

Gay man says Pope Francis told him ‘God made you like this’ and ‘it doesn’t matter’



A gay man who survived abuse from a Catholic priest in Chile said Pope Francis told him that his sexual orientation “doesn’t matter” to him and that “God made you like this.”

Juan Carlos Cruz, who met with the pope in late April, relayed details of their conversation to the Spanish newspaper *El Pais*.

“Juan Carlos, that you are gay doesn’t matter,” Cruz said Francis told him, according to Catholic news site Crux. “God made you like this and loves you like this and it doesn’t matter to me. The pope loves you like this. You have to be happy with who you are.”

Cruz said his sexuality came up in conversation because Chilean bishops had sought to use it to frame him as untrustworthy, a source of hurt he shared with the pope.

The Vatican, which does not comment on the pope's private comments as a policy, declined to confirm or deny the remarks to multiple news outlets.

The remarks recalled Francis' much-discussed comment on gay priests in 2013.

"If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" the pope told reporters at the time. "They shouldn't be marginalized. The tendency (to be homosexual) is not the problem."

Christopher Lamb, Vatican correspondent of London-based Catholic publication *The Tablet*, told *The Guardian* that the remarks now attributed to Francis go further, signaling a shift.

"It goes beyond 'who am I to judge?' to 'you are loved by God,'" Lamb told the newspaper. "I don't think he has changed church teaching but he's demonstrating an affirmation of gay Catholics, something that has been missing over the years in Rome."

Additionally, a transgender man met with Pope Francis in 2015, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*, with the pope telling him that "You are a son of God and the church loves you and accepts you as you are," per the Spanish newspaper *Hoy*.

The church's official teaching on homosexuality refers to it as "intrinsically disordered," the Associated Press noted, and any remarks to Cruz do not amount to a public pronouncement.

Cruz suffered abuse from notorious pedophile and priest Fernando Karadima, who was found guilty by the Vatican in 2011 of abusing dozens of minors over decades. All of Chile's active bishops offered to resign Friday in the wake of sexual abuse by the nation's clergy.

The pope apologized earlier this year after describing Chilean victims' claims about a particular bishop, Juan Barros, as baseless "slander."

Cruz said in *El Pais* that Francis called what clergy did to him "awful" and "a terrible evil," according to *Crux*.

"He told me, 'Help me so that the Holy Spirit guides me so that I know well what I have to do,'" Cruz said.

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