Vatican



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leads the "Regina Coeli" prayer from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square May 8 at the Vatican. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis in a new interview on LGBT Catholics said God "does not disown any of his children" and that a church that is "selective" about its membership more resembles a "sect" than what the Gospel commands.

The pope's words were published on May 9 on a new website for LGBTQ Catholics and their families in response to questions sent by Jesuit Fr. James Martin, a prominent Catholic priest involved in gay ministry and a consultor to the Vatican's communications department.

"God is Father and he does not disown any of his children," wrote Francis in a letter to Martin. "And 'the style' of God is 'closeness, mercy and tenderness.' Along this path you will find God."

The pope's remarks came in response to the question "What would you say is the most important thing for LGBT people to know about God?"

Francis' letter, dated May 8, answered three questions posed to the pope by Martin.

When asked "What do you say to an LGBT Catholic who has experienced rejection from the church?" the pope replied that "I would have them recognize it not as 'the rejection of the church,' but instead of 'people in the church.' "

"The church is a mother and calls together all her children," he continued. "Take for example the parable of those invited to the feast: 'the just, the sinners, the rich and the poor, etc.' [Matthew 22:1-15; Luke 14:15-24]. A 'selective' church, one of 'pure blood,' is not Holy Mother Church, but rather a sect."

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The pope also said that he would recommend LGBT Catholics to read the Acts of the Apostles.

"There they will find the image of the living church," wrote the pope.

While the Catholic Catechism states that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" — and last year Francis approved a decree barring priests from blessing gay couples, which declared that God "cannot bless sin" — throughout his nearly decadelong papacy, Francis has repeatedly tried to extend a warmer welcome to LGBT persons.

During a speech earlier this year reflecting on the challenges of parenting, the pope went off script to tell parents not to condemn children with different sexual orientations.

"Never condemn your children," said Francis, who said that parents should accompany such children and "not hide behind an attitude of condemnation."