



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

DIOCESAN POLICY FOR ALL PARISHES, SCHOOLS, AND DIOCESAN YOUTH PROGRAMS IN THE DIOCESE OF WORCESTER REGARDING SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

All entities of the Catholic Church are for the purpose of furthering the saving mission of Jesus Christ and must operate in accord with the truth revealed by God in both natural law and Divine Revelation. In particular, our Catholic schools must remain in the fullness of the truth in order to carry out their proper mission:

Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life. (Code of Canon Law, c. 795).

These truths extend into every facet of our lives, including human sexuality.

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 the 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).

These teachings of the Church are not mere antiquated notions. In fact, Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed the importance of a proper understanding of our sexuality, warning of the challenge posed by "the various forms of an ideology of gender that denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences" (*Amoris Laetitia* ("AL"), #56). Pope Francis further notes that "biological sex and the sociocultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated," and that although we must always be "understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life," that does not require us to "accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality" (Ibid.). Ultimately, "[w]e are creatures, and not omnipotent," and we must accept and respect our humanity "as it was created" (Ibid.; see also Gen. 1:27, Matthew 19:4, and Mark 10:6). The Holy Father

then stresses that “the young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created,” so that “we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator” (AL, #285).

As Pope Francis notes, we must always respect the sacred dignity of each individual person, but that does not mean the Church must accept the confused notions of secular 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 to pretend otherwise. The policies of all Diocesan Central Catholic Schools, parish schools, parish and Diocesan Religious Education programs and youth programs must reflect these fundamental truths.

Bullying/Harassment/Violence and Human Sexuality

The Catholic faith holds that all persons have inherent human dignity and are thus deserving of innate respect as a person – without exception. Bullying, harassment, or threats or acts of violence against any person based on that person’s perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity will not be tolerated.

This section of the policy, or any other provision of the policy, is not intended, or should not be interpreted, as submitting the Bishop, the School, the Parish, or Diocesan event, to any judgment or finding by any Massachusetts or federal agency, with respect to any issue involving gender identity, to the extent it is inconsistent with the doctrine and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Concerning such doctrines and teachings, the Bishop, School, Parish, and the Diocesan Catholic Schools Department reserve all their legal rights, defenses, and remedies under the United States Constitution and any other state or local law or statute.

Chastity

All persons are called to chastity in accordance with their state in life. For purposes of the school environment and parish activities, chastity also encompasses modesty in language, appearance, dress, and behavior. Accordingly, romantic or sexual displays of affection are not permitted at school, parish, or youth events.

Sexual Orientation and Same-Sex Attraction

Students may not advocate, celebrate, or express same-sex attraction in such a way as to cause confusion or distraction in the context of classes, activities, or events. When discussing homosexuality or homosexual inclinations in school settings, in Religious Education programs and other parish activities, 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.

Gender Dysphoria (Transgenderism)

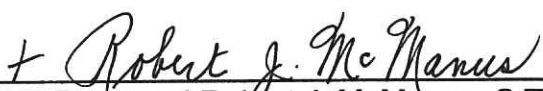
All persons are expected to conduct themselves at school, in Religious Education programs, and other parish activities in a manner consistent with their biological sex, including but not limited to, the following: participation in school athletics; school-sponsored dances; dress and uniform policies; the use of changing facilities, showers, locker rooms, and bathrooms (with rare exceptions only on a limited, case-by-case basis, to be determined by the principal of the school, pastor of the parish where the event is held or the Diocesan leader of the event); titles, names, and pronouns; and official school and church documents. If a student's expression of gender, sexual identity, or sexuality should cause confusion or disruption at the school or other parish activities, or if it should mislead others, cause scandal, or have the potential for causing scandal, then the matter will first be discussed with the child and his/her parents or guardians. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the school, leadership or Pastor whose primary goal must always be to uphold Catholic truths and principles, then the child may be dismissed from the school or program, after the parents or guardian are first given the opportunity to withdraw the child from the school, Religious Education program or other parish activities.

Official School Documents


Sacramental records, diplomas, transcripts, school records, and any other "official documents" shall be issued in conformity with the child's biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth and at the time of the child's enrollment or participation. Such official documents are also historical documents and, as such, must accurately reflect the name and the identity of the alumnus/alumna during the time in which he/she was enrolled at and graduated from the school or participated in a parish program. If after graduation an alumnus/alumna legally changes his/her name for whatever reason, and requests new versions of his/her official school or other church documents, the official documents may be issued in the following format: "Original Name, a.k.a. New Legal Name."

In view of the above policy, I, the Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, Bishop of Worcester, aware of my pastoral responsibilities to this particular Church and in accord with canons 381, §1, 386, §§1-2, 391, §§1-2, 392, §§1-2, and 806, §1, hereby promulgate this policy as particular law for the Diocese of Worcester, effective immediately. It is my expectation that private Catholic schools in the Diocese of Worcester under the sponsorship of religious communities will incorporate these prescripts in their particular school policies (c. 806, §1.)

Given in Worcester, Massachusetts, this the eighth day of December, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand twenty-three.



Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, S.T.D.
Bishop of Worcester



Mr. Raymond L. Delisle
Chancellor