

## **Church's teaching on Transgenderism**

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

2333 Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

2334 "In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity."

### **Congregation for Catholic Education - *Male and female He created them* - Towards a path of dialogue on the question of gender theory in education, 2019**

9. These schools of thought were united in denying the existence of any original given element in the individual, which would precede and at the same time constitute our personal identity, forming the necessary basis of everything we do. According to such theories, the only thing that matters in personal relationships is the affection between the individuals involved, irrespective of sexual difference or procreation which would be seen as irrelevant in the formation of families. Thus, the institutional model of the family (where a structure and finality exist independent of the subjective preferences of the spouses) is bypassed, in favour of a vision of family that is purely contractual and voluntary.

11. In this cultural context, it is clear that sex and gender are no longer synonyms or interchangeable concepts, since they are used to describe two different realities. Sex is seen as defining which of the two biological categories (deriving from the original feminine-masculine dyad) one belonged to. Gender, on the other hand, would be the way in which the differences between the sexes are lived in each culture. The problem here does not lie in the distinction between the two terms, which can be interpreted correctly, but in the separation of sex from gender. This separation is at the root of the distinctions proposed between various "sexual orientations" which are no longer defined by the sexual difference between male and female, and can then assume other forms, determined solely by the individual, who is seen as radically autonomous. Further, the concept of gender is seen as dependent upon the subjective mindset of each person, who can choose a gender not corresponding to his or her biological sex, and therefore with the way others see that person (transgenderism).

19. Gender theory (especially in its most radical forms) speaks of a gradual process of denaturalisation, that is a move away from nature and towards an absolute option for the decision of the feelings of the human subject. In this understanding of things, the view of both sexuality identity and the family become subject to the same 'liquidity' and 'fluidity' that characterise other aspects of post-modern culture, often founded on nothing more than a confused concept of freedom in the realm of feelings and wants, or momentary desires provoked by emotional impulses and the will of the individual, as opposed to anything based on the truths of existence.

20. The underlying presuppositions of these theories can be traced back to a dualistic anthropology, separating body (reduced to the status of inert matter) from human will, which itself becomes an absolute that can manipulate the body as it pleases. This combination of physicalism and voluntarism gives rise to relativism, in which everything that exists is of equal value and at the same time undifferentiated, without any real order or purpose. In all such theories, from the most moderate to the most radical, there is agreement that one's gender ends up being viewed as more important than being of male or female sex. The effect of this move is chiefly to create a cultural and ideological revolution driven by relativism, and secondarily a juridical revolution, since such beliefs claim specific rights for the individual and across society.

31. Christian anthropology has its roots in the narrative of human origins that appears in the Book of Genesis, where we read that "God created man in his own image [...] male and female he created them." (Gen. 1,27) These words capture not only the essence of the story of creation but also that of the life-giving relationship between men and women, which brings them into intimate union with God. The self is completed by the one who is other than the self, according to the specific identity of each person, and both have a point of encounter forming a dynamic of reciprocity which is derived from and sustained by the Creator.

## **DDF - Dignitas infinita - 2024**

### Gender Theory

55. The Church wishes, first of all, "to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence." For this reason, it should be denounced as contrary to human dignity the fact that, in some places, not a few people are imprisoned, tortured, and even deprived of the good of life solely because of their sexual orientation.

56. At the same time, the Church highlights the definite critical issues present in gender theory. On this point, Pope Francis has reminded us that "the path to peace calls for respect for human rights, in accordance with the simple yet clear formulation contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose seventy-fifth anniversary we recently celebrated. These principles are self-evident and commonly accepted. Regrettably, in recent decades, attempts have been made to introduce new rights that are neither fully consistent

with those originally defined nor always acceptable. They have led to instances of ideological colonisation, in which gender theory plays a central role; the latter is extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal.”

57. Regarding gender theory, whose scientific coherence is the subject of considerable debate among experts, the Church recalls that human life in all its dimensions, both physical and spiritual, is a gift from God. This gift is to be accepted with gratitude and placed at the service of the good. Desiring a personal self-determination, as gender theory prescribes, apart from this fundamental truth that human life is a gift, amounts to a concession to the age-old temptation to make oneself God, entering into competition with the true God of love revealed to us in the Gospel.

58. Another prominent aspect of gender theory is that it intends to deny the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference. This foundational difference is not only the greatest imaginable difference but is also the most beautiful and most powerful of them. In the male-female couple, this difference achieves the most marvelous of reciprocities. It thus becomes the source of that miracle that never ceases to surprise us: the arrival of new human beings in the world.

59. In this sense, respect for both one’s own body and that of others is crucial in light of the proliferation of claims to new rights advanced by gender theory. This ideology “envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.” It thus becomes unacceptable that “some ideologies of this sort, which seek to respond to what are at times understandable aspirations, manage to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised. It needs to be emphasised that ‘biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.’” Therefore, all attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman are to be rejected: “We cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God’s work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and experiences, and where biological elements exist which are impossible to ignore.” Only by acknowledging and accepting this difference in reciprocity can each person fully discover themselves, their dignity, and their identity.

## Sex Change

60. The dignity of the body cannot be considered inferior to that of the person as such. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expressly invites us to recognise that “the human body shares in the dignity of ‘the image of God.’” Such a truth deserves to be remembered, especially when it comes to sex change, for humans are inseparably composed of both body and soul. In this, the body serves as the living context in which the interiority of the soul unfolds and manifests itself, as it does also through the network of human relationships. Constituting the person’s being, the soul and the body both participate in the dignity that characterises every human. Moreover, the body participates in that dignity as it is endowed with personal meanings, particularly in its sexed condition. It is in the body that each person recognises himself or herself as generated by others, and it is through their bodies that men and women can establish a loving relationship capable of generating other persons. Teaching about the need to respect the natural order of the human person, Pope Francis affirmed that “creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.” It follows that any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception. This is not to exclude the possibility that a person with genital abnormalities that are already evident at

birth or that develop later may choose to receive the assistance of healthcare professionals to resolve these abnormalities. However, in this case, such a medical procedure would not constitute a sex change in the sense intended here.

## **CBCEW- Intricately woven by the Lord, 2024**

In our time, many conflicting, divergent and often contradictory views of the human person have found wide acceptance and can easily dominate discourse. They have led to holders of traditional theories being cancelled or even losing their jobs. A new language has evolved to describe these diverse ideas, with words and phrases appearing in public discourse such as: 'trans', 'transgender', 'gender identity theory', 'being born in the wrong body', 'gender fluidity' or 'gender being different from sex assigned at birth'.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)*, Pope Francis warns against views that deny 'the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual difference, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to education programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes a choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.'

In line with the teaching of Pope Francis and the previous Pontiffs, most recently solidified in the Declaration "Dignitas Infinita" released by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, we see the importance of holding together the pastoral care of those experiencing gender dysphoria or identifying as transgender and the need to proclaim the truth of the human person. In fidelity to the example and teaching of Christ, the Church seeks always to walk respectfully, sensitively and compassionately alongside people in all the complexities of life, including people's struggles with gender identity. We urge all Catholics to behave towards others in precisely these ways.

The realisation of this vision of the human person is marred and impeded by the reality of the Fall and original sin. This leaves our human nature wounded. Rather than living in the harmony intended by God the Creator, we can and do experience disharmony within ourselves, in our relationships with others and with creation. This can include varying degrees of alienation, or disharmony, with our body, soul and mind. As a result of this woundedness, we are often confused and confounded by conflicting desires.

The Good News is that Christ came to restore the original harmony intended for us. In the depths of struggle and suffering, there is the light of hope, given by redemption in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God is reconciling us to himself, and it is Jesus, 'the image of God, who enlightens fully and brings to completion the image and likeness of God' in the human person.

Those who experience discomfort around issues relating to sex and gender, are reassured that such confusion, although deeply painful, is an expression of our shared humanity. We all experience dissonance and dilemmas. As St Paul said, we groan with the rest of creation and long to be free, 'as we await eagerly our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies' (Rom 8.23). Wholeness is only ultimately restored in each of us by finding the fullness of life in Christ. We cannot rely on human means alone to resolve internal tensions. To do so will only sow further doubt and distress.

It is also important to note that the whole of the human person is seen as being created in the image of God. A person cannot be reduced to one element of his or her being, such as his or her body or sex/gender. To do so would be to distort this image. We are invited to 'see each person holistically rather than seeking to define them by just one aspect of their identity.' Our bodies are animated by a spiritual soul, and it is our whole person - body, mind and soul - that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit. '

This is why Pope Francis stresses that 'the acceptance of our body as a gift from God is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father...learning to accept your body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning. 'Since the body shares in the dignity of the image of God and it was created by God, we must not despise bodily life. Rather we are obliged to regard our body as good. We are to honour our body? resisting medical interventions, intended to "reassign" gender where these destroy the body's fertility or sexual function. Views that promote a misleading view of the human body are deeply concerning as they foster such a limited and flawed view of the human person as to serve the detriment of the good of the individual. Whilst recognising with great love and compassion the difficulties individuals may experience with regards to gender variance, it is clear that all and especially 'the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created.'

There is both a fundamental equality, and a distinctiveness, in being created man or woman. This is good and willed by God! We are therefore invited to 'acknowledge and accept' our sexual identity as woman or man. As Pope Francis highlights, 'it is not a healthy attitude which would seek to cancel out sexual differences because it no longer knows how to confront it' Therefore, when we consider human sexuality and affectivity, we must learn how to value our own body in its femininity or masculinity. This is necessary if we are going to be able to recognise ourselves in 'an encounter with someone who is different', and if we are to 'joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator and find mutual enrichment.

With regard to the matter of biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (or some might say gender), we are keen to emphasise that while these can be distinguished, they cannot be separated. We recognise that how we live out our roles as male or female 'is not simply the result of biological or genetic factors, but of multiple elements having to do with temperament, family history, culture, experience, education, the influence of friends, family members and respected persons as well as other formative situations. We also recognise that roles attributed to the sexes may vary according to time and space. Therefore, 'rigid cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are... unfortunate and undesirable because they can create unreasonable pressure on children to present or behave in particular ways.' However, it is clear that the sexual identity of the person as man or woman is not purely a cultural or social construction and that it belongs to the specific manner in which the image of God exists. As Pope Francis highlights, 'we cannot separate the masculine and feminine from God's work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and where biological elements exist which are impossible to ignore.

Flowing from this, our pastoral accompaniment should view the other as "sacred ground", viewing every person as they are at this moment. The heart of accompaniment, then, requires a reverence towards each person's situation before God and towards each person's life of grace as 'mysteries which no one can fully know from without'. This, states Pope Francis, means we refrain from 'making judgements about their responsibility and culpability'.

Thus it is that we speak to those adult members in our Catholic communities who have chosen to transition socially and medically: "You are still our brothers and sisters. We cannot be indifferent to your struggle and the path you may have chosen. The doors of the Church are open to you, and you should find, from all members of the Church, a welcome that is compassionate, sensitive and respectful.'

Those who offer particular pastoral accompaniment to gender dysphoric persons need a clear understanding of the Catholic vision and understanding of the human person and a holistic view of human sexuality. They need to be skilled in discernment and, through establishing safe and trusting relationships with those people and families experiencing gender dysphoria, their work should help young people 'to discern how God is calling them to find true happiness'. This formation and competence is vital to ensure that the testimonies and lived experiences of those struggling with gender identity can be properly understood and responded to in a way which honours their perception of reality, particularly when painful. At the same time, we are encouraged by Pope Francis to accompany others to a complete appropriation of the mystery of our human nature.

For all these reasons, we cannot encourage or give support to reconstructive or drug based medical intervention that harms the body. Nor can we legitimise or uphold a way of living that is not respectful of the truth and vocation of each man and each woman, called to live according to the divine plan.

Rather, when a family or person experiencing these challenges seeks to be accompanied on their Christian journey, our aim is to help them rediscover and cherish their humanity as it was conceived and created by God, body and soul. <sup>53</sup> We know that this must be done with gentleness, respect, patience, and love. As Christ consistently demonstrated in his teaching ministry, and taking him as the only sure model of authentic pastoral accompaniment, we must first listen to and understand the situations of all those we meet, and then slowly and patiently invite them, as he did, to embrace a wider horizon, the horizon of God's love for each person.

This pastoral accompaniment also requires care in the choice of language used. Our choice of words is always to be assessed in the complex situation of social interaction. Sensitivity and a desire to show respect are important. We should never seek to cause offence to another, including in situations where the other person advocates a view of reality that is different from or departs from the Church's vision of the human person. Yet care should be taken to resist the temptation to adopt the language of gender ideology in our institutions. In the heat and confusion surrounding the 'gender issue', the Church is called to proclaim an authentic understanding of the human person with clarity, simplicity, love and respect.

With regard to children and young people, across society and within the Church, there are some who experience gender incongruence/dysphoria. From a pastoral perspective, accompaniment must have at its heart an acceptance and celebration of the body as created, respect for parents as primary educators, and should uphold best practice in terms of safeguarding principles. Medical intervention for children should not be supported. It should also be recognised that social 'transition' (living in the opposite gender role) can have a formative impact on a child's development and can set a child on a path towards later medical interventions. Care should be taken to avoid this especially with young children.

What we are able to affirm in each and every pastoral situation is the truth that the individual person, no matter how distressed and disturbed in their own sense of self and reality, is

known and loved by God in all their complexity, including confusion about their gender identity.