

An Open Letter to Pope Francis

10/6/2023

Dear Pope Francis,

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I am writing to you in the spirit of *parrhesia*, a biblical word you have used several times to encourage us to speak freely, boldly, and without fear of disagreement. In your opening speech to the Synod delegates on Wednesday, you said that "everyone needs to express themselves freely." Please receive the following words freely, not from Rome, but from the peripheries, from a simple parish priest.

My Papa Francesco, I must tell you that you are making my job as a parish priest difficult. I work in one of the declining parishes of San Francisco, California, a city that prides itself in having evolved beyond faith in God. In my city, the faith is openly mocked and attacked, and my parishioners are struggling to believe in Jesus. Most of their family members, friends, and co-workers have abandoned the Christian faith. My parishioners cannot wear a cross or speak the name of Jesus at work for fear of losing their jobs. Our schools teach their children from kindergarten to doubt the natural goodness of their bodies, and to despise marriage and family life. My parishioners are clinging to the simple truths of our faith, especially the Church's teachings about the human person.

When you promote homosexuality, Holy Father, you hurt me and my parish. When you do not speak clearly, you make my priestly task very difficult. You have said that two men cannot "marry," and that homosexual acts are wrong, but you also encourage bishops who bless same-sex unions. A female student from my parish, who attends a Jesuit-owned university, "married" another woman according to United States law. She later surgically removed her breasts and uterus to appear like a man. She

hates her mother for raising her Catholic, and her mother grieves the loss of her daughter and grandchildren. But this college student points to you, Holy Father. She says you permit blessings for homosexual unions in Germany, and that you favor priests and cardinals who promote homosexual relations. She knows that you have appointed a European cardinal who promotes homosexual unions to lead the Synod.

You are my spiritual father, Papa Francesco. Please know that you are hurting me, and hurting my parish. We need you to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ clearly in a time of great confusion and hurt. We need you to teach the simple truth of the first book of the Bible, that God made us male and female, and for this reason "a man clings to his wife, and the two become one flesh." If you do not teach this clearly, we parish priests cannot evangelize our people well, and all the people suffer.

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