

Regarding sexuality and sexual identity, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* ("CCC"), 2360-2363). By its very nature, sexuality is ordered to conjugal love of a man and woman within the bond of marriage (c. 1055). And marriage, which is a partnership of the whole of life, is always ordered by its very nature to both the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (*Ibid.*). All persons are called to chastity, to be lived out according to one's state in life (CCC, #2337-2359).

As Pope Francis notes, the sacred dignity of each individual person must always be respected, but that does not mean the Church must accept the confused notion of gender ideology. We must not demean or deny the sincerity and struggle of those who experience same-sex attraction or who feel their true gender identity is different from their biological sex. Rather, we seek to accompany them on their journey of life, offering them the light of the Gospel as they try to find their way forward. These truths are not merely faith-based; rather, such realities are also knowable through the use of properly functioning senses and right reason (Pope St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, #22). We do not serve anyone's greater good by falsifying the truth, for it is only the truth that frees us for the full life that God offers to each of us. Thus, when a person experiences same-sex attraction or some form of gender dysphoria, such struggles do not change the biological fact of how God created that person, and it would be untruthful for the Catholic Church or our Catholic schools to pretend otherwise. The policies of our Catholic schools, therefore, must reflect these fundamental truths.

Schools shall consider the gender of all students as being consistent with their biological sex, including, but not limited to, the following: participation in school athletics; school-sponsored dances; dress and uniform policies; the use of changing facilities, showers, locker rooms, and bathrooms; titles, names, and pronouns; and official school documents. If a student's expression or gender, sexual identity, or sexuality should cause confusion or disruption at the school, or if it should mislead others, cause scandal, or have the potential for causing scandal, then the matter will first be discussed with the student and his/her parents. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the school, whose primary goal must always be to uphold Catholic truths and principles, then the matter shall be treated as any other serious discipline issue, and the student may be afforded a hearing to determine appropriate consequences.

All students are expected to conduct themselves at school in a manner consistent with their biological sex. Students may not advocate, celebrate, or express same-sex attraction in such a way as to cause confusion or distraction in the context of Catholic school classes, activities, or events. When discussing homosexuality inclinations, the use of the term "same-sex attraction" is preferred, as it is a more appropriate description in accordance with the truths of Catholic faith and morals, which do not define an individual by sex but rather as a human person who is a child of God.

Diplomas, transcripts, school records, and any other official documents of the school ("official school documents") shall be issued in conformity with the student's biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth and at the time of the student's enrollment. Official school documents are also historical documents and, as such, must accurately reflect the name and identity of the alumnus/alumna during the time in which he/she was enrolled at and graduated from the school. If after graduation an alumnus/alumna legally changes his/her name, for whatever reason, and requests new versions of his/her official school documents, the official school documents may be issued in the following format: "Original Name, n.ka. New Legal Name".

*Adapted from Diocese of Little Rock Addenda to the Manual of Policies and Regulations for Elementary and Secondary Catholic Schools of Arkansas

The USCCB states, “Any efforts to portray real or simulated sexual acts in order to display them to others uses persons as objects and betrays the meaning of sexuality. Pornography defames the intimacy of the marital act and injures the dignity of viewers and participants. Child pornography is a particularly abhorrent form of pornography that dehumanizes children for profit or perverted pleasure. Christians are to shun all participation in pornography as producers, actors, consumers, or vendors. Pornography also tends to become addictive. The ready availability of pornography on the Internet and television adds to the spread of this addiction.” (CFCL section B, part 1, 1)

7. Transgender Issues

In order to discuss the Church’s teachings on this issue, it is important to clarify terms. “Sex” refers to the biological condition of being male or female, as based upon physical differences at birth. “Gender” is a person’s identity as male or female, harmonious with one’s biological sex upon birth (CCC 2333).

There is a new gender ideology today which holds that sex is no longer a given element of nature that individuals must simply understand. Instead, it is considered merely a social role that we choose for ourselves rather than have it chosen for us by reference to “nature” or societal norms. In this view, “sex” is minimized, while the cultural element, known as “gender,” is maximized and held to be primary.

The Church teaches that “God created man in his own image...male and female he created them...” (CCC 2331)... “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.” (CCC 2333) Further, Pope Francis quotes Pope Benedict XVI in stating that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will.” In addition, Pope Francis adds, “The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary...It is not a healthy attitude which would seek ‘to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it.’” (Laudato Si’)

Catholic schools, faithful to the teaching and mission of the Catholic Church, will interact with students according to their biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth. An individual who wishes to express a gender other than his or her biological sex is understood as functioning outside of the “reality deeply inscribed” within (CDF, Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World, 2004, no. 8). Assisting the person in his or her disconnect with this reality, however sincerely expressed, by agreeing to participate in any efforts to change natural gender expression is

contrary to the pursuit of truth. Authentic love, a gift of the self for the good of the other, requires that we compassionately dwell in the truth and assist those we love to do the same.

The Church teaches that except when performed for strictly therapeutic reasons, directly intended mutilations are against the moral law (CCC 2297). Transsexual surgery involves radical mutilation: castration and construction of a pseudovagina for the male; mastectomy and hysterectomy (sometimes also the construction of a non-functional pseudopenis and testes) for the female, along with hormonal treatments with possible serious side effects. The attempt to change a person's biological sex is never a legitimate aim of medical care.

The Church recognizes that, in exceptional cases, an individual may be born with DNA (X and Y chromosomes) that do not match his or her anatomy. These situations, though rare, require special care and assistance.

There are other situations in which individuals report what is known as "gender dysphoria." Gender dysphoria is defined as the "condition of feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as male or female to be opposite to one's biological sex." The Church recognizes that there may be instances in which young people experience dissonance between their biological sex and the roles and norms advocated by society (Pontifical Council for the Family, Family, Marriage, and 'De Facto' Unions, 2000, no. 8). Some young people might feel drawn to dress, act, and even manipulate their physical bodies in ways contrary to God's plan. The Church, in close cooperation with parents, urges young people to bring these types of issues to their pastors, as well as to other trained professionals who might best assist them in clarifying and defining identity issues in accord with the teachings of Christ. As the Nebraska bishops note, "Any person who experiences gender dysphoria is entitled to the respect and dignity that is the right of every human person, as well as genuine concern and the support ... Such support, however, must be provided with due consideration to fairness and the safety, privacy, and rights of all students... It would be unjust to allow a harmful and deceptive gender ideology to shape either what is taught or how activities, including admissions and continuing enrollment policies, are conducted in our schools. This would certainly have a negative impact on students' and society's attitudes towards the fundamental nature of the human person and the family."

[October 6, 2017 Leaven Column: Prayer, education and love are key to changing hearts by Archbishop Naumann](#)