

“We are very happy that Clare Byarugaba was able to meet with Pope Francis,” said Christopher Vella of Malta, co-chair of GNRC. “We know that she brought the same message that GNRC leaders did when we met the Pope. His 2023 call for decriminalization of homosexuality was an important first step. But the fact that this extremely punitive law could be passed just months later, and with the support of a number of Catholic leaders, shows that much more needs to be done.”

“GNRC has members and member groups in Uganda,” said Marianne Duddy-Burke of the United States, GNRC’s other co-chair. “Many of them have been fired from jobs, forced out of

housing, or forced to flee the country since this law was passed. Some are constantly on the move due to threats of violence. Our faith calls us to honor the human dignity of all people. We need more Catholics to join us and Pope Francis in working to end discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Human Rights Watch and Ugandan LGBTI+ service organizations have documented increased attacks against members of the community since the 2023 law took effect. LGBTI+ people have been subject to beatings, sexual and psychological violence, evictions, blackmail, loss of employment, denial of healthcare, online harassment, mass arrests at Pride events and bars, and break-ins at LGBTI+ organizational offices. In 64 countries, consensual same-sex activity between adults is still criminalized. In 12 nations, same-sex relationships can result in the death penalty.

“We all have the responsibility to uphold the human rights of all people,” said GNRC’s leaders. “We hope that Pope Francis’ meetings with LGBTI+ people, and the calls of so many Catholic leaders to recognize LGBTI+ people as beloved by God, help to end the persecution of LGBTI+ people quickly.”



## Argel's Profile

Tell us a little about yourself:

Hi, I'm Argel Oclarit Tuason. I'm 41 and I live in the Philippines. I teach theology at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde. I have a master's degree in theology and graduated Magna cum laude. I am also a critical scholar of religion and I have been presenting my papers in different academic institutions, the latest of which is in the Critical Religion Conference held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am also a Benedictine oblate of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) also known as the Monastery without Walls. I have been actively co-moderating the Contemplative Spiritual Formation Program of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) since 2017. That same year I also co-founded Rainbow Catholics Philippines (RCPhil) to give voice and hope for LGBTQ+ Catholics like me.



**Tell us a little about family and friendship circles and why they are important to you:**

I grew up in an extended family – with my dad, stepmother, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. My mom and dad got separated when I was in grade 2. Here in the Philippines such a family is called a “broken family” and I grew up with that stigma and with it lots of internal drama. I eventually had an awakening that words are powerful. I stopped using that description to my family of origin. I now describe my family as a family with “a unique set-up” – my mom and dad have their own families and I have half-siblings from both sides.

I have been building my own family with my life-long partner for 15+ years. His name is Ronnel Rosales and we have a child called Tisoy – a Japanese Spitz.

Also, I love hanging around in spas with my best friend Mark Lester Rodriguez for rest and recreation and collaboration (hahahah). He's been my best friend since elementary. It's good to have someone to bare out my soul – my sorrows in life as well as joys and victories. I can say that together with Fr Richard Mickley (will tell more about him later), Mark is also my anam cara (celtic for soul friend).

**What are your hobbies?**

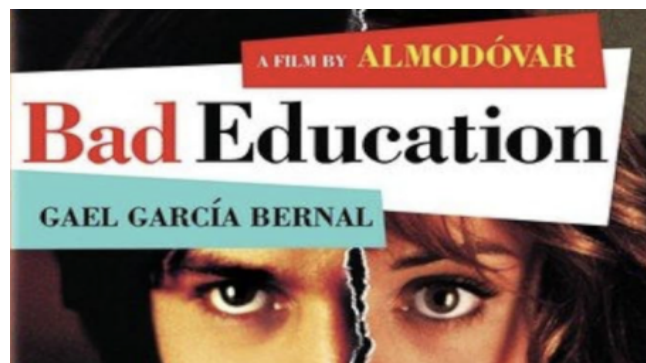
I'm a “book hunter.” I can spend 3-5 hours or more inside a book shop especially a store selling second-hand books. Here in the Philippines, there's a popular store called “Booksale” selling second-hand books (which I realize are actually garbages of the Americans/West hahahah). If you wanna find me, go to any of their branches in Manila. Why is it important for me? Book browsing, smelling the pages of books and book hunting are a precious way to relax my mind. Hhahahaaa!

**What is your favourite artist and song? Why?**

Ewan McGregor and his rendition of the songs Your Song and Come What May in the film Moulin Rouge. As a kid who grew up in the 90's and saw the first ever musical film I've ever seen when I was in college, I have become a big fan of the movies and its songs especially by Ewan. He's such a fantastic actor.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lGP78ckF\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lGP78ckF_Q)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HatxxtiVCzs>

**What is your favourite film or tv programme?**



I'm a film enthusiast and I have a lot of favorite movies! Y Tu Mama Tambien and El Crimen Del Padre de Amaro are just some of my fave movies. These two because I had a big crush on Gael Garcia Bernal, the Mexican actor on those film! Why Y Tu Mama? Because it's my first time to watch a film that had a scene of a menage a trois between best friends and a woman stranger they just met. That was mind-blowing for me as a teenager back then! My favourite director of all time is the Spanish director Pedro Almodovar, especially his film Bad Education starring my ultimate crush Gael.



### What is your favourite food?



I discovered that I could cook during the pandemic. I was jobless that time and I needed to save money. That's why I started cooking my own meals. The “sizzling tofu” is the favourite dish I'd like to cook. I like it because it's meat-less and can save the lives of our fellow earthlings (animals). Disclaimer: I'm a flexitarian trying my best to be a vegetarian. : )

### Your favourite place on earth? Why?

Since I came from a conference just recently to present a research paper in this place, I'd say it's Hong Kong. I especially love my trip to the Big Buddha and when I walked by myself the Wisdom Path where I was surrounded by big and tall wooden beams containing the Heart Sutra. That trip was like a spiritual pilgrimage for me and my experience there at Lantau Island where the Big Buddha and Wisdom Path are prompted my heart to learn more about and hopefully practise Buddhism.



### Who inspires you the most and why?

It's Rev Bishop Richard Mickley of the Diocese of One Spirit fondly called by the LGBTQ+ community here in the Philippines as “Fr Richard” (God bless his soul!). He brought the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) here in the Philippines and opened the doors of the church for the LGBTQ+ individuals in the 90's the time when they felt unwelcome and discriminated against in their own churches. He helped organise the first “Gay Mass” (a Eucharistic celebration) in Asia!



I was blessed to have met him before he passed on in 2022 or 23. He had been my faithful prayer partner since 2009, the time when I just left my own Catholic community who couldn't accept my gayness and wanted it exorcised like an evil spirit! It felt like I

was an exiled back then when I left that community and I found a community in Fr Richard who journeyed with me during those times when I was still in the process of exorcising the internalised homophobia I've experienced and inherited from the Roman church.

### What or who could make the world a better place for LGBT+ people and what can you do to help make that improvement happen?

It is the LGBTQ-affirming communities and movements around the world like GNRC, New Ways Ministries, Metropolitan Community Churches, etc – these are the prophetic communities within

and without the churches who continue to work for the well-being of the whole wide LGBTQ community, they who continue the work of critiquing and opening the mind of bigoted members of the churches; always calling these members to repent of their ways and harden not their hearts when they hear the voice of God (Ps 95) speaking through the LGBTQ+ prophets in their midst! As for me, I have felt called to the “ministry of presence” in the church. My mere presence (and the decision to stay and still be present in the face of opposition and oppression – up to how long I do not know) in the church as

an out gay Catholic speaks volume and is a prophetic presence in itself.

In the peripheries of the church, I will continue sharing with my fellow LGBTQ's the practice of meditation and contemplation to underscore the fact that we too have a direct access to the divine within who loves us no matter what the institutional church is telling us. As a Benedictine oblate, I have committed myself to the Monastery without Walls. I have come to focus my commitment on the words “without walls” in my pledge to this kind of monastery. I pledge to tear down the walls or overcome the artificial human-made walls that the institution (read: the sinful social structure) is using (knowingly or unknowingly) to separate us to the one true God within. The monastery after all is within. As St Francis once said: “The world is my cloister, my body is my cell, and my soul is the hermit within.”

# THE AFRICAN CORNER

## From Africa

Welcome to "The African Corner," a new section in The Corner dedicated to sharing the stories, opinions, and reports directly from our community in Africa, a continent where being LGBT often means facing profound challenges and risks.

In each edition, you will hear from "Anon," an author who has chosen to remain anonymous. This decision speaks volumes about the realities of being LGBT in Africa—where simply living authentically can place one's life in danger. Anon's anonymity is a powerful statement, reflecting the precariousness and courage of those who continue to advocate for their rights and share their truths in a world that often seeks to silence them.

Through "The African Corner," you will be introduced to the lives of individuals who navigate these challenges daily. You will read personal stories that reveal the complexities and resilience of LGBT Africans, narratives of struggle and stories of hope, solidarity, and the relentless pursuit of dignity.

We invite you to engage with this new section as readers, as allies. The voices you will encounter in "The African Corner" are a call to action—reminding us all of the ongoing fight for equality and the universal right to love and be loved without fear.



## Church's reiterated stance in Malawi

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Anon

The Catholic Church in Malawi has reaffirmed its stance on homosexuality, reiterating its opposition to same-sex relationships and emphasizing the importance of traditional family values.

In a statement issued by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), the Catholic bishops in the country emphasized that homosexuality is "intrinsically disordered" and that same-sex unions are "not in line with God's plan for humanity."

The ECM statement, signed by Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa of Blantyre, emphasized that the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality is guided by scripture and tradition. "The Church teaches that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can never be approved," the statement read.

The bishops also expressed concern over what they described as "growing pressure" to accept homosexuality as a "normal" lifestyle. "We urge Catholics to remain faithful to the teachings of the Church and to reject any attempts to normalize homosexuality," the statement said.

The Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality has been a subject of controversy in Malawi, where same-sex relationships are criminalized under colonial-era laws. While some human rights groups have called for the decriminalization of homosexuality, the Catholic Church has maintained its opposition to same-sex relationships.

In 2020, the ECM issued a statement condemning a move by the Malawi government to consider decriminalizing homosexuality. The bishops argued that decriminalization would "lead to moral decay" and "undermine traditional family values."

The latest statement from the ECM reiterates the Catholic Church's commitment to upholding traditional teachings on sexuality and marriage. "We will continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which calls us to chastity, self-control, and love for all people," the statement said.

## Church's Outdated Stance in Africa

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Anon

As the world progresses towards inclusivity and acceptance, the Catholic Church in Africa remains entrenched in its outdated views on homosexuality. The recent reiteration of its stance by the African bishops is a stark reminder of the Church's refusal to adapt to the changing times.

By stating that they will not bless homosexual couples, the Church is not only denying these individuals a basic human right but also perpetuating discrimination and stigma. The argument that it would cause confusion and contradict cultural norms is a weak excuse, as it ignores the fact that cultural norms are evolving and that the Church should be a beacon of love and acceptance.

The Church's teaching that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered is a harmful and archaic view that has no place in modern society. It ignores the scientific consensus that sexuality is a complex and multifaceted aspect of human identity and that homosexuality is a natural part of human diversity. Moreover, the Church's emphasis on treating people with homosexual tendencies with respect and dignity rings hollow when it refuses to recognize their right to love and be loved. The African bishops' statement is a classic case of "love the sinner, hate the sin," a trope that has been used to justify discrimination and marginalization for far too long.

The Church's reliance on biblical passages to justify its stance is also problematic, as it ignores the historical and cultural context in which these passages were written. It is time for the Church to recognize that its interpretation of scripture must evolve to reflect the changing understanding of human sexuality.

Ultimately, the Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality in Africa is a missed opportunity to promote love, acceptance, and inclusivity. Instead, it perpetuates harm and discrimination, and it is time for the Church to re-examine its views and join the 21st century.



# Make a Difference One Donation at a Time

## GNRC

Every day, the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics tirelessly works to foster inclusion, acceptance, and love within our diverse community. We stand with our LGBTQ+ siblings, ensuring they feel heard, loved, and supported within our faith. Our network spans worldwide, breaking barriers, and advocating for equal treatment in all aspects of Catholic life.

However, we cannot do this alone.

As you flip through the last page of this edition, we invite you to join our mission. GNRC is currently unfunded and we rely on the good will of our members to carry on the day to day work of the organisation. Your kind donation, no matter how small, will make a profound difference to our work. The Accompaniment Project, our flagship project for the next few years, our work on the Synodal Process, our work on Diversity and Equality, our work on Youth as well as our Media output all require much needed funds. Every donation made will go towards these good works of GNRC and will help to foster a more inclusive, loving Church that honours the dignity of all of our members.

Stand with us. Donate today.



Global Network of  
Rainbow Catholics

@GNRCfinance

LINK

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/donate-to-gnrc/>

## One Family

DignityUSA has established the One Family Fund to provide crucial support to LGBTIQ Catholics facing hardships due to anti-LGBTIQ laws and societal discrimination. This fund has been instrumental in offering essentials such as food, rent assistance, and computers to those who have been forced to flee their homes or have suffered from violence. Emphasizing rapid response and effective aid, the fund welcomes contributions of any size, each making a tangible difference in someone's life. You can make a difference by donating at Dignity USA's One Family Fund.

Even modest donations can have a profound impact. For example, 8.50 can feed three people for a day, 20 can feed someone for a week, 50 can provide medicine for a refugee, 100 feeds 3 people for 2 weeks, 150 covers rent for a month for up to 3 people, \$300 can provide a second-hand computer, opening up employment opportunities.

This initiative offers a practical way to extend help and solidarity to those in urgent need.

For additional information or to address any inquiries, please contact [info@dignityusa.org](mailto:info@dignityusa.org).



DIGNITYUSA

[info@dignityusa.org](mailto:info@dignityusa.org)

LINK

<https://dignityusa.app.neoncrm.com/forms/one-family-fund>




The Corner © Global Network of Rainbow Catholics

## An invite to a prayer

*“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”*

*(1 Corinthians 9:24-25)*

[www.rainbowcatholics.org](http://www.rainbowcatholics.org) 

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