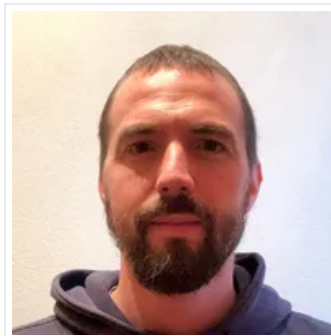


Pastoral Accompaniment and LGBT+ Catholics: 'Seeking the Truth Together'

August 13, 2026 / 1 Comment / in Parish Life & Pastoral Care, Theology & Church Teaching
/ by Elisa Belotti

Italian priest and theologian

Luca Lunardon recently published the book *Incontri che trasformano. Teologia dell'accompagnamento e pratiche di vita*



Luca Lunardon

[https://www.marcianumpress.it/sites/default/files/www.gionata.org_0 (Encounters That Transform: Theology of Accompaniment and Practices of Life) which explores pastoral accompaniment as a shared journey, particularly in situations where Church teaching and people's lived experiences are in tension, including the experiences of LGBT+ people.

Father Lunardon is a priest of the Diocese of Vicenza, and professor of Bioethics and Relationships at the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose, Vicenza, Italy. He received his doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

Bondings 2.0's Elisa Belotti interviewed Lunardon about his approach to accompaniment, dialogue, and pastoral care.

EB: The book opens by saying that anyone who considers doctrine an immutable truth and pastoral ministry simply a practical application of doctrine should read the following pages. You suggest that thinking of pastoral accompaniment is a much more complex process. Could you tell us more about this?

LL: Etymologically, to accompany someone means "to eat bread together." More concretely, I would say it means walking a stretch of the road together, as the book cover illustrates. I am not referring only to spiritual accompaniment, or to accompaniment between two people, but to every experience in which several people share a journey, perhaps as a group.

Accompanying someone does not mean giving them a piece of bread or sharing knowledge that we possess in its entirety. Rather, it means recognizing that truth lies before us and that we must seek it together. This requires us to listen to one

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ourselves, and not to see the discomfort of not always having ready answers as a problem.

I believe that only this way can liberating forms of accompaniment emerge, forms that do not create dependency or suffocate people. Even more so within the Catholic faith, we should live this way knowing that we are guided by the Holy

Spirit, and that the Lord is the first to walk among us, listen to us, and speak to us.

His way of teaching “as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:29) should illuminate those entrusted with positions of responsibility. Jesus, in fact, was not satisfied with the literalism of the law, nor was he obsessed with defending his own power or position. He lived out his ministry accompanied by disciples, healing and learning through his encounters. His sole concern was that every person might encounter the love of God and allow themselves to be transformed by its abundance.

EB: In the book, you focus mainly on three areas: unmarried heterosexual couples who live together, LGBT+ people, and couples who turn to assisted reproductive technology. In these areas, pastoral ministry and doctrine still lack sufficiently solid knowledge and reference points, partly because there has not been enough genuinely open engagement with the experiences of the people involved, nor with the insights from the human sciences. What tools and which interlocutors, then, should those who accompany people have?

LL: Those who accompany people should genuinely listen to them, to their experiences, their fears, and their deepest desires, which cannot always be put into words. Beyond this kind of listening, which has often been lacking, we also need to listen to other fields of knowledge, recognizing that they are not neutral, but that they have expertise that we do not possess.

Too often, we have sought confirmation from them, assuming that we already knew everything or claiming the right to have the final word. Even today, for example, a significant part of the Church considers what the sciences tell us about LGBT+ people or gender studies to be ideological, thereby missing out on the contribution they could make.

I believe that placing the human person and their authentic flourishing at the center is also the perspective of our Creator. In this way, we can engage in dialogue with the sciences, confronting not only the data they provide, but also their questions, methods, and approaches.

In the past, theology was not afraid to engage with other fields of knowledge and with differing positions. This was precisely one of the main characteristics of Thomas Aquinas's

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applies to our relationship with the sciences, but also to our relationships with one another.

EB: Coming specifically to LGBTQ+ people, what attitudes, practices, and tools can make pastoral accompaniment genuinely capable of listening to and supporting people, rather than simply applying pre-established categories or answers?

LL: The attitudes, practices, and tools proposed in the book are in line with the recent document by the Synod's study group 9: "Theological criteria and synodal methodologies for shared discernment of emerging doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues [<https://www.newwaysministry.org/category/study-group-9-synod-on-synodality/>] ." In particular, they reflect a conception of pastoral ministry not in an organizational or functional sense ("I already know what I need to say, and I look for the best way to say it"), but as the creation of environments where people can learn from one another.

In pastoral ministry with LGBT+ people in Italy, I see many examples of this: reading the Bible in order to understand one's own life in the light of the Word of God; building networks among people involved in pastoral ministry; the journey of LGBT+ Catholic groups; mutual and ongoing formation; and the pilgrimages organized every summer [<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2025/09/23/walking-with-pride-and-faith-lgbtq-pilgrims-on-the-via-francigena/>] by the Progetto Cristiani LGBT+ (LGBT+ Christian Project).

All of this makes it possible to walk together even where the Church's norms and moral teaching are not yet suited to today's reality. Not for the sake of novelty itself, nor to follow trends, but to remain faithful to the Gospel, which must be capable of being experienced in every situation of life.

Throughout the centuries, the Church has repeatedly shaped Tradition by adaptation that happens through its encounter with new cultures and situations. It has changed the language used to express the truths of faith, the way the sacraments are celebrated, and even some moral positions. This is a process the Church has already undergone in the past, and one that we can learn from again today.

—Elisa Belotti, *New Ways Ministry*, August 13, 2026

Tags: Catholic, Encounters That Transform: Theology of Accompaniment and Practices of Life, Incontri che trasformano. Teologia dell'accompagnamento e pratiche di vita, Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose, LGBTQ, Luca Lunardon, Vicenza

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Paul Baker, SJ

August 13, 2026 at 7:45 am

A great interview that honours the lived experiences of others. I found the interview engaging and very informative. I can see more clearly now. Thanks.