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Catholics leaders go purple for Spirit Day

Jamie Manson | Oct. 18, 2012 NCR Today

On Friday, millions of Americans will wear purple to celebrate Spirit Day [1] as a sign of support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and to speak out against bullying. Catholic leaders and organizations are joining in the effort.

Catholic groups, including Dignity USA [2], New Ways Ministry [3], Fortunate Families [4], the Los Angeles Archdiocese Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics [5] and the Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry [6], have asked their supporters and followers to wear purple on Friday and send Facebook posts and tweets to do so as well.

Spirit Day was started in 2010 as a response to the young people who had taken their own lives. Observed annually, individuals, schools, organizations, corporations, media professionals and celebrities wear purple, which symbolizes spirit on the rainbow flag.

Several significant Catholic voices have signed on to support the campaign. Two weeks ago, Jesuit Fr. James Martin made a few waves in the social media sphere when he tweeted, "New campaign to end bullying against LGBT youth seeks Catholic support."

And last week, Sr. Alice Zachmann signed onto Catholics for #SpiritDay. She is a well-respected voice throughout the American Roman Catholic Church, and also in Rome. Zachmann is also a recipient of the Catholic University of America's highest honor -- the James Cardinal Gibbons Award. In responding to why she's signing the statement, she wrote: "The issue is one of justice concerning young people who are being 'bullied' because of their sexual orientation."

The site continues to collect signatures. Those who sign on are asked to complete the sentence: "I Support #SpiritDay because ..." The rich range of answers shows that Catholics want to support LGBT youth and end bullying because of their faith, not despite it.

> "... I strongly believe in the inherent dignity of the human person."
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> "... because 'Where charity and love is, God is there.' (Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.)"
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> "... because it is the right thing to do and it IS what Jesus would do."
>
> "... bullying affects young people of all races, colors, ethnic or religious backgrounds. We need to stand up against all evils. "
>
> "... because my Catholic faith teaches me that I have a duty to speak out for justice and peace."

There is still time for Catholics and people of all faith to get involved. Participants are asked to simply go purple on Friday as we work to create a world in which LGBT teens are celebrated and accepted for who they are.

Learn more and go purple at glaad.org/spiritday [1].

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Links:
[1] http://www.glaad.org/spiritday
[2] http://www.dignityusa.org/
[3] http://newwaysministry.org/
[4] http://www.fortunatefamilies.org/
[5] http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/mlgc/Pages/default.aspx
[6] http://www.calgm.org/