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Providence, R.I. — June 4, 2019

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Providence Bishop Thomas Tobin issued a statement June 2 saying he regretted comments that "turned out to be so controversial" on Twitter when he said Catholics should not support or "attend LGBTQ 'Pride Month' events" because "they promote a culture and encourage activities that are contrary to the Catholic faith and morals. They are especially harmful for children."

The backlash on Twitter – and elsewhere – was swift and focused on the harm children have suffered in the Catholic Church because of clergy sex abuse. Many others said his comments were offensive to gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and other communities. A rally by the LGBT community and supporters took place outside the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Providence after the comments.

"I regret that my comments yesterday about Pride Month have turned out to be so controversial in our community, and offensive to some, especially the gay community," the bishop said in the statement. "That certainly was not my intention, but I understand why a good number of individuals have taken offense. I also acknowledge and appreciate the widespread support I have received on this matter."

Some of Tobin's critics on social media asked about how he had safeguarded children when he was a Pittsburgh auxiliary, from 1992 to 1996, referring to the grand jury report issued last August on an investigation into abuse claims in that

diocese and five others covering a 70-year period starting in 1940. Tobin has said he was not mentioned in the grand jury report.

On Twitter, he received the support of Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas.

"Bishop Tobin is simply speaking for one truth of the deposit of faith. God made humans male & female," he tweeted. "Certainly those who are confused about their identity need Christ’s love & compassion, let’s remember Christ’s love is expressed when dies on the cross for the truth."

In his statement, Tobin said that "the Catholic Church has respect and love for members of the gay community, as do I. Individuals with same-sex attraction are beloved children of God and our brothers and sisters."

However, he said, that "as a Catholic bishop ... my obligation before God is to lead the faithful entrusted to my care and to teach the faith, clearly and compassionately, even on very difficult and sensitive issues. That is what I have always tried to do – on a variety of issues –and I will continue doing so as contemporary issues arise."

Ahead of the rally held outside the cathedral, he said: "I hope that the event will be a safe, positive and productive experience for all. As they gather I will be praying for a rebirth of mutual understanding and respect in our very diverse community."

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