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U.S. Archbishop Tells Transgender Catholic: "You Belong to the Heart of This Church"

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Archbishop Wilton Gregory

A leading U.S. archbishop has told a transgender Catholic that they "belong to the heart of this church" and mentioned positively the dialogue he has had with the

Catholic parents of LGBTQ children.

Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington, D.C. made his remarks during a [Theology on Tap event](#) [<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/adw-theology-on-tap/id1459153617>] earlier this month where he addressed LGBTQ issues in responses to two questions. Rory, a transgender Catholic involved with Dignity/Washington, asked Gregory, "What place do I as a confirmed transgender Catholic and what place do my queer friends have here in this archdiocese?" The archbishop replied:

"You belong to the heart of this church. There is nothing that you may do, may say, that will rip you from the heart of this church. There is a lot that has been said to you, about you, behind your back that is painful and is sinful. I mentioned my conversation with Fortunate Families. We have to find a way to talk to one another, and to talk to one another not just from one perspective, but to talk and to listen to one another. I think that's the way that Jesus ministered. He engaged people, he took them where they were at, and he invited them to go deeper, closer to God. If you're asking me where do you fit, you fit in the family."

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Rory also invited Gregory to meet with Dignity/Washington, something his predecessor, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, had chosen not to do. Gregory did not respond directly to that invitation, but his answer to another question may provide insight. Asked about healing in the church, the archbishop shared about his [previous experience](#)

[<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2014/10/24/archbishop-wilton-gregory-other-prelates-churchs-welcome-to-lgbt-people-needs-improvement/>].on LGBTQ dialogue:

“While I was the bishop of Atlanta, I was invited into a conversation with a group of parents who had sons and daughters who were gay and lesbian. They invited me, and I’m grateful that they did, to be in dialogue with them, to have me tell them first of all that they had to love their children and that the church had to love their children. That group was called Fortunate Families. It’s a loosely-knit national group. I was happy to do that.”

Gregory also [referenced his support](#)

[<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/09/27/archbishop-stands-by-fr-james-martin-and-lgbt-friendly-pastor-against-conservative-protestors/>].for Fr. James Martin, SJ, who the archbishop invited to speak in the Atlanta archdiocese despite some criticism. The archbishop’s record on LGBTQ issues has been quite positive. He [acknowledged](#)

[<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2014/10/24/archbishop-wilton-gregory-other-prelates-churchs-welcome-to-lgbt-people-needs-improvement/>].in 2014 that the Church needed to improve its pastoral care for LGBTQ persons. After marriage equality was legalized in the U.S., he [called](#) [<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2015/06/29/catholics-continue-to-react-to-supreme-court-marriage-equality-ruling/>] for all sides to be respectful and civil. Gregory has suggested the work of the 1960s civil rights movement continues today and [includes efforts](#)

[<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/05/11/quote-to-note-archbishop-condemns-discrimination-based-on-race-gender-and-orientation/>].for lesbian and gay protections. In 2016, Gregory [supported](#) [<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2016/03/31/two-catholic-governors-and-two-bishops-oppose-lgbt-discrimination/>] the Georgia governor’s veto of a “license to discriminate” bill that would have expanded anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

Archbishop Gregory has a full agenda in the Archdiocese of Washington, which is still recovering from the clergy sexual abuse scandals involving former Cardinal Donald Wuerl and the once-Cardinal, now-laicized, Theodore McCarrick. But the new archbishop should not neglect the pressing realities of LGBTQ Catholics both in the Washington-area and, given the prominence of his see, nationwide. Meeting with Dignity/Washington’s members per Rory’s invitation would be a



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fine initial gesture of his willingness to keep the dialogue begun in Atlanta going in D.C.



—Robert Shine, *New Ways Ministry*, August 30, 2019

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