



A protester holds a sign ahead of a July 31 march for voting rights in Austin, Texas. (CNS/Reuters/Callaghan O'Hare)



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**Editor's note:** *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a weekly feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

# Monday Starter

Catholic sisters are among those working for passage of the [Freedom to Vote Act](#), a package of federal voting reforms introduced Sept. 14 meant to protect voters' rights and roll back state attempts to restrict or suppress voting.

Sr. Quincy Howard, coordinating director of advocacy, outreach and campaigns for the [Faithful Democracy coalition](#) and a government relations advocate at [Network](#), a Catholic social justice lobby, said months of efforts by the faith community is paying off.

"This bill represents a coming together to find a path forward for badly needed reforms. Leaders from an array of faith traditions applaud today's introduction of the Freedom to Vote Act," Howard, a [Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa](#), Wisconsin, said in a Sept. 14 press release. "While Democrats are working to win support from their colleagues across the aisle, passage of this legislation cannot wait. If Republicans refuse to support these needed reforms, then Senate leadership must find a way to pass this legislation. There is no time to waste and our democracy is too important."

## Advertisement

Stephen Schneck, executive director of [Franciscan Action Network](#), said voting restrictions are aimed at the very voters Christians are most called to serve.

"The Gospels say we are measured by what we have done for those in poverty, the discriminated against, the vulnerable, those whom society has made powerless, excluded, and disenfranchised," Schneck said in a Sept. 14 written statement. "Yet, today that Gospel message is threatened by state laws seeking in subtle and not so

A Home for All: The first page of a four-page advertisement in the Sept. 17 print edition of the National Catholic Reporter that featured more than 2,000 signatories to New Ways Ministry's "A Home for All" statement (GSR screenshot)

The following are excerpts of a 2006 theological statement produced by New York Ministers. The entire text can be found at [www.wittenberg.org/nyminists.html](http://www.wittenberg.org/nyminists.html).

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### Introduction

The relationship between the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and the community of laity, lay, ethnic, racial, linguistic and queer (LERTQ) persons has long been fraught with conflict, negative emotions, and confusion. Equally significant is that a vast section of our church leaders to this day does not fully consider Catholics and functional laypeople as equals when talking problems on LERTQ social policy issues.

Because LERTQ people suffer from the same discrimination as other ethnic and racial groups, we as Catholics must commit us to speak out in support of the people of the discrimination. As Catholics, we are called, as laity, lay, ethnic, racial, linguistic and queer persons, to stand with the people of the discrimination against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. We affirm that Catholic social teaching is a positive and enduring discrimination against racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination. We affirm that the Second Vatican Council declared that "any kind of discrimination against individuals because of race or ethnic discrimination . . . must be rejected and eradicated" (Council at pp. 28).

### Signs of Times: Discrimination

Despite certain legal and social advances in recent years, LERTQ people in the United States continue to experience discrimination. A recent report shows that more than one-third of LERTQ people have faced some form of discrimination, and this rate is even higher for transgender and LGBT people.

Of race, discrimination manifests itself in healthcare, housing, employment, public accommodations, adoption and foster care, interactions with police, access to credit, and education. The discrimination is often compounded by gender, race, religion, class, or other factors. Scripture strongly affirms that God loves and respects the way of the heart and suffering. Society's failure to protect LERTQ people has left them crying out for justice.

### Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching in church documents from the late 18th century through the 1990s has been a powerful tool to support non-discrimination programs for LERTQ people, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds. Catholic Social Teaching has been the catalyst of theological reflection and has developed with the following components at its core:

- Because of human beings are created with human dignity, we owe to one another, no individual or groups should be denied the rights enjoyed by others in society.
- Justice in society requires a preference for the many over the few, for the poor over the rich, vulnerable, or marginalized.
- Society must always value the common-good, which includes providing for each other's ability to reach their full human potential.

### Which Comes First: Justice or Love?

Should the church social ethics tradition or its social justice tradition be the primary lens with which to assess LERTQ inequality? While we believe it is crucial for Catholics to see the need to rely on the social justice tradition, this concept is strongly supported by Catholic reasoning:

- Both social ethics and social justice are fundamentally rooted in love. Love is both love and justice. Christian perfection. Social justice, however, is more easily prior to love. Love is a principle that is good but when people like choose the good when it comes to social ethics.
- The message of Scripture shows that love must be mixed with social engagements with justice.
- In Catholic thinking, public love is not an endorsement mechanism for the totality of personal morality.
- The Catholic ethical tradition rejects the idea that a just and can be identified through arguments. Discrimination against LERTQ people should be viewed as a means to oppose laws or behaviors to which a religious body may object.

### Signs of the Times: The Right Moment

Now is the time to act for non-discrimination protections for LERTQ people. Both the church's and secular leadership of LERTQ people have changed in the following important ways. First, scientific evidence continues to prove that sexual orientation and gender identity are natural and unchangeable traits of an individual and abnormal in the human as persons, not deviations from it. Second, as more LERTQ people are coming forward as LGBT, we witness more and more the healthy, holy, and wholesome ways that God's revelation is manifest in all people, including LGBT people. Third, among the 125, only in the Catholic Church, mass welcoming and offering altitudes toward LERTQ people continue to expand.

### Conclusion

Moreover, our church has played a dramatic role in the social issues as a constructive aspect of its evangelizing mission. The Catholic Church today, emboldened by the dangerous morality of those on the outside of the church, proclaims the Reign of God on earth when it proclaims social justice.

### Signs of the Times: Discrimination

Our strong endorsement of non-discrimination towards LERTQ people comes from careful reflection on scripture, our academic studies, and our acceptance of the laws of God and people. We therefore will join in the mission to end racism in our church and our world for all.

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A Home for All: The first page of a four-page advertisement in the Sept. 17 print edition of the National Catholic Reporter that featured more than 2,000 signatories to New Ways Ministry's "A Home for All" statement (GSR screenshot)

## **A show of support for the LGBTQ community**

Many Catholics are also speaking out in support for measures to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination.

"[A Home for All](#): A Catholic Call for LGBTQ Non-Discrimination" was published as a four-page advertisement in the Sept. 17 print edition of the National Catholic Reporter and included more than 2,000 signatories, including 115 Catholic organizations. At least 48 of those were [congregations of women religious](#). Among the individual signatories were St. Joseph Sr. Helen Prejean, Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell, Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley, and St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson.

A number of vocal church leaders too often ignore Catholicism's fundamental values when taking positions on LGBTQ issues, the statement said.

"By supporting civic policies that promote discrimination and by opposing policies that would produce equality, these leaders bypass the Catholic Church's proud social justice tradition, the product of more than a century's development of social doctrine that increasingly supports the human rights of *all* people without exception," it reads. "As Catholic theologians, scholars, church leaders, writers, and ministers, we affirm that Catholic teaching presents a positive case for ending discrimination against LGBTQ people. We affirm the Second Vatican Council's demand that 'any kind of social or cultural discrimination... must be curbed and eradicated' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 29). We affirm that Catholic teaching should not be used to further oppress LGBTQ people by denying rights rooted in their inherent human dignity and in the church's call for social equality."

The statement was produced by [New Ways Ministry](#), a national Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for LGBTQ people and the church.

"Society's failure to protect LGBTQ people has left them crying out for justice," the statement says. "As disciples of Jesus Christ, we too must hear and respond to this cry by pursuing policies and laws that remedy such grave injustices. To do any less would abdicate our responsibility as Christians to live the Gospel in public life by advancing the good of all people, especially those on the margins."





Maryknoll Srs. Beatrice Meyer and Mary Rose Leifels at an orphanage in Yeung Kong, China, in 1937 (Courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters)

## **A milestone for the Maryknoll Sisters**

The [Maryknoll Sisters](#) are celebrating a century of ministering in China.

Six intrepid sisters and two priests set sail from Vancouver, British Columbia, on Sept. 24, 1921, landing in Hong Kong on Nov. 3.

The congregation has created an [extensive website](#) for the occasion, with many photos, biographies of those first sisters, and even portions of their travel diaries.

There are also photos of the sisters currently ministering in China and a video of the work the sisters have done there. Between 1921 and 2004, 210 Maryknoll sisters served in Hong Kong, working in health care and as teachers and social workers.

## **Dominican sisters launch podcast's second season**

The second season of "[Hearts Afire](#)" has begun.

A project of the [Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt](#), New York, the podcast launched in March with a first season of 10 episodes. Each episode streams live [on YouTube](#) and afterward is made available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Audible.

The first episode of the second season premiered Sept. 16 and featured Sr. Maggie McDermott discussing her ministry at the [Tolentine Zeiser Community Life Center](#) in the Bronx in New York City and reflecting on the importance of education.

New episodes will premiere every other week and will include:

- "The Life of a Dominican Volunteer," featuring Andrea Meyer of Dominican Volunteers USA;
- "Why We Celebrate the Holy Rosary in October," featuring Sr. Rose Ellen Gorman;
- "Caring for the Sick," featuring Sr. Noreen Walsh;
- "The Importance of Kindness to Others," featuring Sr. Grace Augustine Canevari;
- "What Gratitude Means to Me," featuring Sr. Margaret Flood;
- "Looking Back on a Life-long Ministry," featuring Sr. Liz Engel; and
- "Reflections on Advent, Christmas, 2021, and 2022," featuring Sr. Barbara Ann Sgro.