

BEARING GOOD FRUITS

What's in store?

A season of dialogue and quiet persistence. This edition follows GNRC's letter of support to Pope Leo XIV, new conversations with cardinals after the Consistory, the growing network of Prayer Vigils across Europe, and the Called By Name initiative. We also welcome new Board members, share the contemplative work connecting participants around the world, and meet Collins Otieno of Kenya. Finally, we hear a powerful personal testimony from South Africa, reminding us why accompaniment, dignity and hope remain at the heart of our mission.

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Bearing good fruits

What fruit does our life bear?

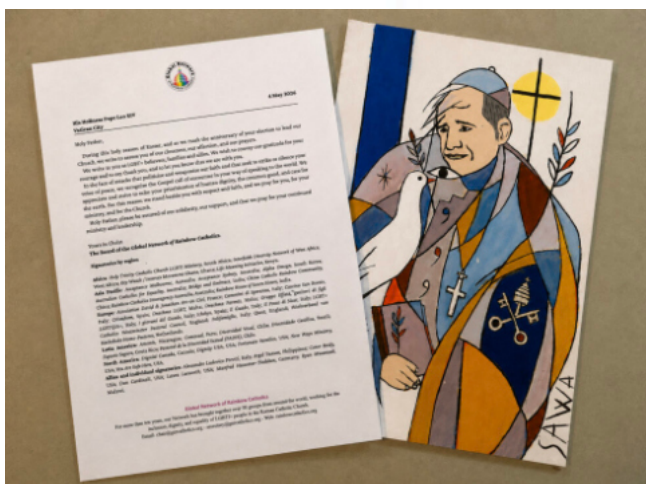
Good fruits grow in conversations that begin with listening instead of certainty. In letters written not to demand, but to encourage. In communities that choose prayer before argument. The stories in this edition are signs of that kind of fruit.



GNRC writes to Pope Leo

During a time marked by many uncertainties and by the challenges facing the Church, including the criticism directed at Pope Leo, GNRC wrote an open letter to him. Members, friends and families of LGBTIQ people were invited to add their names to the letter. Its purpose was simple: to offer Pope Leo a message of love, prayer and support, and to express our care for the Church we share.

At times of difficulty, people need to know that they are not alone. Through this letter, GNRC wanted Pope Leo to know that many Catholics across different countries stand beside him, pray for him and support his ministry of dialogue, peace and service.



LINK

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/a-letter-of-love-and-support-for-pope-leo-xiv/>

A letter to the Cardinals

The GNRC Board wrote private letters to bishops and cardinals in several of our countries, wishing them well during the Consistory and expressing GNRC's desire to work more closely with them.

The letters offered dialogue and cooperation so that the experiences of LGBTIQ Catholics, their families and pastoral communities may be better understood and represented in future meetings and conversations within the Church.

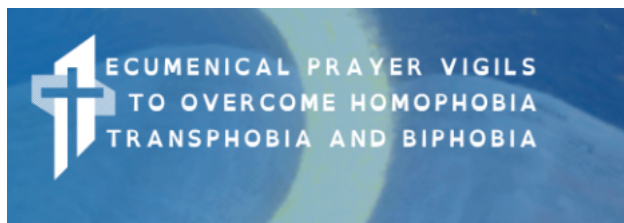
We believe that this discreet and personal approach has already opened space for further contact. Some recipients acknowledged the letters, while others expressed an interest in learning more about GNRC's work and the experiences of our members in different regions.

These positive responses to our outreach with the bishops bode well for future dialogue and mutual understanding for the pastoral needs of our LGBTIQ friends and families.

LINK

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/after-the-consistory-local-voices-and-the-life-of-the-church/>





Prayer Vigils across Europe

The 2026 Prayer Vigils for the Overcoming of Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia brought together more than sixty Christian communities in Italy and other countries.

The Vigils began in Florence in 2007 and continue to grow through the work of local Catholic and Protestant communities, groups of Christians, parents and pastoral workers. La Tenda di Gionata supports this shared journey by connecting communities, collecting testimonies and providing liturgical and communication resources. Since 2024, GNRC has helped extend their visibility through its international network.

Vigils and services were held in Italy, Malta and several countries across mainland Europe. In Malta, Drachma continued a tradition that has lasted for almost twenty years. In Ireland, the Le Chéile group organised the first Vigil at Kimmage Manor Catholic parish in Dublin.

In her article for the GNRC website, Jo O'Sullivan describes how the Irish group grew from conversations within the parish, developed relationships with other communities and eventually gathered for prayer on 15 May. Materials shared by La Tenda di Gionata helped the group prepare the liturgy, while GNRC gave the local experience a place within the wider international story.

The Vigils remain the work of the communities that celebrate them. GNRC's role is to connect these experiences, help them travel across borders and make it easier for other communities to join the journey.

<https://rainbowcatholics.org/project/vigils/>



Called By Name

GNRC is supporting a series of online meetings led by priests and religious sisters who accompany homoaffettive and transgender people and their families within the Church.

Each meeting begins with the experience, faith and pastoral journey of the person offering the invitation. Through prayer, reflection and dialogue, participants can listen to different voices from the Church and consider questions of welcome, spiritual accompaniment and belonging.

The first meetings brought together Sr Enrica Solmi, Fr Andrea Bigalli, Fr Marco Torre and Fr Luca Lunardon, with further invitations in preparation. Italian-English interpretation has helped people from different countries take part.

The initiative *Chiamati per Nome* (Called by Name) is a decentralised initiative, led by passionate individuals. It does not belong to GNRC or to any other organisation. GNRC supports its visibility through its website, communication channels and international network, helping these pastoral voices reach people beyond their local communities.

www.chiamatipernome.org

Contemplative Spiritual Formation

A global community finding connection through prayer, silence and shared presence.

The GNRC Contemplative and Spiritual Formation Committee meets every fortnight and has developed a regular community of participants.

Its three members, Jorge Schoenfeldt, Argel Tuason and Frank Testin, welcome people joining from Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, India, England, Canada and the United States.

Each gathering offers contemplative practices, including prayer, reflection and periods of silence. These practices invite participants to become more aware of the presence of God within themselves and within every person. The sessions take place every other Saturday in a prayerful online space offered by the Meditation Chapel Online Meditation Community. Everyone is welcome to join, whether they have previous experience of contemplative prayer or are encountering it for the first time. Contemplative prayer offers a form of connection that does not depend on geography, language or personal background. Over time, this regular practice can deepen attentiveness, patience and compassion, helping participants carry the fruits of contemplation into their relationships, communities and daily lives.

<https://meditationchapel.org/>

New Board Members

Maritza Fuenzalidid & Wanjiru Kariyki



A long term friend and colleague of GNRC, Maritza Fuenzalidid, is now our Regional Officer.

Maritza has a technical background in Nursing and has worked as an Administrative Assistant in Chile. She is part of Diversidad Vocal and was a committed member of GNRC Embracing Womyns Committee.

Wanjiru is from Kenya and is our newest at-large Board member.

She has close associations with Pema Kenya board, as Chair, a human rights group for gender and sexual minorities and served on the Global Interfaith Network board.

GNRC is very pleased to have Wanjiru on board as she follows on from a proud list of Georgina Adhi-ambo, (RIP) from Kenya and Joanita Ssenfuka Warry from Uganda

Homosexuality Is Not a Sin

Bishop Raúl Vera López calls for inclusion.

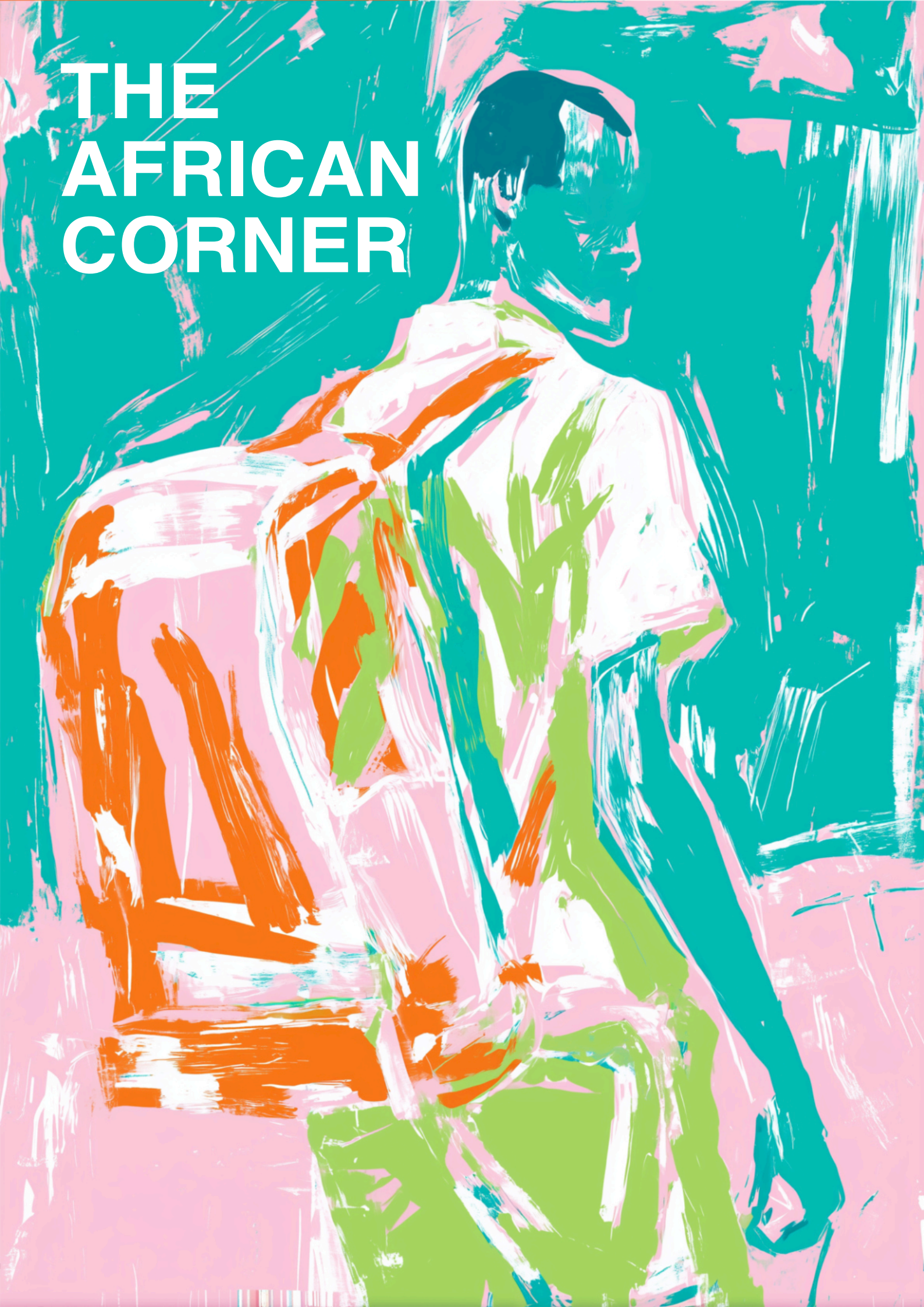
Mexican Catholic Bishop Raúl Vera López has drawn attention after publicly stating that homosexuality should not be considered a sin and calling for greater inclusion of LGBT people within the Catholic Church. According to a report by the Union of Orthodox Journalists, Vera López made the remarks during the opening of the IV National Meeting of the Catholic LGBT organisation Red Católica Arcoíris in Torreón, Mexico. During his address, he described homosexuality as a “natural phenomenon” and argued that LGBT Catholics should be able to participate fully in Church life, including taking on

positions of spiritual leadership. The bishop suggested that the Church would be incomplete without LGBT members and defended his position after receiving criticism from Catholics who disagreed with his statements. His comments have sparked debate because they touch on a sensitive question within Christianity: how churches should balance traditional teachings on sexuality with calls for greater pastoral acceptance and inclusion.

LINK

<https://spzh.eu/en/news/94795-catholic-bishop-declares-that-homosexuality-is-not-a-sin>

THE AFRICAN CORNER



LGBTIQ asylum seekers

Between Fear and Hope: My Journey.

My name is Olamide. I'm 22.

Eight months ago I left Nigeria with one bag and a lot of hope. Back home, being gay made me a target. The threats started as whispers. Then they became real. I heard South Africa was different. The Constitution says everyone is protected. So I came to Cape Town to start again.

At first, it felt possible.

I rented a small table in the township and sold phone chargers and earphones. People came. I started to smile again. For a few weeks I let myself believe I was safe.

That changed on a Tuesday.

I heard shouting down the street: "Foreigners must go." Within minutes, stalls were being kicked over. Mine was next. Someone threw a bottle. My table burned. I ran with nothing but my phone and the shirt on my back. That night I slept on a mat at a church, listening to every sound outside. Since then, loud voices still make me jump.

After that, the city felt smaller.

I'm living with HIV. I need my ARVs every month. But after the attack I was scared to go to the clinic. The last time I went, a security guard asked me questions I couldn't answer. My asylum permit had expired because I was too afraid to go to Home Affairs. "What if they arrest me?" So I missed two appointments. My pills ran low. I know the risk — not just for me, but for everyone. But fear is louder than facts sometimes.

I tried other things.

I asked about an English class. "We don't take foreigners," the teacher told me.

I looked for a room. Three landlords raised the price when they heard my accent. One evicted me after neighbours complained.

I went back to cutting hair, the skill I learned from my uncle. A salon owner offered me work. "Half pay," he said. "You can't report me anyway." I nodded and took it.

The hardest part wasn't the work. It was the silence. I stopped telling people I'm from Nigeria. I stopped telling people I'm gay. Even the support group I used to go to felt unsafe after one member was beaten and outed. At night I lie there and ask myself: "If I get sick, if I'm robbed, who do I call?"

I know my story isn't just mine. I've met other asylum seekers who are too scared to go to clinics, who lost their businesses, who don't trust the police. The law says we have rights to health, safety, and work while our claims are processed. But xenophobia makes those rights hard to reach.

There is hope, though.

A social worker at the church connected me to Lawyers for Human Rights. They're helping me renew my papers and found me a clinic where I can get my ARVs without being questioned about my ID. A community leader in the township started talking with people about who our neighbours really are.

I still get scared when I hear shouting. But last week I picked up my ARVs on time. I'm saving to get my own clippers again.

I came to South Africa looking for refuge. With legal aid, healthcare without stigma, and communities willing to listen, I still believe South Africa can be that place. For me. For thousands like me.



My family — the young men of LIMI

I'm Collins Otieno, 28, living in Utawala, Nairobi, Kenya. I'm the Founder and Director of LIMI Rescue and Psychosocial Centre, a community organisation offering shelter, mental health support, and skills development to marginalised and vulnerable young men, helping them rediscover meaning and rebuild their lives.

What are your hobbies?

I love football and working out at our homemade gym, built by hand with the young men using local materials. Exercising together keeps us healthy in body and mind, builds discipline and confidence, and turns fitness into fellowship. Football brings the same joy: teamwork, laughter, and release.



Our manual, homemade gym

What is your favourite artist and song? Why?

Rina Sawayama — "Chosen Family." The song speaks directly to my life: "we don't need to be related to relate." The young men at LIMI are my chosen family, and every time I hear it, it strengthens my belief that love, not blood, is what truly makes a family.

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTDRg5G77x4>

What is your favourite film or TV programme?

"Flawless." It shows how the LGBT+ community can be a mirror: how we treat others is what we reflect back to the world. When we lead with kindness and dignity, we slowly change how people see us. That message shapes how I try to live my life every day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy0NQbn2C8g>

What is your favourite food?

Rice! In our culture, rice is the food of celebrations. I like to celebrate my life every single day, which conveniently means I get to eat rice every time. For me, it evokes joy, gratitude, togetherness shared around the table.



Rice — the food of celebrations

Tell us a little about family and friends.

The young men at LIMI are my family. We live, cook, laugh, and grow together under one roof. They remind me daily why community matters — that family is not only blood, but the people who walk with you. Their resilience and brotherhood give my life its deepest meaning.

Who inspires you the most and why?

Pope Francis. I admire how he brought people of all kinds together in the Church — making bold reforms that welcomed the LGBT+ community to worship, uplifting women, and championing peace in places like South Sudan, where I once worked. He had a golden heart that I will always admire.

What one thing or person could change the world for the better for our LGBT+ global community? What could you do to help bring about that change?

Love. Love could make the world better, not just for the LGBT+ community, but for everyone. My part is to love and accept people compassionately for who they are — and to love myself, so others can love me. That has already changed how many see me and other gay people in my country. If love transcends, we build a tolerant society — and eventually a loving one, for all.

Whispers at the Altar

The Silent Cost of Being a Queer Kenyan Catholic Woman.

Every Sunday, I join hundreds of believers inside my local parish. I listen to the choir, take my place in the pew, kneel, and bow my head. But as the congregation rises in unison to repeat the prayers of the faithful, my chest tightens with a familiar, suffocating weight. I am a born-and-raised Kenyan woman. I am a devout Catholic. And I am queer.

To live at the intersection of these truths in modern Africa is to exist in a permanent state of exile not from my country, but from the faith that raised me.

-The Pulpit as a Weapon-

In the majority of African countries, the pulpit holds immense power. What a bishop says on Sunday morning does not stay inside the church; it shapes the laws passed on Monday, dictates who gets evicted on Tuesday, and excuses the violence visited upon us by the end of the week.

Over the past few years, we have watched church leadership double down on hostility. When the Kenyan Supreme Court upheld the fundamental right of LGBTQ+ organisations to register and assemble, our own Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops publicly condemned the ruling. When Pope Francis issued *Fiducia Supplicans*, a modest pastoral document allowing priests to offer non-liturgical, informal blessings to same-sex couples, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), led by Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, issued a continent-wide refusal to implement it.

They claimed that blessing a same-sex couple would cause "cultural confusion" and went against the "African beliefs".

Reading those statements as an African Catholic queer woman was a double heartbreak:

The assertion that queer people are "un-African" or a Western import erases our history and isolates us from our own communities.

Faith leaders routinely frame human rights for women and LGBTQ+ people as existential threats to the family, leaving no room for us to exist as daughters, sisters, or parishioners.

My experience as a Kenyan queer woman is not isolated; it is mirrored in the lives of my fellow queer persons across the continent.

-The reality on the ground-

Uganda: The Anti-Homosexuality Act penalizes "aggravated homosexuality" with the death penalty, driving queer women deep into the shadows or into forced exile.

Ghana: The Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill targets allies, advocates, and anyone suspected of being queer.

Regional Camps: Queer female refugees fleeing neighbouring countries to (e.g., Kakuma) Kenya find that homophobia crosses borders, leaving them vulnerable to harassment and violence inside refugee camps.

When a woman flees Kampala or Accra thinking Nairobi will offer sanctuary, she quickly discovers that while the legal framework in Kenya is slightly different, the social and religious condemnation feels identical. Queer female refugees face double jeopardy: exposed to gender-based violence because they are women, and targeted with arson, assault, and systemic neglect because they are queer.

-Reclamation and Resistance-

Why do I stay in a Church that constantly tells me I do not belong?

Because Catholicism isn't just an institution run by bishops; it is the Rosary my grandmother gave me, the quiet solace of personal prayer, and a theology that teaches that every single human being is made in the image and likeness of God.

Across Africa, queer women are quietly staging our own acts of resistance: we are forming alternative spiritual circles where we can pray, process our grief, and celebrate our faith without judgment.

We refuse to accept that our identity is a "Western corruption." We know we are fully African, fully spiritual, and fully human.

By sharing our stories, we force the Church and broader society to realize that the people they demonize from the altar are sitting right in front of them in the pews.

The bishops may refuse to bless us, but they do not own God's grace. We are here, we are African, and we will not be prayed away.

Wanjiru Kariuki

Faith in the Shadows:

On Grace, Resistance, and the Silent Pews

A Reflection for the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC)

To be a queer person in Africa is to live in a constant cycle of visibility and erasure. But to be a queer Catholic in Africa is to carry a unique, sacred paradox: we are deeply, unapologetically rooted in our faith, yet systematically denied a space at the table. When we gather in our parishes from Nairobi to Accra, Kampala to Gaborone, we sing in the choir, kneel at the Eucharistic prayer, and find solace in the Rosary. Yet behind our worship lies profound isolation. We are the silent believers, sitting in pews where our existence is routinely condemned from the pulpit.

The Weight of the Ambo: Denied a Platform

The primary tragedy for African rainbow Catholics is not just the lack of pastoral care; it is the denial of a platform. While the global Church engages in synodal listening, much of the institutional hierarchy across our continent has shut the door on dialogue. When the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) rejected the implementation of *Fiducia Supplicans*, the Vatican declaration permitting non-liturgical blessings for couples in irregular situations, including same-sex couples, it sent a painful message to the faithful. The refusal was framed around preserving African culture and avoiding cultural confusion.

By claiming that queer people are an “un-African Western import,” church leaders erase African history and refuse to acknowledge the queer Catholics sitting before them every Sunday.

Because bishops and clergy hold immense socio-political influence, their rhetoric does not remain inside church walls. It shapes societal stigma, family rejection, and political attitudes.

Under the Shadow of Discriminatory Laws

Across the continent, LGBTQ+ persons face an increasingly hostile political landscape, often reinforced by religious rhetoric:

Uganda: The Anti-Homosexuality Act introduced severe penalties, including death for certain offences classified as “aggravated homosexuality,” forcing many believers into secrecy or exile.

Ghana: Proposed legislation on “Human Sexual Rights and Family Values” has sought to criminalize

not only LGBTQ+ people but also forms of advocacy and support.

Refugee Camps: Queer women and trans people fleeing persecution can encounter new threats, including violence, arson, and hostility within refugee spaces.

In these spaces, prayer can become a plea for basic survival.

Light in the Darkness: Hard-Won Victories

Yet the African queer story is not solely one of victimhood. Even amid state oppression and ecclesial silence, resilience and grace break through.

Legal victories in Botswana, where consensual same-sex relations were decriminalized, and Kenya, where LGBTQ+ organisations have successfully defended their right to register, show that constitutional justice can prevail.

Grassroots communities such as GNRC’s African networks, IDONOWA, Faithful Catholic Souls in Uganda, and Rainbow Catholics Zambia are also creating sacred spaces of their own. We pray together, share the Gospel, and offer the pastoral care too often denied by formal institutions.

The growing presence of African voices within GNRC also ensures that our reality is no longer invisible internationally.

A Call to the Global Church

We refuse to hand over our baptismal rights. We are African, we are queer, and we are Catholic.

To our global brothers, sisters, and siblings in GNRC, we offer a simple truth: we do not need pity; we need platform and solidarity. We ask the global Church to speak against criminalization, challenge the falsehood that queer identities are “un-African,” and amplify the voices of those who must praise God in whispers.

The bishops may withhold their blessings, but they do not hold a monopoly on God’s grace. We remain here: kneeling, praying, and reclaiming our rightful place in the body of Christ.

Wanjiru Kariuki

Make a Difference One Donation at a Time

GNRC

GNRC operates on a voluntary basis and we do not receive any funding. We rely on membership fees and donations through the kind generosity of the public. 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 extends 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 goodwill 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.

Getting Involved

GNRC is always keen to encounter new groups and individuals. Perhaps you would like to become a member, or perhaps volunteer your time.

We would love to hear from you: <https://rainbowcatholics.org/getinvolved/>

Stand with us.



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The Corner © Global Network of Rainbow Catholics

An invitation to prayer

*"Every good tree
bears good fruit."*

(Matthew 7:17)

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