

The Transformative Six's LGBT message at World Youth Day

Kate Childs Graham | Aug. 1, 2013 Young Voices
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"If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

Who am I to judge? Those five words rocked the world Monday because, well, they were spoken by the pope. By now, there have been countless reports and analyses on the statement. Many applauded the Holy Father while some were quick to downplay the significance. But none revealed the true source of the pope's tonal conversion: six brave souls from the Equally Blessed coalition.

I'm giving them the credit.

The Transformative Six -- Delfin Bautista, Lauren Carpenter, Ellen Euclide, Megan Graves, Jennifer Guterman and Sara Kelley -- traveled to Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day to be a prayerful witness for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in our church. As they put it, "We will ... proclaim the Good News that we are all created in God's image and to live the Gospel call to love all God's children and to treat them with dignity and respect."

So to Rio they went, armed with rainbow bracelets and rosaries, prayer cards and kites. They had hundreds of conversations with other pilgrims from across the world. Many -- if not most -- supported their message and equality and inclusion, and they engaged those with whom they disagreed in spirited dialogue. Then, they [blogged](#) [1], Facebooked and tweeted about their experience.

I asked them each to give me a highlight -- or the highlight -- of their trip in 160 characters or fewer. (Some exercised their freedom of conscience and went over the character limit.)

Graves: Our global bridge-building in Rio was built with love, hospitality and encouragement. The "mess" in the church is alive and well until all are welcome.

Euclide: In cheers, smiles and questions about supporting friends, curiosity was revealed and compassion everywhere. We've got a long way to go but worldwide support in the journey.

Carpenter: Meeting young people from all over the world who were grateful for our presence and who were excited to learn that LGBT church justice organizations actually exist.

Kelley: Hearing the youth cheer after Ellen asked an archbishop about LGBT people in the church, questioning the church's teaching and how it conflicts with reaching out to those in the margins.

Bautista: Going up to see the [Christ of Corcovado](#) [2] truly embodied our message of all being equally blessed. Arms wide open, pilgrims from around the world; we are church.

Guterman: Rio was a fitting setting for a church that's diverse and beautiful. I felt so proud to talk with pilgrims from around the world who are hungry for dialogue on equality.

Maybe the pope saw an Equally Blessed kite or received a sticker. Maybe he heard that a brave young woman asked a bishop about LGBT equality and the masses cheered. Maybe he noticed, like these pilgrims, the open arms of the Christ of Corcovado. No matter what it was that helped Pope Francis transform his tone and hopefully will help him transform our church, I'm giving all the credit to the Transformative Six.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.equally-blessed.com/blog>

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ_the_Redeemer_%28statue%29

[3] <http://www.twitter.com/kchildsgraham>