

Liturgical Observation Report: The Annual Diocesan "All Are Welcome" Mass

Date of Attendance: July 12, 2026

Location: St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Hillcrest (San Diego, CA)

Service Attended: 5:00 PM Sunday Mass

Introduction and Environmental Context

The “gayification” of the Roman Catholic Church continued apace when on the evening of Sunday, July 12, 2026, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church hosted its annual diocesan "All Are Welcome" Mass. Located in the heart of Hillcrest—San Diego’s historic LGBTQ+ neighborhood—the liturgy was timed to coincide with the launch of the city's local Pride Week festivities.

Upon entering the nave, the traditional sacred architecture of the church stood in vivid contrast to an extensive array of LGBTQ symbols. The interior was heavily festooned with rainbow and "Progress Pride" decorations. Brightly colored banners hung directly from the church’s marble columns, while a large flag bearing the words "Every One Is Welcome" draped over the choir loft's balcony. Toward the front, several rows of pews were specifically reserved for representatives of regional parish "LGBTQ ministries," each marked with affixed rainbow ribbons. In the sanctuary, the visual theme extended to large rainbow flower bouquets and ribbon adornments surrounding the altar space. Even the candles flanking the tabernacle were fitted with decorative collars matching the colors of the pride flag, and a single rainbow ribbon was tied to the parish poor box.

The Liturgical Progression

Introductory Rites

The liturgy began with a procession of local ministries. Representatives from several Catholic communities across the region marched down the center aisle carrying their respective parish LGBTQ ministry banners. These included St. John the Evangelist, St. Francis of Assisi (Vista), St. Thomas More (Oceanside), St. Brigid (Pacific Beach), St. Catherine Laboure (Clairemont Mesa), and Our Lady of Guadalupe, a Jesuit-staffed parish in Barrio Logan. A delegation from the neighboring Diocese of San Bernardino also participated.

Following the laity, a large contingent of deacons and priests processed to the gathering song, "All Are Welcome" by Jesse and Jenna Manibusan. Some clerics wore rainbow-patterned stoles over their liturgical vestments. Saint John the Evangelist pastor, Fr. Charles Moat, served as the main celebrant. He was joined at the altar by concelebrants Fr. Brad Mills, S.J., Fr. Peter Navarra (St. Joseph Cathedral), Fr. Brian Hayes (St. Catherine Laboure), Fr. Mike White (University of San Diego), and Fr. Larry Johnson, alongside Deacons Robert Booth, Jim Keeley, and Chris Hulburt.

Before beginning Mass, Father Moat announced that a message from San Diego Bishop Michael Pham would be read to the congregation. The message began, "Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may the peace and grace of our Lord be with you. While I cannot be with you today, I wish to send you all an open invitation to encounter Christ and participate in the life of the Church." Bishop Pham went on to say that every Catholic is called to conversion, prayer, and discipleship. Emphasizing that the Church has historically welcomed individuals from every background, he expressed his hope that the "All Are Welcome" Mass reflects that mission, and that "we continue to engage one another with mutual respect."

Liturgy of the Word

While the structural layout of the readings mirrored the universal Catholic calendar, the liturgy incorporated a specific scriptural substitution. The universally slated responsorial psalm for the day (Psalm 65) was replaced with Psalm 139, with the congregation singing the refrain, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

The Gospel reading followed the prescribed text from Matthew 13, recounting Christ's parable of the Sower and the Seed. Jesuit Father Brad Mills, director of the Puentes LGBTQ ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe, delivered the homily. Describing the invitation to preach as one of the greatest privileges of his priesthood, Fr. Mills framed God's grace as a seed scattered boundlessly by a sower who is "not stingy in how grace and love is shared."

Fr. Mills directly applied the imagery of the soil to the LGBTQ community and their families, addressing those who feel marginalized or unworthy within the Church. He proposed that unique aspects of the LGBTQ experience inherently enrich the "soil of the heart," specifically highlighting the acts of "learning to be authentic" and "naming one's authentic story." Reflecting on the pain of exclusion, he noted that experiencing rejection but moving through it with love ultimately expands a person's "heart capacity," drawing a parallel to the rejection experienced by Jesus. Concluding his message, he invited the congregation to contemplate how their personal journeys had cultivated their faith. Notably, the 10-minute address focused exclusively on identity and grace, omitting any traditional calls to repentance, conversion, or chastity.

Following the Nicene Creed, the universal prayers of petition were read aloud in English, Spanish, and Tagalog. The intentions explicitly prayed for the LGBT community, transgender

individuals, parents of LGBTQ children, refugees, the homeless, the marginalized, and those struggling with mental illness or addiction.

Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites

As the Mass transitioned into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the musical program remained contemporary. During the distribution of Holy Communion, the music ministry performed "Who You Say I Am" by Hillsong Worship. No traditional Catholic hymns or Latin chants were utilized at any point during the service except for the Agnus Dei.

Before the final dismissal, Fr. Moat invited the entire assembly to a post-Mass fellowship reception. Gathering the concelebrating clergy around the altar, he delivered a specialized blessing, praying for a Church that responds to the Spirit's call to love all, and asking for the healing of wounds, protection from harm, and the continued growth of LGBTQ ministries. Following the blessing, a guest speaker took the microphone to formally invite all pew-sitters to march as a group in the upcoming San Diego Pride Parade on Saturday, July 18. The clergy and ministries then processed out of the church to the contemporary Christian song "Marvelous Light" by Charlie Hall.

Analytical Summary and Theological Context

This distinct pastoral focus on visible affirmation highlights an ongoing tension with universal Catholic doctrine as outlined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. While the homily and structural elements of the "All Are Welcome" Mass treated the LGBTQ experience as an intrinsic, God-given identity, official Church teaching in paragraph 2357 maintains that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" and contrary to natural law. Furthermore, paragraph 2359 explicitly states that homosexual persons are called to a life of chastity.

This divergence marks a significant shift in methodology. Whereas Courage International—the only pontifically approved apostolate for individuals experiencing same-sex attraction—focuses fundamentally on the spiritual goal of chastity, localized parish ministries such as those represented at St. John the Evangelist center their outreach on community integration, identity validation, and affirmation—a pastoral direction that continues to spark public witness and polarization both inside and outside the parish walls.