

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### WHITE ROCK PRIDE SOCIETY, STAR OF THE SEA PARISH, AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF VANCOUVER REACH HISTORIC RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINT BEFORE THE B.C. HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

White Rock, BC., June 14, 2022 – The White Rock Pride Society (“**White Rock Pride**”), the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver (the “**Archdiocese**”) and the Star of the Sea Parish (the “**Parish**”) have reached an agreement to resolve the human rights complaint initiated by White Rock Pride in 2019.

In June 2019, White Rock Pride filed a complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal alleging discrimination by the Parish/Archdiocese on the basis of sexual orientation, contrary to s. 8 of the Human Rights Code, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210. The Parish had declined White Rock Pride’s application to rent its hall in White Rock, B.C., for White Rock Pride’s 2019 annual Pride fundraising gala, “Love is Love”.

Over the course of the past several months, the parties agreed to meet to discuss each other’s perspectives, beliefs and experiences in an open-minded and respectful manner. These discussions were aimed at repairing the relationship between White Rock Pride and the Parish, together with fostering mutual understanding and respect for each other’s perspectives and beliefs, and the right to hold these beliefs. At the heart of this shared dialogue was an emphasis on the respect for the dignity of all people.

In reaching this resolution with White Rock Pride, the Parish and Archdiocese have jointly issued a Statement of Commitment and Apology to White Rock Pride and the LGBTQ2+ community (copy attached), acknowledging and apologizing for those instances where their actions have caused members of the LGBTQ2+ to feel unwelcome and excluded. Going forward, the Parish and Archdiocese have committed to implementing guidelines to improve their interactions with the LGBTQ2+ community and to provide greater clarity on the management of rental requests by non-Catholic groups. In addition, White Rock Pride and the Archdiocese have committed to engaging in further consultation with each other and other members of the LGBTQ2+ community and Catholic community in order to share their perspectives, and identify opportunities for further growth and collaboration, in a manner consistent with Catholic teachings and the beliefs of White Rock Pride.

“We formed the White Rock Pride Society to build understanding, support and inclusiveness in the community for people who identify as LGBTQ2+ and other at-risk groups. This is a huge step forward in creating an inclusive and diverse society”, said Ernie Klassen, President of the White Rock Pride. “We are extremely appreciative of the Parish and Archdiocese's willingness to listen, change and work constructively towards identifying further opportunities for support, inclusion and dialogue within the Catholic Church. In the true spirit of reconciliation, the two groups have reached an agreement far better than what a ruling from the Human Rights Tribunal could have achieved.”

“In recent years, the Church has grown in its understanding and pastoral approach to members of the LGBTQ2+ community, through an emphasis on loving all people and treating them with dignity and respect. Archbishop Michael Miller echoes recent Popes as he calls for local Catholics to make room in their parishes and their hearts for members of the LGBTQ2+ community”, said Archbishop’s Delegate, James Borkowski. “This resolution is an important step forward in our relationship with our local LGBTQ2+ communities. We look forward to engaging in further dialogue to share in our perspectives, beliefs and ideas, and to identify opportunities to grow together in a manner guided by our faith.”

Media Contacts:

Ernie Klassen  
President of the White Rock Pride Society  
Telephone: 604-531-8188 and 604-240-0139

For all media inquires to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver  
Please email: [media@rcav.org](mailto:media@rcav.org)



Ernie Klassen, president of the White Rock Pride Society (left) and James Borkowski Delegate for Operations of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver (right)

## **Joint Statement of Commitment and Apology to the White Rock Pride Society and Members of the LGBTQ2+ Community, Issued on Behalf of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver and Star of the Sea Parish**

*This statement is issued jointly by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver (the "Archdiocese") and Star of the Sea Parish (the "Parish"). The Parish is a local parish of the Archdiocese located in the South Surrey-White Rock neighbourhood.*

The Catholic Church's mission is to introduce people to God and help them to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. This call is to be lived out in faith, hope and love. Scripture tells us that the greatest of these is love, and Saint Thomas Aquinas defined love as "willing the good of another." People in the LGBTQ2+ community have been deeply hurt all too often by coldness, rejection, judgement, exclusion, and lack of loving support from members of the Catholic Church. For whenever this hurt has occurred, we sincerely apologize.

Homophobic and transphobic approaches to dialogue are hurtful and are often rooted in fear. Fear is opposed to love. We are sorry for those times when individuals in Catholic institutions acted out of fear, not out of love. We are sorry, too, whenever such actions of individuals led to people feeling rejected or isolated. Members of the LGBTQ2+ community have expressed feelings of anxiety, depression, hurt, rejection and even suicide because of this sense of rejection and isolation. This should never happen.

When Catholic teachings on moral issues arise that others may not accept, we commit to answering questions with patience, honesty and gentleness, free of arrogance or prejudice. When our communities interact, there is never any excuse for disrespectful encounters, poor listening, or lack of sensitivity to one another. We acknowledge that, in the past, not all interactions between members and representatives of the Catholic Church and the LGBTQ2+ community have been guided by the principles of respect, sensitivity and love. We apologize for this and are sincerely committed to improving our interactions going forward.

We desire to welcome everyone into dialogue as a child of God, for every person is equal in dignity and worth. We want to ensure that every time we engage with a member of the LGBTQ2+ community we will approach them, as Pope Francis says, "with closeness, compassion and tenderness." Our humanity unites us; and every person, regardless of their sexual orientation, deserves respect.

With these objectives at the forefront, the Archdiocese of Vancouver and Star of the Sea Parish make this joint Statement of Commitment and Apology to the White Rock Pride Society, acknowledging that we have not always lived up to our own ideals in our interactions with the LGBTQ2+ community. We acknowledge that these actions have resulted in increased divisiveness between our faith community and the LGBTQ2+ community, as well as with the individuals, including friends and family members, who support them. We further recognize that members of the LGBTQ2+ community have too often experienced rejection and judgment, and that we must therefore take positive

and affirmative steps to avoid perpetuating these harms through our attitudes and interactions.

The Archdiocese and Star of the Sea Parish are committed to better welcoming the White Rock Pride Society, and the broader LGBTQ2+ community, in our hearts and actions. As a starting point, the Archdiocese and the Parish will be engaging in further efforts to improve and foster their relationships with members of the LGBTQ2+ community, both in the South Surrey-White Rock community and more broadly, developing guidelines for parishes, as well as consulting with the White Rock Pride Society and others to identify additional initiatives and opportunities for support, inclusion and dialogue, consistent with Catholic teachings.

The White Rock Pride Society, the Archdiocese and the Star of the Sea Parish have also expressed a joint commitment towards repairing and building this relationship into one of ongoing constructive dialogue, informed by mutual respect, honesty, sincerity, forthrightness, and the desire to work towards the shared goal of a local community that is welcoming to all persons in our diverse community.

Together with the White Rock Pride Society, we hope that fruitful dialogue will continue, focusing on our shared humanity and shared desire for fostering truth, beauty, and goodness in our world. We look forward to working together to loving one another sincerely as family.