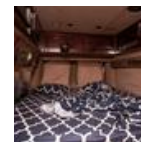


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Pope Francis tells trans youth that 'God loves us as we are' – even 'if we are sinners'

By Muri Assunção

New York Daily News • Published: Jul 25, 2023 at 1:32 pm



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Pope Francis told a young transgender person that “God loves us just as we are” in a new podcast released Tuesday by the Vatican.

Francis’ comments were featured in the second episode of [Vatican Media’s “Popecast”](#) ahead of World Youth Day — a global event set to take place in Lisbon, Portugal, from Aug. 1 to 6.

The leader of the Catholic Church listened and commented on audio messages left by young Catholics sharing their personal stories.



Pope Francis tells transgender youth that "God loves us as we are." In this photo, Pope Francis delivers his speech during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on March 22, 2023. (Alessandra Tarantino/AP)

In one of the messages, a transgender person named Giona spoke about the challenges of reconciling their gender identity with their

LATEST

Catholic faith.

“God loves us just as we are,” the 86-year-old pontiff said in Italian, adding that even “sinners” are looked after by the Heavenly Father.



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“The Lord always accompanies us, always. Even if we are sinners, He draws near to help us,” he said according to Vatican News. “Do not give up, keep striving ahead.”

The Argentinian-born pope has shown a certain degree of openness toward LGBTQ Catholics compared with his predecessors.

Earlier this month, he [appointed an American priest known for his LGBTQ advocacy](#) to take part in a weeks-long gathering of bishops and laypeople later this year.

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The Rev. James Martin, the editor-at-large of the Jesuit magazine America, was selected to participate in the synod of bishops, a closely watched and likely consequential meeting that will focus on issues regarding the mission of the Catholic Church.

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Pope Francis waves at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on May 3, 2023. (Alessandra Tarantino/AP)

In January, Francis denounced laws criminalizing same-sex relationships, saying “being homosexual isn’t a crime,” adding that “we are all children of God.”

Last year, he encouraged parents of gay children not to condemn them — though his guidance came as he cited a list of “children’s problems.”

Nevertheless, in early 2021, Francis allowed the

publication of a Vatican document declaring that the Catholic Church would not bless same-sex unions because God “cannot bless sin.”



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