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Pope Francis speaks during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sept. 21. He met the same day with representatives from the Italian LGBT organization The Tent of Jonathan. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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Pope Francis on Sept. 21 met Italian LGBT Catholic advocates who say the pontiff encouraged their efforts to build a church "that excludes no one."

[According](#) to the daily newspaper L'Avvenire, which is published by the Italian bishops' conference, representatives from the LGBT organization The Tent of Jonathan met with Francis following his Wednesday general audience.

The organization, which was founded in 2018, [aims](#) to provide "sanctuaries of welcome and support for LGBT people and for every person affected by discrimination."

One participant, Fr. Gianluca Carrega, who heads the LGBT pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Turin, reportedly asked for the pope's permission to continue "building a hospitable church that excludes no one."

Other delegates gave the pope a collection of letters from parents of LGBT children who have faced "isolation and suspicion within the Christian community."

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Throughout this papacy, Francis has walked a tightrope of extending greater pastoral outreach to LGBT individuals and their families, while also upholding church teaching, which [states](#) that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered."

At an audience earlier this year, Francis went off script while delivering a reflection of parenthood to specifically tell parents not to condemn children who have different sexual orientations.

"Never condemn your children," [said Francis](#) on Jan. 26, adding that parents should accompany such children and "not hide behind an attitude of condemnation."

Last month, the pope also [met](#) — for the fourth time — a group of transgender people who are cared for by a Catholic parish on the outskirts of Rome.

As the pope met the latest group of LGBT Catholics on Sept. 21, they greeted the pontiff wearing T-shirts bearing a rainbow heart and a passage of scripture from 1 John 4:18: "In love, there is no fear."