

## **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT**

Below is an announcement that can be shared with your ministries. If you receive any queries from the media, please direct them to Jocelyn Thomas, director of communications for Holy Name Province, at [jthomas@hnp.org](mailto:jthomas@hnp.org).

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### **Franciscan Leadership Joins Catholic Bishops in Condemning Bullying, Violence Toward LGBT Youth**

March 8, 2021 — In accordance with the Catholic-Franciscan tradition, which recognizes and celebrates the God-given dignity of every human being, the leadership of six provinces belonging to the Order of Friars Minor in the United States have added their support to a statement signed by Catholic bishops and dozens of religious orders and institutions that condemns bullying and other acts of violence toward LGBT youth.

Ten U.S. Catholic bishops signed a statement in January that supports the Tyler Clementi Foundation in its vital work of standing up for LGBT youth, who are vulnerable to and experience high rates of bullying, harassment, violence and suicide. In signing on to this statement, the leadership of the Franciscan friars reaffirmed their support of their LGBT sisters and brothers and condemned any form of violence against them.

The Franciscan leaders who signed the statement are Fr. Jim Gannon, OFM, of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province (based in Franklin, Wis.), Fr. Kevin Mullen, OFM, of Holy Name Province (New York City), Fr. Ron Walters, OFM, of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province (Albuquerque, N.M.), Fr. Thomas Nairn, OFM, of Sacred Heart Province (St. Louis, Mo.), Fr. David Gaa, OFM, of St. Barbara Province (Oakland, Calif.) and Fr. Mark Soehner, OFM, of St. John the Baptist Province (Cincinnati, Ohio).

The statement, [“God Is on Your Side: A Statement from Catholic Bishops on Protecting LGBT Youth,”](#) is below:

As we see in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught love, mercy and welcome for all people, especially for those who felt persecuted or marginalized in any way; and the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that LGBT people are to be treated with “respect, compassion and sensitivity.”

All people of goodwill should help, support, and defend LGBT youth; who attempt suicide at much higher rates than their straight counterparts; who are often homeless because of families who reject them; who are rejected, bullied and harassed; and who are the target of violent acts at alarming rates.

The Catholic Church values the God-given dignity of all human life and we take this opportunity to say to our LGBT friends, especially young people, that we stand with you and oppose any form of violence, bullying or harassment directed at you.

Most of all, know that God created you, God loves you and God is on your side.

**About the Order of Friars Minor**

The worldwide Franciscan Order, founded in 1209 by St. Francis of Assisi, comprises brothers and priests who work in a variety of settings including parishes, schools, retreat centers, and social justice ministries. Today, St. Francis, whose feast day is Oct. 4, remains one of the most widely known saints, revered for his affection for nature and care for the poor and marginalized.

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