

Let Us Dream of a Better Future

Reflection by Beth Garascia

My brother-in-law Charlie is a deeply inquisitive person. He attended a Jesuit college, is very proud of that fact, and was raised in a Catholic family who followed Church guidelines strictly. Like many people who were instructed in the faith in the 50's and 60's, he, as well as four of his six siblings, are no longer active Catholics. Charlie tries to live simply, is quite generous, and is an Earth advocate. He describes himself as angry Catholic, waiting for his Church to catch up with the teachings of Vatican II.



Charlie follows James Martin, SJ, an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ Catholics, on Facebook and recently sent my husband Tony, who is Charlie's brother, and me a post from Martin about a Lenten event at St. Ignatius Loyola parish in Chestnut Hill, MA. This Jesuit parish, dreaming of a better world, just as Moses did in the first reading from Deuteronomy for the First Sunday of Lent, is having a series of five events during this season intended to welcome LGBTQ+ persons. What a gift! Charlie is proud of the parish for their outreach, and of the Jesuits for generally supporting such a program, and so are Tony and I. If only additional parish priests and bishops would be open to a similar ministry, perhaps more persons on the margins would be active in our Church. Here's a [link to the information](#) from St. Ignatius.

The Jesuits have advocated quite publicly for LGBTQ+ persons in recent years. One example is the 2019 refusal by administrators at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis, led by principal Greg VanSlambrook, to fire a gay teacher, one chapter in a growing debate over LGBTQ staff in Catholic education. Another example is a video released June 18, 2020, in which prominent Catholic leaders including Fr. James Martin, SJ, and Fr. John Cecero, SJ, the provincial superior of the USA Northeast Province of the Jesuits, voice their support for the LGBTQ+ community. More prophetic actions such as these by Church leaders are needed in our world. May they continue this good work and may others join them.

Our Marianist Family has also advocated for LGBTQ+ persons, both in its institutions and by its support of MSJC's LGBTQ+. Initiative. The world premiere of the video, [Living our Marianist Charism: Embracing the LGBTQ+ Community](#), which was produced by members of the Initiative, was at the MLCNA Assembly virtually on July 18, 2020. In 2015 *Working with LGBT Youth: A Marianist Resource* was sent to all the Marianist high schools, universities, and retreat centers, with the support of the Marianist Family Council. The University of Dayton sponsors The Brook Center LGBTQ+ Student Services, which provides outreach on campus and has an LGBTQ+ Student Services Coordinator. The other two Marianist universities and some of the high schools may also have outreaches of which I'm unaware.

So let us dream, as Moses dreamt of a land flowing with milk and honey in the Deuteronomy reading mentioned earlier, of a better future. Let's dream of that reality we may never see, but that we hope will exist for our children, and our children's children, of a

world where LGBTQ+ persons can live their truth without fear, of a Church where the dignity and gifts of all are affirmed, of a world where queer children are loved, accepted, celebrated, and allowed to receive the healthcare they need, of a Church where all families with LGBTQ+ children can be supported by our parishes. Perhaps one key to the fulfillment of this dream is that the leaders of other religious orders embrace a prophetic role and speak out for justice for LGBTQ+ persons just as the Jesuits and the Marianists have. Accordingly, as we dream of this better future, let us continue to work for the inclusion of all in the LGBTQ+ community in order that all of us might have a brighter tomorrow and this dream will be made a reality.