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## **MORE THAN 90 PERCENT OF AMERICAN CATHOLICS BACK TRANSGENDER RIGHTS**

*Equally Blessed hails laity's willingness to move beyond bishops' "insensitive and  
uninformed" teaching*

WASHINGTON, D. C., November 8, 2011--The majority of American Catholics disagree with the teachings of their bishops on sexual issues so often that it is a wonder that the news media continues to speak of the Catholic Church's position on a given issue when what they really mean is the position of the Catholic hierarchy.

This is nowhere more evident than in recent polling on transgender issues that found that 93 percent of American Catholics believed that transgender people deserve the same legal rights and protections as other Americans. The hierarchy, on the other hand, teaches that transsexual individuals do not exist, and that those who believe themselves to be transsexuals suffer from a psychiatric disorder.

The survey, conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute also found that approximately three-quarters of Americans—from across the political and religious spectrum—believe that Congress should pass employment nondiscrimination laws to protect transgender people. A similar majority favor Congress's recent expansion of hate crimes legislation to protect transgender people. U. S. Catholic bishops have opposed laws that extend legal protections to lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

“This is a momentous finding reinforcing the fact that Catholics have clearly formed their consciences despite being fed nothing but inaccurate information by the bishops,” said Casey Lopata, co-founder of Fortunate Families, a member of Equally Blessed, a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for LGBT people in the church and in civil society. “The hierarchy's unwillingness to even moderate its views on human sexuality in the face of strong scientific evidence and volumes of personal testimony have cost it all credibility on issues of human sexuality.”

“The survey results give us reason to be glad,” said Frank DeBernardo, director of New Ways Ministry, another Equally Blessed member organization. “Over and over again we have seen lay Catholics ignore a hierarchy that urges them to acquiesce when friends and family members are marginalized by unjust laws. We may be a long way from the day when our bishops finally recognize the pain and suffering their insensitive and uninformed teachings have helped to inflict on transgender people, but until then we can take comfort that those teachings are almost universally ignored.”

*Equally Blessed is a coalition of faithful Catholics who support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people both in the church and in civil society. Equally Blessed includes four organizations that have spent a combined 112 years working on behalf of LGBT people and their families: Call to Action, DignityUSA, Fortunate Families, and New Ways Ministry.*