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Stances of Faiths on LGBT Issues: Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church, the largest Christian denomination in the United States with an estimated 62 million members, has welcomed celibate gay and lesbian people into its church life but increasingly is becoming more intolerant even of this population. Most recently, the Vatican has issued plans to release a document to the church worldwide that will bar celibate gay men from Catholic seminaries. The Human Rights Campaign condemned the document for scapegoating gays. (The document will not affect already ordained priests and does not address lay members.)

The church does condemn legal discrimination against gays and lesbians and supports increased research into the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS; however, the decision to bar celibate gay men from the priesthood indicates that the Roman Catholic Church is taking a more aggressively anti-gay stance. In addition, the church has also been a staunch opponent of marriage equality for same-sex couples and rejects adoption by gay and lesbian parents.

It has been silent to date on transgender members.

On a Gay or Lesbian Orientation

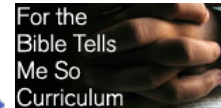
The Roman Catholic Church does not consider a gay or lesbian orientation to be inherently sinful because it is not a choice, and "morality presumes the freedom to choose," according to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Marriage and Family's 1997 statement, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children."

Yet the church does consider a gay or lesbian orientation "unnatural," "disordered" and one of the many manifestations of original sin. The Catechism states:

"Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

Pope Benedict XVI, who was named pope in April 2005, has not shown support for GLBT equality in the church. During an address to a conference of the Diocese of Rome in June 2005, he criticized the

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