# Francis: the first non-homophobic Pope? There's even evidence!



In a field where the bar is low enough to step over - even in high shoes! - Pope Francis turned out to be a Christian with actual Christian values. Even when it came to the gays! Unprecedented!

While previous wearers of luxury linens, fine jewellery and, in the case of his predecessor Benedict, red Prada shoes took any opportunity to hammer the gays, it turns out that Francis engaged directly with LGBTQ+ advocates, sometimes even in the same room without so much as a water pistol loaded with holy water!

Conversations, which took place in August 2023 and again in August 2024 at the Pope’s private residence in Rome, were apparently arranged by GLAAD, the organisation that promotes LGBTQ+ acceptance in media and society. Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of GLAAD, alongside other advocates including Emmy-nominated actress and transgender activist Nava Mau, and Clare Byarugaba, a vocal human rights advocate from Uganda, took their seats opposite His H-ness and spoke with him about the church’s stance on issues affecting members of the LGBTQ+ community worldwide.

Ellis spoke to People.com about the conflab. 'It looked like his mind was being opened and his heart was being opened,' she said, adding that when she shared her own family's story - including the fear that her own children might not be allowed to be baptised due to their parents’ orientation - 'he shook his head in sadness.' Wow! 'You never wanted to leave him...' she went on. 'He was just such a nice person and a charming person.' And while nice cuts no ice - any fool can be nice - even words (and sad head-shakings) in this organisation can be seen as progress.

Before these meetings, GLAAD had sent the Vatican documents outlining laws that criminalize LGBTQ+ identities from around the world, which, in January 2023, Pope Francis described as 'unjust' stating that 'Being homosexual isn’t a crime.' Later in 2023, the Pope made headlines by endorsing blessings for same-sex couples... which doesn't mean same-sex marriages were recognised by the church but obviously indicated a softer approach to LGBTQ+ relationships. Additionally, Vatican guidance was modified to allow priests to baptise transgender individuals under particular circumstances, specifically when such action does not cause 'public scandal or confusion among the faithful'. Or, in the UK, takes place in female-only spaces.

For Ellis - and a lot of other Catholics - these shifts represented a meaningful recognition of their humanity by an institution that has long condemned homosexuality as sinful.

But it's not all good news for the LGBTQ+s. In April last year, a Vatican document reiterated the church's opposition to gender transition treatments and expressed concerns about gender fluidity, stating that such interventions could threaten 'the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception'. This reaffirmation of traditional church teachings prompted further dialogue during GLAAD’s second meeting with Pope Francis.

During the follow-up visit in August 2024, Ellis was joined by Mau, Byarugaba, and other advocates who shared powerful personal testimonies. Mau, reflecting on the encounter in an Instagram post, expressed her astonishment: 'Not ever in my life did I imagine I would be sitting next to the Pope in his residence… I told him about my upbringing, my work with survivors of violence and the way community has been my faith.' Ellis highlighted a particularly moving moment from the meeting: 'He looked right at her and he told her to keep fighting,' she reckons.

While acknowledging that Pope Francis was 'not all perfect' and sometimes made statements seen as setbacks, Ellis insisted he remained 'open to having conversations' and learning more about LGBTQ+ experiences.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Francis_and_LGBTQ_topics> - This Wikipedia article corroborates Pope Francis's softer approach to LGBTQ+ issues, including his endorsement of blessings for same-sex couples in 2023 and changes to Vatican guidance on baptizing transgender individuals, supporting details about his evolving stance described in the article.
* <https://www.advocate.com/voices/pope-francis-lgbtq> - The Advocate’s coverage confirms that Pope Francis engaged in open discussions about LGBTQ+ concerns during recent Synods in 2023 and 2024, which aligns with the article's mention of the evolving conversation between the Pope and LGBTQ+ advocates.
* <https://outreach.faith/2025/04/outreach-remembers-pope-francis/> - This source highlights Pope Francis’ greetings to LGBTQ+ Catholic conferences and clarifications on homosexuality, supporting the article's depiction of his openness and outreach to LGBTQ+ individuals and communities.
* <https://www.axios.com/2025/04/21/pope-francis-causes-climate-immigration-lgbtq> - Axios documents Pope Francis’s 2023 grant to priests allowing blessings for same-sex couples under certain conditions, corroborating the article's claim about his progressive stance on same-sex blessings within the Church.