

Why the Pope Met With a Gay Couple During US Visit

During his whirlwind U.S. tour, including time in the nation's capitol, Vatican officials say Pope Francis only granted one "real" audience, and that was with former student Yayo Grassi, who is openly gay.

This announcement comes on the heels of Liberty Counsel sharing Francis met with their client, Kentucky clerk Kim Davis, as well. Davis gained fame earlier this summer when she refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

"The two encounters—one with an openly gay couple and one with a government official who ardently opposes homosexuality—have left the Vatican scrambling to issue statements that seek to de-politicize the Pope's meetings and agenda," CNN reports.

Indeed, the Vatican has released information regarding both situations.

Davis' attorney, Liberty Counsel's Mat Staver, says Francis told Davis to, "Stay strong." His words and actions support the universal human right to conscientious objection."

Meanwhile, the Holy See says, "The only real audience granted by the Pope at the Nunciature was with one of his former students and his family."

Grassi says he is the student, and he brought his partner of 19 years to meet with Francis.

The New York Times reports Grassi and the pontiff have known each other since the 1960s, when Jorge Mario Bergoglio taught Grassi literature and psychology at the Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepción, a Jesuit high school in Santa Fe, Argentina.

“As noted in the past, the Pope, as pastor, has maintained many personal relationships with people in a spirit of kindness, welcome and dialogue,” Vatican spokesperson Federico Lombardi says.

The Vatican reportedly reached out to both Davis and Grassi, who seemingly abide on opposite ends of the LGBT marriage rights’ spectrum.

Despite Francis’ friendship with Grassi, he reiterated the Catholic church does not support gay marriage.

“This is God’s dream for his beloved creation: to see it fulfilled in the loving union between a man and a woman, rejoicing in their shared journey, fruitful in their mutual gift of self,” the pope said upon his return to the Vatican.