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END SILENCE ON VIOLENCE TOWARD LGBT YOUTH, SAYS EQUALLY BLESSED
Bishops meeting November 14-16 should speak, says coalition of faithful Catholics

October 31, 2011—Equally Blessed, a coalition of four Roman Catholic organizations that support full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families both in the church and in civil society, has released a sign-on statement asking the US Conference of Catholic Bishops to end its silence about violence directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth.

“Religious leaders from many faiths have been active in speaking out against bullying of LGBT youth for more than a year,” said Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, an Equally Blessed partner. “But our Catholic bishops have remained silent.”

“We call on the bishops, who meet in November, to put our church firmly on the side of LGBT youth who have been targeted. When any of us is harmed or tormented, the entire Body of Christ is wounded,” said DeBernardo.

“A statement by the bishops at their November meeting would provide clear direction to Andrew W. Lichtenwalner, the new executive director of the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth who begins work in January 2012,” said Mary Ellen Lopata, co-founder of Fortunate Families, an Equally Blessed partner and ministry for Catholic parents with LGBT children. “This transition provides the bishops and their staff with the opportunity to end the church’s complicity in the silence that has caused agony for so many families.”

The text of the Equally Blessed petition is below. Catholics can join the campaign by signing on at www.equally-blessed.org. The signed petition will be delivered to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops before its November meeting.

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.

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Catholics Call for an End to Bullying of LGBT Youth

By signing this petition, I pledge to raise my voice against bullying and to encourage others to do likewise. I call on the US Catholic bishops to join me in working for an end to bullying and violence against LGBT Youth.

News stories have highlighted the growing epidemic of violence perpetrated against transgender people, of suicides among lesbian/gay youth who are ostracized by their peers, and of the deadly impact that silence about these trends is having. As Catholics, we believe that each and every one of us is a beloved child of God, and that each of us reflects the Divine Image. We are one family, one body, each of us a part of the other.

It is in that spirit that we once again decry the continued bullying of children and youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), or who are perceived to be LGBT. When any of us is harmed or tormented, the entire Body of Christ is wounded. Therefore, we rededicate ourselves to the continued work of building a culture of love and support for all young people. We reject hurtful words that can be seen as justifying violence and bullying.

We call upon our Catholic bishops, who meet November 14-16, 2011 in Baltimore, to make an end to bullying and violence a priority. We urge them to end their silence about the tragedy of bullying endured by LGBT youth, and to put our Church firmly on the side of those who have been targeted.

Let our Church not be seen as complicit in the pain endured by thousands of young people, who suffer so much that many consider, attempt, or actually commit suicide. This is agony that no child, no family should ever endure again.