

## **Towards Welcoming and Affirming Roman Catholic Communities: Young LGBTIQ\*-People and their Faith**

In preparation for the *Synod 2018 on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* in October 2018 Pope Francis has asked the youth via a questionnaire to state their expectations for the Church's future. However, this questionnaire did not offer a space for detailed information about personal situations.

This document is based on the various experiences of the young Roman Catholic members of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups. The Forum was held in Albano Laziale in May 2018.

As members of the Roman Catholic Church we would like to use this document to point out our view, as young LGBTIQ\* Roman Catholics. LGBTIQ\*<sup>1</sup> stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer people.

Throughout Europe the LGBTIQ\*-communities are facing different situations depending on social, political and religious contexts. However, young LGBTIQ\* Roman Catholics all have one thing in common: they are neither fully accepted in their church nor recognized for who they are. At the moment the Roman Catholic Church is living a paradox: there is a non-acceptance of LGBTIQ\*-identities and at the same time a non-judgemental approach towards LGBTIQ\*- people as humans. This ambiguity leads to isolation of young LGBTIQ\*-Catholics from their church, parishes, communities, friends and families.

However, this situation has been identified by some Western-European dioceses, local communities and Roman Catholic initiatives towards LGBTIQ\*-people. They already try to create space for young Roman Catholics, who are outside of the cisgender<sup>2</sup> and hetero norm, trying to include them inside the Roman Catholic community.

Because of official statements, many young LGBTIQ\* Roman Catholics feel shame and exclusion from their Church, to which they want to fully belong with dignity and pride. This discrimination leads many of us to believe that our sexual orientation and/or gender identities cannot coexist with our faith.

We would like to fully affirm our attachment towards our Church founded on the body of Christ. This originates from our Roman Catholic upbringing and later on made decisions of being an active part in our Church's future in a spirit of growing hope and faith.

The description of the current situation of young LGBTIQ\* Roman Catholics leads us to the following proposals:

- let the LGBTIQ\*-people be visible inside their Church;
- develop an inclusive pastoral care for young LGBTIQ\*-people and their families considering their faith and sexuality and/or gender identities, especially in their teenage years, because those are the years when people discover their identities;
- support young LGBTIQ\*-people in the fight against LGBTIQ\*-phobic attitudes and speeches inside and outside the Church by referring to its catechism and teachings;
- create and reinforce the cooperation between the Church and Christian LGBTIQ\*-associations and movements.

We hope that these perspectives will be recognized respectfully and taken into account at the *Synod 2018 on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*.

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<sup>1</sup> LGBTIQ is an abbreviation that is used to describe a group of people who are a sexual and/or gender minority, but there are many more people for whom this document is relevant, who fall out of this acronym. In an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, we added the \*.

We are open towards any further conversations and would love to be part of further discussions and activities.

**Definitions:**

**Queer** is a word that is either used as an umbrella term for all LGBTIQ\* people, or it describes a specific group of people who actively denounce labels as they feel limited by them, since they experience that identities are not fixed.

**Cisgender** is a word that describes all those who identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth. In other words: cisgender is the opposite of transgender.

**Transgender** people do not identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth. Some transgender people decide to undergo a medical transition, but not all of them do.

**Intersex** is a physical condition that people are born with. Intersex people have both male and female physical traits.