



April 22, 2015

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Your Holiness:

In "Always Our Children," a pastoral message to the parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children created by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family wrote to LGBT young people, "In you God's love is revealed. You are always our children." Unfortunately, the recent news that the Apostolic Nuncio will speak at the National Organization for Marriage's "March for Marriage" on April 25th jeopardizes the relationship between the Church and the LGBT community by backtracking on the inroads forged through "Always Our Children."

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò's role as Apostolic Nuncio – the Holy See's representative before the United States government – is critical to diplomatic relations between the United States and the Vatican. On an objective level, the Apostolic Nuncio's decision to speak at such a partisan event is divisive to say the least. Imagine if the United States ambassador to the Vatican took part in a rally in support of reproductive rights in St. Peter's Square. The role of an ambassador such as Archbishop Viganò or our own ambassador to the Vatican is to represent diplomatic interests, not further politicize differences.

Moreover, Archbishop Viganò's remarks will be made at an event held by an organization noted for a campaign of hate and intolerance against LGBT people and their families. The National Organization for Marriage has violated campaign ethics laws, championed divisive racial tactics, accused LGBT people of promoting child abuse, and promoted pundits who declare that the fight for marriage equality was "a satanic plot to destroy our seed." Under the banner of "protecting families," the National Organization for Marriage stands for rank bigotry.

In "Always Our Children," your bishops reminded us that "love is the greatest of spiritual gifts." In that spirit of love and respect, and in full knowledge of your deep respect for LGBT people and their families, we ask that you respectfully decline the National Organization for Marriage's invitation for Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò to speak at the March for Marriage. LGBT people and their families – Catholic or non-Catholic – are deserving of support and respect, particularly from those tasked with the highest of diplomatic responsibilities.

Very Respectfully

Chad Griffin
President
Human Rights Campaign