

St. Andrew Parish Community Statement

In light of the Archdiocese of Portland's recently-published document, "[A Catholic Response to Gender Identity Theory](#)", St. Andrew Parish wishes to reiterate our belief in the rights of all people - including all members of the LGBTQ community - to gather at our table and participate in the Body of Christ as their full, authentic selves.

As a community of faith:

We believe that transgender and nonbinary people are loved by God, and we are called to support them. The statement put forth by the Archdiocese appears to have been created without any consultation from transgender or nonbinary people, and contradicts commonly-accepted best practices in child development, psychology, sociology, medicine, science, and education, all of which state clearly that LGBTQ people of all ages thrive when their identities are affirmed by those around them, and suffer tremendously when they are not. For example:

- LGBTQ youth who overhear their parents using religion to say negative things about being LGBTQ were **twice as likely to attempt suicide** as those who do not.¹
- Transgender youth with at least one adult in their life who affirmed their identity had **39% lower odds of attempting suicide** than their peers who were not accepted.²
- Trans and nonbinary youth who received gender-affirming hormones experienced **less depression and anxiety** and greater happiness with their lives than they did before.³

We believe that to respect people's name and pronouns is to honor their fundamental identity. Our faith tradition is rich in stories where God grants someone a new name and with it, a new life path, sense of self, and position in the world. The Human Rights Campaign's resource guide, "[What Does the Bible Say About Transgender People?](#)" explains this in simple, eloquent terms: "*While some transgender and non-binary people do not feel that affirming their gender identity requires a change in name or pronouns, many do. To this end, it feels important to lift up the way that Scripture is filled with stories of people having their name changed . . . These stories demonstrate that name change can be about proclaiming who one is to become, recognizing and confirming who one has always been or some combination of the two.*"

We believe that everyone's relationship with their God-given body is complex and unique. Pope Francis' declaration that our bodies are "a gift from God" does not mean that identifying as transgender or nonbinary is a rejection of that gift; there are many ways to love our bodies, but perhaps the most powerful is to make oneself at home in it. We share the Archbishop's belief in the value of "whole person affirmation" of transgender and nonbinary youth; we do not, however, interpret this statement's meaning in the same way. In Catholic social teaching, the "dignity of the human person" is innate to each of us; therefore, to tell a young person they are mistaken about something so fundamental as their own body is to *undermine*, not affirm, their human dignity. There is no better expert on a person than themselves.

We believe that Christ welcomes all to His table, exactly as they are.

¹ The Trevor Project ("[Religiosity and Suicidality Among LGBTQ Youth](#)")

² The Trevor Project ("[Acceptance of Transgender and Nonbinary Youth from Adults and Peers Associated with Significantly Lower Rates of Attempting Suicide](#)")

³ New England Journal of Medicine ("[Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones](#)")