

Policy Statement on Gender-Related Matters

The Catholic Church has always believed that her first mission given her by Christ Jesus is the salvation of souls. The Church must be true to her own identity and mission. Thus, the teachings of the Catholic Church must permeate all aspects of her activities. As a result, the Catholic community has a responsibility to be a witness to truth, charity, and justice based on the Gospel; and must always strive to be respectful of persons and understanding of the struggles present within and among the people of God. It would be inconsistent with the Church's mission to teach, promote, or encourage anything that is contrary to the teachings she has received from God and which the Magisterium has clearly and consistently articulated. For this reason, the Church cannot, and may not, sponsor, endorse, facilitate, or host such organizations, events or activities that would promote such views, in any form or format whatsoever.

With specific regard to the human person, the Catholic Church has always and everywhere affirmed her belief that each and every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. As such, every person deserves respect, dignity, and freedom from discrimination. By remaining true to what Christ has taught concerning the human person, the Church encourages individuals to accept their own bodies and gender as they were created¹, and seeks to help all people to recognize that the current attempts in modern culture to redefine gender and social institutions, as well as alter the nature and purpose of human beings, are misguided and not in accord with the truth. Therefore, it would be morally unacceptable for the Catholic Church, including the Diocese of Toledo, its parishes, schools, or ecclesiastical organizations to provide accommodations based on anything which in itself is contradictory or antithetical to the teachings of Christ and his Church, including notions of gender and sexuality that are contrary to Catholic teachings. For a fuller catechetical treatment of this topic, see Catechesis Regarding Human Dignity and Gender-Related Matters in the Appendix.

In Catholic parishes, schools and ecclesiastical organizations of the Diocese of Toledo, all activities and ministries are to be rooted in, and consistent with, the principles of Catholic doctrine. Therefore, in every parish, school and institution, all paid employees and unpaid volunteers will:

1. Treat all persons with sensitivity, respect, and compassion.
2. On a case-by-case basis, consider in a compassionate way any specific request sensitive to the physical and psychological needs of a person. The basis of the consideration will be on the following questions:
 - i. What is the specific request of the adult, student and/or parent(s)/guardian?
 - ii. Is the request in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church?
 - iii. Is the parish, school or ecclesiastical organization reasonably able to provide for the request?
3. Require that names and pronouns be in accordance with the person's biological sex.
4. Maintain names in records according to the person's biological sex.
5. Confirm that uniforms and gender specific dress, bathrooms, locker rooms, showers, and sponsored activities will all be according to biological sex.
6. Require that participation on athletic teams and extra-curricular activities be according to biological sex.
7. Consult the Office of Marriage and Family Life with extenuating circumstances.

¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 56.

Catechesis Regarding Human Dignity and Gender-Related Matters

The Catholic Church has always and everywhere affirmed her belief that each and every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. As such, every person deserves respect, dignity, and freedom from discrimination. Indeed, there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of all people, no matter who they are¹. Further, the Church is obligated to hand on to every generation all that she has received from Jesus Christ, her divine founder, especially as it relates to our understanding of the human person in these present times.

The witness of Sacred Scripture is clear: God created human beings male and female (Genesis 1:27). From the dawn of creation as depicted in the Book of Genesis to the closing pages of the Apocalypse, Scripture presents the human race as consisting of only two (2) sexes. Both sexes, male and female, are created in the image of God and are equal in dignity and destiny (Genesis 2:21-24). God created Adam and Eve out of love and for love. One's gender is therefore determined by one's biological sex.

The entirety of divinely inspired Scripture affirms the male and female forms of human nature *as reality*. They are not mere cultural phenomena or subjective constructs. Although wounded by the entrance of sin into human experience and its far-reaching effects on our bodily nature, man and woman continue to image God in both their uniqueness and complementarity. Scripture is clear on the necessity of respecting God's order and commands for human beings to experience the fullness of life he intends.

As articulated by Pope Francis, the clear and constant moral teachings of the Catholic Church have always envisioned a connection between our highest human happiness and our willingness to embrace the biological sex given us at birth². Our bodies teach us profound truths about ourselves and our purpose in life. Our bodies signify that we are called to and gifted for relationships that are complementary in nature, open to new life, and destined for eternal happiness and joy. Our bodies are God-given means of deepening our human generosity and communion with both God and each other.

Pope Saint John Paul II affirmed in his teaching known as the *Theology of the Body* that in our given biological complementarity, *as distinctly male and female*, God clearly intended us to live in loving communion with him and with each other. Through mutual self-giving and interdependence, he invites us to share in his own act of creation, as well as his own eternal happiness and joy. Therefore, our God-given maleness and femaleness clearly make visible our calling to love and co-create with God in bringing new life into the world. This is what Pope Saint John Paul II called the "sacramentality of the body." Our bodies are "icons" that reveal the deepest essence of who we are in the moral, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions of life.

¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 27.

² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 285.

Catholic teachings envision biological sex as neither a politically defined nor socially constructed reality. It is an objective reality, a cornerstone of our createdness, and an invitation to enter joyfully and generously into what we believe to be the central mystery of the Christian faith, namely, that God is himself an eternal exchange of love emanating from the love shared between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit³.

The Catholic Church recognizes that there is much confusion regarding human sexuality and gender in today's society. Knowing that this confusion touches the lives of many people very personally, the Catholic Church is committed to walking with each individual on the path towards a more integral understanding of their human dignity and their unique vocation in the Creator's plan for salvation history.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 221.

Pastoral Care Guidelines

Recalling that each moment when a person or persons come to the Church—regardless of reason— is an opportunity to provide pastoral care and to evangelize, an opportunity to introduce (or reintroduce) them to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, these following general guidelines have been developed as a means to help us assist others with their needs and concerns.

These guidelines are general insofar as it can apply to many different people and scenarios. Because of this generality, it would be impractical to provide a specific answer for each and every pastoral possibility or variation. The guideline includes suggestions and reminders on how to approach a situation when presented by a person who is actively engaging or pursuing a lifestyle contrary to Catholic teaching. Examples of this include, but are not limited to: those engaging in a sexual relationship that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church (same sex relationships; marriages that cannot be recognized by the Church; non-marital heterosexual relationships, such as premarital and extramarital cohabitation; and those persons desiring to be identified in a manner inconsistent with their biological sex).

1. Welcome and thank the individual(s) for expressing an interest in the Church and her apostolates.
2. Ascertain what the person(s) is(are) seeking:
 - i. Reception of a sacrament
 - ii. Use or rental of parish or school property
 - iii. Admission to school, religious education program, or parish/institution-related activity.
 - iv. Involvement in parish ministry
3. Ask for other pertinent details regarding what it is the person(s) is(are) asking, for example:
 - i. Are you a member of the parish; do you have children in the school?
 - ii. Where is the wedding being held? What are the names of the parties to be married?
 - iii. Who is celebrating the anniversary? Are they Catholic; were they married in the Church?
 - iv. Who are the parents/guardians of the child?
 - v. What charity or for what purpose are you raising funds?
4. If something in the answer given or conversation suggests the person(s) is(are) not pursuing a lifestyle that is in accord with Church teaching, the matter should be referred to the pastor or pastoral leader.
5. The pastor or pastoral leader should meet with the person(s), listen to the person(s)'s story, and discover where the person(s) is(are) spiritually at the moment. With all pastoral charity, inquire if the person(s) is(are) living in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Church. Then, invite the person(s) into a deeper life in Christ. This moment becomes the opportunity to ask how the Church can possibly help. Perhaps this would include assistance with the convalidation or sanation of a marriage or inviting them to celebrate their wedding in the Church (or even to be prepared and celebrate the marriage with a dispensation from the

canonical form of marriage). Perhaps this would include (re)introducing the person(s) to the Courage apostolate. In all situations, this is an opportunity to present, in a clear and pastoral fashion, the teachings of the Church (see Catechesis on Human Dignity and Gender-Related Matters), to evangelize, and to encourage all persons we encounter.

6. The catechetical exhibit then logically leads to sharing the policy statement of the diocese. Perhaps, from the pastoral discussion, the pastor or pastoral leader may determine that the Church is able to assist in and perhaps fulfill the person(s) request of the Church. If the Church is not able to assist, she has provided the opportunity for the person(s) to meet a caring person from the Church who has taken an interest in the person(s), has helped the person(s) to understand Catholic teaching, and has invited the person(s) into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, to share in his truth and in the life of the Church.
7. At the end of the encounter, the person(s) should be both invited into the life and truth of Christ and his Church, and thanked for their understanding.
8. If the pastor, pastoral leader or school administrator requires assistance or guidance beyond what is provided in this document, please contact the Office of Marriage and Family Life in the Diocese of Toledo.

Handbook Acknowledgement Page

I have received a copy of the [Name of Institution] Handbook. I acknowledge that I have read and reviewed the Handbook. I understand the policies and procedures of the Handbook, and I agree to adhere to these policies and regulations. I further understand that [Name of Institution] has the right to change, modify, and/or revise any of the policies set forth in this Handbook at any time.

Print Full Legal Name

Signature

Date