



October 7, 2024 | *Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary*

Dear Archdiocesan Catholic school leaders and pastors,

The 2019 document *Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* from the Congregation for Catholic Education identifies a three-fold approach to addressing the often difficult and complex topics of gender ideology, sexual identity, and the teaching of the Catholic Church on the human person: **listening**, **reasoning**, and **proposing**.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with this approach, a series of listening sessions was conducted in fall of 2022 and spring of 2023, in collaboration with the Diocese of Oakland, with pastors, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and medical professionals on the topic of gender identity issues in our archdiocesan ministries, especially our Catholic schools. I am grateful to all who took the time to participate in those sessions. The listening sessions consistently identified two main areas of desired support: **clarity** with respect to the Church's teaching on the human person and gender ideology, and the need for **pastoral guidance** for those in our Catholic schools.

In keeping with our responsibility to instruct the faithful, on September 29, 2023, the Feast of the Archangels, I issued, together with His Excellency the Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, S.J., Bishop of Oakland, the joint pastoral letter [\*The Body-Soul Unity of the Human Person\*](#) to those involved in our ministries clarifying certain aspects of Catholic teaching.<sup>2</sup> In the letter, we reiterated the constant teaching of the Church concerning the nature of the human person as a unity of body and soul; identified the respects in which gender ideology is incompatible with science, reason, and a Christian understanding of the human person; reaffirmed the goodness and dignity of every person, including those who struggle with gender dysphoria; and provided resources for further reflection.

Recognizing the potential for scandal or confusion and lest our witness contradict the mission of our Catholic schools and their mandate from Christ, the following pastoral guidelines are given to all who serve in our Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, that they may, with renewed clarity and purpose, accompany in truth and charity the young people they serve.<sup>3</sup> An increasingly hostile secular culture and the false, harmful ideologies promoted by it present a significant challenge, but they also present a profound opportunity for our Catholic schools to live the Lord's mandate to "teach all the nations" (Matthew 28:19) and to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) by giving joyful witness to the dignity of every person and fullness of life in Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Salvatore J. Cordileone  
Archbishop of San Francisco

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. [\*Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education\*](#) (2019), 5.

<sup>2</sup> [\*Code of Canon Law\*](#), 386 §1.

<sup>3</sup> [\*Code of Canon Law\*](#), 806 §1.

## Pastoral Guidelines on the Truth and Dignity of the Human Person for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of San Francisco<sup>4</sup>

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In keeping with their mission to proclaim the Gospel and promote the formation of the whole person, Catholic schools have a responsibility to promote a view of the human person that is consistent with a Catholic worldview and anthropology, and to base their policy and decision-making on these principles.<sup>5</sup> Catholic schools and school personnel should not endorse, either implicitly or explicitly, any view of the human person that denies, in theory or in practice, the dignity of the human person as willed and loved by God and created as male and female in His Image and Likeness as an integrated unity of body and soul. The following pastoral guidelines are offered as an expression of the Catholic view of the human person in practice in Catholic schools with respect to the challenges presented by the pervasiveness of gender ideology. The challenges faced by the young people and families in our Catholic schools present an opportunity to evangelize the culture and, with compassion and charity, give living witness to the dignity and fullness of truth about the human person as known by reason and revealed by Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

**Respect for the Truth and Dignity of Every Person:** Each person is a unique and unrepeatable bearer of the *Imago Dei*—the image and likeness of God.<sup>7</sup> The dignity of each person demands that no one in our Catholic schools should suffer bullying, violence, insults, or unjust discrimination.<sup>8</sup> This dignity also demands respect for the fullness of truth about the person as a body-soul unity.<sup>9</sup>

**Parent Partnerships:** Parents as the primary educators of their children should be fully included in any discussions of accommodations and concerning the formation of their children, especially regarding sensitive topics such as their child's sexual maturation, development, and self-perception. In choosing to partner with Catholic schools in the education and formation of their children, parents should respect the natural moral law as well as the teaching of Catholic doctrine and moral principles in Catholic schools.

**Educational Materials:** Educational, curricular, and pedagogical materials should align with a Catholic understanding of the human person. Schools should offer age-appropriate curricula, materials, and conversations about gender and sexuality in the context of a Catholic worldview and anthropology.

**Language & Signage:** Designations and pronouns should accord with biological sex. Nicknames should not be used as part of a social transition process or to recognize a child's imagined self-perception that is at odds with the child's biological sex, nor used out of an attempt to affirm ideas or ideologies that violate the natural moral law and Catholic beliefs on sexual difference and complementarity. Catholic schools and school personnel should not display signage, images, or symbols in support of gender identity theory or that deny a Catholic worldview, and Catholic beliefs on sexual difference and complementarity.

**Records & Documents:** Formal institutional documentation should use legal names.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon.

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *The Catholic School* (1977), 8 and Instruction on *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (2022), 45-51.

<sup>6</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (1982), 9 and *The Catholic School*, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration Dignitas Infinita on Human Dignity* (2024), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (2019), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone and Bishop Michael C. Barber, S.J., Pastoral Letter on *The Body-Soul Unity of the Human Person*, September 29, 2023.

**Facilities:** Restrooms and locker rooms should be organized according to biological sex. Access to single-use facilities should be approved by the administration on a case-by-case basis.

**Sports & Extracurricular Activities:** Participation in any sex-segregated activity should be based on biological sex, rather than self-perceived gender identity.

**Attire:** All persons should abide by the dress or uniform code that accords with his or her biological sex, in keeping with school uniform policies.

**Medication:** No person should have on-site or distribute medications for the purpose of medical gender transition. Catholic institutions should not endorse nor enable any form of gender transition, whether social or medical.<sup>10</sup>

**Additional resources:**

- **Pastoral Letter on [\*The Body-Soul Unity of the Human Person\*](#)**, Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone and Bishop Michael C. Barber, S.J. (September 29, 2023)
- **Declaration [\*Dignitas Infinita\*](#) on Human Dignity**, Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (April 4, 2024), in particular paragraphs 55-60.
- **[\*Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education\*](#)**, Congregation for Catholic Education (February 19, 2019)
- **[\*Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body\*](#)**, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Doctrine (March 20, 2023)
- **[Person and Identity Project](#)**

Principals and pastors should direct questions to the **Department of Catholic Schools** and the **Office of Catholic Identity Assessment & Formation**.



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Most Reverend Salvatore J. Cordileone  
Archbishop of San Francisco

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<sup>10</sup> Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, [Declaration \*Dignitas Infinita\* on Human Dignity](#) (2024), 60.