

LGBT JUBILEE

Gay Pride in St Peter's: that mess should have been avoided

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It was included in the Jubilee events calendar as a 'pilgrimage by the *La Tenda di Gionata association and other associations*', but behind this name, which may mean little to the reader, lies one of the most divisive issues in contemporary ecclesial debate. It was

immediately renamed the LGBT Jubilee by the press, however, and discussed in the media around the world for at least two weeks. Evidently, however, it must have slipped the notice of the extremely costly Dicastery for Communication, as there is still an impenetrable silence surrounding the event. This is despite the controversy over the images of around a thousand pilgrims entering St Peter's Basilica on 6 December.

The LGBT Jubilee event was always expected to be controversial. After its initial inclusion, it was removed from the official calendar, but then reinstated. Ultimately, what was widely predictable in the absence of monitoring occurred: instead of carrying the 2025 Jubilee cross designed by Riccardo Izzi and made available to all groups, the pilgrimage participants entered the Holy Door of the Basilica behind a rainbow cross. In a place of worship where the dress code of tens of thousands of daily visitors is carefully monitored, a male couple participating in the pilgrimage was photographed wearing a backpack bearing the slogan 'Fuck the rules'. These scenes ended up on social media and provoked indignation among many faithful people around the world, reigniting the controversy over the appropriateness of the event. In short, it was a predictable outcome that has damaged the image of Leo XIV's pontificate.

Sadly, all this could have been easily avoided if those responsible had exercised intelligence and prudence. The attentive Vaticanist Diane Montagna had even sounded the alarm in advance by writing to the director of the press office, Matteo Bruni, to warn him that rainbow material displayed on that occasion could 'dominate the news cycle rather than the canonisations'. As he often does when faced with requests from journalists, Bruni replied that he would look into the matter, but then disappeared. Even afterwards, when questioned by an American Vatican correspondent about the possibility of issuing a statement regarding the incident, he did not respond. Yesterday, *Daily Compass* also wrote to Bruni to ask what the Vatican's communications department intends to do in response to the uproar following the pilgrimage. At the time of writing, no response has been received. Ultimately, Montagna's concerns were proven correct, even if the news of the elevation to sainthood of Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati was not overshadowed, the events of 6 September in the Basilica continue to be the focus of public attention.

Beyond the intentions of the pilgrimage itself, the message conveyed by the way it was carried out is causing confusion and adding fuel to the fire. The procession of an investigative popular Italian TV show, *Le Iene*, and the enthusiastic articles in the popular daily *Repubblica*, have betrayed Prevost's hope that a lower-profile approach could be taken to the rainbow issue. Those who have known the Pope for a long time say that, in

private, he is accustomed to expressing his pastoral support for homosexuals who wish to follow the Lord; however, he does not condone the excesses witnessed in recent years by some prelates.

Regarding the so-called LGBT pilgrimage, it is clear that Leo XIV was informed and did not oppose it. However, except for the audience with Father James Martin, he was careful not to give any indication of support to those who would probably have hoped for gestures or words to set in motion the usual exploitation. This is demonstrated by the fact that the rainbow pilgrimage coincided with a Jubilee audience in St Peter's Square. Typically, such events that end up in the official Jubilee calendar are granted a "hand-kissing" meeting with a delegation of pilgrims. In this case, it does not appear that this took place; otherwise, it would have been difficult to keep it confidential. Furthermore, the Jubilee audience coincided with the pilgrimage Mass at the Church of Jesus, presided over by Monsignor Francesco Savino. The Bishop of Cassano All'Jonio revealed pompously that his presence had been authorised by Leone himself, and some media outlets celebrated this news as a sort of papal endorsement. While it is true that the vice-president of the CEI (of whom there are three) seems to have a very high opinion of himself, he is certainly not a prefect of the Curia.

In short, the 'political' signal that some wanted to attribute to the Pope's 'yes' to the rainbow pilgrimage did not exist. Those who do not think in terms of partisanship can discern the Pope's desire to downplay the hype surrounding the issue by his attitude: in the 'fan' reports, for example, reference was made to the transgender people of Torvajonica whom a nun (present last Saturday) brought to Francis almost weekly. However, if one had taken off their uniform, one would have noticed that, although these transgender people are assisted in a parish in the Diocese of Albano, they did not meet the Pope on 17 August at the Borgo Laudato Si' lunch, which was reserved for the least fortunate people helped by the Diocesan Caritas. Would they have been absent with Francis? Hardly. Leo tries to avoid a narrative that pulls him by the cassock towards positions that are more media-oriented than ecclesial.

The problem is that the old Vatican machine, accustomed to the 'cunning' silences of Bergoglio's administration, seems to have convinced itself that the Prevost pontificate changes but only in appearance while everything will remain as before. After the four-month probationary period that ended yesterday, we will see if Leo feels the need to refute these firmly established certainties and thus revolutionise the most strategic sectors of the Curia, in order to avoid once again being caught up in controversy and exploitation for faults that are not his own.