

Catholics and Religious Discrimination

In the current climate of debate surrounding the draft Religious Discrimination Bill, it is important for the Catholic Church, a powerful player in the debate, to distinguish between abortion and euthanasia, which involve a decision to *end* human life, and the position of people who identify as LGBTIQ+. People who identify as other than heterosexual need the right to be themselves, together with the freedom to engage in the gift of fulfilling human relationships. Many Catholics believe that the age-old doctrines of the Church regarding sexuality and gender need revision in the light of credible contemporary biology and genetics. Science has learnt that LGBTIQ+ people are an integral part of the natural world. They can be a sign of hope in our Catholic institutions, together with their expressions of deep human love and their desire to do good, just as people of heterosexual orientation can model altruistic human love. Any of us, whatever our gender orientation, can equally be guilty of giving scandal through hatred, discrimination and selfishness. The Vatican urgently needs to conduct a serious study of the biology that underpins human sexuality, just as its Academy of Sciences took up Climate Change as a critical issue for our times, resulting in Pope Francis' environmental Encyclical *Laudato Si*. Only the most fervent climate change deniers among Church guardians of doctrine, now reject that powerful document. Just as the Catholic Church has changed traditional doctrines that once defended slavery and inferiority of women, we Catholics need to do the same for our LGBTIQ+ sisters and brothers everywhere.