# New Pope Leo XIV signals shift towards greater inclusion of LGBTQ+ Catholics



Pope Leo XIV, the first pontiff from the United States, has signalled a continuation of the inclusive approach toward LGBTQ+ Catholics established by his predecessor, Pope Francis. In a private audience with Reverend James Martin, a Jesuit priest well-known for his advocacy for LGBTQ+ members of the Catholic Church, the new pope conveyed a message of openness and welcome. The 30-minute meeting, described by Martin as warm, receptive, and calm, reinforced Pope Leo’s intent to uphold the legacy of inclusion fostered by Francis.

Reverend Martin, who is closely associated with Pope Francis, highlighted that Pope Leo expressed a clear desire to continue the 'idea of openness' Francis had championed. This includes the principle of synodality—listening to the voices of all members of the Church, explicitly including LGBTQ+ individuals. While doctrinal changes remain unchanged, this tonal shift marks a significant moment in the Catholic Church's engagement with LGBTQ+ faithful. Martin is set to participate in an upcoming LGBTQ+ Catholic pilgrimage in Rome, officially part of the Holy Year calendar, further symbolising increased visibility and acceptance within the Church.

Pope Francis’s twelve-year pontificate already altered how the Church communicates about LGBTQ+ issues. From his 2013 declaration of 'Who am I to judge?' to his more recent decision at the end of 2023 to authorise blessings of same-sex unions, Francis has consistently promoted dignity and inclusion without modifying Church doctrine. Nonetheless, these moves sparked criticism, particularly from conservative factions in regions such as Africa and parts of the United States. Pope Leo has so far refrained from publicly addressing specific controversies like the blessing of same-sex couples but appears committed to maintaining the openness and pastoral sensitivity his predecessor embodied.

The Vatican’s inclusion of the LGBTQ+ pilgrimage in the official World Jubilee Year programme illuminates a subtle but meaningful shift. Organised by groups such as the Italian La Tenda di Gionata, this event involves prayer vigils and visits to significant sites such as St. Peter’s Basilica. While the Vatican clarifies this inclusion does not constitute official sponsorship, it nonetheless marks a recognition of LGBTQ+ faithful within the Church’s formal activities, a rare development in the historically conservative institution.

At the same time, the Vatican’s recent doctrinal updates, exemplified by the document 'Dignitas Infinita,' illustrate ongoing tensions. This extensive text addresses various contemporary moral issues, including surrogate motherhood, euthanasia, and gender identity, reaffirming traditional stances and explicitly rejecting gender theory and sex-change interventions. This juxtaposition of openness toward LGBTQ+ individuals with doctrinal conservatism underscores the complex and evolving nature of the Church’s position.

Pope Francis, remembered as a reform-minded and compassionate leader who resided simply and advocated for social justice and inclusion, left a profound impact despite not altering foundational doctrines. His approach reshaped the Church’s tone, embracing a pastoral sensitivity toward the LGBTQ+ community that Pope Leo now appears intent on sustaining. The meeting with Reverend Martin therefore represents not only continuity in personal pastoral outreach but also signals the ongoing evolution within the Vatican under new leadership. [Picture: Vatican News] Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://24-horas.mx/mundo/el-papa-recibe-a-uno-de-los-principales-defensores-de-los-catolicos-lgbtq/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/f54bbf057757bdb7230802a8d5d77242> - Pope Leo XIV met with Rev. James Martin, a prominent advocate for LGBTQ+ Catholics, affirming his intent to continue Pope Francis' inclusive approach. Martin found the meeting encouraging, noting Leo's emphasis on welcoming all individuals, including LGBTQ+ people, into the Church. The Vatican officially announced the half-hour audience, underscoring its significance. This event precedes an upcoming Holy Year pilgrimage involving LGBTQ+ Catholics, seen as another symbol of inclusion. The meeting highlights a shift towards greater acceptance within the Church, building upon Francis' legacy of openness.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/pope-leo-meets-james-martin-us-priest-known-lgbt-ministry-2025-09-01/> - Pope Leo XIV, the first U.S. pope, met privately with Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest known for his ministry to LGBTQ+ Catholics. The meeting is seen as a sign that Pope Leo will continue the inclusive approach toward the LGBTQ+ community initiated by Pope Francis. Martin found the encounter encouraging, noting Leo echoed Francis' message of welcome toward LGBTQ+ people. The pilgrimage, though not Vatican-endorsed, is featured in the Holy Year calendar, indicating increased visibility and acceptance.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/vaticans-holy-year-calendar-includes-event-lgbt-catholics-2024-12-06/> - The Vatican has included an event organized by LGBTQ+ Catholics in its official online calendar for the 2025 Roman Catholic Holy Year, signaling a rare instance of openness towards the gay community. The event, a pilgrimage by the Italian group 'La Tenda di Gionata,' will involve a prayer vigil at a Rome parish before a visit to St. Peter's Basilica. Although the Vatican clarified that listing the event does not equate to sponsoring it, Pope Francis has been noted for encouraging a more inclusive stance within the Church.
5. <https://time.com/7267052/pope-francis-impact-on-the-lgbtq-community/> - Since his 2013 papal inauguration, Pope Francis has notably shifted the Catholic Church's tone toward the LGBTQ+ community. His now-famous 'Who am I to judge?' comment signaled a departure from past condemnations and sparked global discussion. While he has not changed official doctrine, Francis has consistently emphasized dignity, inclusion, and God's love for all individuals. In 2018, he reassured a gay man that 'God made you like this,' and in subsequent years endorsed legal protections for same-sex couples and condemned anti-LGBTQ criminal laws.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/840c9096-8890-44e6-9e6c-769dca291851> - Pope Francis, remembered as a compassionate and reformist leader, passed away shortly after publicly delivering Easter blessings despite severe illness. His papacy was marked by humility, exemplified by living in modest accommodations and adopting the name of St Francis of Assisi. As the first non-European pope in over a millennium, and the first from the Americas, he sought to modernize the Catholic Church, focusing on social justice, climate change, and inclusion. While he did not alter doctrine, Francis initiated significant tonal shifts, advocating for tolerance.