



### **Regarding LGBT persons, priests' association supports bishops' anti-bullying efforts**

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As an association that has consistently supported the rights of individuals in the LGBT community, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests applauds and supports the Catholic bishops who have signed a statement affirming the God-given dignity of all human life.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, who serves as episcopal moderator of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, and Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark are among bishops who signed their support for a statement issued by the Tyler Clementi Foundation, an organization that fights LGBT. bullying in schools, workplaces and faith communities.

“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 Tyler Clementi statement reads.

*America Magazine* quoted Archbishop Wester, from a telephone interview, that he signed the statement because he wanted L.G.B.T. young people to know “you have worth, you have value and you’re a child of God.”

“We priests and our friends in the AUSCP are called to minister to all of God’s children,” said Father Greg Barras, chair of the AUSCP leadership team. “Our pastoral experience has been one of great suffering with the pain inflicted by some in our church and society upon the vulnerable among us.”

Barras referred to a comment from Pope Francis, in a filmed documentary last fall, as a clear and direct statement against bullying. Pope Francis said, “Homosexuals have a right to be a part of the family. They’re children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out, or be made miserable because of it.”

He also noted that the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that those who identify as LGBT “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” (Paragraph 2358)

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