

The Church and Gender/Transgender Ideology & Related Pastoral Issues

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See also the much larger ***Sexual Ethics Bibliography*** at
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Klyrk8tWi3bxM2FIsbo8KI6wbgoeMJfO/view?usp=sharing>

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Episcopal and/or Magisterial Related Articles and Documents

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Allen Elise. “Vatican signals openness but also caution on transsexuals and baptism.” *Crux* (November 9, 2023)

<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2023/11/vatican-signals-openness-but-also-caution-on-transsexuals-and-baptism>

A new ruling from the Vatican’s doctrinal office says that transsexual individuals can be baptized, and also opens a cautious door to allowing transgender and homosexual couples to serve as godparents, while indicating that the “homosexual lifestyle” remains sinful and that more suitable options ought to be considered.

The decision, which came in response to a set of dubia, or “doubts,” submitted by a Brazilian bishop, has been welcomed by advocates for LGBTQ+ Catholics, who nevertheless also argues it doesn’t go far enough.

The dubia were submitted to the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) by Bishop Giuseppe (José) Negri of Santo Amaro in Brazil, a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, on July 14.

The six dubia Negri issued focused on whether transsexuals can be baptized, whether they can serve as godparents, whether actively homosexual couples could serve as parents to a baptized child, and whether a cohabitating homosexual could be godparent to a child or witnesses to a marriage.

In a letter of response, signed Oct. 31 by both Pope Francis and DDF prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, the dicastery indicated that an active homosexual lifestyle was still sinful and a potential source of scandal, and that while baptism was possible, prudence is necessary.

For the DDF document (currently available only in Italian and Portuguese) go to https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_20231031-documento-mons-negri.pdf

Aquila, Archbishop Samuel (Denver). “Denver Archbishop Aquila: Media Reaction to Club Q Shooting Scapegoated Religion.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (December 10, 2022)

https://www.ncregister.com/cna/denver-archbishop-aquila-media-reaction-to-club-q-shooting-scapegoated-religion?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=237384502&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8X6H_Buj5mVkVGAbgGzvRi0W3nujRuYaeFlare2Wku2ExUw6b72jjFFbjK0HxHZdFGO14AqyBIPWe-vsH6pOvMunQCiA&utm_content=237384502&utm_source=hs_email

The “unmitigated tragedy” of a mass shooting at a Colorado Springs 'LGBT' nightclub prompted “irresponsible” press coverage that wrongly scapegoated religious communities for their stands on sexual morality and identity, Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver has said.

“This type of irresponsible commentary is increasingly common,” he said, summarizing the assumption as “You don’t accept what I believe, therefore you are not only wrong but hateful.”

“Unfortunately, the reaction has thus far fostered more vitriol and division than peace and unity as the press has blamed religious communities, including the Catholic Church, to which the shooter has no apparent connection,” Archbishop Aquila said.

His comments come in a Dec. 8 commentary for the Wall Street Journal weeks after the Nov. 19 shooting.

The alleged gunman, 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, entered Club Q just before midnight on that Saturday and began shooting. Several people at the club overpowered the gunman and subdued him. The gunman killed five and wounded 17 people.

In the wake of the shooting both Archbishop Aquila and Bishop James Golka of Colorado Springs voiced their concern, prayers, and sympathies for the victims and others affected.

Archbishop Aquila also criticized the New York Times for placing the mass murder in the context of Colorado Springs’ evangelical community and its opposition to same-sex marriage.

The archbishop rejected the claim that it is discriminatory against self-identified gay or transgender people to say their beliefs “don’t conform to nature.” Rather, this is “an act of charity.”

. “Denver Archbishop Blames Transgender Equality for Declining Church Attendance.” Ariell Simon and Robert Shine. *New Ways Ministry* (March 8, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/08/denver-archbishop-blames-transgender-equality-for-declining-church-attendance/>

Aquila has suggested transgender equality is responsible for declining church attendance just weeks after he suggested the church was unfairly blamed for heightened anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that contributed to a mass shooting last year.

He made his anti-transgender comments during a Mass on the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision in January. The *Colorado Times Recorder* quoted Aquila as saying:

““We wonder why our Churches are empty. . . Whether it is the CRT [Critical Race Theory], [or] transgender ideology we have failed to belong to Jesus Christ.””

He has previously [compared](#) same-gender marriages to bestiality, [opposed](#) the Equality Act, [blamed](#) gay priests for clergy sexual abuse, and [supported conversion therapy](#). Last year, the Archdiocese of Denver under his leadership [approved](#) an anti-transgender policy for parishes and schools, and [fired](#) a lesbian church worker over her marriage.

Broglio, Archbishop Timothy. [Report by John Lavenburg] “US bishops’ new leader blasts Dodgers for honoring faux ‘queer and trans nuns’” *Crux* (June 16, 2023)

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2023/06/us-bishops-new-leader-blasts-dodgers-for-honoring-faux-queer-and-trans-nuns>

The other national issue Broglio discussed was the Los Angeles Dodgers plans to honor the “Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence” at the organization’s Pride Night scheduled for Friday evening.

The group – self-described as a “leading-edge order of queer and trans nuns” – is made up of LGBTQ activists who dress in drag as religious nuns, and who have often, over the years, mocked the Catholic faith.

The Dodgers’ decision to honor the group has drawn the ire of Catholic leaders, groups, and politicians.

“Our thoughts and prayers also go to Archbishop [Jose] Gomez and the faithful of Los Angeles,” Broglio said.

“The disrespect for truth and traditions of our faith, for the legendary commitment of religious women to building up society, and tarnishing of what has so often been called the national sport, harkens back to the Know-Nothings of the 19th Century,” he said.

Carlson, Archbishop Robert (St. Louis). “Compassion and Challenge: Reflections on Gender Ideology” June 1, 2020

<https://www.archstl.org/Portals/0/Pastoral%20letters/Compassion%20and%20Challenge%20-%20letter%20size.pdf>

See the critique of Creighton University professors Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, “The Catholic Church must listen to transgender and intersex people.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 1, 2020)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/catholic-church-must-listen-transgender-and-intersex-people>

Catholic News Service (CNS). “Advisory council suggests bishops guide ministries on gender dysphoria.” *Boston Pilot* (November 18, 2022)

https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.php?h=Advisory_council_suggests_bishops_guide_ministries_on_gender_dysphoria&utm_source=ConstantContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Dailynewsletter&ID=193658

An advisory body to the U.S. bishops has called for the development of practical and pastoral guidance on gender dysphoria to help laypeople and clergy in their ministries in parishes, schools and other settings.

The suggestion was among a series of proposals from the National Advisory Council that was included in a report Nov. 16 delivered to the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore.

The council's work is to review, discuss and advise the bishops on the agenda items from Administrative Committee meetings that may be coming before the full USCCB for

action at the bishops' annual fall general assembly. It includes about three dozen members, including clergy, women religious, laypeople and four bishops.

Congregation for Catholic Education. “Male and female he created them. For a path of dialogue on the issue of gender in education” 2 February 2019 (released 10 June 2019). <https://zenit.org/articles/new-vatican-document-provides-schools-with-guidance-on-gender-issues/> (accessed June 13, 2019).

Controversial document, released without any indication of papal approval even *in forma communi*, which strongly critiques much contemporary theory regarding gender and gender identification. For a journalistic summary of the document and its context see Gerald O’Connell, “Vatican issues new document criticizing ‘gender theory’.” *America* June 10, 2019, released online at

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/10/vatican-new-document-gender-theory>

Many news reports and commentaries appeared shortly after the document’s release. For a positive assessment see David Cloutier, “The stark choices the Vatican’s gender theory document is raising.” *America* June 12, 2019, released online at

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/12/stark-choices-vaticans-gender-theory-document-raising?utm_source=Newsletters&utm_campaign=b5feecde2-DAILY_CAMPAIGN_2019_6_11_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0fe8ed70be-b5feecde2-58760285. For a more critical assessment see James Martin, S.J., “Listen to the

L.G.B.T. person: a response to the Vatican’s gender theory document.” *America* June 11, 2019, released online at

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/11/listen-lgbt-person-response-vaticans-gender-theory-document>

See also Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler’s analysis in “The Catholic Church must listen to transgender and intersex people.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 1, 2020)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/catholic-church-must-listen-transgender-and-intersex-people>

“Bishop Daly: USCCB Meeting Needed to Address Transgender Treatments in Catholic Hospitals.” Matthew McDonald, *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (October 16, 2024)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/mcdonald-bishop-daly-usccb-meeting-on-transgender-treatment?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9lf8D3wo4eGUcHjUK1N9FMJocdzMDpS5v6ogWc1pV6gzL36n0z8dDNFP7ZzBAxU0mSe_Ujf7PBmwjkm0tqZZimqUkfiw&hsmi=329620298&utm_content=329620298&utm_source=hs_email

Reacting to a [recent report](#) that shows that scores of Catholic hospitals have provided children with drugs or surgeries to change their gender identity, a U.S. bishop has called for a special meeting of the country’s bishops to address what he sees as a major breach of Catholic medical ethics.

“As bishops, I think we need to confront Catholic health care, because they are violating their mission,” Bishop Thomas Daly of the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, told the Register.

The medical watchdog group Do No Harm published a [database](#) of public hospital records on Oct. 8 that catalogs nearly 14,000 sex-change-related treatments — including 5,747 sex-change surgeries — patients age 17 and under received from health-care facilities from 2019 to 2023.

Nearly 150 Catholic hospitals were among the health-care facilities that appear in the database, an [EWTN News analysis found](#).

The Register sent a request for comment about the report to every bishop who heads a diocese in the United States. Bishop Daly of Spokane was among those who responded.

“I’m appalled, but sadly I’m not surprised,” he told the Register.

Several bishops contacted by the Register expressed disgust with reports that Catholic hospitals have provided such services.

“The surgical mutilation and chemical castration of young kids under the rubric of ‘gender-affirming care’ is a moral outrage. That any of it takes place within the confines of a Catholic hospital is appalling,” said Bishop Robert Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, by email through a spokesman. (None of the Catholic hospitals in the database is in that diocese.)

Fourteen of the Catholic hospitals that the database says assisted gender transitioning are in Ohio.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio, which represents the bishops of the state’s six dioceses in public-policy matters, provided the Register a written statement saying that people “experiencing gender incongruence must receive compassionate treatment and personal accompaniment without resorting to medical interventions that harm the created body.”

Daly, Bishop Thomas (Spokane). “USCCB Catholic Education Chair Speaks Out on ‘Confused Catholic Schools’ Embracing ‘Sinful’ Gender Ideology.” Interview with Laretta Brown of the *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (December 2, 2022) https://www.ncregister.com/blog/bishop-daly-speaks-out-on-sinful-gender-ideology?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=236547510&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9mZidwXcYfhw9jWeZGaagVpNjUb7-CABIHKsPH7abiGAPqToZ9GY5C1lB8hdoamOwCQEQLCP5QpxaNDhXHLVOaXki_VA&utm_content=236547510&utm_source=hs_email



Daly said that gender politics should have “no place” in the classroom and it is especially “tragic and sinful” when it occurs at Catholic institutions of higher learning.

He then went out to list magisterial documents which he believes support his position on this complex issue.

. “Bishop Thomas Daly: “We Are Playing Make-Believe with Students’ Biological Sexes.” [Report by Kevin Wells] *Crisis Magazine* (September 12, 2022)
<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2022/bishop-thomas-daly-we-are-playing-make-believe-with-students-biological-sexes>

Critiquing the Archdiocese of Baltimore and other places that have, in Bishop Daly’s view, too liberal policies on gender inclusion:

“The Catholic school’s mission is suffering terribly because we are playing make-believe with students’ biological sexes.

I’ve found myself thinking more and more about Truth. Is there Truth in that [IAAM] policy? No. We are created man and woman in the image and likeness of God—the notion that we assign it to us is a falsehood. This notion has ripped us apart in our culture, and especially hit hard [are] our young people. When we in the Church deny the youth a clear understanding of our Christian anthropology, we have deeply harmed them. And it is something we will answer for from God.

When Jesus said, “Let the children come to me,” it was a beautiful gesture of love, care, and the importance of our young ones. Christ asked us to care for the orphan. In modern society, the new orphan is the impressionable young person who is confused by what some in the Church have allowed him to believe. When the child is allowed to be confused under church auspices, the harm done is unspeakable.

We are called to persevere for Christ and to help all young people to holiness, to watch over young people, and to protect them. As Catholics, we are called to be prophetic, full of mercy, and compassionate, but this acceptance of new gender ideas has nothing to do with mercy and compassion. This has to do with confusion that leads to chaos.

Many people are weak; they want to go along to get along...The Church needs to respond in a way that is in total fidelity to what the Church teaches. That’s all. It cannot accommodate worldly trends; In schools, the tail can never be allowed to wag the dog.... Since taking over the [USCCB Education czar] position, I’ve learned that schools are very much impacted by unhealthy trends in culture. The problem is not the Church in the world—the problem is the world in the Church.

Schools and dioceses need strong leaders. Why did so many religious orders collapse over the years?—it was due to poor leadership. Changing governance will not help us. The remedy is strong and faithful high school administrators who respond with a clear Catholic message. You need pastors who support the school, knowledgeable business managers, and strong principals who love the Faith.

Laity is frustrated by a lack of leadership from certain bishops. It is the bishop’s role as a successor of the apostles to take on the role of Christ’s own mission—and that is to save

souls. It's a tremendous responsibility we as bishops have. We cannot allow the secular to overtake the sacred.

It saddens me that some bishops, Catholic education departments, and schools have capitulated. Watered-down Church teaching under the guise of social justice and accompaniment has been emphasized at the expense of the salvation of souls.

So many Catholic schools now have gone with the woke agenda. If schools have made the move to embrace the woke agenda, critical race theories, and the unbridled social justice agenda, they get a failing grade from me—because they have failed our children.

Too many schools have compromised Church teaching—whether it's because of money, fear, to please society, or because they just don't believe, it is happening. We cannot let the worst of our culture define who we are as Catholic schools.

When asked how he thought Modernism had been allowed to breach and infiltrate Catholic schools, Daly said:

There was poor instruction in the '70s, '80s, and '90s—and we have a moral fiber that has snapped. There is a collapse now that we need to do whatever we are able to prevent. All of this [gender-inclusion in schools] is the product of what the society is now producing.”

Bishop Daly said the foundational issue plaguing Catholic schools is the lack of strong Catholic leadership. In refusing to place the full teachings of the Catholic Church first, he said, certain bishops have capitulated and adjusted old Catholic norms in exchange for state money. The aftermath is often reflected by a change of verbiage in school handbooks.

. “On gender policies, bishop says schools must defend Catholic identity.” Interview with John Lavenburg. *Crux* (September 3, 2022)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2022/09/on-gender-policies-bishop-says-schools-must-defend-catholic-identity>

“The loss of Catholic identity, the loss of a mission, is not like a blown-out tire, it’s like a slow leak,” said Daly, the U.S. bishops’ conference’s education committee chair. “You begin to compromise – the teaching, the classes offered, hiring practices, leadership of your board – and more and more the mission becomes not even secondary, and then you cease to really be Catholic.

We can’t lose sight of the fact that there are certain non-negotiables in Catholic schools. I think this is an important thing that often gets forgotten: People don’t have to go to our schools, and this is not something that is a minor issue. It’s something we can’t shy away from. I think we try to understand, but when it’s all said and done we as Catholic schools have a mission that is given to us by the church and we have to be faithful to it. ...

[Criticizing universities in particular]: I think there's some leadership at Catholic institutions of higher learning where it's almost an embarrassment that the church calls people to truth. ...

[Expressing support for some sort of national guidelines]: I think there will be because of how we're just seeing how extreme this is becoming, just the question is what will it be next? When will it stop? So I think it does warrant a discussion and beyond a discussion, action. Now, bishops are autonomous of their own dioceses, but I think it warrants a discussion first, I would imagine, in the regions."

For a critical reflection on Bishop Daly's remarks see Sarah Cassidy, "USCCB Education Chair Says Gender Policies Causing Decline in Parochial Schools." New Ways Ministry (September 13, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/09/13/usccb-education-chair-says-gender-policies-causing-decline-in-parochial-schools/>

Cassidy argues that "Many LGBTQ+ individuals already feel disconnected from Catholic institutions, and harmful rhetoric, such as Bishop Daly's, continues to perpetuate the cycle of discrimination. While he claims that Catholic schools have a duty to align with Catholic teaching, schools also have a duty to teach the next generation to be kind, loving, and accepting. The Catholic schools that are taking steps towards gender inclusivity should be recognized for their commitment to holistic care, which is more authentic to Catholic education."

Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith [replaces the CDF]. "Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* [Begging for Trust {or Confidence}] On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings." (December 18, 2023)

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/12/18/0901/01963.html#en>

Declaration which gives papal approval for a wider range of blessings, including to those in irregular marriages or same-sex unions, as long as these are not given a "ritual" form that might be confused with sacramental marriage.

For a bibliography of reports, reactions, and commentaries on this Declaration see Bretzke's Fiducia Supplicans DDF Declaration On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings Bibliography [Uploaded December 18, 2023]

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PS-wq-XLBaV0iBglG167c_5J6WFhJWvu/edit?usp=sharing&oid=10351953710877764442&rtpof=true&sd=true

Dolan, John P. "Bishop Dolan to LGBTQ Catholics: 'I wish to reaffirm your sacred identity'." *Outreach* (July 19, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/07/bishop-john-p-dolan-to-lgbtq-catholics-i-wish-to-reaffirm-your-sacred-identity/> Also found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vfU6toUvXbp2TguF8FFXbVQTA6O0H8Sh/view?usp=sharing>



I wanted to unpack the meaning of “being Christian.” To Catholics within the LGBTQ community, I wish to reaffirm your sacred identity. You are Christian—not just in name, but in fact.

This “being Christian” begins with the Spirit of God, who has been poured out on you through faith and baptism. You have been configured to Christ and branded as Christian, even though some would like to re-brand you and consider you as objects to be discarded, rather than as beloved communal members of the Body of Christ.

I believe that every Christian, before asking the Lord for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and love, should ask God, “Do you have faith in me? Do you have hope for me? Do you love me?” If you let the Lord answer you in the affirmative, then you’ll know who you are: a beloved child of God in Christ. ...

When people re-brand Catholics in the LGBTQ community as sinners, intrinsically disordered or as persons inclined to disorder, while forgetting that they are Christian, they have not only ruptured the “being” of the other, but even their own Christian selves.

I have come to believe that rupturing our “being Christian” is the source of sin and disorder. We certainly understand that life is chaotic and disordered. Even our age-old Catholic teaching regarding concupiscence acknowledges this fundamental theological construct that, due to original sin, our essential goodness has been disordered and we are each inclined to sin. ...

Whenever people say that we must defend the deposit of faith, I wish to remind them that the truth is Christ. Faith (fides) is Christ, who is with us. He is with us not just remotely, but imminently, intimately and sacramentally.

We can often be like Pontius Pilate asking “What is truth?” while missing that the fundamental truth—Christ Emmanuel—is staring us straight on (Jn. 18:38). The worn-out and tortured Christ standing before Pilate, or the objectified and disenfranchised members of the Body of Christ standing before an accusatory lot, is the same truth hiding in plain sight.

When, in our attempt to define or defend truth, we fail to ask the question, “Who is truth among us?” we treat the other as a puzzle and not as a mystery to celebrate.

Our deepest sin, our original sin, misses the mark when we fail to celebrate our sense of being. Cardinal-designate Fernández is correct. We must indeed experience and celebrate the mystery of the living Christ, who is with us to shape our “being Christian.”

John P. Dolan is the Bishop of Phoenix, Ariz.

Francis, Pope. [report by Nicole Winfield] “Pope Francis’ unexpected friendship with a group of trans women.” *America* (November 20, 2023)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2023/11/20/pope-francis-women-transgender-community-246547?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=6qA.BD5DJPsZg_vepDPuSICLukqgD8J8N7WyzeRqpU1mbtWbmMRJYQxwTGlpmy2JqcMNIp_G

Pope Francis’ recent gesture of welcome for transgender Catholics has resonated strongly in this working class, seaside town south of Rome, where a community of trans women has found help and hope through a remarkable relationship with the pontiff forged during the darkest times of the pandemic.

Thanks to the local parish priest, these women now make monthly visits to Francis’ Wednesday general audiences, where they are given VIP seats. On any given day, they receive handouts of medicine, cash and shampoo. When COVID-19 struck, the Vatican bussed them into its health facility so they could be vaccinated ahead of most Italians.

On Sunday, the women — many of whom are Latin American migrants and work as prostitutes — joined over 1,000 other poor and homeless people in the Vatican auditorium as Francis’ guests for lunch to mark the Catholic Church’s World Day of the Poor. ...

Francis’ latest initiative was a document from the Vatican’s doctrine office asserting that, under some circumstances, transgender people can be baptized and can serve as godparents and witnesses in weddings. It followed another recent statement from the pope himself that suggested same-sex couples could receive church blessings.

In both cases, the new pronouncements reversed the absolute bans on transgender people serving as godparents issued by the Vatican doctrine office in 2015, and on same-sex blessings announced in 2021.

Prominent LGBTQ+ organizations have welcomed Francis’ message of inclusivity, given gay and transgender people have long felt ostracized and discriminated against by a church that officially teaches that homosexual acts are “intrinsically disordered.”

_____. [report by Joshua McElwee] “Pope sends support to LGBTQ ministry conference as online petition tries to cancel event.” *National Catholic Reporter* (June 14, 2023)

Pope Francis has sent a message of support to a conference that will discuss LGBTQ ministry in the Catholic Church this weekend, after right-wing online influencers organized a petition to try and stop the event.

The pope is publicly backing the Outreach conference, [a three-day meeting](#) set to be held June 16-18 at New York’s Fordham University that will consider issues ranging from how the Bible speaks of homosexuality, how the church should minister with transgender Catholics and how to raise LGBTQ children in the faith.

In a handwritten letter released on June 14 by Jesuit Fr. James Martin, one of the organizers of the event, Francis asks the priest to send his "best regards" to the participants of the meeting and assures: "In my prayers and good wishes are you and all who work at the Outreach Conference."

The pope's letter comes after a range of right-wing social media influencers have expressed outrage at the event. One group organized [an online petition](#), garnering some 92,000 signatures, demanding that Fordham cancel the conference.

Outreach is [an online news and opinion site](#) dedicated to LGBTQ Catholics that is affiliated with the Jesuit-run America magazine. The 2023 event is the group's second in-person conference, following [a similar event at Fordham](#) in 2022.

Keynote speakers for this year's conference include Tania Tetlow, Fordham's president; Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of LGBTQ Catholic ministry DignityUSA; and Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean abuse survivor and member of the pope's clergy abuse commission.

[report by Claire Giangravé]. "How Pope Francis' welcoming message transformed a trans community in Rome." *Religion News Service* (September 7, 2022) <https://religionnews.com/2022/09/07/how-pope-francis-welcoming-message-transformed-a-trans-community-in-rome/>

But in the past two years, Church of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Pastor Rev. Andrew Conocchia has gained fame for serving a particular community that found him shortly after he arrived at Blessed Virgin: a group of trans women whose lives he has changed both practically and spiritually. Since April, at the invitation of the Vatican, Conocchia has brought four groups of LGBTQ people to meet Pope Francis and receive needed medical care.

The trips, he said, have allowed fathers struggling with their children's sexuality to find redemption. Since becoming known for his work in Torvaianica, he conducts prayer sessions via Zoom with disenfranchised LGBTQ Catholics across Italy.

The trans women in Torvaianica sought out Conocchia for basic needs. Most of them sex workers, they had been left without clients, and therefore income, by the pandemic. Because many are HIV-positive, they are at higher risk for serious illness. As immigrants, they could not take advantage of Italy's health care system.

As their numbers continued to grow, he came up with idea of having the women write to the pope. They told him they were ashamed to describe their lives to the pope. Several wept to think of it.

But the letters went to Rome, and in April 2020, the pope sent money and food to Blessed Virgin through Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, the official dispenser of Francis' philanthropy. The 58-year-old Pole is known for diving into sewers to restore

electricity to Roma refugee camps. More recently Francis sent Krajewski to Ukraine, where he has met with refugees and blessed mass graves.

Since early in his pontificate, Francis has taken a novel approach to LGBTQ issues, beginning with his reply in 2013 to a question about gay priests: “Who am I to judge?” He has met with a Spanish trans man and his partner at the Vatican and praised the work of the Rev. James Martin, the American Jesuit who advocates for inclusion for LGBTQ Catholics.

Last year, not long after the Vatican’s office of doctrine issued a document calling the blessing of same-sex couples a sin, Francis overhauled the office and removed those responsible.

Francis has stopped short of definitively changing Catholic teaching, which still regards homosexuality as “intrinsically disordered.” He has called gender theory a form of “ideological colonization,” especially when taught in schools. Measured against this doctrinal stance, the pope’s steps toward openness to the LGBTQ community are mere gestures, but outside Vatican circles they have been seen as earthshaking.

At Easter 2021, Krajewski called Conocchia to tell him to bring the trans women and others in need to the Vatican to receive COVID-19 vaccines and health checkups. When Conocchia arrived at the Vatican City gates with two busloads in tow, Vatican officials asked the pope whether they should be allowed inside. Francis ordered them to be admitted, saying, “Ask for their names, ask for anything they need, but do not ask them about their sex,” according to activist Juan Carlos Cruz, a friend of the pope’s.

The next day at the papal audience, Conocchia ushered the women forward to meet the pontiff. “When I touched his hand, I was lost for words,” Minerva Motta Nuñez said. She offered him a traditional leather cup from Peru, where she was born.

Afterward, Conocchia said, the pope told him: “Keep going, continue in this ministry, you are doing well.”

The trans women feel the division between Francis’ vision and the reality of the church differently. Nuñez was raised Catholic but avoids attending Mass for fear of judgment. “I can’t separate myself from what I do,” said Nuñez, hinting at her work as a prostitute, “because I’m always met by the prejudice of people and the church.”

Salas echoed this feeling of rejection. People in the pews shake her hand at the sign of peace but won’t give her a glance when they pass on the street.

But Marcella Demarco Muniz said that when she was ushered forward at the general audience to meet Francis in April, he told her in Spanish: “Don’t worry, we are all the same in the eyes of God.” If she could, she said, she would visit him at every general audience.

They believe Francis’ message of inclusion is slowly changing the church. “The pope has opened many doors,” said Nuñez.

. “Italian LGBT advocates meet Pope Francis, discuss church 'that excludes no one'.” [Report by Christopher White] *National Catholic Reporter* (September 22, 2022) <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/italian-lgbt-advocates-meet-pope-francis-discuss-church-excludes-no-one>

Pope Francis on Sept. 21 met Italian LGBT Catholic advocates who say the pontiff encouraged their efforts to build a church "that excludes no one."

According to the daily newspaper L'Avvenire, which is published by the Italian bishops' conference, representatives from the LGBT organization The Tent of Jonathan met with Francis following his Wednesday general audience.

The organization, which was founded in 2018, aims to provide "sanctuaries of welcome and support for LGBT people and for every person affected by discrimination."

One participant, Fr. Gianluca Carrega, who heads the LGBT pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Turin, reportedly asked for the pope's permission to continue "building a hospitable church that excludes no one."

Other delegates gave the pope a collection of letters from parents of LGBT children who have faced "isolation and suspicion within the Christian community."

At an audience earlier this year, Francis went off script while delivering a reflection of parenthood to specifically tell parents not to condemn children who have different sexual orientations.

"Never condemn your children," said Francis on Jan. 26, adding that parents should accompany such children and "not hide behind an attitude of condemnation."

Last month, the pope also met — for the fourth time — a group of transgender people who are cared for by a Catholic parish on the outskirts of Rome.

As the pope met the latest group of LGBT Catholics on Sept. 21, they greeted the pontiff wearing T-shirts bearing a rainbow heart and a passage of scripture from 1 John 4:18: "In love, there is no fear."

. “Pope says using Tinder is 'normal,' talks inclusivity in Disney documentary.” Justin McLellan. *National Catholic Reporter* (April 5, 2023) <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/pope-says-using-tinder-normal-talks-inclusivity-disney-documentary>

Speaking with 10 young adults, Spanish-speakers between 20 and 25 years old from around the globe, the pope responded to questions on topics ranging from the church's abuse crisis to abortion and from LGBTQ inclusion to immigration.

The conversation was filmed in June 2022 for a documentary titled "The Pope: Answers," released on the streaming service Disney+ April 5. The pope warned against labeling all sexual activity as "ugly" and said the church's "catechesis on sex is still in diapers."

"Christians haven't always had a mature catechesis on sex," he added.

Asked by a self-described nonbinary person about the treatment of LGBTQ people in the church, Francis said people who use the Gospel to sow hate "live to condemn others because they don't know how to ask forgiveness for their own faults."

"I don't have the right to cast anyone out from the church," said the pope, referring to members of the LGBTQ community. "My job is to receive, always."

At the conversation's end, the pope thanked the young people for the conversation saying he learned a lot from them, and joked that in conclusion he risked making a marketing statement:

"This is the way of the church: all brothers and sisters, all united, each their own points of views, their positions, some closer, some further, but brothers and sisters, a fraternity."

French Bishops. "French Catholic Education Association Seeks Balance in Gender Identity Guidance." Report by Bobby Nichols. *New Ways Ministry* (April 27, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/04/27/french-catholic-education-association-seeks-balance-in-gender-identity-guidance/>

In a new set of guidelines, the French Association for Catholic Education recommends acknowledging students and staff who express "alternative gender feelings," while at the same time suggesting educators keep their distance from what they refer to as "gender ideology."

Drawing inspiration from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* that calls Catholics to be attentive to all people, the letter seeks to respond to the needs of students.

The letter also addresses how Catholic schools should handle gender identity issues within the framework of French law. Although Catholic schools fall under different regulations than public schools, they still must offer sexual education courses. However, Catholic schools are exempt from certain requirements and do not have to allow students to change their names on records, to provide gender-neutral restrooms, or to alter uniform or clothing requirements.

As Catholic schools around the world enact policies about gender identity, the French Association for Catholic Education seeks an alternative path from some transgender-negative U.S. diocesan policies, instead seeking to account for both Catholic tradition and modern science. "We want to make our schools a real space of freedom for young people," Philippe Delorme, secretary-general of Catholic education, shared, "They must be given space to progress and take the time to reflect, as the Academy of Medicine recommends."

Fullam, Lisa. "'Repeating a Silly Idea Doesn't Make It True': Where Some Bishops Err on Trans Identities." *New Ways Ministry* (May 11, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/05/11/repeating-a-silly-idea-doesnt-make-it-true-where-some-bishops-err-on-trans-identities/>

One of the more curious accusations leveled at transgender people in Catholic magisterial documents is that of dualism, that somehow trans people are adopting the stance that body and soul/mind/spirit are considered separable in the human person, and that bodily sex is a matter of personal choice.

Repeating a silly idea doesn't make it true. Further, this accusation is exactly backwards; any body/soul dualism here is in the magisterial minds, not those of the people they attack. Let me explain.

Fundamental Catholic anthropology holds that the human person is incarnate spirit, in other words an inseparable body/soul composite. Resurrection (Jesus' and, in time, our own) is not merely a matter of disembodied spirits floating around but involves physical bodies: the risen Jesus ate and drank with his friends, invited Thomas to touch his wounds, grilled fish on the beach for breakfast. His body wasn't identical to his previous body—he had an unsettling tendency to show up in closed rooms, for example—but he was still a body, flesh and blood, not spirit alone. In Catholic thought, we don't have bodies, we are bodies. We are not merely material, but ensouled matter; our spirits/souls/minds inform and enliven our bodily selves.

So the Popes et al., got that part right. (Phew!) Where they went wrong was in their description of trans identity: they seem to think that trans people simply choose their bodily form the way one might choose clothing for the day, a matter of personal whim or taste. I see two mistakes in this assumption.

First, trans people are the last to say that bodies are a matter of whim or simple choice. (A caveat: I do not claim to represent here the experience of every trans person, but only those I've read and spoken with.) Many trans people transition out of a profound sense of a disconnect between who they know themselves to be and how they are labeled, dressed, addressed, and have been socialized. For some trans people, this begins at the age when children first express gender identity, about 2-4 years of age; for others this becomes an urgent matter later on, at puberty or beyond. Transition may take enormous courage as people risk relationships with families and friends, career, and safety: trans people are subject to hate crimes at a rate surpassing that of LGB people, who are themselves attacked disproportionately to the general population. Transition at every stage is a statement that bodies matter a great deal, and must align with one's deepest sense of self.

Second, an increasing body of psychological and neurological evidence shows that trans identity is not a matter of mind alone, but involves certain aspects of brain function—a biological/bodily, not a purely psychological phenomenon.[1] For example, some trans men on testosterone note psychological and social effects of the hormone beyond “merely” physical effects. Intriguingly, some neuroscientists are raising questions of [whether gender causes epigenetic changes in the brain](#). Epigenetics explores how one's environment and experience can influence how genes are expressed, which could affect biological sex (at least if “biological sex” is understood—correctly—as more than a matter of X or Y chromosomes, but descriptive of the whole organism). Thus, again, the magisterial accusation that the “immaterial mind” is imposing itself arbitrarily on the material body is simply untrue.

Any body/soul dualism, clearly, is in the magisterial mind, not in the experience of trans people or in an increasing body of scientific evidence that affirms their sense of self.

I suspect that the fundamental error in the magisterial stance is a failure of moral imagination. As cisgender guys, they probably cannot imagine trans identity as anything other than contradictions of their incarnate cis selves. Indeed, for them, it would be—but not for trans people. All in all, they might make an effort to listen to trans people, not just talk about them.

Lisa Fullam, D.V.M., Th.D., professor emerita, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University.

“German Bishop Calls for “Significant Changes” to Catholic Teachings on Sexuality.” Robert Shine, *New Ways Ministry* (April 24, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/04/24/german-bishop-calls-for-significant-changes-to-catholic-teachings-on-sexuality/>

In a letter to his diocese, a German bishop has called for the church to re-evaluate its sexual ethics, and he considers LGBTQ+ people at the center of this work.

Bishop Heiner Wilmer, SCJ, of Hildesheim, Germany, released the letter Catholics in his diocese at the conclusion of Germany’s Synodal Way, which held its final assembly ended in March. In the [seven-page letter](#), Wilmer addressed many of the topics covered in the multi-year process, including writing of LGBTQ+ issues.

Jackels, Archbishop Michael. “Gender: Bend but Don’t Break.” A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels *Archdiocese of Dubuque* (October 24, 2022)
https://dbqarch.org/documents/2022/10/MJ_102422_GenderBendbutDontBreak.pdf

His Excellency’s Letter is reported and critiqued by Robert Shine in “Bishop Claims Transgender and Nonbinary Identities Are Result of Original Sin.” *New Ways Ministry* (November 3, 2022)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/11/03/bishop-claims-transgender-and-nonbinary-identities-are-result-of-original-sin/>

Jackels writes:

“People who identify themselves as transgender sometimes express themselves with a new name, preferred pronouns or wardrobe, and anticipate that others will respect that choice. That is a challenge for those who embrace the Catholic worldview, especially in terms of understanding the human person and human sexuality

“Catholics are guided by the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised will lead us into all truth (John 16:13). That guidance is given through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

“In our human nature we enjoy free-will, which isn’t a limitless autonomy, but circumscribed by the sovereign will of God (Genesis 2:17).

“Our first parents violated those boundaries by trying to commandeer the sovereignty of God, resulting in our soul and body feeling divided (Genesis 3:5).

“One form of that divide is feeling shame when naked (Genesis 3:7). Others may feel it as a disconnect between their chosen gender and their body.”

“But at this point in the gender discussion, we aren’t able to go along with the idea that people can choose and change their gender, rather than see it as a fact of nature.

“Others may consider Catholics unenlightened, but we too deserve respect when in our various ministries we aren’t able to accommodate someone’s preferred gender expressions.”

Biographical Update: On April 4, 2023 Pope Francis accepted the resignation of the 68-year-old Jackels for “health reasons.” Jackels was named Bishop of Wichita in 2005 (serving there until 2013 before assuming the position in Dubuque). Prior to that he spent eight years working in the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI. Named a bishop by Pope John Paul II he was consecrated bishop on April 4, 2005 (2 days after John Paul’s death) by bishops Joseph F. Naumann, Fabian Bruskewitz, and Thomas Olmsted. He was appointed Archbishop of Dubuque technically by Pope Francis who had been elected Pope 3 weeks earlier.

Joensen, Bishop William. “Iowa Bishop Uses Occasion of Diocesan Anniversary to Criticize Transgender People.” *New Ways Ministry* (August 25, 2021)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/08/25/iowa-bishop-uses-occasion-of-diocesan-anniversary-to-criticize-transgender-people/> His Grace’s full blog posting of August 17, 2021 can be found at

<https://www.dmdiocese.org/blog/bishop-still-together-after-all-these-years>



<https://i0.wp.com/www.newwaysministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/20191111T1106-0831-CNS-BISHOPS-FALL-MEETING.jpeg?fit=1000%2C667&ssl=1>

Citing illnesses such as Parkinson’s, dementia, and disordered eating, in the next paragraph, Joensen writes, “One of the acute challenges facing families and our society is the rising attention devoted to the situation of persons suffering from gender dysphoria/gender-identity discordance.”

The bishop uses the next three paragraphs to reject proper medical care for transgender people. He attributes being transgender to “sexual or other forms of trauma” in youth and uses an anti-intersex slur in discussing why assigned sex is determinative for a person. Joensen continues:

“The emerging medical data confirm that so-called gender-altering surgeries and the chemical disruption of sexual development that is a preceding step do not deliver promised long-term therapeutic relief. Sadly, the incidence of suicide for these patients does not decrease. We do not want to be complicit with a cultural mindset that simply shrugs and goes along with irregular drumbeat of the demands to abet what is a fundamental mis-taking of our human personhood. . .

“Perhaps for persons who suffer gender-identity discordance, the yoke of suffering they bear may not be fully alleviated until Christ destroys all authority and power, including death itself, and hands us over to his Father as the most prized possessions of his Kingdom. We take comfort in the Gospel truth that those who share most fully in the cup of Christ’s suffering will be filled to overflowing with the new wine of Spirit joy.”

Lori, Archbishop William. “Like Every Disciple: LGBT Accompaniment.” *Archdiocese of Baltimore* (2023) <https://www.archbalt.org/lgbt-pastoral-accompaniment/> **Also found at** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uT6LahqKChnJpw7zMx-o2ioaR3HmzsQ5/view?usp=sharing>

Persons who may identify as LGBT are daughters and sons of God, they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, they are members of the Body of Christ, they are our family members and friends. Like every human person, they were created with a desire for intimacy with Jesus Christ. Like every disciple, LGBT persons are called to a lifelong journey of turning toward the Lord, seeking to know and love Him more and more deeply each day. The experience of LGBT persons means that they approach this journey of discipleship within a particular context, yet the deepest needs of their heart are the same. The Church, with a mother’s tenderness, never forsakes or abandons any of her children but seeks to draw them close and lead them to Christ, who fulfills their hearts’ desire. As Pope Francis reminds us there are “three words that indicate God’s style: nearness, compassion, tenderness.”[7] If this is the method of Christ, it must also be the method of the Church.

Key Issue/Question:

Many would say that someone can *either* be Catholic *or* be LGBT. They would suggest that to be both Catholic and LGBT would require rejecting some part of their identity or rejecting some aspect of the Church’s teaching. Thus, the question we face as a local church is this: How do we offer pastoral accompaniment to LGBT persons and their families in a way that truly welcomes and embraces them while faithfully teaching the truth about human sexuality that God has revealed in creation, Scripture, and Tradition? How can such accompaniment lead LGBT persons into a deeper relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and his body the Church?

When it comes to accompaniment of LGBT persons, two elements must be held in a life-giving tension. The first is our desire to welcome every person into relationship with Christ and his Body, the Church. The second is the desire to lead people to the fullness of life that flows from knowing the liberating truth about the human person that has been revealed to us in nature and fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

The first element—the desire for charity, the desire to truly welcome and embrace sexual minorities, to hear their stories, to walk with them in their struggles—is essential. Without this, no such ministry is possible. We should not presume to understand what each person has gone through or is going through. Openness to the lived experience of LGBT persons and a desire to walk with them is essential.

The response of the Church must also always be one of truth. If we are to love people, in the truest and deepest way, we must desire their good. To love is to desire the good of the other. This requires us to ask questions about what is truly good: What are we made for? What does it mean to be a human person? What is the meaning of human sexuality? What is sacred about our embodied nature? These have always been important questions, but they are even more important today when there is so much confusion and rancor.

While we experience a tension in balancing charity and truth, we also know that in Jesus, they are one. Truth is not an impediment to charity; and charity is no threat to truth; they mutually inform one other. Truth requires charity and charity needs truth. Navigating this tension is not easy. As the various ministries that are arising to serve LGBT persons have developed, it has become clear that there is often a struggle to hold these two essential elements in a life-giving tension. As a result, these ministries may tend more strongly toward one element or another. We need both.

While we seek to speak the truth in charity, no set of guidelines—however thorough—will say all that needs to be said or say it in the best way. As such we approach this task with a great deal of humility asking always for the Holy Spirit to preserve us in communion, fidelity, and love.

What I also realize is that nothing is more powerful than building relationships and walking together.

His Grace then presents, and further explains, the “Essential Characteristics of Pastoral Accompaniment”:

- RECOGNIZING THE REALITY OF OUR NEED.
- SHOWING COMPASSION, RESPECT, AND SENSITIVITY.
- JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN LIGHT OF OUR CALLING.
- HAVING A DIFFERENT KIND OF CONVERSATION.

- LIVING ROOTED IN THE CHURCH.
- BEING WILLING TO MAKE THE LONG JOURNEY.

Marx, Cardinal Reinhard (Munich and Freising, Germany). "Cardinal Marx Celebrates Mass Marking '20 Years of Queer Worship and Pastoral Care'." *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire.

<https://www.ncregister.com/cna/cardinal-marx-celebrates-mass-marking-20-years-of-queer-worship-and-pastoral-care>

This piece is NOT by Cardinal Marx, but about him---a strong critique from the EWTN Media Empire.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx celebrated a Mass marking “20 years of queer worship and pastoral care” in Munich, southern Germany, on Sunday.

The archbishop of Munich and Freising offered the Mass on March 13 at St. Paul parish church, near Munich’s Theresienwiese, where the annual Oktoberfest is celebrated, reported CNA Deutsch, CNA’s German-language news partner.

Speaking at the Mass, the cardinal said: “I desire an inclusive Church. A Church that includes all who want to walk the way of Jesus.”

He added that a synodal Church means being open, learning, and always breaking out anew in faith, in the search for the “possibilities of God,” as well as “in the question of what we have to say about sexuality and what we have to say about people’s relationships.”

“The kingdom of God is to discover that God is Love — in all its dimensions.” This included the sexual dimension but was not limited to it, he added.

“All human relationships must be marked by the primacy of Love. Then they can be accepted by God,” he said.

The archdiocese noted that the “men’s pastoral care service of the archdiocese offers dedicated weekends for gay, bi and trans men, and there are other programs on offer in the area of the department of family and adult pastoral care such as retreats for LGBTI.”

The archdiocese quoted a project leader as saying: “Rainbow ministry sees itself as a service to the reconciliation of the Church with the LGBTI community. It works to resolve theologically those traditions and Church structures that in the past have led or still lead to the discrimination and devaluation of LGBTI persons, in order to overcome them.”

The Munich archdiocese’s goal, it said, was for “LGBTI people to experience appreciation throughout the parishes of the entire archdiocese” and find programs “about their life situation, in which they feel accepted and taken seriously as people and members of the Church.”

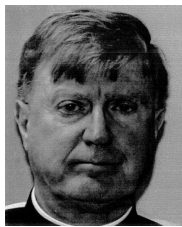
A number of German prelates have called publicly for changes in the Church's stance on homosexuality. There have also been similar appeals in neighboring Austria.

German bishops who have so far publicly voiced support for blessing same-sex unions include Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Bishop Franz-Josef Bode of Osnabrück, Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, and Bishop Heinrich Timmermeyer of Dresden-Meißen.

Bishop Georg Bätzing, the president of the German bishops' conference, called in December 2020 for changes to the section on homosexuality in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which was promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992 as an authoritative guide to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

McManus, Bishop Robert (Worcester MA). "Bishop Issues Decree on Nativity School." Diocese of Worcester, MA (June 16, 2022)

<https://worcesterdiocese.org/news/bishop-issues-decree-on-nativity-school>



<https://patch.com/img/cdn/users/1923478/2013/05/raw/5ce18b0bbfd41fe132b3f90c3c455ff4.jpg>

Bishop McManus' Statement:

The school claims to be a "Catholic" school affiliated with the Roman Catholic/Jesuit tradition. The administration of the school has permitted the flying of "Black Lives Matter" and "Gay Pride" flags in front of the school for a period of time.

I publicly stated in an open letter dated, May 4, 2022, that "these symbols (flags) embody specific agendas or ideologies (that) contradict Catholic social and moral teaching." It is my contention that the "Gay Pride" flag represents support of gay marriage and actively living a LGBTQ+ lifestyle.

This is also true of "Black Lives Matter." The Catholic Church teaches that all life is sacred and the Church certainly stands unequivocally behind the phrase "black lives matter" and strongly affirms that all lives matter.

However, the "Black Lives Matter" movement has co-opted the phrase and promotes a platform that directly contradicts Catholic social teaching on the importance and role of the nuclear family and seeks to disrupt the family structure in clear opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The flying of these flags in front of a Catholic school sends a mixed, confusing and scandalous message to the public about the Church's stance on these important moral and social issues.

According to canon 803, §§ 1-3, of the Code of Canon Law, the Diocesan Bishop must maintain vigilance over Catholic Schools within his Diocese, even those operated by lay groups who seek the use of the title “Catholic” for their schools. Such usage requires ecclesiastical approbation (canon 803, §3). ...

After prayerful consideration of this matter, I, the Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, Bishop of Worcester, holding before me my pastoral responsibilities to this particular Church, in view of canon 381, §1, hereby declare and decree the following:

- The Nativity School of Worcester is prohibited from this time forward from identifying itself as a “Catholic” school and may no longer use the title “Catholic” to describe itself;
- Mass, sacraments and sacramentals are no longer permitted to be celebrated on Nativity School premises or be sponsored by Nativity School in any church building or chapel within the Diocese of Worcester;
- The Nativity School is not allowed to undertake any fundraising involving diocesan institutions in the Diocese of Worcester and is not permitted to be listed or advertise in the Diocesan Directory;
- The name of Bishop Emeritus Daniel P. Reilly must be removed from the list of the Board of Trustees of Nativity School.

This decree is effective immediately.

I order that this decree be published.

Given at Worcester, Massachusetts, this the tenth day of June, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand twenty-two.

For the Worcester Nativity School’s Response see “Statement to the Nativity Worcester Community.” (June 15, 2022) <https://nativityworcester.org/statement-to-community/>

Issued in response to Worcester Bishop Robert McManus’ stripping of “Catholic Identity” from the school and prohibition of the celebration of the sacraments.

For a media report see Michael O’Loughlin, “Bishop forbids Jesuit-run school from calling itself ‘Catholic’ for flying LGBT and Black Lives Matter flags.” *America* (June 16, 2022)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/06/16/worcester-nativity-lgbt-blm-243176?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=v7lqCXpdNKIX2abCpSrlCc2N5QmtU4RtP.WtnPl4tkFm5Biq6vnzH.BkS9pLqCeUm6jp_wK8

For a commentary on the Bishop’s actions see James T. Bretzke, S.J., “Could the Sanctioning of Nativity School Have Been Handled Differently? | Part One” *New Ways Ministry* (August 2, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/02/could-the-sanctioning-of-nativity-school-have-been-handled-differently-part-one/>

Abstract: The standoff between Bishop Robert McManus of Worcester and the Jesuit-Sponsored Nativity Middle School in his diocese over the School's flying of Gay Pride and Black Lives Matter flags resulted in the Bishop's stripping the designation of "Catholic" from the School, and forbidding the celebration of the Sacraments in any School sponsored venue. This article looks at the morally relevant features of this decision and suggests that a broader application of the Roman concept of *auctoritas* (moral authority or prudence) would be a helpful complement to the exercise of episcopal *potestas* (juridical power). Flags as symbols can often have multivalent meanings, and exploration of some of these differing meanings may help to resolve the standoff.

_____. "Could the Sanctioning of Nativity School Have Been Handled Differently? | Part 2 *New Ways Ministry* (August 3, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/03/could-the-sanctioning-of-nativity-school-have-been-handled-differently-part-two/>

O'Loughlin, Michael and Christopher Parker. "Catholic Pride month events face increasing backlash." *America* (June 12, 2023)

https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2023/06/12/pride-month-june-2023-245471?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=rrVnEjkZL7tFiqueet27uSI2U7ki1VZd3d_6837o0oRNmLlokIOqRcS_y6aJgvOWjRvnOc6m4

On Monday, the bishops conference said in an announcement, "Catholic Christians traditionally recognize June as the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," and urged believers "to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart on June 16, offering this prayer as an act of reparation for the blasphemies against our Lord we see in our culture today."

Increased visibility among L.G.B.T. Americans has created a backlash to some Pride events, with some activists zeroing in on events and programming appealing to children, especially related to gender identity. Catholic celebrations are not immune to the pressure. ...

Back in Pittsburgh, an email from Bishop David Zubik said that while the "Church has invested much energy in welcoming people who are dealing with sensitive issues in their lives, [it] cannot support behavior that goes against God's law."

The bishop, who last year released a pastoral letter about hospitality that included a call for the church to be welcoming to L.G.B.T. Catholics, said that ministers want "to do more in our pastoral care," but he nonetheless asked organizers to cancel the event.

"My hope is that the Church of Pittsburgh is welcoming to the LGBTQ community and in turn that the LGBTQ community is welcoming of the Church and her teachings," Bishop Zubik continued.

Paprocki, Most Reverend. Thomas. "The Law Of The Heart Is Love." *First Things* (June 8, 2023) <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2023/06/the-law-of-the-heart-is-love>

Quite an emotional attack at support for Gay Pride.

“The Catholic Church teaches that pride is the deadliest of the deadly sins, so it is something to be avoided, along with lust, not celebrated.

The rainbow was first used as a symbol in the Bible, when God told Noah following the flood that the rainbow “is the sign of the covenant that I am making between me and you and every living creature with you for all ages to come” (Genesis 9:12). This rainbow was not a symbol for a license to sin nor was the covenant a one-sided promise on God’s part, since the Lord said that he would “demand an accounting” for the actions of every creature on earth (Genesis 9:5).

Humility and chastity: These would be more fitting themes to promote during this month of June.”

Sample, Archbishop Alexander (Portland OR). “US archbishop condemns abortion, transgender ideology and the undermining of marriage.” *Life Site News* (August 25, 2022)
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/us-archbishop-condemns-abortion-transgender-ideology-and-the-undermining-of-marriage/>

In an appearance on Catholic Answers Live, Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland, Oregon spoke out in condemnation of abortion, the undermining of marriage, and the new push for the acceptance of transgender ideology, calling these an attack of Satan against God. For the YouTube link to the interview go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFxdePp1HGI>

“The Enemy despises the image of God in us,” Sample said. “I think Satan has engineered this whole acceptance of the evil of abortion.”

Addressing the newest attacks on marriage posed by the transgender ideology sweeping the nation that were preceded by the cultural push for a universal acceptance of homosexuality in all corners of public life, Sample affirmed the basic complementarity of the two sexes written into human nature. “A man’s body doesn’t make sense without a woman’s body and a women’s body doesn’t make sense without a man’s body,” he declared, echoing the words of Genesis, “In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Sample then pointed out that to reject the distinction and complementarity of the two sexes is to attack God our Creator, in whose image we are made. “A lot of this insanity with gender ideology today is an attack on the image of God in each of us.”

At a time in which many bishops are calling for the Church to cast off its moral teachings in favor of an agenda more acceptable to the secular world, Archbishop Sample stands out among Catholic prelates for his courage in clearly addressing controversial issues in a way that both exposes deceptions and provides a theological foundation for understanding the truth.

_____. “Archbishop urges truth and love on controversial issues [Interview].” *Catholic Sentinel* (June 17, 2022)
<https://catholicsentinel.org/Content/Faith-Spirituality/Living-Faith/Article/Archbishop-ur>

[ges-truth-and-love-on-controversial-issues-/4/29/45908](https://www.ges-truth-and-love-on-controversial-issues-/4/29/45908) See the entire interview:
<https://youtu.be/yFxdePp1HGI>.

Archbishop Alexander Sample on June 13, 2022 described abortion, disregard for family life and transgender ideology as instances of a satanic attack on the image and likeness of God.

“A lot of this insanity with gender ideology today is an attack on the image of God in each of us,” Archbishop Sample said. “The pope was very clear and strong on altering gender — he called it an assault on God himself.”

The archbishop criticizes schools where young children are taught that gender is fluid and a matter of choice.

Scandinavian Bishops. Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality. 5th Sunday of Lent 2023 (March 26, 2023)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m93-02fVM5C1ujnkqitg04EpCD0v7kdN/view?ts=64218e4c>

_____. “Scandinavian Bishops’ Letter on Sexuality Exemplifies Tension in Catholic LGBTQ+ Issues.” Bobby Nichols and Robert Shine reporting in *New Ways Ministry* (May 3, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/05/03/scandinavian-bishops-letter-on-sexuality-exemplifies-tension-in-catholic-lgbtq-issues/>

The Catholic bishops from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland wrote about the “noble aspirations” of the LGBTQ+ movement. They claim to share a similar desire for the movement’s goals of promoting the “dignity of all human beings and of their longing to be seen.” However, the bishops also assert that the “image of God in human nature manifests itself in the complementarity of male and female,” and they criticize views that support same-gender sexual relationships and expansive views about gender.

This letter from the Nordic Bishops’ Conference highlights the common tension in how Catholics approach LGBTQ+ issues: should the primary lens be the church’s sex and gender ethics or its social justice tradition? The bishops attempt to answer somewhere in the middle. The pastoral letter shows no evidence of consultation with any LGBTQ+ people or contemporary science, and this lack of open communication echoes a painful trend in recent church documents that fail to reason with science and listen to the experience of the LGBTQ+ community.

It is debatable whether the bishops found the balance they sought, but it is good that the bishops acknowledge positive aspects in the movement for LGBTQ+ equality and commit themselves to pastoral accompaniment even across difference.

Scott, Katie Collins. “Catholic hospitals criticize report alleging they provide surgeries for trans youth.” *National Catholic Reporter* (November 13, 2024)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-hospitals-criticize-report-alleging-they-provide->

[surgeries-trans-youth?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=32dae00cc4-EMAIL_CA_MPAIGN_2024_11_13_02_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-32dae00cc4-230519238](https://www.nationalcatholicreporter.com/surgeries-trans-youth?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=32dae00cc4-EMAIL_CA_MPAIGN_2024_11_13_02_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-32dae00cc4-230519238)

Catholic hospitals are raising alarms about the accuracy of a conservative group's list of U.S. medical facilities that allegedly provided gender-affirming procedures to minors over a five-year period.

The list was compiled by an organization with backing from conservative Catholics and others who oppose gender-affirming interventions. At least three bishops have cited the group's work that claims such care was given by 28 Catholic health systems.

But the stated methodology of the group, [Do No Harm](#), is being denounced for drawing potentially false conclusions from anonymous billing data on individuals — while even acknowledging separately that its own database might be incorrect.

The Catholic Health Association and independent specialists consulted by the National Catholic Reporter cited several problems:

- Some data relies on billing codes for treatments that are not only for gender transition but also non-transition-related medical conditions.
- The methodology does not indicate if the group took into account the age and sex of patients, variables that clarify if a prescription is for transitioning or a different medical reason.
- The group does not fully disclose where it obtained its data and lacks an objective peer review, both departures from scientific best practices.

Mercy Sr. Mary Haddad, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, sent a memo to association members listing "errors and inaccuracies in the database." The Oct. 30 memo, which has not previously been made public and was reviewed by the National Catholic Reporter, echoes critiques of medical specialists who examined the database for NCR.

Dominican Fr. Charles Bouchard, a liaison between the bishops and the Catholic Health Association for seven years until he retired last year, said he is unaware of any gender-affirming surgeries on minors at Catholic facilities during his tenure.

NCR asked Do No Harm for a response to the criticisms. The group defended its methodology, but its response did not address specific questions about that methodology.

Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane, Washington, has [called for](#) a special bishops meeting to discuss the so-called violations of Catholic medical ethics in the report, and Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, cited the data in his recent [column](#). "Woe to Catholic individuals and institutions who poison and mutilate children," Conley wrote.

The database was released as Donald Trump made transgender-related policies a key issue in his presidential campaign, condemning trans rights in speeches at rallies and in hundreds of television advertisements in battleground states.

Attention to the group's findings comes as the bishops' doctrine committee is working to update its [Ethical and Religious Directives](#), which are binding for the large network of U.S. Catholic health care facilities. Revisions are expected to reflect a [doctrinal note](#) issued last year rejecting interventions that "transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex."

Do No Harm, a nonprofit advocacy group working to ban gender-affirming care nationwide, is primarily bankrolled by conservative groups, among them [a fund](#) tied to Catholic and judicial activist [Leonard Leo](#).

The nonprofit released the findings in October in a [state-by-state dashboard](#). The data allegedly shows that nearly 14,000 minors received gender-affirming treatments at hospitals, including some at Catholic facilities, between 2019 and 2023. In a news release, Dr. Stanley Goldfarb, founder of Do No Harm, said the data show "the pervasiveness of irreversible sex-change treatments for minors in America."

There are about [300,000 minors](#) in the United States ages 13-17 who identify as transgender, according to the Williams Institute, a research center at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law. Based on that figure and Do No Harm numbers, 2.9% of trans youths nationwide would have received hormones and puberty blockers at hospitals over the five-year period; 1.9 % would have undergone surgeries.

Julia Sadusky, a Catholic psychologist who has reservations about gender-affirming medical interventions, especially for minors, flagged several potential problems in the report.

There are treatments listed in the group's methodology that are provided to patients for many reasons, "some of which are not sex-specific and have nothing to do with transition," Sadusky said.

Liebschutz agreed. For example, "reshaping of tip of nose" is listed in the group's report. "That's a nose job," Liebschutz said. "Hair removal by electrolysis" could be a teen eliminating unwanted hair growth.

Likewise, there are medications that are "not used specifically for transition," said Dr. Cynthia Herrick, who specializes in endocrinology and is co-director of a gender medicine clinic in St. Louis.

Do No Harm does not explain if it took into account the age or sex of patients. That's a problem because the same drug prescribed as a puberty blocker for a 9-year-old transgender-identifying youth could be used to treat precocious puberty in a 5-year-old. Depo-Testosterone can be used for gender transition but is also prescribed for men and boys to treat conditions caused by a lack of the hormone.

Shine, Robert. “Catholic Groups, Including USCCB, Seek Halt to Federal Protections for Transgender Athletes.” *New Ways Ministry* (June 12, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/06/12/catholic-groups-including-usccb-seek-halt-to-federal-protections-for-transgender-athletes/>

Three Catholic organizations, including the U.S. bishops’ conference, have asked the U.S. Department of Education to halt efforts to protect transgender athletes in schools.

The [joint letter](#) from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), National Catholic Education Association, and The Catholic University of America is a public comment as the Biden administration seeks to make Title IX funding contingent on schools’ support for transgender athletes.

The new rule, if approved, would prohibit generalized policies forcing students to participate in sports according to their assigned sex, rather than their gender. Exceptions could be allowed if a school or university can prove forcing an athlete to participate according to their assigned sex is necessary for reasons of safety or competitiveness.

The Catholic groups’ letter, which does acknowledge the church opposes “unjust discrimination,” nonetheless argues:

“The NPRM [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking] imposes an inaccurate view of human nature and sexuality. It is internally inconsistent, unworkably vague, and fails to consider a significant aspect of the issue presented – the intersection of the NPRM’s requirements with the Title IX religious exemption.”

After a lengthy section about the institutional church’s present LGBTQ-negative teachings on gender, the letter is mainly concerned with whether religious schools or universities would see their federal funding impacted should they choose to discriminate against transgender athletes. The letter claims the proposed rule is not sufficiently clear about how religious exemptions would work, writing:

“Given the many religious schools subject to Title IX and the prevalence of relevant religious beliefs, the Department should clarify how the proposed rule applies to schools with religious beliefs contrary to the proposed rule’s requirements. The application of the religious exemption to a religious school’s internal policies on sports participation should be straightforward: The school should be free to adhere to its religious beliefs in how it runs its athletics programs.”

A further concern is that religious schools may be impacted if other schools choose to opt out of competition with religious schools that discriminate against transgender athletes.

Leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have worked for several years to stop non-discrimination policies benefiting transgender athletes at educational institutions. Earlier this year, Bishops Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, as chair of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, and Thomas Daly of Spokane, as chair of the

Committee on Catholic Education, [wrote to Republican legislators](#) in support of their bill to prohibit trans women and girls from participating on female sports teams. This federal bill would add to similar laws passed in at least eighteen states. In 2020, two USCCB leaders, Bishops David Konderla of Tulsa and Michael Barber of Oakland, [endorsed similar legislation](#) that would have ended federal Title IX education funding if trans women and girls were allowed on female sports teams.

In 2022, as USCCB representatives, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, and Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane [asked the Department of Education](#) to not expand other Title IX protections to include LGBTQ+ students and survivors of sexual assault.

. “New Ways Ministry Brings Transgender, Intersex, Ally Catholics for Dialogue with Pope Francis.” *New Ways Ministry* (October 12, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/10/12/new-ways-ministry-brings-transgender-intersex-ally-catholics-for-dialogue-with-pope-francis/>

Pope Francis met today with a diverse group of transgender, intersex, and ally Catholics, including a medical doctor who provides gender transition care. The group urged Pope Francis to move past the Church’s negative approach to gender-diverse people, and to encourage Church leaders to listen more attentively to the lives and faith of LGBTQ+ people.

The nearly 90-minute meeting was arranged by Sister Jeannine Gramick, SL, a U.S. nun who has ministered with LGBTQ+ people and their families for more than 50 years. The visit was sponsored by New Ways Ministry, a national Catholic outreach to the LGBTQ+ community, which Sister Gramick co-founded in 1977 with the late Fr. Robert Nugent, SDS.

Five of the group of 11 Catholics who met with the pope shared their testimonies with him, including:

Nicole Santamaria, an intersex woman from El Salvador who immigrated to the United States because of death threats.

Michael Sennett, a transgender man and a theology graduate student, who has been involved with church ministry for many years.

Deacon Raymond and Laurie Dever, pastoral ministers who are the parents of a transgender daughter, whose difficult transition led to a suicide attempt.

Dr. Cynthia Herrick, a medical doctor specializing in endocrinology and a co-director of a gender medicine clinic.

New Ways Ministry staff also attending the meeting are Sr. Jeannine Gramick, Co-founder; Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director; Robert Shine, Associate Director; Brian Flanagan, theologian and Senior Fellow, Matthew Myers, Operations Manager; Bernadette Donlon, Digital Content Coordinator.



Pope Francis meeting part of the the New Ways Ministry delegation. From left, Dr. Cynthia Herrick, Laurie Dever, Deacon Ray Dever, Michael Sennett, and Nicole Santamaria

Stowe, Bishop John, OFM, Conv. “Bishop Stowe: Legislators’ Priorities Must Include Care for LGBTQ+ People.” *New Ways Ministry* (January 20, 2024)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/01/20/bishop-stowe-legislators-priorities-must-include-care-for-lgbtq-people/>

The text of the full address can be found here:

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/bishop-stowe-kentucky-lawmakers-focus-human-flourishing-not-book-bans>

Bishop John Stowe, OFM, Conv., of Lexington addressed the Kentucky Council of Churches last October in an address reprinted by the [National Catholic Reporter](#). Stowe opened by noting that his state ranks low on indicators like health and poverty, to which he asked:

“[W]ouldn’t you think that lawmakers would be concerned with something more beneficial than banning books, or creating more secrecy about the funding of public agencies?”

“Do you think that the pronouns a student chooses for themselves is the priority to get under control or that placing limits on the union dues collected is the best way to improve the quality of life for workers? . . .

“We, as a Council of Churches, have from the beginning been committed to fulfilling that requirement and have been consistently asking ourselves what it means and how are we to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God in our day and age and present circumstances.

“Perhaps it is easier to begin with what it doesn’t mean. To act justly cannot possibly mean to cause young people who are already suffering from gender dysphoria and the accompanying higher rates of suicidal ideation and mental illness to be further alienated by denying their experience and any references in literature or otherwise to people with similar experiences of life, and forcing them to use restrooms and changing rooms that make them uncomfortable, or denying their ability to consult a counselor in confidence.”

Stowe continued by expounding on what acting justly means: not denying people healthcare or meaningful work, not allowing the Earth to be abused by corporations, not abiding by white supremacy. And the bishop then reflected on what walking humbly means, explaining:

“And to walk humbly with God cannot mean that we discriminate against those who do not share our beliefs. To walk humbly with God cannot mean that Muslims are to be treated with disrespect or kept out of the nation altogether. To walk humbly with God cannot mean that we quietly accept rising incidents of antisemitism.

“To walk humbly with God cannot mean that we leave the LGBTQ population without basic rights of equal protection under the law and permit discrimination on the basis of gender. To walk humbly with God cannot mean that we leave the traveler beaten up in the road without help because they are undocumented, the wrong color, or of ambiguous gender.”

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB). “USCCB Asks Senators to Stop Equal Rights Amendment In Part Due to LGBTQ Concerns.” Robert Shine, *New Ways Ministry* (March 7, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/07/usccb-asks-senators-to-stop-equal-rights-amendment-in-part-due-to-lgbtq-concerns/>

The February 27, 2023 USCCB Letter can be found at

https://www.usccb.org/resources/ERA_Letter_and_Backgrounder_2023.pdf?ref=the-pillar

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has written to U.S. senators asking them to reject a reconsideration of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), in part because it would help protect transgender people’s rights.

About LGBTQ+ rights, the bishops write:

“Advocates have argued that laws forbidding sex discrimination also forbid discrimination based on ‘sexual orientation,’ ‘gender identity,’ and other categories. . . In fact, that year’s [2020] House Judiciary Committee report on H.J. Res. 79, a resolution purporting to remove the ERA’s ratification deadline, stated ‘the ERA’s prohibition against discrimination “on account of sex” could be interpreted to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.’ These claims heighten our concern about a federal constitutional provision that, in broad fashion, purports to forbid the abridgement [sic] of rights based on sex.”

The ERA would add language to the U.S. Constitution simply stating “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

The bishops allege that such consequences of the ERA’s passage could include ending gender-segregated spaces, such as restrooms, stating:

“The ERA could also be asserted as a basis for compelling people’s speech, such as to conform to ‘preferred pronouns.’ The ERA could bolster the claim that public social services devoted to the most vulnerable of women, including homeless and domestic abuse shelters, must admit men. Healthcare workers in public facilities could be forced to provide, and taxpayers made to pay for, ‘gender transition’ procedures, including on children.”

In the bishops’ backgrounder document, the bishops make their religious liberty argument. They argue that the ERA could “force private charities that offer a broad range of services to their communities to change their facilities, speech, and practices to promote abortion, or to affirm ‘gender identities’ or living situations, contrary to their sincerely-held religious and moral beliefs.” Conscience protections for religious organizations allegedly would be imperiled, and they continue:

“The ERA could likewise make it more difficult for faith-based organizations to compete on a level playing field with secular organizations in applying for and obtaining public resources to provide needed social services. For example, the government could argue on a constitutional level that a decision not to perform an abortion or transgender surgery is sex discrimination, so that a health care provider is ineligible to receive generally available federal funds (including Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements) for its healing work if it declines to perform such a procedure.”

The signatories of the letter are Bishop Robert Barron of Winona-Rochester, chair of the Committee for Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth; Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities; Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, chair of the Committee for Religious Liberty; and Archbishop Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

/ “USCCB Committee Chairmen [Archbishop Charles Chaput and Bishop George Murry] Applaud The Repeal Of “Dear Colleague Letter On Transgender Students.” February 27 2017. <http://www.usccb.org/news/2017/17-045.cfm> (accessed March 5, 2017)

Short statement congratulating President Trump for removing the anti-discrimination protocols for trans-gender students put in place by the Obama administration.

. “U.S. bishops call on Catholics to support measure in Congress over transgender athletes in female sports.” *Boston Pilot* (April 14, 2023) https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.php?h=U.S._bishops_call_on_Catholics_to_support_measure_in_Congress_over_transgender_athletes_in_female_sports&utm_source=ConstantContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Dailynewsletter&ID=194630

The U.S. bishops are calling on Catholics to contact their representatives and senators in Congress and urge them to vote for a bill that would protect women and girls' opportunities in sports by requiring federally funded female sports programs "to be

reserved for biological females." The proposed Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act, introduced in the U.S. House and Senate, "would promote fairness and safety for women and girls by ensuring female athletes can compete on a safe and level playing field with other females," the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said in an April 14 alert.

The USCCB alert indicated a vote is expected during the week of April 17. The bill is "consistent" with the Catholic Church's "clear teaching on the equality of men and women and the truth that we are created male and female," the USCCB said.

The USCCB full text can be found at:

https://www.usccb.org/resources/USCCB_Letter_Protection_of_Women_and_Girls_in_Sports_2023.pdf

The U.S. Department of Education's proposed rule can be found on the Federal Register website at <https://bit.ly/3KYqAaA>

Zubik, Bishop David. [Pittsburgh] Report by Aleja Hertzler-McCain. "Pittsburgh's Bishop Zubik cancels LGBTQ Mass after pressure online." *National Catholic Reporter* (June 14, 2023) <https://www.ncronline.org/news/pittsburghs-bishop-zubik-cancels-lgbtq-mass-after-pressure-online>

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik canceled a Corpus Christi Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ people, to be held on Duquesne University's campus, after a flyer advertising it as a "Pride Mass" was circulated on social media and anti-LGBTQ Catholic influencers urged their followers to contact the prelate.

The Pittsburgh-based group [Catholics for Change in Our Church](#) has held monthly social justice Masses at Duquesne University for more than two years. The group was formed in the wake of a [2018 grand jury report](#) in which more than 300 Pennsylvania priests were accused of sexual assault over some 70 years.

The group invited the LGBTQ Ministries at St. Joseph the Worker and St. Mary Magdalene parishes, Pax Christi and the Association of Pittsburgh Priests, a church renewal group, to collaborate on the June 11 Mass.

"It was mistakenly called a Pride Mass on a flyer created by one of the people of one of the groups helping to plan the Mass. The correct designation was a Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics," said Kevin Hayes, president of the board of Catholics for Change in Our Church.

The group held a Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics at Duquesne last year with support from campus minister and Spiritan Fr. Bill Christy, so Hayes said that he did not expect any problems this year.

"The purpose was to stand in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics and affirm and encourage LGBTQ Catholics as beloved sons and daughters of a loving God," said Hayes, who

expressed confusion about the meaning of a Pride Mass. "The Mass was not going to promote any ideas or initiatives contrary to church teaching," he said.

In a May 30 [blog post](#) about whether Catholics can celebrate Pride month, Jesuit Fr. [James Martin](#) wrote that Pride month is "a recognition of the human dignity of a group of people who have, for centuries, been treated with contempt, rejection and violence."

Martin wrote that it is "especially important for churches to mark Pride Month since much of the rejection that LGBTQ people have faced has been motivated by Christianity," including LGBTQ teens becoming homeless after their parents kick them out for religious reasons.

Consuelo "Chelo" Cruz-Martínez, a mother of two adult children who are part of the LGBTQ community, said she was "very hurt" that the Mass was canceled.

"As a mother, you are not sending me the message that you are an open church, that you are welcoming my children," said Cruz-Martínez, a psychologist and a former Sacred Heart sister who now volunteers in various Pittsburgh Catholic ministries. "I don't feel like the institution is supporting the many who are leaving the church because they do not feel at home."

"What is the problem with having a Mass to say to the gay community: We love you, you are welcome, you are a human being worthy of respect?" she asked.

Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith Declaration *Dignitas Infinita* On Human Dignity

Dicastery For The Doctrine Of The Faith. "Declaration "*Dignitas Infinita*" On Human Dignity." (April 8, 2024)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddd_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html

Commentaries and Reports on *Dignitas Infinita*

For the annotated bibliography on these commentaries and related reports see

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16I3BZBYQwe8uuumx8RXY8c3-2q6KCVLi/edit?usp=sharing&oid=10351953710877764442&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Norway

"A Joint Christian Declaration on 'Diversity of Gender and Sexuality'." *Felleskristen Norway* (no date, but accessed December 28, 2024)

<https://www.felleskristen.no/the-declaration-in-english>

Watson Simon, Ariell. “Norway’s Bishops Join Ecumenical Anti-LGBTQ+ Statement.” *New Ways Ministry* (December 28, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/12/28/norways-bishops-join-ecumenical-anti-lgbtq-statement/>

The Norwegian Catholic Bishops’ Council has signed onto an ecumenical statement denouncing diverse categories of gender and sexuality. Signed by 14 denominations and over 40 Christian organizations, the statement asserts that “the very concept of ‘gender and sexual diversity’ is not based on medical and natural science.” The statement, entitled “[A Joint Christian Declaration on ‘Diversity of Gender and Sexuality’](#),” claims that, “The notion that gender is a subjective category and that sexual and gender identity can be freely chosen on the basis of feelings or preference, irrespective of biological sex, is based on ideology.”

The document also argues that “Marriage between one man and one woman constitutes the Biblical framework for sexual relationships” and denounces “Other forms of sexual relationships [as] ‘diversity’ at odds with the Bible’s theology of creation and with Jesus’s ethical teaching.” This idea echoes a 2016 “Declaration on Marriage,” released the same year that the Church of Norway, the nation’s state church, ratified a gender-inclusive form of its marriage liturgy.

By endorsing this statement, the Catholic bishops have chosen to ally themselves with the conservative evangelical minority against the more progressive Church of Norway. Well over half of Norwegians belong to the Church of Norway, which has allowed queer marriages since 2017. Olav Fykse Tveit, its presiding bishop, [called the ecumenical statement](#) “disappointing,” “not a good contribution to Christian unity,” and “a poor use of Scripture.”

USCCB Canonical Committee on Transgenderism and Consecrated Life & Related Issues

McDonald, Matthew. “Bishops Call for Urgent Review of ‘Pediatric Sex-Change Services’ at Catholic Hospitals.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (November 11, 2024)
https://www.ncregister.com/news/conley-daley-call-for-urgent-review-gender-catholic-hospitals?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-6tSV0posCO2dog-LveidS2EKaOLjcS_uOutVOiAgeeoBPxS26FkudAPx1a2xKRB18g2Un-qGFPSaDXvs0NJjsKHV9Q&_hsmi=333570694&utm_content=333570694&utm_source=hs_email

Two culture-warrior bishops, James Conley of Lincoln, NE and Thomas Daly of Spokane, are calling for an investigation into Catholic hospitals that they claim did gender re-assignment surgeries.

This seems to be based on a *Register* article: [As the Register reported last month](#), on Oct. 8 a medical watchdog organization called Do No Harm [released a database](#) finding that about 150 Catholic hospitals in the United States provided “pediatric sex-change services” between 2019 and 2023, including 33 Catholic hospitals that performed so-called gender-reassignment surgeries on minors.

Spokesmen for several Catholic health-care organizations mentioned in the database have declined to confirm or deny that their hospitals have provided chemical or surgical procedures that contradict the Church's teaching on human sexuality. But they have defended the care they provide patients, including those who identify as transgender.

Bishop Thomas Daly, who leads the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, told EWTN News Nightly last month that he hopes bishops will talk about the sex-change database during regional meetings of bishops and perhaps discuss it as a body at a future meeting.

Christian, Gina. "US bishops' canonical committee to offer 'clear analysis' of transgenderism and consecrated life." *Boston Pilot* and *OSV* (June 17, 2024)

https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.php?h=US_bishops%27_canonical_committee_to_offer_%27clear_analysis%27_of_transgenderism_and_consecrated_life&utm_source=ConstantContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Dailynewsletter&ID=197629

A number of the nation's Catholic bishops have asked for guidance from their episcopal conference following the public disclosure of transgenderism by a Lexington diocesan hermit.

"This issue is now on our agenda," Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, told OSV News. "Other bishops may be looking at this, and they've asked about this. And so we will try to give a clear analysis that will give the doctrinal and canonical guidelines that hopefully will be helpful to any bishop."

39-year-old Brother Christian Matson, hermit for the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, came out as transgender on Pentecost Sunday (May 19, 2024), having been received as such when professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to Bishop John E. Stowe a year prior.

Bishop Stowe, who declined OSV News' request for comment, told Religion News Service in a May 19 article that he regarded Matson as "a sincere person seeking a way to serve the church."

The bishop also told the outlet that "hermits are a rarely used form of religious life ... but they can be either male or female. Because there's no pursuit of priesthood or engagement in sacramental ministry, and because the hermit is a relatively quiet and secluded type of vocation, I didn't see any harm in letting him live this vocation."

But Bishop Paprocki indicated to OSV News that following a "preliminary discussion" by the canonical affairs and governance committee, "the initial consensus ... was that it's not really possible for a (transgender) person to be admitted to the role of a hermit or consecrated life if they are not repentant of what they've done."

"Consecrated life is vowing yourself to God, and the church's teaching on transgender ideology is very clear," Bishop Paprocki told OSV News. "Pope Francis has been very clear about that. And the Bible is also very clear. God made us male and female. And so someone who is claiming to be a transgender person is basically denying a biblical and a doctrinal teaching of the church, and so I would say it would be very difficult for a person like that to authentically enter consecrated life unless that person's repented."

However, he added, "at least as far as being a hermit is concerned, if that person has repented and somehow tries to take steps to reverse the decision they made, well, maybe there's a possibility for a person in that situation. But that's not the scenario that's been presented to us."

As a result, the case "also raises other questions in terms of Catholic teaching about mutilation of the body, which is also part of the church's moral objection to transgender surgeries, unless it's in those very rare cases of ambiguous sexuality that a baby may be born with. But that's very rare."

Bishop Paprocki also noted an apparent incongruence between Matson's public disclosure and the hermit vocation, which -- although tracing its roots to the third century -- was only formally recognized by the universal church's canon law in 1983.

"You also have a question of why is a hermit going public with making statements, when you can see the very nature of eremitical life is to withdraw and to dedicate yourself to a life of private prayer with God," he said. "And so it seems that someone who is claiming to be a hermit and then is giving public interviews -- it really raises some serious questions about the seriousness of that person's commitment to this way of life."

USCCB Actions Regarding Transgender Care & related Issues

"US bishops officially ban gender-transition care at Catholic hospitals." Tiffany Stanley, Associated Press, published in *Crux* (November 13, 2025)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2025/11/us-bishops-officially-ban-gender-transition-care-at-catholic-hospitals>

U.S. Catholic bishops voted Wednesday to make official a ban on gender-transition care for transgender patients at Catholic hospitals. The step formalizes a yearslong process for the U.S. church to address transgender health care.

Major medical groups and health organizations support gender-transition care for transgender patients.

Most Catholic health care institutions have taken a conservative approach and not offered gender-transition care, which may involve hormonal, psychological and surgical treatments. The new directives will formalize that mandate. Bishops will have autonomy in making the directives into law for their dioceses.

The new guidelines incorporate earlier documents on gender identity from the Vatican in 2024 and the U.S. bishops in 2023.

In the 2023 doctrinal note, titled “Moral Limits to the Technological Manipulation of the Human Body,” the bishops specified: “Catholic health care services must not perform interventions, whether surgical or chemical, that aim to transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex, or take part in the development of such procedures.”

On the same day that U.S. Catholic bishops were discussing gender identity, the heads of several major progressive religious denominations issued a statement in support of transgender, intersex and nonbinary people, at a time when many state legislatures and the Trump administration are curtailing their rights.

The 10 signers included the heads of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Episcopal Church, the Union for Reform Judaism and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

USCCB Committee on Doctrine “Doctrinal Note On The Moral Limits To Technological Manipulation Of The Human Body” The text of the Doctrinal Note:
<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Doctrinal%20Note%202023-03-20.pdf> (March 20, 2023)

For the customary laudatory Press Release which celebrates the document see
https://www.usccb.org/DoctrineGuidanceToCatholicHealth?utm_source=hootsuite&utm_medium=twitter&utm_term=

After the initial document the other postings will be in *reverse chronological order*.

Commentaries and Journalistic Reports On, or Related to, Church Teaching on Gender Issues

Listed in reverse chronological order

Glatz, Carol. “Vatican doctrine chief: Dignity lies at heart of church’s stance on gender.”

America/Catholic News Service (March 6, 2025)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2025/03/06/dignity-church-stance-gender-250084?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=scripture&pnespid=qeA_D3RKOr0efFoy2_T4KUsgKrTIkuLfCyw7Js8QdmuhIGJeKgb.fK0nHioCgDlbP16OhW

“We don’t want to be cruel and say that we don’t understand people’s conditioning and the deep suffering that exists in some cases of ‘dysphoria’ that manifests itself even from childhood,” said Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Those experiencing profound dysphoria, which is a state of intense emotional discomfort or distress, are “exceptional situations (which) must be evaluated with great care,” he said

in a talk given during a conference in mid-February organized by Germany's Cologne University of Catholic Theology.

What the church opposes is “the ideology that usually accompanies so many sex-change decisions,” which the cardinal said is an ideology that claims “omnipotence” and refuses to recognize the reality of one’s body as a gift, he said in his February 17, 2025 talk, which was published on the dicastery’s website in Italian and German.

Italian:

<https://www.doctrinafidei.va/content/dam/dottrinadellafede/discorsi-del-prefetto/2025-02-17-Fernandez---La-dignita-ontologica-della-persona.pdf>)

German:

<https://www.doctrinafidei.va/content/dam/dottrinadellafede/discorsi-del-prefetto/2025-02-17-Fernandez---Die-ontologische-Wurde-der-Person.pdf>

Laddach, Agnieszka. “Prohibition, Censorship, Denial: Polish Episcopate’s Narrative on (Homo)sexual Acts Between 1945 and 1989.” *Journal of Church and State* 66/4 (Autumn 2024): 221–234. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csae024>

Abstract: One of the most important issues for the Polish Episcopate under communism was moral evaluation of sexual activities. Bishops suggested that, along with other immoral activities, homosexuality resulted from the popularization of Marxism and atheization of customs. This article presents a thematic analysis of the episcopal writings from 1945 to 1989, and their evaluation in light of Michel Foucault’s theory, in order to discuss Polish episcopal power in the context of its narrative on homosexuality. I present the doctrinal and historical context of the analyzed writings in a trichotomy: the Episcopate of Poland, the Apostolic See, and the authorities of the Polish People’s Republic. Moreover, I recognize that components of episcopal discourse suggest a multiplicity of power relations. In the selected period, these forces were the subjects of a game in which the church created strategies and chains of influence, and, as an agent of power, consolidated its position by demanding obedience. This image of the institutional church in Poland was established through a great central mechanism of denial that excluded any possibility of a positive moral evaluation of homosexual and other extramarital acts.

Cooper, Jenna. “What is the church's teaching on transgender issues?” *OSV/Boston Pilot* (October 30, 2024)
https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.php?utm_source=ConstantContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Echoes&Source=we&ID=198474

Largely conservative summary of what the author holds to be “official” Church teaching on gender, though without the vitriol that is often found in similar right-wing opinions.

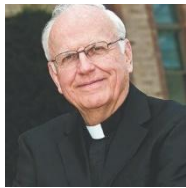
“That being said, the church is against any "gender ideology" that would separate the concept of psychological gender from biological sex; or which would propose that one's sex could be changed through medical or surgical means; or which would hold that one's

bodily sex could be somehow wrong or mistaken in light of one's self-perception of one's gender. And in practical terms, the church is also against any medical intervention that would damage healthy organs in the absence of any true medical need.”

Canonist Jenna Marie Cooper is a consecrated virgin, a practicing canon lawyer, and columnist for OSV News.

Clifford, Richard, S.J. “Genesis reminds us of everyone’s ‘inalienable dignity’.” *Outreach* (July 23, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/07/richard-j-clifford-s-j-genesis-reminds-us-of-everyones-inalienable-dignity/>



It is important that all human beings today, especially those in the LGBTQ community sidelined by misunderstanding, embrace the dignity and responsibility granted them by the Creator, and reject human judgments that exclude and diminish them.

Father Clifford, a leading Old Testament scholar, is the founding dean of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and the former dean of the Weston Jesuit School of Theology from 1983 to 1987. A past president of the Catholic Biblical Association, he began teaching at the former Weston College in 1964 and retired from Boston College in 2023.

. “Using “Male and female he created them’ to adjudicate gender controversies is ‘thoroughly misguided’.” *Outreach* (June 25, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/06/richard-j-clifford-s-j-using-male-and-female-he-created-the-m-to-adjudicate-gender-identity-controversies-is-thoroughly-misguided/>

But does the phrase in Genesis 1:27 negate the claims of trans people cited above? Does it even say anything about the issue? Here is the full verse in the NRSV: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

The first duty is to determine the context of the verse. Outside of its context, the wording alone might seem to support the claim that God endowed the human race with only two genders: male and female. Yet this verse should not be interpreted apart from its context; it is part of a carefully crafted creation account in which each verse gains meaning from the whole account. ...

The expectation that this single verse in Genesis can adjudicate modern controversies about gender is thoroughly misguided. There is no hint that the ancient author knew anything about the modern issue of gender identity. And the text gives no hint either. To

use “male and female he created them” against (or for) contemporary discussions of gender is to read into the biblical text rather than read the biblical text.

Father Clifford, a leading Old Testament scholar, is the founding dean of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and the former dean of the Weston Jesuit School of Theology from 1983 to 1987. A past president of the Catholic Biblical Association, he began teaching at the former Weston College in 1964 and retired from Boston College in 2023.

For a related article that complements this biblical interpretation see Sarah Imhoff, . “Nonbinary gender would have been no surprise to ancient rabbis.” Religion News Service (RNS) (July 7, 2023)

<https://religionnews.com/2023/07/07/nonbinary-gender-beyond-male-and-female-would-have-been-no-surprise-to-ancient-rabbis/>

Scott, Katie Collins. “Did US bishops really listen to trans Catholics?” *National Catholic Reporter* (June 23, 2023)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/news/did-us-bishops-really-listen-trans-catholics>

Bishop Michael Olson of Fort Worth, Texas, a member of the bishops' doctrine committee, said the bishops had done "a great deal of listening" on the matter. But, in an interview this week, Derouen contended that Olson had used her name in a misleading manner to buttress the prelates' claims of consulting trans individuals.

Derouen told NCR June 19 she was "very surprised" to see her name mentioned by Olson and that it appeared the bishop "intended to give the impression that he's spoken extensively with trans people and with me."

The sister said she had two interactions with Olson three years ago — during a personal phone call and then a panel organized by the Catholic Health Association — but that the "extent of our conversation was minimal and he was not grasping what I was trying to say."

Olson declined NCR's request for an interview in response to Derouen's concerns and about the committee's preparation for the doctrinal note.

The U.S. bishops voted on June 16 to align their directives for Catholic health care institutions with a doctrinal note the bishops released in March that focused on [what the prelates called](#) the "moral limits to technological manipulation of the human body."

Derouen said while she does not know the extent of Olson's interactions with trans people, the doctrinal note does not reflect what she and several members of the trans community have shared with the bishops.

O'Loughlin, Michael. “Transgender medicine at Catholic hospitals: U.S. bishops vote to begin process that could formally ban it.” *America* (June 16, 2023)

<https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2023/06/16/usccb-transgender-healthcare>

[are-catholic-hospitals-245508#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20bishops%20voted%20on,describ ed%20as%20gender%20Daffirming%20care](#)

The U.S. bishops voted on Friday to begin a process that could lead to rules formally banning Catholic hospitals from offering medical procedures and therapies sometimes collectively described as gender-affirming care.

While most Catholic hospitals already refrain from offering transgender surgeries and hormonal interventions, the vote means that the bishops will move to formalize such bans by incorporating guidance from a document released by the U.S.C.C.B.'s doctrine committee in March. In the "Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body," the bishops addressed both hormone therapies and surgical procedures related to gender.

The section of the directives that the bishops voted to revise has not been updated since 1994.

The vote begins a process that could take months, or even longer, before any changes are made to the directives. But the eventual language is likely to come from the March document, which states unequivocally that certain medical procedures related to gender, such as hormone therapy and elective hysterectomies, cannot be offered in Catholic health care settings.

"These technological interventions are not morally justified either as attempts to repair a defect in the body or as attempts to sacrifice a part of the body for the sake of the whole," the document states. Such interventions, the 14-page document continues, are "attempts to alter the fundamental order and finality of the body and to replace it with something else." Thus, the bishops conclude, such interventions are not morally permissible.

"Catholic health care services must not perform interventions, whether surgical or chemical, that aim to transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex or take part in the development of such procedures," the document says.

A handful of bishops took to the floor ahead of the vote and urged the committee to broaden its consultations ahead of any proposed revisions, including meeting with people who identify as transgender.

Cardinal Robert McElroy, the bishop of San Diego, said that one of the main questions in any revisions to the directives related to transgender patients must be "How do we help people who are wrestling with dysphoria?"

The archbishop of Newark, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, urged the committee to consult a wide range of experts during the drafting process, "including people who are from the trans community."

Calling the proposed revisions "a delicate matter," Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Seattle said such consultations were "absolutely necessary" and should also include physicians and hospital administrators.

Some bishops said that the drafting committee should look at the legal impact of any revisions, particularly at how federal health care guidelines could impact Catholic hospitals, while others, including Bishop Michael Olson, who heads the Diocese of Fort Worth and who serves on the doctrine committee, said that a broader pastoral document about gender dysphoria could be helpful after the directives are updated.

The head of the Catholic Health Association, which represents hundreds of Catholic hospitals and other health care facilities, said that she hopes the revision process will “engage in broad consultation with patients suffering from gender dysphoria and providers who care for them to ensure the health of the whole person.”

“Through this effort, I hope we can reach an outcome which reflects a deeper clinical, theological, and pastoral understanding of caring for transgender individuals,” Mary Haddad, R.S.M., said in a statement. “Establishing trust with marginalized patients is vital to their health and well-being, and it is our hope that the ERD revision will communicate this pastorally and clearly.”

The March document was praised by those who say transgender care has moved too quickly, especially when it comes to children, but criticized by others who said that the bishops failed to take into account the lived experiences of transgender people.

Mary Rice Hasson, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, told Our Sunday Visitor, “People need to hear the truth: we are created only male or female.”

“Even within some Catholic circles there is a lot of confusion about whether medical interventions are morally licit,” Ms. Hasson said. “The USCCB Doctrine Committee is clear: These interventions are not morally licit.”

Others said the document did not explore difficult medical and moral questions.

M. Therese Lysaught, a bioethicist at Loyola University Chicago, wrote at the National Catholic Reporter, “the doctrinal note and its prohibitions provide no real guidance to Catholic health care professionals who will continue to face practical questions as they accompany real persons.”

Winters, Michael Sean. “Bishops, listen to Catholic health workers, not culture warriors, on transgender directives.” *National Catholic Reporter* (June 13, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/bishops-listen-catholic-health-workers-not-culture-warriors-transgender>

At this week's meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, one of the [agenda items](#) is "a revision of Part Three of the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services." Part of the [revisions](#) would include assessing what kind of care Catholic hospitals would, and would not, provide to transgender persons.

This is worrisome. It is hard to imagine how this discussion won't open up a new front in the culture wars for the bishops.

Health care is an enormously complex reality. I remember one of the smarter bishops I know telling me once, "I used to think that universities were the most complex institutions in the church, but now I realize it is hospitals. There are so many discrete decisionmakers who need to come to a consensus for the institution to make a singular decision."

They intersect with a diverse set of governmental agencies, at the federal, state and local levels. They inhabit a professional universe with ever-changing ideas about care.

In the face of such complexity, the bishops should want to consult extensively those working in the field before they make any decision, and they should think long and hard before discounting what they learn from those frontline workers.

In this area, that organization is the Catholic Health Association, whose track record is, to my mind, unparalleled. It had the courage to publicly [differ from the U.S. bishops' conference](#) over support for the Affordable Care Act. President Barack Obama gave Daughter of Charity Sr. [Carol Keehan](#), then the head of the association, [one of the signing pens](#) for the landmark legislation, and there is little question the act might not have passed but for Keehan's intervention, a fact that only angered the conservative leadership at the bishops' conference. The bishops tacitly [acknowledged](#) she had been right when they refused to support overturning the act in 2017.

The current president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, Mercy Sr. [Mary Haddad](#), said "CHA works closely with the USCCB. We reviewed the doctrinal note, but all our suggestions were not accepted."

If the bishops' conference is not listening to the Catholic Health Association, to whom are they listening? My concern is that they are listening to the National Catholic Bioethics Center. The group is promoting its involvement on this issue, even raising money off of it.

Privately, more than one bishop has voiced concern to me that the current leadership at the center is more easily swayed by the culture war zeitgeist.

A visit to the center's website amplifies the concerns. The new president of the organization, Joseph Meaney, issued a [message](#) celebrating the New York Supreme Court's ending of the vaccine mandate in New York state, stating: "A big part of the reasoning behind the ruling was the now-acknowledged scientific fact that the various COVID vaccines do not stop transmission of the disease."

The bishops need to listen to the frontline Catholic health care workers represented by the Catholic Health Association, not the culture warriors who now rule the roost at the National Catholic Bioethics Center. There is no pressing need to change the Ethical and

Religious Directives and any effort to do so will likely cause the church to be seen, yet again, as a field marshal in the culture wars. That is not a good look for pastors.

Fraga, Brian. "US bishops to consider banning transgender care at all American Catholic hospitals." *National Catholic Reporter* (June 12, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/us-bishops-consider-banning-transgender-care-all-american-catholic-hospitals>

The U.S. Catholic bishops will vote at their spring assembly this week on whether to amend their official directives for American Catholic health care institutions to mandate that Catholic facilities not provide gender-affirming medical treatment to transgender patients.

The vote, scheduled for one of the bishops' two public sessions during their June 15-16 meeting in Orlando, Florida, could mark the beginning of a substantial change in the provision of health care in Catholic hospitals, clinics and facilities across the U.S.

If approved, the measure would authorize the bishops' doctrine committee to begin the process of revising the [Religious and Ethical Directives for Catholic Health Care](#), which are described as the "authoritative guidance" for U.S. Catholic health care institutions. The revision would change the directives to align with a doctrinal note the bishops released in March, which focused on [what the prelates called](#) the "moral limits to technological manipulation of the human body."

The ballot item on which the bishops will vote this week, a copy of which was provided to NCR, says the [Committee on Doctrine](#), led by Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, intends to make minimal changes to the directives, but "is prepared to make those changes necessary for providing clear and useful guidance to Catholic health care services."

The item also says that the committee's "immediate concern" is the directives' Part III, which addresses the relationship between Catholic medical professionals and their patients. However, the ballot item adds that the committee "does not exclude the possibility of proposing minor revisions in other parts" of the directives.

Opinions among Catholic theologians, bioethicists and LGBTQ advocates have been split about the controversial doctrinal note. Some observers, including Massimo Faggioli, a theologian and church historian at Villanova University, said the document's language reflected a cautious approach in an area of moral theology and doctrine that is not yet fully developed.

But scholars including M. Therese Lysault, a Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine theologian who studies and has written about bioethics, criticized the document for reflecting "a striking inability to conduct a basic moral analysis."

Lysault told NCR that the doctrinal note displayed "next to zero knowledge of, experience with, or expertise in transgender persons and the complexities of Catholic health care, even less compassion or Christian virtue."

Lysault added: "As a moral theologian, I think it's important to note that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has not yet issued a statement on transgender health care. I would guess that this is due to the fact that the issue is so new and that they are prudently waiting for the scientific and clinical research to advance so that the Church's moral discernment can be properly informed."

The bishops' health care directives, last revised in the mid-1990s, do not specifically address questions of gender-affirming care for patients who identify as transgender or who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

When the directives were last updated, the doctrine committee says in the upcoming ballot action item, "it was not envisioned that it might be necessary to include specific guidance concerning radical modifications of the human body, such as are frequently advocated today for the treatment of the condition commonly known as gender dysphoria or gender incongruence."

The section that the doctrine committee is looking to amend makes a reference, in Directive 29, to patients having the "right and duty to preserve their bodily and functional integrity." Directive 33 mentions therapeutic procedures in the context of whether their benefits would be proportional to the likelihood of harm or undesirable side effects.

Several Catholic bioethicists, including some who declined to be identified on the record because of the sensitivity of the topic, told NCR that issues of gender-affirming care in Catholic health settings most often deal with whether the institution should address the patient by their preferred name, or to continue providing the patient with previously prescribed hormonal treatment while in their care.

Cory Mitchell, a professor of bioethics at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, told NCR that most medical professional bodies in the United States see gender-affirming care as evidence-based treatment to mitigate the suffering of people diagnosed with gender dysphoria.

"When dealing with a patient population, from an ethical standpoint, if you can mitigate or ameliorate harm or suffering, you do so," Mitchell said. "That's the story of the good Samaritan. We don't pass by on the other side of the road when we can help and continue Jesus' healing ministry."

However the bishops revise the ethical and religious directives, Mitchell said he hopes the process will reflect the "culture of encounter" that Pope Francis has championed so

that "norm-making does not become hurting, sanctioning, or othering" transgender people.

Aihiokhai, Simonmary Ase. "Portland's gender policy shows a church uninterested in 'signs of the times'." *National Catholic Reporter* (May 26, 2023)

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/portlands-gender-policy-shows-church-uninterested-signs-times>



While this article makes specific reference to Archbishop Sample's diocesan policy, most of the article deals with gender and ecclesial documents, including those from the Holy See.

Over two decades ago, if someone had asked my opinion on the phenomenon of fluid gender awareness, I would have opined that such a phenomenon was either immoral or disordered. However, I have encountered many persons who have shared with me their life successes, stories and struggles as they attempt to make sense of who they are.

Through these encounters, I have come to the realization that perhaps, our theological views that offer rigid meanings to what is not of its nature rigid is where the problem lies.

It is noticeable how the church tends to frame the conversation around gender and sexuality as though they are solely within the domain of cognitive awareness. For example, the opening lines of the guidelines offered by Sample use the term, "to conceptualize" in relation to a person's gendered self-understanding.

From my experience of the discourses around gender in ecclesial circles, I have come to the realization that there seems to be a lack of awareness of the phenomenological nature of gender. Gendered self-understanding is not within the domain of conceptualization. Rather, it is within the domain of sociocultural and political constructions of identities.

Reading the document that first came out from the Vatican's former Congregation for Catholic Education in 2019, titled " ['Male and Female He Created Them.' Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education](#)," alongside the pastoral guidance from Sample, one notices a conflation of the understanding of gender and sexuality as though they are interchangeable and they have the same meaning.

Work has also been done to highlight the differences between gender and sexuality, for example, in [this essay](#) by Cynthia Vinney.

Too often, the church tends to conflate gender and sexuality. This is particularly true in the document released by the Vatican in 2019. This conflation continues to be reflected in the diocesan adoptions and implementations of that text.

SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai is associate professor of systematic theology at the University of Portland, Oregon.

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.” *Outreach* (May 10, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they

“repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

Ryan Di Corpo is the managing editor of Outreach. His work has appeared in The Washington Post, America, Boston College Magazine, Peace Review and American Catholic Studies. He holds an M.A. in journalism from Northeastern University, in Boston.

Lysaught, M. Therese. “US bishops' transgender document fails morally, theologically — and is poorly argued.” *National Catholic Reporter* (May 1, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/us-bishops-transgender-document-fails-morally-theologically-and-poorly-argued>



Lysaught contrasts the approach and flaws in the USCCB Doctrinal Note with the episcopal duties outlined in Vatican II’s *Christus Dominus* and a recent address of Pope Francis on moral theology delivered at the Alphonsianum in Rome.

“In the doctrinal note, the committee members have failed in this key duty of their office. This document suffers from three significant flaws: intellectual, theological (or, troublingly, doctrinal) and moral. ...

The committee quite overtly utilizes solely the methodology of the pre-Vatican II manualist tradition. ... Each of these claims—enormous, complex, often contested within and beyond the Catholic Church — are all simply asserted via prooftexts from the Catechism and select papal documents. ...

Thus, apart from a few random quotes, this document could have been written in the 1950s.

Second, the committee conflates two meanings of the word "nature" (which appears 15 times). They slide back and forth between "nature" as a biological reality and "nature" (or more specifically "human nature") as a philosophical or theological construct. This is a long-standing problem with Neo-Scholastic approaches to natural law that critics have noted for decades. Many of the claims listed above are biological claims, and recent biological research has, at minimum, begun to complicate them. But no studies are cited, not even in support of their position. Instead, superficial assertions about "biology" are marshaled as the foundation for absolute social and philosophical claims about "human nature" that are precisely at issue.

Third, [as Pope Francis has noted](#), the search for "disciplinary solutions [and an] exaggerated doctrinal 'security' " rooted in a past that no longer exists leads to an inability to prioritize the essential truths of [the Christian kerygma](#). We see this same doctrinal lapse in this document. For we might ask: Who is God in this document?

Moral flaws

As a result of all this, in my opinion, this doctrinal note is morally flawed as well. In failing to follow the basic standards of a reasoned argument, the committee fails to exercise the intellectual virtues, defined by Thomas Aquinas as knowledge, understanding and wisdom. No attempt is made to gather, present or evaluate the best science and knowledge. The document demonstrates what appears to be a willful misunderstanding of the nature of the issue; thus, in the end, the document fails to embody wisdom.

Because of these intellectual, theological and moral flaws, in the end, the doctrinal note and its prohibitions provide no real guidance to Catholic health care professionals who will continue to face practical questions as they accompany real persons and seek "to mitigate the suffering of those who struggle with gender incongruence" (Paragraph 18), as they have been for many years. Fortunately, as [Catholic writer Helen Hull Hitchcock](#) outlined decades ago, a document such as this one — issued by a committee without approval of the conference — has no binding authority.

I hope going forward that the Committee on Doctrine will heed a final word from the Holy Father's remarks to the Alphonsianum — to avoid "extremist, polarizing dynamics," and instead "apply instead the principle, always indicated by St. Alphonsus, of the 'middle way,' which is not a diplomatic balance, no; the middle way is creative, it arises from creativity, and it creates."

A Summary of Lysaught's article appears under the title "USCCB Note on Gender Transitions "Could Have Been Written in the 1950s," Writes Bioethicist." By Angela Howard McParland. New Ways Ministry (June 8, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/06/08/usccb-note-on-gender-transitions-could-have-been-written-in-the-1950s-writes-theologian/>

National Catholic Report "Letters to the Editor." "Letters to the editor on the bishops' transgender document." *National Catholic Reporter* (April 28, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/letters-editor/letters-editor-bishops-transgender-document>

A cross-section, across the theological—political spectrum, of responses both the USCCB Doctrinal Note, as well as coverage given this by *NCR*.

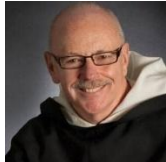
The Ruth Institute. "Bishops Stand Courageously Against Gender 'Transition' for Kids." *The Stream* (April 26, 2023)
<https://stream.org/bishops-stand-courageously-against-gender-transition-for-kids/>

"The Ruth Institute is grateful to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for this important and timely statement. May Catholic medical professionals across the country take its wisdom to heart."

The Ruth Institute is a global non-profit organization, leading an international interfaith coalition to defend the family and build a civilization of love. The Ruth Institute's Founder and President, Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, is the author of [The Sexual State](#):

How Elite Ideologies Are Destroying Lives *and* Love and Economics: It Takes a Family to Raise a Village.

Bouchard, Charles, O.P. “Catholic ethicist on U.S. bishops’ directive: Transgender people teach us that human sexuality is ‘varied and complex’.” *Outreach* (April 24, 2023) <https://outreach.faith/2023/04/catholic-ethicist-on-bishops-directive-transgender-people-teach-us-that-human-sexuality-is-varied-and-complex/> **Also found at** https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Idb5s39891ghzjzP3EFw0g_nl9Ov4WFA/view?usp=share_link



Earlier drafts addressed many issues (e.g., sacraments, liturgical participation, parish membership), but this final version is focused on two things: the philosophical basis of the church’s understanding of the human person and an application of the traditional teaching on technical interventions on the human body.

However, “nature” and “natural” are not univocal terms. Even within the Catholic tradition they can be understood in at least two ways. The bishops’ Note uses “nature” in the traditional sense of a general premise that is universal and unchanging. We use deductive reasoning to arrive at new conclusions. “God created all cows black. This cow is not black. Therefore it is not part of God’s creation.” This approach assumes we know everything about God’s plan.

I am using the term in a different sense, which emphasizes the inductive aspect of nature. We can acknowledge an inbuilt order of nature based on God’s plan, but we must acknowledge that the fullness of this plan remains in the mind of God.

We can know a great deal about this plan from Scripture, Revelation, science and our reflection on human experience, but our understanding is partial and evolving. In other words, we discover this plan over time. In this case, we might say, “Well, we used to think all cows were black, but now we have irrefutable evidence that there are brown cows, so we have to revise the basic premise.”

I am suggesting that we used to think human nature was totally binary, but the experience of trans persons is causing us to rethink that.

The bishops’ Note appears to assume that gender and soul are the same. “A soul can never be in another body, much less in the wrong body,” the Note says. I have heard trans people say they feel they are in the wrong body but of course that is not the case. They are who they are, body and soul. We are beginning to understand that most persons, by nature, experience sex and gender as congruent, but some persons, by nature, do not.

The Note rejects forms of “gender ideology” as dualistic if they see gender as just a matter of personal choice or if they “do not regard the body as an intrinsic part of the human person, [but as a mere] instrument used by the soul.”

I do not know any trans person or trans advocate who holds such a position. If we listen to trans people talk about their experience of their own embodiment, there is a sense in which they are trying to achieve the same unity that the document values.

Technological Interventions

Medical interventions, especially surgery, have always been subject to ethical evaluation. Because they are invasive and carry risk, they were seen as morally acceptable for two reasons, namely, repair or replacement (e.g., surgery on a broken leg or replacement of a worn-out knee) or removal of a diseased organ that threatens the health of the whole body (e.g., lung or kidney cancer).

This is the heart of the ethical dilemma. As number 15 in the Note points out, surgery for gender incongruence is not replacing or repairing a defective body part, nor is a diseased body part being removed for the health of the body.

Trans persons seek these interventions for the sake of the whole person. The health of the whole person is part of our tradition, reaffirmed by Pope Pius XII and others. The argument in favor of transition is that even though the body may not be disfigured or diseased, there is an “inbuilt” disparity between “brain sex” and “body sex” which occurs because the brain and the sexual organs do not develop simultaneously.

I don’t think trans people deny the “givenness” of human nature; rather, they are saying that their nature as sexed persons is an exception, relative to more common patterns. They participate in God’s plan and share the same human nature as everyone else, but with a variation.

This is why it is important for us to distinguish between gender ideologies based on a desire to foster unlimited self-determination and eliminate discrimination and gender incongruence, a diagnosable medical condition that can be treated.

This reflects the struggle that gay men and women went through in another age. They knew their sexual attraction and affect were atypical, but they also knew they were “made this way,” for reasons they probably did not understand. Similarly, many trans people today knew from an early age that something was not right; only gradually did they begin to understand or have the language to express what they felt.

Their choice is not whether to be transgender or not, but whether to acknowledge the incongruity and seek personal harmony through medical intervention.

Is there any good news?

Yes.

The document is heavy on metaphysical analysis, but modest in its practical claims. It does not mention use of preferred names or pronouns, nor does it discuss hormone therapy or distinguish different kinds of surgery. It does not mention the special case of children who exhibit gender dysphoria.

This suggests to me that the U.S.C.C.B.’s Administrative Committee may have wanted to say as little as possible. They urge that we employ “all appropriate resources to mitigate

the suffering of those who struggle with gender incongruence.” This tells us to focus on what we can do for trans patients.

We can listen, we can promote scientific research, we can provide pastoral and spiritual care and we can care for families. (It is noteworthy that the document uses the term “gender incongruence” while other parts of the Note seem to suggest that it is not a real medical condition that requires intervention.)

Trans people are teaching us that human sexuality is more varied and complex than we might feel comfortable admitting. The bishops’ Note may open the door for serious discussions of the questions transgender experience raises. It may help us see that God’s plan for human sexuality is not entirely binary after all. Maybe we will discover that God is glorified by creation in more ways than we thought possible.

Father Bouchard is a Dominican friar and the senior director of theology and sponsorship at the Catholic Health Association of the United States. Previously, he taught moral theology from 1986 to 2008 at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis

Kohlhaas, Jacob. “Transgender Healthcare and the Catholic Moral Vision.” *New Ways Ministry* (April 10, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/04/10/transgender-healthcare-and-the-catholic-moral-vision/>



His article focuses on the use of Pius XII’s notion of the principle of totality used in medical ethics.

When it comes to this type of surgery, it seems the “principle of totality” is easily and widely accepted. This principle basically recognizes that while individual parts have their own purpose, they should not dictate the good of the whole. After all, I’m not just a hip, I’m not just a body, I am irreducibly a person.

But something odd happens when we move from talk about hips to other body parts that fall along the midline. The USCCB’s recent clarification exemplifies how the stakes seem to heighten and the moral scope seems to narrow when genitals or other physical markers of sexual difference enter the picture. Consequently, when sex and gender appear to be at stake, the moral vision slides from respect for the person who is a body to concern about the integrity of body as a precondition being a person. In doing so, the principle of totality no longer includes social, psychological, and spiritual well-being (as in my example of timing a hip replacement) but is instead limited to the body’s anatomy alone.

The USCCB’s guidelines place significant emphasis on bodily integrity but at consequential moments appears to forget that persons are more than the sum of their body parts. The guidelines state that when justifying intentional removal or alteration of a

functional body part, such a serious decision must be made “truly as a last resort that is necessary for the welfare of the body, there being no other options for securing the welfare of the body as a whole” (#12 italics added). Where did the person go? So much of the Christian tradition rests on the idea that the person lives for goods well beyond the physical integrity of their body, and yet, when genitals are at stake, anatomical bodily integrity itself is offered as the standard for moral discernment.

Interestingly, the document seems to fall into this position through its own tendency to prefer simple proof-texting to broader contextual assessment. ... My bigger concern, though, is that the popes being selectively quoted also offer examples of thinking that could have led to a very different document. In other words, the drafters of this document faced a range of interpretive possibilities when considering how to receive the tradition in light of the present concern. They chose to favor a particular narrow line of thinking evidently tailored to reaffirm a predetermined conclusion.

Transgender health care presents the Catholic moral tradition with questions that are very complex. Two of the most significant popes cited in the clarification consistently reminded us that the person is far more than their body alone. Even as the USCCB has chosen to follow a narrow tradition that inconsistently places the good of persons behind the functionality of their body parts, the moral tradition itself continues to offer many more expansive interpretive possibilities.

Palmieri, David. “Someday Never Comes.” *New Ways Ministry* (April 1, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/04/01/someday-never-comes/>

These ecclesial documents have become a litany of don’ts, like circles of barbed wire protecting the trenches of Catholic order and discipline. For example, instead of listening to the needs of transgender persons, the doctrinal note prohibits Catholic healthcare services from “any technological intervention that does not accord with the fundamental order of the human person as a unity of body and soul” (no. 20). This policy will promote the “authentic good” of the human person (no. 22). But that is a judgment from afar, not an invitation to the closeness that Jesus embodies. ...

And speaking of truth, how do we define truth when we are talking about realities that are not new but are only now becoming more understood?

Some LGBTQ+ persons and allies will often fire back that their opponents are hateful. While the [data supports](#) that some people actually do wish physical and moral evil upon the LGBTQ+ community, most Catholics who are opposed to LGBTQ+ ministry are not truly hateful.

A more accurate description might be that these opponents are self-righteous, a quality that Jesus condemned in the Pharisees ([Mt 23:1-36](#)). Brené Brown says, “People who exhibit this emotion [self-righteousness] see things in black and white—they tend to be closed-minded, inflexible, intolerant of ambiguity, and less likely to consider others’ opinions.” This description seems to more precisely describe the behavior of those opposed to LGBTQ+ ministry.

David Palmieri, a theology teacher at Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, MA, is the founder of [Without Exception](#), a grassroots network of secondary educators dedicated to discerning the art of accompaniment for LGBTQ+ students in Catholic high

schools, and received an award from the National Catholic Educational Association in 2021.

Zuba, Christine. “Respecting the dignity of transgender people means affirming their experiences.” *Outreach* (March 31, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/03/respecting-the-dignity-of-transgender-people-means-affirming-their-experiences/>

Often, these policies and opinions are presented with little understanding of transgender or non-binary lives, and come from people who have had little interaction or communication with us. Since many do look to church leadership for guidance, words matter. Words also hurt, and much of what we’re hearing and reading do not reflect the lived reality of our transgender and non-binary selves.

The recent U.S.C.C.B. doctrinal note adds to a disappointing string of recent church publications. It re-emphasizes the Book of Genesis, ignores modern medical science and condemns any gender-affirming care as an immoral manipulation of the body, contrary to the will of God.

The worldwide synod illustrates a church willing to reach out to those on the margins, hopefully including a long overdue acceptance of LGBTQ persons. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, however, appears again to have not engaged in any substantive conversations with transgender and non-binary persons to better understand our lives.

If our faith, however, teaches us that we are all made in the image and likeness of God, we must ask: Is God male or female? Is God both? Does sex or gender really matter in our personal faith journey ?



Christine Zuba is a transgender Catholic woman from Blackwood, N.J. and a Eucharistic minister at Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Turnersville, N.J. Christine is chair of the transgender ministry of Fortunate Families.

Warsaw, Michael. “The Embodiment of Truth.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (March 31, 2023)
https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/the-embodiment-of-truth?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=252581700&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-hPI0Uks5C82RHoTZs2L3U9lMe-4xhCuEx6JGir13TJy28EjGr2KL9fxQppYitnfsUAOA2HR-3ObFhMX1MxnBBnrwM2A&utm_content=252581700&utm_source=hs_email

Extols both the USCCB Doctrinal Note and individual states who are passing legislation to curtail or deny care to trans individuals. He also uses this occasion to lambast President Joseph Biden as well.

He concludes his piece with these words: “We can be grateful for their new document, and we should offer our prayers on their behalf, to strengthen them as they continue to provide this courageously faithful witness in the face of the torrent of invective that their fidelity inevitably provokes.”

Michael Warsaw is the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the EWTN Global Catholic Network, and the Publisher of the National Catholic Register.

Winters, Michael Sean. "Bishops' transgender document and its critics both need more self-criticism." *National Catholic Reporter* (March 29, 2023)
https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/bishops-transgender-document-and-its-critics-both-need-more-self-criticism?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=37a7d9ac0e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_03_28_10_38&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-37a7d9ac0e-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

The document states that Catholic health care providers "must employ all appropriate resources to mitigate the suffering of those who struggle with gender incongruence," It would have cost the authors nothing to have expressed a few more words of compassion for those persons who experience some variety of gender incongruence or noted the immense challenges such persons face. ...

The biggest practical problem with the document is that the hyper-teleology of the natural law, combined with a rigorous understanding of the call to conversion in the Gospels, yields an understanding of sexual morality that permits no exceptions and lacks all nuance. The realization that, for a small but definite percentage of the population, sexual identity is both experienced as constitutional, that is, not as something chosen, and falls outside the moral norms that emerged in the history of the church prohibiting sexual deviations, challenges that traditional natural law understanding of sexual morality. ...

Horan fails to recognize one major problem with his criticism: He wants the bishops to articulate what the church does not teach. He quotes Pope Francis about wanting a culture of encounter, but ignores the Holy Father's warnings about gender ideology. ...

Returning to the bishops' document, I wish to make two recommendations, one small and particular and the other large and expansive.

First, I wish Catholic leaders, in the hierarchy and the academy, would adopt the phrase, "That is not in our tradition," rather than rushing to denounce something or some idea as "sinful" or "harmful." The tradition develops, and it needs self-critical analysis to do so, and the use of fraught language only makes people dig in. What does and does not constitute "harm" is the heart of the debate, so hurling it at the other side only obfuscates, it does not clarify, the issues. The recent [statement and video from the Scandinavian bishops](#) did a much better job of setting forth the church's teaching without bashing anyone.

The larger or prior problem is that we U.S. Catholics need to find ways to stop reducing religion to ethics, whether those ethics be conservative or liberationist. Our ethical teaching, especially in the area of human sexuality, can't stand on its own, but it was never meant to stand on its own.

We need continually to redraw the links to the Christian anthropology from which our ethical claims grow, and redraw how our anthropology is rooted in our Christology. If we place sexual teachings at the forefront of our evangelizing efforts, we will become

complicit in the effort to turn the church into an upper-middle-class club for people with conservative, or liberal, sexual ethics.

As one bishop said to me recently, "We need to introduce people to Jesus before we start talking to them about sex." Amen.

Shine, Robert. "Catholic LGBTQ+ Advocates Strongly Condemn Latest USCCB Transgender Statement." *New Ways Ministry* (March 29, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/29/catholic-lgbtq-advocates-strongly-condemn-latest-usccb-transgender-statement/>

Gives a quick collection of sound-bytes from various individuals who are highly critical of the USCCB document.

Bretzke, James T., S.J. "A moral theologian on the US bishops' directive on transgender people." *Outreach* (March 26, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/03/more-explicit-attention-to-the-individuals-a-moral-theologian-on-the-u-s-c-b-s-directives-on-transgender-people/> **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1owVYRMJvmp69g3s5ULzAA57gB39GCBb5/view?usp=share_link

This episcopal committee document outlines, from a moral perspective, some of the various medical aspects of therapeutic care for people experiencing such profound gender dysphoria that they seek medical intervention.

The transgender experience, a well-established reality, surfaces myriad issues that are highly emotional, deeply divisive and exceedingly complex on many levels: medical, moral, social, sexual, political, cultural and so on. To expect either the bishop's note or this brief reflection to touch upon, much less resolve, these nettlesome issues would be naïve at best, and probably deeply counter-productive at worst. ...

As a Jesuit in my second half-century of religious life, I also have developed a real appreciation for the Ignatian-inspired conflict resolution stratagem, namely the "Presupposition," that immediately precedes the "First Principle and Foundation" of the Spiritual Exercises.

Presuming that many are already familiar with this concept, I would just highlight the Ignatian trajectory: that we start by postulating good will on the part of our adversary, even if in the deepest recesses of our hearts we suspect this may not exist. Next, we seek, as far as is reasonably possible, to interpret the words (or actions) of the other in the best possible light.

Next, if difficulties still remain (as they likely will in most deep-seated controversies) we begin our dialogue with posing questions of clarification over points that we believe misconstrued or even downright wrong. If this last step still has not adequately resolved the situation then, and only then, does St. Ignatius propose "correcting" the other "with charity." ...

I believe that the common ground that most people of good will could stand upon, and respond charitably to, is an awareness of the very real distress experienced by individuals

who feel there is a serious mismatch between their gender identity and the sexual category listed on their birth certificate. „„

Without going into an extended analysis here of the bishops' note, I would observe that its analytical method is largely deductive, starting with abstract principles and then arguing for conclusions that may not take into sufficient account many particular differences. By contrast, an inductive approach would seek to begin with, or take explicit account of, the actual lived experiences of transgender individuals.

These experiences seem to be largely missing from the bishops' doctrinal note, and this absence has been the focus of several critiques of the text. Therefore, it is not astounding to see that quite different practical conclusions would come about when applied to a particular situation using some vastly different starting points and accompanying methodologies.

Perrins, Laura. "USCCB doctrinal note prohibiting transgender procedures is a welcome intervention." *Catholic Herald (UK)* (March 23, 2023)
<https://catholicherald.co.uk/usccb-doctrinal-note-prohibiting-transgender-procedures-is-a-welcome-intervention/> **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lingFpV5UF5Ej0xxMKBvVNfmaI7959-X/view?usp=share_link

This is a welcome statement from the bishops which should put to rest any suggestions that the Catholic Church could support any such surgeries which are always and everywhere harmful to the patient, the natural order, and the created order of God.

No person is born in the wrong body, as their body and soul are one. Sadly, some people may indeed suffer from gender dysphoria, a deep conflict with their biological sex. This must be a terrible mental health condition, but it must be recognised as such. There is nothing wrong with the body of the person who suffers from gender dysphoria – their body does not need to be manipulating. Instead, appropriate support must be given to this person to come to terms with the fact that they are either male or female. Manipulating the appearance of their body will never alter this scientific reality.

This is a very welcome intervention into the transgender conflict that is raging in the United States and should give clarity to anyone deluded enough to think mutilating the bodies of children could ever be deemed ethical or moral.

President Biden, in particular, should take note that what the Bishops are saying is in complete conflict with his own government proposals.

Jenkins, Jack. "Bishops discourage Catholic health-care groups from performing gender-affirming care." *Washington Post* (March 23, 2023)
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2023/03/23/bishops-discourage-catholic-health-care-groups-performing-gender-affirming-care/>

Gives an overview, as well as quoting some critiques offered against the Doctrinal Note.

The doctrinal note comes amid rising political division over gender-affirming care across the United States. Earlier this month, West Virginia's legislature [passed a ban](#) on

gender-affirming care for transgender youths, and the Kentucky legislature took similar action [a few days later](#). Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene has promised to introduce a [similar bill](#) in the U.S. House of Representatives this term.

Horan, Daniel P., OFM. "US bishops' document against transgender health care is a disaster." *National Catholic Reporter* (March 23, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/us-bishops-document-against-transgender-health-care-disaster> **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IZISOBM_B9r6KjCH_MqGSPecA-7NDm2/view?usp=share_link

Raises considerable theological, scientific, pastoral and methodological concerns about the Bishops' Doctrinal Note.

Theologically, this document is problematic for several reasons. First, while some aspects of orthodox Christian faith are correctly stated, such as that the natural world designed by the Creator is inherently good and that there is a divinely created order, the authors then bestow upon themselves an uncritical authority to determine what constitutes that order absolutely. For example, they state that there are only two genders that conform to one of two biological sexes and that this is a universal and unchanging theological truth. This is an historically and theologically contested claim. ...

That the bishops assume they understand in totality the incomprehensible complexity of God's creation generally and the human person particularly is a consistent and errant attitude present throughout this document. In every age and time, we continually learn more about the wondrous, mysterious, beautiful and complex creation of which we are also a part. To make absolute claims in the manner present throughout this text is, at best, theologically irresponsible.

Second, the authors of this document use a very narrowly selected set of sources to justify their agenda and preconceived conclusions based on their reading of the principle of totality, which holds in this case that the destruction of one bodily part can be morally justified only for the preservation of the whole body. The core of their argument rests on Pope Pius XII's reflections on the moral status of some medical interventions from the 1950s, footnoted in the document. The authors interpret Pius XII's reflections to conclude that surgical interventions within the context of gender-affirming care can never be morally licit. ...

Importantly, on the question of the principle of totality, on which the U.S. bishops' statement places significant justificatory weight, [Beckert] Gremmels writes: "In the meantime, we can at least be confident that Pope Pius XII's insights on the principle of totality show that simply because SRS [sex reassignment surgery] removes healthy, non-pathological body parts and results in sterility does not mean it is unjustified."

The bishops' document exhibits none of this responsible theological and moral restraint. References to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and proof-texting from encyclicals

by Popes Benedict XVI and Francis to give a false air of universal conclusiveness does not make a sound theological argument. What do post-conciliar theologians have to say about these questions? What do systematic theologians and theological ethicists, experts from the Catholic Health Association and others with specialized medical and theological knowledge have to say?

Scientifically, there is absolutely nothing redeemable about this document. The language used and the presumptions expressed betray a gross ignorance of what the medical and scientific communities have taught the world about an admittedly specialized and complex reality. Recourse in this document to proof-texted passages from Genesis, for example, are as irresponsible in identifying historical, social and scientific realities today as claiming that the Earth was created in six 24-hour days according to the same superficial reading of Scripture.

Additionally, the document contains glaring generalizations and frequent conflations among discrete scientific questions. For example, there seems to be a confusion between genetic engineering, broadly speaking, and the particular question of medical interventions for gender-affirming care.

It's not just that the bishops misunderstand the complex dynamics of the issues they attempt to address, it's that they signal strongly that they are not interested in understanding even the basic facts and reality. The authors of this document should have consulted with and learned from actual experts in the areas of human sexuality and gender from within the scientific and academic communities.

Finally, this is a pastorally disastrous document. It is on this point that the bishops have failed those entrusted to their pastoral care. As with the 2019 document on "gender theory" from the Congregation for Catholic Education, this U.S. bishops' document appears to have been drafted, published and imposed on the people of God without consultation with or inclusion of the experiences, realities and voices of the people it most directly affects.

Pope Francis has called for the church to embrace a "culture of encounter," and yet this statement reflects a culture of paternalism, arrogance and dismissiveness, signaling that the bishops are not interested in encountering trans, nonbinary and intersex people but only interested in denying their very existence and experiences.

The authors of this document want so badly for their vision of the world to be true, to be simple, to be comfortable for them, that it appears as though they do not stop to think about the consequences of their actions or the veracity of their claims.

Again, the bishops of the United States, in an effort to address what they imagine is an ethical problem or social evil, instead increasingly diminish their moral authority and pastoral relevance through their own epistemological arrogance and refusal to learn from others. So perhaps rather than listening to the bishops' misguided instructions, we should

instead acknowledge the reality and listen to the experiences of trans, nonbinary and intersex persons.

Shine, Robert. “New USCCB Document Seeks to Stop Transgender Healthcare at Catholic Institutions.” *New Ways Ministry* (March 22, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/22/new-usccb-document-seeks-to-stop-transgender-healthcare-at-catholic-institutions/>

Begins with a fairly objective summary of the Doctrinal Note before going into reports of various critiques.

Several Catholics involved with transgender healthcare and ministry reacted strongly against the U.S. bishops’ attempt to stop gender-affirming care. The Catholic Health Association issued a [statement](#) emphasizing that it would remain “committed to careful analysis of new scientific evidence and its application to guidance from the *Ethical and Religious Directives* (ERDs).” Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, the organization’s president, commented:

“Catholic health care providers will continue to respect the dignity of our transgender patients and provide them with the same quality care we provide to all our patients. We recognize that the well-being of the whole person must be taken into account in deciding about any therapeutic intervention or use of technology in caring for our patients. . . Our goal is to create a dialogue between patients and providers that will assure the health of the whole person. As our Church continues our process of listening and dialogue, we have an opportunity to embrace the spirit of Pope Francis by creating a culture of encounter. We look forward to our active participation in this important dialogue.”

More critical were trans Catholics and pastoral ministers. Michael Sennett, a trans Catholic who serves in parish ministry and is a contributor to *Bondings 2.0*, told the *National Catholic Reporter* that ideas about gender are “not as simple as we learn in high school” and the bishops “may be dismayed to learn that biological sex is not necessarily binary — chromosomes and sex characteristics do not always line up.” He continued:

“This is yet another document that lacks any compassion or love for transgender folks. . . [Documents like this] serve to make our lives harder and promote discrimination against us. I pray for the bishops who have fallen victim to this culture war, that they find peace and healing, and seek to share the love of God with everyone in their flock.” Sennett added that gender transitions are not an “agenda,” but a “lifeline.”

Craig Ford, Jr., a theologian who studies gender identity from a natural law perspective, commented to *NCR* that it would be more appropriate to be in a humble “posture of listening. . . in the face of the stories that transgender people tell about who they are as well as in the face of the emerging scientific and medical discussions around gender identity.” He continued:

“‘We should be especially humble in our use of words like “nature” and “natural order,” especially since these have been used in the past to justify a number of moral atrocities, such as slavery.’ . . .

“‘To truly be Christ’s community of care for all, we must strive to protect the dignity of transgender persons, making clear to all that their lives are sacred and worthy of respect. . . the document indirectly factors into the suffering — told and untold — that transgender people endure.”

Sr. Luisa Derouen, who has ministered with trans people for three decades, stated:

“‘The reality is that a statement like this from bishops can have negative and serious ramifications for transgender people and their families in every arena of their lives.”

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, commented in a [statement](#):

“‘The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ new document on transgender healthcare states its intention as continuing Jesus’ healing ministry. Yet, in neglecting the experiences of trans people and in not attending to contemporary science, it harms people instead of healing them.

“‘The bishops’ unwillingness to counter any of the evidence from the scientific community or the experience of transgender people is neither good theology nor acceptable pastoral care.

“‘Thankfully, this document is limited in its power at this point. Whether it becomes a national policy remains to be seen. Each bishop can still determine for himself if the recommendations in this document are helpful for the pastoral care of the transgender people in their communities. We hope that local bishops will turn to transgender people and to the wider medical community to decide what policies about transgender healthcare they will pursue.”

Asher, Julie (OSV). “U.S. bishops: Medically changing person’s sex characteristics to those of opposite sex ‘not morally justified’.” *America* (March 21, 2023)
https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2023/03/21/medical-sex-change-not-morally-licit-bishops-244942?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=tbI7GiBaJb0CxejLpzCvQsuA5Aj.VMt3JLm_zLt4sUdmQ.ux7u9U6mYfzYbh3_nj6dttZIZ0

Basically summarizes the USCCB Committee on Doctrine’s document, with no deeper analysis, nor any critique at all.

“‘The human person, body and soul, man or woman, has a fundamental order and finality whose integrity must be respected,” the committee said. “‘Because of this order and finality, neither patients nor physicians nor researchers nor any other persons have unlimited rights over the body; they must respect the order and finality inscribed in the embodied person.”

Lavenburg, John. "U.S. bishops say Catholic healthcare institutions should not perform gender transitions." *Crux* (March 21, 2023)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2023/03/u-s-bishops-say-catholic-healthcare-intuitions-should-not-perform-gender-transitions>

Fairly straight-forward journalistic "report" of the content of the Doctrinal Note, though it did acknowledge briefly some critical reception.

The March 20 statement, titled "Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body," was issued to provide a moral criteria to Catholic health care institutions for discerning which medical interventions "promote authentic good of the human person and which are in fact injurious," according to the USCCB. The bishops noted that the document was developed in consultation with medical ethicists, physicians, psychologists, and moral theologians.

With more than 600 hospitals and 1,600 long-term care and other health facilities across the United States, Catholic health ministry is the largest group of nonprofit health care providers in the nation, according to the most recent data from the Catholic Health Association.

In a statement following the release of the bishops statement, Sister Mary Haddad, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association of the United States, said that "Catholic health care providers will continue to respect the dignity of our transgender patients and provide them with the same quality care we provide to all our patients."

On March 21, Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry – an organization that works to bring together the Catholic Church and LGBTQ+ community – criticized the bishops' for not consulting a trans or nonbinary person in preparing the document.

The debate around gender-affirming care in the U.S. has largely centered on whether or not it is acceptable for minors. Utah became the first state to ban gender-affirming care for minors at the end of January. Since, other states have joined in considering or passing legislation restricting the procedures. Meanwhile, other states have taken steps to protect access to care for transgender people.

Scott, Katie Collins. "Critics say US bishops' new statement on transgender health care lacks sound science and trans voices." *National Catholic Reporter* (March 21, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/critics-say-us-bishops-new-statement-transgender-health-care-lacks-sound-science-and-trans>

Since 2019, when the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education published "[Male and Female He Created Them](#)," which addresses "gender theory" and Catholic education, many anticipated an authoritative text from the U.S. bishops on gender identity. Yet the new doctrinal note is circumscribed; it principally covers medical interventions for

people with "gender dysphoria" and emphasizes "particular care should be taken to protect children and adolescents."

Sr. Luisa Derouen, a Dominican Sister of Peace who has ministered among the transgender community since the 1990s, said the document is "not just about health care."

"The reality is that a statement like this from bishops can have negative and serious ramifications for transgender people and their families in every arena of their lives."

Craig Ford Jr. is assistant professor of theology and religious studies at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, said The document lacks humility "in the face of the stories that transgender people tell about who they are as well as in the face of the emerging scientific and medical discussions around gender identity," said Ford, adding there "is still learning on both fronts, and learning takes time."

"We should be especially humble in our use of words like 'nature' and 'natural order,' especially since these have been used in the past to justify a number of moral atrocities, such as slavery," he said.

Fr. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, praised the doctrinal note.

"Our personal identity is rooted in Christ, who has willed each of us in our basic maleness or femaleness," he told NCR. Seeking to redirect "our innate sex characteristics toward the opposite sex puts us on the road to heartache and a false identity."

"When it comes to the authentic core of our identity," said the priest, who holds degrees in philosophy, biochemistry, chemistry and neuroscience, "the bishops emphasize the foundational grammar of being human and being biologically sexed."

Ford said the document is limited "by not taking into more conscious consideration" the context into which it was released.

"Transgender persons experience staggering amounts of violence and discrimination on the basis of their gender identity," said Ford. Between 2017 and 2021, for example, the number of transgender people who were murdered in the United States [more than doubled](#), according to a nonprofit that tracks gun safety, with Black trans women accounting for a disproportionate number of deaths.

"To truly be Christ's community of care for all, we must strive to protect the dignity of transgender persons, making clear to all that their lives are sacred and worthy of respect," Ford said. By overlooking this opportunity to denounce violence and discrimination against transgender persons, "the document indirectly factors into the suffering — told and untold — that transgender people endure" and hinders their ability to "respond faithfully to God's call to integrity in their lives."

The statement also comes as [more than 100](#) bills affecting transgender people — many related to health care — have been introduced by Republican state legislators so far this year.

DeBernardo, Frank. “New Ways Ministry Criticizes New USCCB Guidance on Transgender Healthcare.” *New Ways Ministry* (March 21, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/21/new-ways-ministry-criticizes-new-usccb-guidance-on-transgender-healthcare/>

The bishops’ document, coming from its Committee on Doctrine, does not begin with the experience of transgender people. In fact, there is no evidence that a single trans or nonbinary person was consulted in preparing it. Further, the document follows a typical ecclesiastical style of refusing to engage with or even acknowledge experts’ advice. Nearly every major medical and psychological organization finds that gender-affirming medical interventions positively aid transgender people’s human flourishing. This professional consensus about the best standards of care for transgender people is absent from the bishops’ text.

The bishops’ unwillingness to counter any of the evidence from the scientific community or the experience of transgender people is neither good theology nor acceptable pastoral care.

They ignore the reality that when transgender people are denied appropriate medical care, many see their only alternative as suicide instead of living a painfully inauthentic life. In the past, the Catholic Church did not allow medical interventions in childbirth, thus resulting in death for many women. The bishops are making a similar mistake now by prohibiting interventions that would save the lives of many transgender people.

This document makes clear just how much church leaders have to learn about LGBTQ+ people. Bishops and leaders in Catholic healthcare should model the hallmarks of Jesus’ healing ministry to which they say they adhere: encounter, listening, accompaniment, and love.

National Catholic Bioethics Center. “Press Release: US Bishops Draw Unambiguous Line on Gender Transitioning in Catholic Health Care.” *NCBC* (March 20, 2023)
<https://www.ncbcenter.org/ncbc-news/usccbresponse>

Against this tidal wave of transgender activism, authentic care for people with gender dysphoria must be rooted in a proper understanding of the order within creation and an accurate application of Catholic ethical principles. When it comes to the truth of one’s identity, the bishops rightly emphasize the foundational grammar of being human and being sexed. Moreover, the principles of totality and integrity cannot be manipulated to make gender ideology consistent with this natural order. First, the altered organs are not pathological. Second, the modifications are not tolerated as a means of protecting the health of the whole body but are the desired result. Applauding the reasoning in the Doctrinal Note, NCBC President Joseph Meaney said, “It is very important for the Church to speak clearly on the transgender issue, where there is so much cultural

confusion. Pope Francis has done this many times and most recently said, ‘Gender ideology, today, is one of the most dangerous ideological colonizations.’”

Diocesan or Governmental Policies with Bearings on Gender, Transgender or GLBTQ Issues

Scott, Katie Collins. “2 conservative groups influence US Catholic transgender policies.”

National Catholic Reporter (May 21, 2024)

https://www.ncronline.org/news/2-conservative-groups-influence-us-catholic-transgender-policies?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=bd6474389b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_05_21_10_37&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-bd6474389b-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Over the past several years, as debates about transgender rights and [medical treatments](#) intensified both in the [U.S. political sphere](#) and the [Catholic Church](#), two conservative Catholic groups have played a consequential but often undisclosed role as they attempt to shape policies and perspectives about trans individuals, especially young people.

Staff of the [Person and Identity Project](#), an initiative of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., provide legal firepower to transgender-related court cases, have the ear of U.S. bishops, offer talks and resources to thousands of Catholics, and have served as consultants for an undisclosed number of controversial diocesan [LGBTQ policies](#).

An NCR analysis additionally found a quarter of those diocesan guidelines contain at least some language that appears on a policy template created by [The Cardinal Newman Society](#), a nonprofit based in a D.C. suburb and best known as a [self-appointed watchdog](#) for [Catholic colleges](#).

The Person and Identity Project and the Newman Society similarly employ rhetoric that at times echoes right-wing talking points and assert that "gender ideology" — a term that for these groups includes acceptance of trans identities — is pervasive and harmful. Each adopts certain approaches seemingly at odds with Pope Francis and that depart from the Vatican's most recent [doctrinal statement](#).

Ed Whelan, then president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a think tank supported by [influential conservatives](#), praised a North Carolina law mandating transgender people use bathrooms that correspond with their sex as assigned at birth.

Permitting individuals to self-identify will "[lead us down a dangerous path](#)," Whelan said at a forum hosted by Rutgers Law School.

"When you lower the bar allowing trans people in the bathroom, you do make things easier for non-transgender perverts and harassers," he said.

To combat the perceived burgeoning cultural embrace of transgender advocacy and acceptance, Whelan's policy center launched the [Catholic Women's Forum Gender Project](#), which evolved into the Person and Identity Project, to respond to "the challenges of gender ideology." The Newman Society produced a [sample set of guidelines](#) for Catholic schools that suggest officials reject trans identities and potentially expel transgender students. ...

"A Catholic school cannot accommodate willful gender confusion," wrote Dan Guernsey, a Catholic school administrator and senior fellow at the Newman Society, as he [announced](#) in 2016 a new society resource he had co-authored: "[Human Sexuality Policies for Catholic Schools](#)."

Since that announcement, at least 15 U.S. diocesan LGBTQ policies have adopted language that appears in the document's 21 pages.

A handful of dioceses use only a couple phrases, and all add portions and tweak wording. But five — the [New York](#) and [Las Vegas](#) archdioceses; and the dioceses of [Green Bay](#), Wisconsin; [Knoxville](#), Tennessee; and [Joliet](#), Illinois — include large sections of the text. ...

Currently 58 dioceses, or nearly 30% of dioceses in the United States, are known to have guidelines focused on LGBTQ people, with most centered on trans individuals or those with gender dysphoria. Many address schools and require names, pronouns, facility use and attire to correspond with individuals' sex as assigned at birth. The total count is based primarily on a [public folder](#) compiled by Catholic school educator David Palmieri, an expert on the policies. ...

In April 2023, the Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa, hosted a Person and Identity Project presentation for priests and deacons.

"It answered a lot of the questions I had and gave me some truth to keep people on the trail to salvation," Fr. David Hemann, a Sioux City pastor, told the diocesan [communications publication](#). "Hopefully it will equip us to better speak to people in their confusion."

Five months after the presentation, Bishop R. Walker Nickless of Sioux City issued a [policy](#) that denies enrollment to students who identify as transgender and prohibits trans people from receiving the sacraments. The latter appears to conflict with an Oct. 31 [Vatican statement](#) allowing trans people, in certain instances, to serve as godparents and be baptized.

McDonald, Matthew. "Almost All Catholic Women's Colleges Admit Men Who Identify as Women." *National Catholic Register* (February 17, 2024)
https://www.ncregister.com/news/almost-all-catholic-women-s-colleges-admit-men-who-identify-as-women?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=294557291&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-88XllxDlhmpLSWA2463HZ1BHKydrel6P2KPOYZijtMGBF28TPQ7__x

[kXAO7p2rL203VXgkgKlt7MualQbyC8HF5Tc7jg&utm_content=294557291&utm_source=hs_email](https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/lgbt-catholic-schools-synodality-fagnant-francis-davenport-omaha?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=e51628999e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-e51628999e-92450125)

Praises Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome ListECKi for his attempts to punish two women's colleges (Alverno and Mount Mary) for their policy of admitting transgender females.

For the fuller notes on this article see the listing in the Milwaukee Archdiocese section below.

Fagnant, Nicholas. "Trusting LGBTQ+ students: We need Catholic schools that listen."

Commonweal (October 22, 2023)

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/lgbt-catholic-schools-synodality-fagnant-francis-davenport-omaha?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=e51628999e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-e51628999e-92450125

Uses the controversy of the first Omaha Archdiocesan gender policy (which was later revised) to frame the problematic with these approaches by Church authorities to LGBTQ+ students.

The revised policy went into effect in August 2023, and is significantly shorter (and less specific) than the original. Yet in essence it remains the same. It still states that "if at any time, parents, guardians, or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community."

The Archdiocese of Omaha is not an outlier. In September, officials in the Diocese of Cleveland in Ohio handed down a similar set of policies designed to curtail the self-expression of LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools. The rules expressly prohibit students from "transitioning" or receiving gender-affirming care. They also ban the use of "preferred pronouns" and some nicknames, require students to use bathrooms corresponding with their "God-given biological sex," and bar them from displaying "sexual attraction to or romantic interest in members of the same sex" at school-sponsored dances and mixers.

At the root of such policies is much of the American hierarchy's vehement rejection of the amorphous concept of "gender ideology." In Catholic circles, the phrase is invoked primarily (and pejoratively) by staunch traditionalists, who hold that sex and gender are binary, permanent, and mandated by God. Deviating from or questioning this belief, regardless of the findings of current psychological and medical research, is viewed with intense suspicion. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly expressed concerns that gender-affirming care threatens the Catechism's teachings regarding the unity of the human body and soul. In their view, the range of treatments that for many Americans constitutes "health care" amounts to a usurpation of God's role as "loving creator" and a negation of the "natural order." (Pope Francis, in his 2016

post-synodal exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, recognizes that gender expressions are culturally contingent and vary based on historical context.)

When translated into educational policy, such views can present serious challenges for LGBTQ+ students. Everything from their clothing and hairstyles, to which sports teams and clubs they can join, to their recommendation letters, diplomas, and transcripts reinforces a rigid gender binary that many in the scientific community believe to be out of date. The Trevor Project, a nonprofit research, advocacy, and suicide-prevention organization, releases annual data concerning the mental health of LGBTQ+ young people. In 2023, they found that when transgender and nonbinary young people find their school to be gender-affirming, they report lower rates of suicide attempts than those in schools that do not affirm their gender identity and expression. Gender-affirming school environments do not just contribute positively to the mental health of transgender and nonbinary students; they actually save lives. It's ironic, then, that the Church's education ministry—designed to promote the life and flourishing of its young people—could also be responsible for placing vulnerable LGBTQ+ lives at greater risk. ...

The Synod on Synodality, convened by Pope Francis and taking place in Rome this October, could potentially bridge some of the divisions currently engulfing the Church, especially in the United States. Catholic theologians here are sharply divided on LGBTQ+ issues, mirroring the country's divergent ideological political poles. In such an environment, how possible will it be for American Catholics to “journey together”?

Retrieving an image from the Book of Isaiah, the “Working Document” for the Synod's Continental Stage called on participants to “[e]nlarge the space of your tent!” “This tent is a space of communion,” the document explains. It's also “a place of participation, and a foundation for mission.” At the heart of this participatory ethic is the practice of “listening,” which is not merely perfunctory or instrumental. In theological parlance, this means incarnating the way God lovingly attends to the cries of God's people. Concretely, it means seeking out and welcoming other perspectives with humility and fidelity. ...

On October 4, the Archdiocese of Davenport in Iowa, a state that borders Nebraska, published a new document on LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools that many found encouraging. The “Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities” cautions against “blanket policies,” which “may prove ineffective and may risk doing greater harm.” Instead, the Davenport document stresses acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, offering a framework for discernment on a “case-by-case” basis. The language of synodality—terms like “consensus,” “fruitful dialogue,” and “collective wisdom”—appears throughout.

Most importantly, the Davenport document affirms a key point that has been glaringly absent in diocesan gender policies thus far: we must listen to and trust our LGBTQ+ students. Embracing the synodal call to journey together, the Davenport document asks educators and ministers to “listen first to people who experience differences in sexual orientation or gender discordance and their loved ones or caregivers. They know themselves and their loved ones...more intimately than anyone else.”

Nick Fagnant is a Commonweal Synod Writing Fellow and a doctoral student in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, where he specializes in “queering Ignatian education.”

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.” *Outreach* (May 10, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they

“repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

Ryan Di Corpo is the managing editor of Outreach. His work has appeared in The Washington Post, America, Boston College Magazine, Peace Review and American Catholic Studies. He holds an M.A. in journalism from Northeastern University, in Boston.

Palmieri, David. “How new U.S. diocesan policies intentionally exclude LGBTQ youth.” *Outreach* (March 3, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/03/how-new-u-s-diocesan-policies-intentionally-exclude-lgbtq-youth/>

This is the first of a three-part series on new policies on gender identity and sexuality that have been issued by Catholic dioceses in the United States. Outreach previously published an overview of several policies last June.

The best teaching happens through personal encounters, which are encounters of love—not tough love, but encounters characterized by what Pope Francis calls “tenderness.”

In contrast to this more relational model of catechesis, we continue to see signs in Catholic education that point toward a more didactic, even apodictic, model of instruction—more along the lines of apologetics. This emerges particularly in the debate over how to speak about sexual orientation and gender identity, and flows even into decisions over the words and letters we use.

In the Diocese of Green Bay, for example, “expressing a gender discordant with one’s biological sex” and “homosexual activity” are named as grave offenses against chastity and marriage. Other listed offenses include lust, masturbation, pornography, fornication, adultery, cohabitating in a sexual relationship outside of marriage, voluntary sterilization, artificial contraception, in vitro fertilization, procuring an abortion and sexual abuse.

But if grave sin requires full knowledge and complete consent (CCC 1859), then how can the correlated effects of gender dysphoria in a young person be grouped with intrinsic evils like adultery, abortion and sexual abuse?

The Diocese of Green Bay goes further:

A member of the diocesan school community who wishes to express a gender other than his or her biological sex is understood as operating outside of the “reality deeply inscribed” within. Assisting the person in his or her disconnection with this reality, however sincerely experienced, by agreeing to participate in any efforts to change natural gender expression is contrary to the pursuit of the truth.

To demonstrate the short-sightedness of such policies, consider St. Joan of Arc, who cut her hair short and wore a man’s clothes and a suit of armor (“The clothes are a small matter,” said Joan at her trial, “the least of all things.”)

There is also St. Galla of Rome, a widow who grew a beard to throw off future courtiers, and St. Marina the Monk, who disguised herself as a man to live an ascetic life in a monastery.

According to the diocesan policies mentioned above, each of these women obstinately persisted in manifest grave sin and would not be welcome in some Catholic schools. Their gender-nonconforming behaviors specifically violate these schools' current policies.

National Catholic Reporter. "Editorial: Talk to trans people before issuing diocesan LGBTQ school policies." (February 9, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/editorial/editorial-talk-trans-people-issuing-diocesan-lgbtq-school-policies>

Students, parents and schools most affected by these policies — indeed, all Catholics — deserve more information about the process by which they have come to be, about who or what is prompting them, and about who is at the table when they are being created. At the very least, dioceses and archdioceses need to apply the values of dialogue and transparency to the process of creating LGBTQ policies, and to discerning whether such policies are necessary.

Instead, they are being born in secrecy, and critics are concerned about a lack of input from reputable mental health and medical experts, not to mention LGBTQ individuals themselves. ...

Granted, there is much we don't understand about sexual identity, gender dysphoria and transgenderism, especially how it affects young people. All the more reason to tread carefully when crafting policies that make sweeping and exclusionary rules about LGBTQ students and their families.

Instead, the church needs to listen to people who are affected by them. Ideally, before any policy like this goes in place, the bishop or administration of the school should consider going on a retreat with young people struggling with their identity, just to listen to them.

It is possible for church leaders to address these issues more carefully and with some level of transparency and dialogue, as the recent process in the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, attests. The bishop there [formed a committee](#) and sought to educate himself and others, with input from transgender people themselves. But the Davenport Diocese is an outlier. ...

As San Diego Cardinal Robert McElroy has [said](#) recently, the church is risking losing young people over this issue: "We believe we are approaching a real crisis in how to minister to the LGBT+ community. It is clear that the church in the U.S. must transform its outreach to LGBT+ persons if it seeks to be a truly welcoming presence in the world."

Pope Francis also has demonstrated that the church can be more welcoming, more open, more transparent, even while maintaining church teaching. It's a model U.S. dioceses should follow when considering policies about LGBTQ students.

Scott, Katie Collins. "As Catholic dioceses release new gender policies, grassroots groups demand input." *National Catholic Reporter* (February 1, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-dioceses-release-new-gender-policies-grassroots-groups-demand-input>

The total number of such policies and guidelines has slowly [inched upward](#); there are now about 34 in place. In January a new policy went into effect in [the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa](#), and the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, issued a [catechesis and guidelines](#) on gender identity.

. New Catholic policies across US create 'culture of fear' for LGBTQ students, advocates say. *National Catholic Reporter* (September 15, 2022)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/new-catholic-policies-across-us-create-culture-fear-lgbtq-students-advocates-say>

LGBTQ advocates say many Catholic secondary schools are working hard to support students. But they also believe there's a particularly harmful trend: LGBTQ youths face a growing number of diocesan-approved policies or guidelines on gender identity and sexual orientation. According to critics, the newest are among the harshest.

This summer new or updated written policies were released by the dioceses of Green Bay, Wisconsin; Lafayette, Louisiana; Memphis, Tennessee; Sioux Falls, South Dakota*; and the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska.

"Catholic high schools struggle with how to minister to LGBTQ teens because in the background is the specter of these policies," said David Palmieri, a theology teacher at Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, Massachusetts, who holds a master's in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School. Palmieri has conducted extensive research on the policies and created a [public folder](#) containing copies of most.

"There is a disconnect between the legalism of many policies and the lived experiences of the human person," said Palmieri. "They are not creating schools of encounter. They help create a culture of fear."

O'Loughlin, Michael. "Pronouns, uniforms and bathrooms: How Catholic schools are facing questions of gender identity." *America* (September 6, 2022)
https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/09/06/catholic-schools-gender-identity-243689?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=pLk2DS5Wb6lEw.mYvDSqEYCFpE68SJJuNfKjkOJ28B9mfgUwYRgJCsfKPHFJjZbSMUOZx_mL

Gives an overview of some of the contentious gender policy protocols instituted by a variety of dioceses such as Omaha, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Sioux Falls, etc., as well as blowback to these, and different standards employed by a number of other Catholic institutions such as Villanova and DePaul University.

*N.B. The Dioceses below are listed in **alphabetical order** below, and relevant commentary specific to a particular diocese is found immediately after the entry for the diocesan policy. If no reference is supplied that links directly with the diocese, then the earliest article treating the policy is listed.*

Alabama

Ring, Trudy. “Appeals Court Lets Alabama Enforce Trans Care Ban, Cites Anti-Abortion Ruling.” *The Advocate* (August 21, 2023)

<https://www.advocate.com/law/gender-affirming-care-alabama-dobbs>

A federal appeals court has lifted a block on most of the provisions of Alabama’s ban on gender-affirming care for transgender youth, citing the anti-abortion Dobbs Supreme Court ruling in doing so.

This means Alabama can enforce anti-trans law, which made it a felony to provide this care to trans minors, while a lawsuit against it proceeds.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit issued the unanimous ruling Monday. The three judges — Barbara Lagoa, Andrew Brasher, and J.P. Boulee — were all appointed by Donald Trump. Boulee is a judge on a lower court, but he participated in the 11th Circuit case under a process by which judges can be temporarily designated to serve on appellate courts.

They cited *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, in which the Supreme Court last year overturned *Roe v. Wade* and its national guarantee of abortion rights. In *Dobbs*, the high court found that when determining if a right is a substantive one guaranteed by the due process clause, courts decide if it is “deeply rooted in [our] history and tradition” and “essential to our Nation’s ‘scheme of ordered liberty.’”

The 11th Circuit ruling quoted those passages and asserted that “the use of these medications in general — let alone for children — almost certainly is not ‘deeply rooted’ in our nation’s history and tradition. Although there are records of transgender or otherwise gender nonconforming individuals from various points in history, the earliest recorded uses of puberty blocking medication and cross-sex hormone treatment for purposes of treating the discordance between an individual’s biological sex and sense of gender identity did not occur until well into the twentieth century.” The ruling also said that the Alabama law does not amount to discrimination based on sex or transgender status and is therefore subject only to the lowest level of constitutional review.

Arlington, Virginia

(suffragan diocese of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Maryland)

Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology (August 12, 2021)

<https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/bishop/public-messages/2021/a-catechesis-on-the-human-person-and-gender-ideology/>

Baltimore, Maryland

“Like Every Disciple: LGBT Pastoral Accompaniment.” Archdiocese of Baltimore. 2023

<https://www.archbalt.org/lgbt-pastoral-accompaniment/> **Also found at**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uT6LahqKChnJpw7zMx-o2ioaR3HmzsQ5/view?usp=sharing>

The response of the Church must also always be one of truth. If we are to love people, in the truest and deepest way, we must desire their good. To love is to desire the good of the other. This requires us to ask questions about what is truly good: What are we made for? What does it mean to be a human person? What is the meaning of human sexuality? What is sacred about our embodied nature? These have always been important questions, but they are even more important today when there is so much confusion and rancor. Without facing these questions in light of revealed truth, these ministries cannot bear fruit. But there is hope. In our desire to know what is good and true we are not alone. God reveals his plan through creation. This revelation is reflected in the Church’s teaching. This teaching is not an obstacle to human flourishing around which we navigate, but rather is an invitation to the abundant life that God promises. The truth is not something we create but something we receive as a gift.

PASTORAL ACCOMPANIMENT SHOWS COMPASSION, RESPECT, AND SENSITIVITY.

From this it follows that:

We recognize the struggles of LGBT persons, and the feelings of pain and rejection that they may have, even with the Church and her ministers.

These ministries must be a safe place where people are free to share their stories and know that they will be welcomed and listened to without condemnation.

We must remember that the experiences of LGBT persons are diverse. These ministries must not make assumptions or place people into reductive categories but accept each person and listen to their unique story.

LGBT persons have a variety of views on the nature of same-sex attraction or gender. Likewise, those who participate in these ministries—be they LGBT persons, their family

members, or friends—may be at different places in their own journey of faith. Once again, these ministries must respect the unique gifts and experience of each person.

Those who lead these ministries must have a deep love for the people they serve, for our LGBT brothers and sisters and their families. They must have a willingness to listen to their stories with an open heart. They must see each person as a person, not as an idea or a commodity.

Lavenburg, John. “Bishop calls Easter observance of Transgender Day ‘offensive and unnecessary’.” *Crux* (April 5, 2024)

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2024/04/bishop-calls-easter-observance-of-transgender-day-offensive-and-unnecessary>

Commenting on the Biden Administration and local officials in Fairfax County, Virginia, promoting March 31, which this year was Easter Sunday, as Transgender Day of Visibility, Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington called it “offensive to many people and unnecessary.”

“I was so extremely, extremely disappointed that our local officials and our president would use the most important religious observance of the Christian calendar to proclaim a message that is political, it is, and a source of division,” Burbidge said April 4. “It was offensive to many people, and unnecessary.”

Transgender Day of Visibility has been celebrated on March 31 since 2009. President Joe Biden has issued a proclamation around the observance of that date every year since becoming president. This year, the day coincidentally fell on Easter Sunday, which falls on a different date each year.

Burbidge said that while the Church offers love and compassion, and has a desire to walk with, assist, and counsel transgender people, “we cannot agree that anyone is someone other than who God created that person to be, nor can we agree with surgeries or other medical inventions to confirm what is not true.” He added that lifting up Transgender Day of Visibility may be harmful to those who have detransitioned. ...

Burbidge then touched on the White House’s decision to not allow any participants in its egg decorating contest to include any religious symbols, or “overtly religious themes,” saying that if that’s going to be the standard then they might as well not have the event. The White House later clarified that the language has been used for the event for the last 45 years across Democrat and Republican administrations.

“You can’t make up what Easter is. Everyone knows what Easter is. It is a celebration of the Lord Jesus, who raised from the dead, who took on the world and proved victorious. That’s Easter. You can’t pretend it’s something else,” Burbidge said. “If you’re going to say no religious symbols, we’re not going to acknowledge Jesus on Easter Sunday, well then don’t have a celebration.”

DeBernardo, Francis. “Baltimore Archdiocese’s Plan for LGBTQ+ Ministry Has Limitations.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 5, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/09/05/baltimore-archdioceses-plan-for-lgbtq-ministry-has-limitations/>

Yet, further into the document the archbishop places restrictions on LGBT ministry. For example, while he promotes the idea that parishes can establish ministries with LGBT people, saying that “nothing is more powerful than building relationships and walking together,” he also adds the caution that “Any parish engaging in any form of ministry with LGBT persons and their families must have my approval.” This requirement seems odd. If LGBT persons are “like every disciple,” as the document’s title says, then why does ministry with them need special permission that ministry with other disciples does not need? ...

Similarly, the guidelines suggest that “personal accompaniment may be preferable to group meetings” when structuring parish ministry. In the overwhelming majority of parishes across the country with LGBTQ+ ministries, the format offered is usually group meetings. Why? There are many reasons, including the need for some LGBTQ+ people to emerge from isolation and shame through mutual recognition and support. Reserving LGBTQ+ ministry to only one-on-one conversations sends the signal that this is a dimension of human reality which must be kept private. Group meetings offer support to newcomers and signal to others in the church that LGBTQ+ people are welcome in the faith community. Most importantly, however, is that the one-to-one format is not a model proposed for ministries with any other community.

I was surprised to find in this document that Archbishop Lori warns against LGBT ministry becoming a platform to call for changing church teaching. I’ve been in touch with hundreds of parish LGBTQ+ ministries across the U.S. for over 30 years, and I can’t think of a single one which included advocacy for changing church teaching as part of their programs.

The history of LGBT ministry in Baltimore, however, actually goes back over 40 years when the Archdiocese of Baltimore issued a [document on pastoral ministry](#) in 1981. That document, while in some ways dated (e.g., it only discusses lesbian and gay people instead of the full-range of LGBTQ+ identities which are now in the public consciousness in ways they weren’t 40 years ago) is well worth reviewing, as its pastoral instincts remain relevant and helpful.

The 1981 document differs from the new guidelines in two significant ways:

1. The earlier document contains a section on the importance of conscience. The current guidelines do not discuss conscience at all.
2. The current guidelines suggest that LGBT ministry should not have a social justice component, while the 1981 document said that social justice should be an important part of this ministry.

Both conscience and social justice are critically important for LGBTQ+ ministry. The primacy of conscience is fundamental church teaching. No legitimate reason exists why LGBT people should be kept in the dark about this doctrine. And although LGBT people have made great advances in society over the past 40 years, they continue to face great amounts of discrimination and oppression, particularly transgender people.

Jones, Kevin. "Baltimore archbishop issues guidelines for Catholic LGBT ministries." *CNA* (Catholic News Agency of the EWTN Media Empire) (July 24, 2023)
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/254878/baltimore-archbishop-issues-guidelines-for-catholic-lgbt-ministries>



Reflecting upon cultural changes, Lori noted recent decades of "an increased awareness within the Church of the experience of our sisters and brothers who are same-sex attracted" and the more recent attention to "those who experience gender discordance or those who may consider themselves to be gender nonconforming." People with these varieties of experiences often identify as LGBT, he said, using the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

"Persons who may identify as LGBT are daughters and sons of God, they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, they are members of the Body of Christ, they are our family members and friends," the archbishop continued. "Like every human person, they were created with a desire for intimacy with Jesus Christ. Like every disciple, LGBT persons are called to a lifelong journey of turning toward the Lord, seeking to know and love him more and more deeply each day."

LGBT ministry must be "shaped toward offering pastoral accompaniment rather than advocating for changes to Church teaching," Lori's guidance said. Christian revelation and Church teaching are not "an obstacle to human flourishing" but "an invitation to the abundant life that God promises."

It is also "essential" for such an LGBT ministry to have "the desire for charity, the desire to truly welcome and embrace sexual minorities, to hear their stories, to walk with them in their struggles."

"We should not presume to understand what each person has gone through or is going through. Openness to the lived experience of LGBT persons and a desire to walk with them is essential," his guidance continued. "We also recognize the feelings of hurt and rejection that many LGBT persons may have felt from those who should care most deeply for them: family members, clergy, and members of their parish community. The response of the Church must always be the response of Christ, which is love."

Lori described contemporary life as a "polarized time" with "polarized discourse" that denies the ability to hold two different realities "in tension." He noted that there are views

that “someone can either be Catholic or be LGBT.” This view suggests that either a person must reject some aspect of the Church’s teaching or must reject some part of their identity. ...

Lori’s guidance focuses on six different “essential characteristics of pastoral accompaniment.” These are: recognizing the reality of our need; showing compassion, respect, and sensitivity; journeying together in light of our calling; having a different kind of conversation; living “rooted in the Church”; and a willingness to “make the long journey.”

Kevin J. Jones is a senior staff writer with Catholic News Agency.

Boston, Massachusetts

Cassidy, Sarah. “Member of Boston Archdiocese’s Gender Commission Resigns Over Transparency Concerns.” *New Ways Ministry* (May 17, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/05/17/member-of-boston-archdioceses-gender-commission-resigns-over-transparency-concerns/>

A member of the Archdiocese of Boston’s gender identity committee has resigned, citing transparency concerns and the absence of transgender people in the process as her reasons.

Maureen DiMilla announced her departure from the committee after the chair, Bishop Mark O’Connell, an auxiliary in Boston, asked the committee’s members to avoid speaking to anyone about the drafting of new guidelines for elementary and middle school students, according to the National Catholic Reporter. O’Connell’s stated goal was to keep all information confidential until the document is close to completion.

Scott, Katie Collins. “Member of Boston Archdiocese's gender identity committee resigns.” *National Catholic Reporter* (May 3, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/member-boston-archdioceses-gender-identity-committee-resigns>

A member of the committee charged with drafting gender identity guidelines for Catholic elementary and middle school students in the Boston Archdiocese has resigned from the group, citing concerns about its transparency and lack of input from transgender individuals.

The departure of Maureen DiMilla — a licensed mental health counselor and former director of the archdiocese's child advocacy office — came after Boston Auxiliary Bishop Mark O'Connell, the committee's chairman, asked all members of the group to pledge via email that they would not speak to the press or anyone else about the document-drafting process.

O'Connell made the request in the wake of NCR's [earlier coverage](#) of the committee's work.

"I didn't feel I could adhere to the request," said DiMilla, NCR's primary source for the initial story. "It is too important of a topic."

"It doesn't need to be fully transparent all the time, but there needs to be a level of transparency during the process. Families, teachers and principals and those it will impact in Catholic schools need to know that the archdiocese is working on this type of document and what types of resources they are using to craft it."

Her resignation underscores the conflicting views about the extent of transparency needed and when transparency should occur as a growing number of dioceses in the United States issue policies related to LGBTQ people, particularly those who are transgender.

O'Connell, speaking publicly for the first time about the guidelines, told NCR in an interview on April 26 he believes sharing the content of the discussions or details about the process while it is underway would inhibit the committee's ability to engage in a complex endeavor thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Both DiMilla and Michael Sennett, a transgender Catholic in the Boston Archdiocese who also spoke to NCR for the earlier story, said that not all conversations within the committee need to be publicized but that it's important to share key elements of the group's approach.

"We've seen the [harmful effects](#) of these documents in other dioceses and states," said 27-year-old Sennett. "Transparency is important because the risk is to an already marginalized group, a vulnerable group. Trans people are having these policies written about us, and when we don't know what's going on it puts us in a more vulnerable position. We don't know what's going on until it hits us."

DiMilla said the Boston committee members were not initially told to keep their work secret.

In speaking with NCR about the work earlier this year, she said she wanted to bring some transparency to the process. She also wanted to share some criticisms, including about certain medical claims made by a presenter to the group, the lack of transgender individuals' perspectives, and about the possibility of certain content that in her view is problematic.

The 11-person committee was convened last spring by Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, and in June DiMilla asked Sennett if he'd be willing to share his experiences as a transgender Catholic with the group. O'Connell, however, said no to the plan, according to DiMilla.

O'Connell said the committee has taken its time to pursue the process with intentionality.

"On one pole of the issue is the view that if you even think about this you are sinful and on the other pole if you don't do what scientists or sociologists say then that's sinful," said the bishop. "It should not be on these poles where we are writing."

DiMilla is hoping the archdiocese will describe how they went about crafting the document at least after it comes out.

Given the Catholic Church's history of secrecy, including past institutional cover-up of clergy sexual abuse in the Boston Archdiocese, "the church needs to be very cautious about being open and not looking like it's covering something up," said DiMilla. "Transparency is an essential component in rebuilding trust."

The Catholic Church, Sennett added, "has not mastered the art of transparency."

DiMilla would like to see a document that affirms school leaders' ability to address situations on a case-by-case basis, as a majority of principals and faculty already are skilled at "supporting and loving and accompanying students who are on this type of journey," she said.

Howard, Angela. "Boston Archdiocese's Process for Writing Transgender Policy Detailed in New Article." *New Ways Ministry* (March 6, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/06/boston-archdioceses-process-for-writing-transgender-policy-detailed-in-new-article/>

Follow up report based on the Katie Collins Scott February 14, 2023 article below.

Collins Scott, Katie. "An inside look at how the Boston Archdiocese is crafting gender-identity guidelines." *National Catholic Reporter* (February 14, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/inside-look-how-boston-archdiocese-crafting-gender-identity-guidelines>

Detailed overview of how the Boston Archdiocese is going about gathering information and input on the drafting of a policy on gender. This includes a possible inclusion of a parish Church worker, Michael Sennett, who is transsexual. However, input is also detailed from Mary Hasson, co-founder and director of the [Person and Identity Project](#), affiliated with the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a conservative think tank. Staff of the project have [served as consultants](#) for a number of dioceses drafting guidelines and policies. Hasson spoke to the Boston committee about how doctors were "mutilating children's genitalia."

Though the committee is drafting the document, its approval rests with O'Malley, who has walked a fine line around LGBTQ issues.

In 2010, after a Catholic school in the archdiocese revoked admission to the 8-year-old child of a lesbian couple, O'Malley supported the pastor's decision about rescinding admission while also trying to help the couple find another Catholic school in which to enroll their child.

"Catholic schools exist for the good of the children, and our admission standards must reflect that," O'Malley wrote in a blog post at the time. "We have never had categories of people who were excluded."

In the same post, he also wrote: "But we recognize that, regardless of the circumstances involved, we maintain our responsibility to teach the truths of our faith."

Cincinnati, Ohio

"In Reversal, Cincinnati Archdiocese Welcomes Back Girl Scouts to Catholic Spaces." *New Ways Ministry* (October 1, 2025)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2025/10/01/in-reversal-cincinnati-archdiocese-welcomes-back-girl-scouts-to-catholic-spaces/>

In a move that can serve as a model for relationships between Catholic institutions and groups which have pro-LGBTQ+ policies, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the regional chapter of the Girl Scouts of America have reached an agreement which will allow the youth organization to use Catholic facilities once again, after having been expelled from archdiocesan facilities in November of 2024.

The agreement mends a more than 100-year relationship between the two organizations which [ended](#) in 2024 when the then-Archbishop of Cincinnati, Dennis Schnurr, said that the Girl Scouts USA organization "embraced and promoted" an "impoverished worldview regarding gender and sexuality" because of their pro-LGBTQ+ positions.

The new agreement, signed by the new archbishop, Robert Casey, adds several new policies to the existing Memorandum of Understanding which covers many logistical and legal issues such as insurance and child protection background checks for the Girl Scouts of Western Ohio (GSWO), the regional organization.

[The article has a fuller description of the Agreement and links to the text as well].

Lavenburg, John. "Cincinnati archdiocese cuts ties with Girl Scouts over 'sexual and gender ideology'." *Crux* (October 30, 2024)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2024/10/cincinnati-archdiocese-cuts-ties-with-girl-scouts-over-sexual-and-gender-ideology>

In an Oct. 28 letter Schnurr said that the decision is a response to an "impoverished worldview regarding gender and sexuality" that Girl Scouts of the USA has "embraced and promoted" in recent years.

"Through some of their activities, resources, badges and awards, Girl Scouts – including the local chapter, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio – has contributed to normalizing a sexual and gender ideology contrary to the Catholic understanding of the human person made male and female in the image and likeness of God," Schnurr said.

Schnurr recommended that every Girl Scout troop should convert to an American Heritage Girls troop, which he calls the “preferred scouting option for girls” based on a mission that is consistent with that of Catholic youth ministry.

In an Oct. 29 statement shared with Crux, the Girl Scouts of Western Ohio said they were notified of the archdiocese’s decision late on Oct. 28 and are “deeply disappointed.” The organization said it remains open to a mutually respectful dialogue, and it hopes the archdiocese will return to conversation.

“Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is — and always has been — a secular organization that welcomes girls of all faiths. Our membership includes girls and families of many faith traditions, and we believe that a part of girls’ healthy development is encouraging girls in their spiritual journey, through partnerships with their faith communities,” the organization said.

An FAQ page on the Girl Scouts of USA website states that the organization “does not take a position or develop materials” on the issues of human sexuality, birth control, and abortion.” The page also notes that the organization does not have a relationship or partnership with Planned Parenthood.

The USCCB, on its website, states that each local bishop determines their diocese’s relationship with the local Girl Scouts Branch. Following the USCCB investigation in 2012, the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas was the first to sever its relationship with Girl Scouts of USA in 2014. Crux did not find any other instances of a diocese making a similar decision.

Cleveland, Ohio

Diocese of Cleveland. “Human and Sexuality” web-page.

<https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/offices/parish-life/marriage-and-family-ministry/human-sexuality/human-sexuality-gender> (accessed September 18, 2023)

In response to societal trends and at the request of church and school leadership, the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland has taken existing guidance and practice in matters of sex and sexuality and developed them into a formal policy. Since questions of sex, sexuality, and gender identity have become increasingly prevalent in our society, it is our hope that the policy will help to ensure these matters are addressed in a consistent and authentically Catholic manner across our diocesan institutions and diocesan Catholic schools, and that those we serve will have a clear understanding about expectations and accommodations related to those matters.

After careful study and thoughtful review, a team of experts chosen by the Bishop and representing relevant disciplines throughout the diocese has developed this formal policy on sexuality and gender identity.

- [Cover letter from Bishop Edward C. Malesic](#)
- [Parish & School Policy on Issues of Sexuality and Gender Identity](#)

Cassidy, Sarah. “Students Protest Cleveland Bishop’s Transgender-Negative Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (November 30, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/11/30/students-protest-cleveland-bishops-transgender-negative-policy/>

Students and alumni from Catholic schools in Cleveland have continued protests against a new diocesan policy restricting the rights of LGBTQ+ students and staff.

Dozens of people protested outside the Cleveland Public Auditorium on November 1st while inside the diocese’s Bishop Edward Malesic led a Eucharistic Revival Rally and Mass. Malesic requested that all Catholic high schoolers attend the event.

Many students and alumni consider the new policy harmful to the LGBTQ+ community. Samantha Platek, the mother of four children who attended Catholic high schools, participated in the recent protest. Platek, one of whose children identifies as transgender/nonbinary, believes that the policy takes autonomy away from parents. She stated:

“The first thing they teach you, when you have a child in Catholic schools is that the parent is the first teacher and the most important teacher, and the schools take a secondary role. And I think they should just continue with that policy. Parents know their children and love their children and love them as they are. And they shouldn’t get in the way of that, and they should let parents love their children. They can learn a lot from us.”

Platek’s nonbinary child, Gill, who now works for an LGBTQ+ nonprofit, warned about the policy’s possible negative impact in an appeal for it to be rescinded:

“I heard about the policy, and it broke my heart. Growing up in Catholic schools, those rules were kind of unwritten. And now they are explicitly written, and they are going to affect queer and trans youths’ mental health. The policies are going to increase suicides among LGBT youth in Cleveland. . . It needs to be taken down. If (the diocese) truly cares about God’s children, they will take it down.”

Megan O’Brien, a student at St. Joseph Academy, also participated in the protest. St. Joseph Academy is independent from the diocese, as it is sponsored by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and has decided not follow the gender policy. Still, O’Brien believes that the new policy is “teaching heterosexual and cisgender children to exclude others,” which ultimately fosters “hatred.” She added:

“We’re out here because we have the privilege to be a voice for kids who cannot speak up for themselves who are really devastated by this policy. . . This goes against what the Congregation of Saint Joseph teaches us . . . that we should serve the dear neighbor.”

In addition to students, parents, and alumni at Catholic schools, the faithful in the wider Cleveland area have been vocal in their criticism of the new policy.

Fr. Jim Sheil, a retired Cleveland diocesan priest, wrote in an op-ed about the new policy being problematic. He states that the policy contradicts Pope Francis' affirming stance toward LGBTQ+ folks, and that there is no evidence that the diocese consulted LGBTQ+ people or their family members in developing the policy. Sheil notes that while it is often "easier to talk about our LGBTQ sisters and brothers than to talk with them," it is unethical to make policies without consulting the impacted community. He writes:

"A good way to ruin a person is to tell a child, 'You are wrong, and I will not accept you unless you change into what I tell you to be, because I know who you have to be much more than you do.'"

"We don't get to decide who is or who is not an image of God, or make rules that others have to follow, because each of us is a unique image of God — even, or especially, people we don't understand, who make us uncomfortable, or whom we fear, or just do not like."

Fagnant, Nicholas. "Trusting LGBTQ+ students: We need Catholic schools that listen." *Commonweal* (October 22, 2023)

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/lgbt-catholic-schools-synodality-fagnant-francis-davenport-omaha?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=e51628999e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-e51628999e-92450125

Uses the controversy of the first Omaha Archdiocesan gender policy (which was later revised) to frame the problematic with these approaches by Church authorities to LGBTQ+ students.

The revised policy went into effect in August 2023, and is significantly shorter (and less specific) than the original. Yet in essence it remains the same. It still states that "if at any time, parents, guardians, or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community."

The Archdiocese of Omaha is not an outlier. In September, officials in the Diocese of Cleveland in Ohio handed down a similar set of policies designed to curtail the self-expression of LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools. The rules expressly prohibit students from "transitioning" or receiving gender-affirming care. They also ban the use of "preferred pronouns" and some nicknames, require students to use bathrooms corresponding with their "God-given biological sex," and bar them from displaying "sexual attraction to or romantic interest in members of the same sex" at school-sponsored dances and mixers.

At the root of such policies is much of the American hierarchy's vehement rejection of the amorphous concept of "gender ideology." In Catholic circles, the phrase is invoked

primarily (and pejoratively) by staunch traditionalists, who hold that sex and gender are binary, permanent, and mandated by God. Deviating from or questioning this belief, regardless of the findings of current psychological and medical research, is viewed with intense suspicion. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly expressed concerns that gender-affirming care threatens the Catechism's teachings regarding the unity of the human body and soul. In their view, the range of treatments that for many Americans constitutes "health care" amounts to a usurpation of God's role as "loving creator" and a negation of the "natural order." (Pope Francis, in his 2016 post-synodal exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, recognizes that gender expressions are culturally contingent and vary based on historical context.)

When translated into educational policy, such views can present serious challenges for LGBTQ+ students. Everything from their clothing and hairstyles, to which sports teams and clubs they can join, to their recommendation letters, diplomas, and transcripts reinforces a rigid gender binary that many in the scientific community believe to be out of date. The Trevor Project, a nonprofit research, advocacy, and suicide-prevention organization, releases annual data concerning the mental health of LGBTQ+ young people. In 2023, they found that when transgender and nonbinary young people find their school to be gender-affirming, they report lower rates of suicide attempts than those in schools that do not affirm their gender identity and expression. Gender-affirming school environments do not just contribute positively to the mental health of transgender and nonbinary students; they actually save lives. It's ironic, then, that the Church's education ministry—designed to promote the life and flourishing of its young people—could also be responsible for placing vulnerable LGBTQ+ lives at greater risk. ...

The Synod on Synodality, convened by Pope Francis and taking place in Rome this October, could potentially bridge some of the divisions currently engulfing the Church, especially in the United States. Catholic theologians here are sharply divided on LGBTQ+ issues, mirroring the country's divergent ideological political poles. In such an environment, how possible will it be for American Catholics to "journey together"?

Retrieving an image from the Book of Isaiah, the "Working Document" for the Synod's Continental Stage called on participants to "[e]nlarge the space of your tent!" "This tent is a space of communion," the document explains. It's also "a place of participation, and a foundation for mission." At the heart of this participatory ethic is the practice of "listening," which is not merely perfunctory or instrumental. In theological parlance, this means incarnating the way God lovingly attends to the cries of God's people. Concretely, it means seeking out and welcoming other perspectives with humility and fidelity. ...

On October 4, the Archdiocese of Davenport in Iowa, a state that borders Nebraska, published a new document on LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools that many found encouraging. The "Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities" cautions against "blanket policies," which "may prove ineffective and may risk doing greater harm." Instead, the Davenport document stresses acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, offering a framework for discernment on a "case-by-case" basis.

The language of synodality—terms like “consensus,” “fruitful dialogue,” and “collective wisdom”—appears throughout.

Most importantly, the Davenport document affirms a key point that has been glaringly absent in diocesan gender policies thus far: we must listen to and trust our LGBTQ+ students. Embracing the synodal call to journey together, the Davenport document asks educators and ministers to “listen first to people who experience differences in sexual orientation or gender discordance and their loved ones or caregivers. They know themselves and their loved ones...more intimately than anyone else.”

Nick Fagnant is a Commonweal Synod Writing Fellow and a doctoral student in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, where he specializes in “queering Ignatian education.”

Schenk, Christine. “Cleveland Diocese LGBTQ policy a 'slap in the face' to God's creation.”

National Catholic Reporter (October 18, 2023)

https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/cleveland-diocese-lgbtq-policy-slap-face-gods-creation?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=73c5e5950c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_10_18_12_36&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-73c5e5950c-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

About 10 years ago, my congregation began to discern how we are called to accompany our LGBTQ sisters and brothers. We spent considerable time learning about [recent scientific understandings](#) of human sexuality and the many ways LGBTQ sexuality manifests and expresses itself in our human family.

We learned about pronouns, yes, but mostly we learned about the people who find themselves persecuted and marginalized because of their God-given embodiment. We learned [startling statistics](#) about the incidence of suicide attempts or self-harm among LGBTQ youth and adults.

We chose to be allies of our LGBTQ sisters and brothers because our charism impels us to live the truth that love of God and love of neighbor are one. As a result, we have become engaged in an [array of activities](#), from attending Pride festivals and parades to joining with Catholic bishops supporting the [Tyler Clementi Foundation](#) standing with at-risk LGBT youth in our country.

One of the most distressing aspects of the spate of anti-LGBTQ policies being issued by Catholic dioceses is the repeated assumption that all humans are born either male or female and one's gender identity must be consistent with one's "God-given biological sex." [Genesis 1:27](#) is often cited.

It isn't that simple.

Consider that 1.7% of babies born in the U.S. have [intersex traits](#) which can occur both internally and externally, according to the organization InterACT. Are intersex people also created by God?

Then there are transgender people, whose gender identity is different from the one they were assumed to be at birth based on genitalia alone. A Pew Research Center survey estimated them to be 1.6% of the U.S. population. Trans and intersex individuals are not the same. (Remember I said this is not simple — it is complicated!)

What isn't complicated is that the theology used by Catholic church leadership assumes that human beings are either male or female, and never the twain shall meet. Contemporary science says otherwise. An in-depth 2019 article from Scientific American summarizes extensive research findings that "sex is anything but binary" and concludes: "Transgender humans represent the complexity and diversity that are fundamental features of life, evolution and nature itself. That is a fact."

Apparently, the diocese did not even invite the views of Catholic high schools. KC McKenna, the president of St. Edward High School, which is sponsored by the Congregation of Holy Cross, said the school was unaware of and had not been consulted about the directives.

This is a really bad way to develop policy — especially in a time of synodality with a pope who is passionate about including everyone. I wish that the Cleveland Diocese — indeed, all U.S. dioceses — would imitate the far more enlightened guidelines recently issued by the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, after widespread consultation.

I grieve for the hurt the Cleveland policy brings to our LGBTQ young people. They deserve so much better.

Carstens, Phoebe. "Cleveland Catholic Schools Resist Transgender-Negative Diocesan Policy." *New Ways Ministry* (October 10, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/10/10/cleveland-catholic-schools-resist-transgender-negative-diocesan-policy/>

Quotes from leaders of various Catholic schools not under direct control of the Diocese, reflecting on how they will handle the issues treated by the Diocesan restrictive policy on LGBTQ issues in schools.

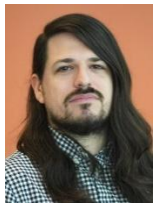
Multiple Catholic schools have issued statements reflecting an LGBTQ-positive stance in response to the Diocese of Cleveland's restrictive gender policy released in September.

A number of Catholic schools run by religious orders, which have some independence from the diocese, have since released statements to parents and staff prioritizing welcome, compassion, and sensitivity, especially in regard to LGBTQ+ students. Cleveland.com gathered several of these statements.

A common thread throughout these schools' statements is the conviction that responding to LGBTQ+ youth with compassion is the most Christ-filled response to this situation. Anthony Burke, a spokesman for Walsh Jesuit High School, noted that it is specifically because of the school's Catholic identity and a faithfulness to the teachings of the Catholic Church that they strive for inclusion and welcome.

In related news, the Diocese of Cleveland's policy is impacting the wider community. [News 5 Cleveland](#) reported that Khalil Seren, mayor of Cleveland Heights, is reviewing the city's non-discrimination ordinances' exemptions for private and religious schools. The city includes Beaumont School, sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland, and Communion of Saints Catholic School, a diocesan institution. Seren said, "we have the ability to protect the kids that live in our community, that go to school in our community, but I want to make sure we're doing it the right way."

Morris, Conor. "Cleveland Diocese LGBTQ+ policy illustrates rift in NE Ohio Catholics' views." *Ideastream Public Media* (October 2, 2023)
<https://www.ideastream.org/education/2023-10-02/cleveland-diocese-lgbtq-policy-illustrates-rift-in-ne-ohio-catholics-views>



A policy barring pride flags and other forms of LGBTQ+ expression at Catholic churches and schools in Northeast Ohio that went into effect in September has illustrated a divide among local Catholic parents' and students' attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people and their place in the church.

Carina Klockner, a mother of five who lives in Green, is in favor of the policy. She arrived to a recent Sunday mass early at the Queen of Heaven Catholic church in Uniontown. As three of her kids don their vestments and head to the nave, where they will assist as altar servers, she discusses why the policy came as a relief.

"The culture seems like they want to normalize like a wide variety of behaviors," she said, referring to greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. in recent years. "And, you know, people can live however they want to live... but for us, trying to teach our kids in their faith, it's like we don't want to say that this is a normal behavior."

Both Klockner and the diocese say they welcome LGBTQ+ people in church. However, Klockner said her beliefs teach her that LGBTQ+ people should remain celibate if they are attracted to somebody of the same sex. And she believes transgender people are experiencing a "disorder," and should not dress or act differently from their sex assigned at birth.

Her son Bradley attends Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron. He's also in favor of the policy.

"I think a lot of high schools, especially Hoban, we're kind of falling backwards," he said. "So I think the policy is a step in the right direction."

Paul Murphy, director of the Institute of Catholic Studies at John Carroll University, is an expert on how Catholic teachings have changed over time. He said that Catholics' feelings on LGBTQ+ rights and acceptance in the church vary and that those stances often align politically with their conservative or liberal views.

"The inclusion of LGBTQ people and the trans community is so very new that although it's clear that this is a challenge to a traditional expression of Catholic ethics regarding sexuality, nevertheless, there's an awful lot of material out there from the popes about including the marginalized, especially since Pope Francis came along," Murphy said.

Meanwhile, Carina Klockner, the mother in Green, has questioned why Catholics' faith needs to adjust as cultural norms change. She said that's led to challenges in raising her children in a way she feels fits with their religious teachings.

"We can't even watch Disney movies anymore because Disney is trying to, you know, influence us, you know? I mean, it just it makes it so hard," she said.

Paul Murphy at the Institute of Catholic Studies at John Carroll University noted that the Catholic Church's teachings and stances have changed over time on a number of fronts, including on slavery.

"So what you, what you've got is a situation where the church completely reversed itself because its understanding of human dignity deepened over time," Murphy said. "The church came to realize that human trafficking and enslaving people was in contrast with the dignity of the human person whom the church holds to be made in the image and likeness of God."

He also notes sometimes things have changed in the church without any formal acknowledgment. The Catholic Church had previously condemned the act of "usury," or loaning money with interest. As the world became more industrialized and commercialized, its stance has changed. Murphy noted the Vatican now runs its own bank.

"Quite literally, the church never officially changed its teaching on it," he said. "It just stopped talking about it."

Klockner said she understands that the Catholic faith has changed over the years, but said some things should remain immutable.

"There are things about the church that can change, you know, like what the priest wears at Mass, the music we play, the you know, there's a lot of things that can, but there are certain doctrines of the church (where), this is what our faith teaches us that will never change," Klockner said.

Foytik and Klockner both argued the church can and does support LGBTQ+ people in their faith. Foytik noted there are organizations that help LGBTQ+ Catholics remain celibate.

The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland has called for the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland to rescind the policy, which calls for schools and staff to tell parents if minors are experiencing "gender dysphoria." That refers to distress somebody might feel when their gender identity is inconsistent with their sex assigned at birth.

“Again we find here the dangerous practice of outing students for their expression of self, subjecting youth to potential harmful situations,” the LGBT Center wrote. “The repressive culture and othering that will be fostered further by the hurtful policies documented in this statement is a massive setback in creating an affirming community here in Northeast Ohio where all should be welcome to live and thrive as their authentic selves.”

Murphy at John Carroll University noted the policy comes at a time when Pope Francis this month is hosting a “synod.” At that assembly, bishops and religious lay men and women will take on topics like women’s roles and LGBTQ+ inclusion in Catholicism. This is the first time that non-bishops will actually have voting power at a synod, Murphy added.

The conclusions formed at that meeting could inform the church’s teachings on those matters for years to come, Murphy said.

Armstrong, Patti Maguire. “Cleveland Bishop Targeted for School Policy on Gender Ideology, but Tide Is Turning.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (September 25, 2023)

https://www.ncregister.com/blog/cleveland-bishop-parish-and-school-policy?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=275834460&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8kFEFZbKsObk kb0SzloDD6QQ4AI73rBJuhbAe0flvyvIPk48MnmQMsWnziovh2yFtcTQoQCo8EkgdH7W_HwEBvdmwlzQ&utm_content=275834460&utm_source=hs_email



The expected highly laudatory celebration of Bishop Malesic’s position, though the author does note “The Usual Backlash: Naturally, this policy [provoked passionate responses on both sides](#). Many applaud the bishop’s defense of truth while others demand reversing the policy.

Tide Turning

The transgender agenda is losing ground. Even in states where it’s not legally banned, [gender clinics are banning such treatment amid fears of being sued](#). Many are

doing so, [such as a 21-year-old in Minnesota](#), who was diagnosed with gender dysphoria by a therapist during a one-hour session and referred for “top” surgery after the second appointment, getting a mastectomy at 16.

This past summer, Denmark joined a [growing number of European countries](#) banning or recommending against transitioning minors. The Journal of the Danish Medical Association, [Ugeskrift for Læger](#), [confirmed](#) that most youth now get therapeutic counseling and support rather than puberty blockers or surgery. In less than a decade, Denmark saw an exponential increase in gender dysphoria among young people. “In 2014, there were only 4 documented pediatric cases who requested gender reassignment. By 2022, the number of referrals grew by 8700% to 352, similar to the several-thousand-percent increase in less than a decade witnessed by a number of Western countries.”

Patti Maguire Armstrong worked in social work and public administration before staying home as a freelance writer while she and Mark raised their 10 children in North Dakota. Follow her on Twitter at [@PattiArmstrong](#) and read her blog at [PattiMaguireArmstrong.com](#).

Kincaid, Laken. “Cleveland Diocese issues controversial statement on sexual identity and gender, JCU [John Carroll University] responds.” *Carroll News* (September 21, 2023) <https://carrollnews.org/228190/campus/cleveland-diocese-issues-controversial-statement-on-sexual-identity-and-gender-jcu-responds/#>

According to Marianne Duddy-Burke, the Executive Director for pro-LGBTQ+ Catholic organization DignityUSA, the Cleveland Diocese is not the first institution to introduce these kinds of approaches to their institutions. For her, while many of these policies are “consistent with official catholic doctrine,” they still “... reflect a very outdated view of humanity that is not consistent with the findings of Sociology, Social Sciences and Psychology.”

“We see this policy and the dozens of others similar to it that have been released over the past three years as very problematic in lots of ways,” Duddy-Burke told The Carroll News. “There has been a group of Catholic bishops, and they tend to be the bishops who are involved in a whole lot of culture war issues, that have released policies. No matter who the people of the church are, there seems to be a particular targeting of LGBTQ+ people. And, recently, trans and non-binary people.”

Many members of the John Carroll community have expressed concern that these statements will impact the university. For LGBTQ+ faculty and students, the message leaves some apprehensive.

“Queer and trans youth are vulnerable as is and for their existence to be rejected and attacked in this way goes against what we see to be Catholic values of solidarity and human dignity,” JCU Allies club president Rebecca Kilmer ‘24 told The Carroll News.

“I can only imagine how emotionally burdensome and painful it must be for some to navigate the news,” Jurell Sison, the Assistant Director of Campus Ministry at John Carroll University, stated. “We are fortunate to have many LGBTQ+ Catholics who seek to deepen their faith. As a minister of faith, I remain committed to the ongoing work of learning, listening and accompanying them.”

However, as confirmed by the Vice President of Mission and Identity Ed Peck, the Diocese’s new policy is not directed at JCU. Yet Peck still told The Carroll News that it is important to “... form a community in which all people, regardless of their background or identity, can experience a deep sense of belonging.”

In an email blast to the wider campus community on Sept. 11, President Alan Miciak said that “... we believe all are made in the image and likeness of God and have inherent human dignity that must be respected. Our university’s foundation is built on the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual. We are called to treat one another with kindness, compassion and respect, reflecting the divine image within each of us.”

For clergy member Fr. Jim Bretzke, he is confident the university will handle the controversy appropriately.

“Clearly John Carroll should be ‘responsible for developing policies and practices for the operation of their schools that reflect and promote the Catholic faith and Catholic teaching,’” Bretzke elaborated. “I am confident that this is exactly what JCU will do, keeping in mind our commitment to Cura Personalis, the care of the whole person, and the Jesuit ideal of having our actions and decisions oriented always to that which will be more promotive of the ‘Magis’ of God’s greater glory.”

Shine, Robert. “Cleveland Diocese’s New Gender Policy Is “Dangerous,” Say Catholic Protestors.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 21, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/09/21/cleveland-dioceses-new-gender-policy-is-dangerous-say-catholic-protestors/>

Ohio Catholics strongly criticized a new restrictive diocesan gender policy which threatens to ban LGBTQ+ people and allies from participation in the church should they act in what is labeled an “inappropriate or scandalous way.”

In response to Bishop Edward Malesic’s announcement of the policy, local Catholics and LGBTQ+ advocates alike condemned it. FutureChurch, a church reform group based in Cleveland, described the policy as “dangerous” and as seeking to erase transgender people. Co-Director Russ Petrus commented in a [statement](#):

“The document acknowledges both the reality and the complexity of gender dysphoria, but the policies contained in it immediately seek to erase that reality rather than honestly and openly engage with it. This policy puts LGBTQ+ youth – a population that is already more susceptible to bullying, stigmatization, and death by suicide – at a greater risk of harm, by further ostracizing them from their school community and their Church and by pulling support systems out from underneath them.”

Susan Russell, president of Dignity/Northeast Ohio, said in a [statement](#):

“The policies that our bishop has recently released send a clear message that welcome in our schools and churches is conditional. They say people who are LGBTQ+ must hide the reality of who they are to be part of our faith communities or to learn at our schools. This betrays the essence of Catholicism, will alienate many Catholics, and, worse, may pose real dangers, especially for children and teens coming to terms with their identities. . This type of exclusionary policy wounds the Body of Christ.”

The diocesan policy [was also criticized](#) by Cleveland’s mayor, Justin Bibb, who called it a “shocking betrayal” of church teaching, as well as of the queer organizations, LOVEBoldly and LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland. A report in [Cleveland.com](#) also raised objections by some that an increasing amount of public funding goes towards private schools, including Catholic ones, meaning taxpayers now potentially pay for anti-LGBTQ+ policies. Finally, Dolores Christie, a theologian who has a transgender grandchild, wrote at [Cleveland.com](#):

“Requiring parental notification will render students reluctant to be candid, or certainly to censor the pain they feel, when they talk with adults working in the school. They need confidants whose discretion they can trust, especially when parents do not yet understand. Not to mention the burden placed on those who now must ‘report’ such discussions, or the actual suicide rate for trans teens. . .

“At the core of both Hebrew and Christian scripture is the admonition to welcome the marginalized and to love one another (the greatest commandment) in community. This new decree is not congruent with the Christian — ‘the greatest of these is love,’ ‘always our children,’ — nor with biology or biblical scholarship, even if it’s in the current Catechism.”

Community of St. Peter (Cleveland) “The Community of Saint Peter responds to the recent Gender Policy promulgated by the Diocese of Cleveland.” (September 12, 2023) https://www.communityofstpeter.org/files/ugd/6441de_ba6d7b933fcb466bb37f3d0ccd3e728e.pdf

The Community of St. Peter is a faith community in the Catholic tradition that is open, welcoming, and affirming. All are welcome at our Eucharistic table. We affirm and celebrate the unique gifts that each of us contributes to the Body of Christ. **Therefore, we stand together in opposition to the Diocesan Policy on Issues of Sexual and Gender Identity, as it fails to recognize the full humanity of the LGBTQ+ community and celebrate each of their unique identities as members of the Body of Christ.** [emphases in the original]

We are appalled that when the LGBTQ+ community would be well-served by the fostering of an affirming environment, the diocese has chosen instead to publish a policy that states gender dysphoria is the diagnosis and discipline is the cure. The sentiment in this policy reveals a lack of compassion and a misunderstanding of human sexual development.

The Community of Saint Peter urges all the faithful of the Diocese to ponder the policy and discern a proper response. The Community of Saint Peter recommends that the Bishop rescind the policy and invite a thorough review by a more diverse committee of faithful, including members of the LGBTQ+ community, school counselors, and parents. Then he will have a richer understanding of “divine revelation.” **We would also like to stress that our doors are always open to LGBTQ+ persons and allies, and we are waiting to celebrate and affirm all that you are.** [emphases in the original]

Morris, Conor. “Catholic Diocese of Cleveland issues official policy barring LGBTQ+ expression.” *Idea Stream Public Media* (September 11, 2023)
<https://www.ideastream.org/education/2023-09-11/catholic-diocese-of-cleveland-issues-official-policy-barring-lgbtq-expression>

This article contains a link to the formal Diocesan Policy.

The Catholic Diocese of Cleveland this month announced a new formal policy on LGBTQ+ expression at parishes and schools. The policy bars the display of pride flags and rainbows and prohibits same-sex couples from attending school dances.

There are an estimated 1.3 million Roman Catholic LGBT adults in the U.S., according to a study by the Williams Institute at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law.

The diocese, in a statement, said the policy formalizes “existing guidance and practice” and is in response to “societal trends” at the request of church and school leaders.

The new policy will affect 84 diocesan-run and parish schools throughout Northeast Ohio.

Nancy Fishburn, spokesperson for the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, said it only affects private diocesan-run schools. Fishburn said the policy is not binding on schools founded by specific orders, like St. Ignatius High School, a Jesuit school, or St. Edward High School, founded in the Holy Cross tradition.

“Schools that are independent or governed by religious orders are not subject to this policy,” she said. “As Catholic institutions, they are responsible for developing policies and practices for the operation of their schools that reflect and promote the Catholic faith and Catholic teaching.”

The policy sets out the following guidelines for staff, students, volunteers and anyone participating in any faith-related activities:

Staff are required to notify parents if minors are experiencing “gender dysphoria” (a conflict between sex assigned at birth and gender with which one identifies).

Institutions will not permit students or others to use preferred pronouns that do not reflect their sex assigned at birth.

No dressing in a manner “inconsistent” with one’s gender assigned at birth, or acting in a manner that has the effect of “causing confusion or scandal regarding” one’s sex or gender.

No advocacy or celebration of LGBTQ+ sexual orientation or identity, including the display of pride flags.

No same-sex couples at parish or school dances.

Gender transitions are prohibited.

Single-gender schools and programs will only accept people based on their sex assigned at birth, although "a possible exception to this is the allowance of biological females competing on athletic teams designated for biological males when deemed appropriate," the policy reads.

The LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland, in a statement, said it is “gravely disappointed in this continued harmful rhetoric towards the LGBTQ+ community,” which it said is in contrast to more accepting attitudes displayed by Pope Francis recently.

“Again we find here the dangerous practice of outing students for their expression of self, subjecting youth to potential harmful situations,” the center wrote. “The repressive culture and othering that will be fostered further by the hurtful policies documented in this statement is a massive setback in creating an affirming community here in Northeast Ohio, where all should be welcome to live and thrive as their authentic selves.”

Forte, David. “Cleveland Bishop Malesic Speaks the Truth.” *Catholic Thing* (September 18, 2023)

<https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2023/09/18/cleveland-bishop-malesic-speaks-the-truth/>

This article was appreciatively sub-tweeted by Bishop Joseph Strickland @Bishopoftyler on September 18, 2023 <https://twitter.com/Bishopoftyler/status/1703745549835420144>

As American society continues to sink into a mire of solipsism and nominalism, it’s the Church, and perhaps only the Church, that can proclaim and defend those things that are permanent, irreducibly real, and radically good. Such is **the courageous and true directive on handling “trans” questions** recently issued by Edward C. Malesic, Bishop of Cleveland.

“Bay Village priest's homily touches on cultural flashpoints, sparks backlash.” *ABC News 5* (May 31, 2023)

<https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/oh-cuyahoga/bay-village-priests-homily-touches-on-cultural-flashpoints-sparks-backlash>

Catholic Diocese of Cleveland defends Rev. Timothy Gareau speaking out against the L.A. Dodgers' support of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

The Catholic Diocese of Cleveland offered its support for the longtime pastor of St. Raphael Parish in Bay Village whose critical comments about a pro-LGBTQ non-profit prompted some parishioners to walk out of Sunday's services. Rev. Timothy Gareau's homily was also condemned by a former parishioner that identifies as transgender who had walked up to the altar during Sunday's mass.

During his homily on Sunday, Rev. Gareau took direct aim at the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and the Dodgers controversy, although he did not refer to the non-profit by name. In his address, Rev. Gareau said the Catholic faith was "under attack" and that God is being defamed. The longtime priest, who has been at St. Raphael since 2002, urged parishioners to fight back — but not with "boxing gloves."

"Look at the Los Angeles Dodgers, look [at] what's happening," Rev. Gareau said in Sunday's services, which were live-streamed. "Defaming the name of Jesus Christ, defaming the name of every Christian here on Earth. It just burns a hole in my heart, angers me and embitters me. And it should you. We should feel that sting. We should know that sting. We should understand it and fight against it — not by boxing gloves. There's other means, there's other ways."

Parishioners that spoke with News 5 on the condition of anonymity said Rev. Gareau has previously, on occasion, touched on cultural flashpoints in his sermons, including abortion and infertility. The livestream from Sunday's mass has been removed online.

Immediately after Rev. Gareau's homily, some parishioners left the sanctuary, witnesses said. After a prayer, a former parishioner named Avery approached the altar, spoke into the microphone and offered a stern rebuke of Rev. Gareau's comments.

"I know you're talking about the [Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence], and I understand that from the outside, it looks like they are defaming the Catholic faith..." Avery said before members of the church can be heard booing and objecting to Avery's statements. Three men then approach the altar and order Avery to leave.

Near the tail end of Sunday's mass, Avery and another parishioner that had walked out of the service were speaking near the parish offices when another parishioner began to verbally accost them, witnesses said.

One witness said the angry parishioner told Avery to, "get the [expletive] off the property" before threatening to assault the other parishioner that was supporting Avery. The angry parishioner allegedly pushed another member of the church. The commotion continued before a man later identified as an off-duty auxiliary police officer helped to diffuse the situation by restraining the angry parishioner, witnesses said.

In a statement released to News 5, the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland offered applause and support for Rev. Gareau's comments on Sunday. The Diocese's statement is posted in its entirety below.

"In his homily on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, Fr. Tim Gareau, pastor of St. Raphael's Parish in Bay Village, talked about a subject that was of deep concern to him and to the Catholic Church more generally. That subject was the growing acceptance of anti-Catholic bigotry in our society, with the most recent example being the Los Angeles Dodgers' plan to honor an overtly anti-Catholic group known as the 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence' at an event in mid-June.

"The Catholic Diocese of Cleveland applauds Fr. Gareau for his courage and fully supports him in calling on Catholics to speak out when others disparage our faith and to fight hatred, not with violence, but by embodying Christ's love and boldly proclaiming the Gospel.

"Those who disagree with the Church's teachings are free to do so, but are not free to disrupt the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to express their opinion. Likewise, those who would seek to defend the Church should do so lovingly and without in any way threatening or committing violence."

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Shine, Robert. "Colorado's Bishops Issue Election Letter Insisting Catholics Vote Against LGBTQ+ Rights." *New Ways Ministry* (July 17, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/07/17/colorados-bishops-issue-election-letter-insisting-catholics-vote-against-lgbtq-rights/>

Colorado's bishops have issued a joint letter about state ballot initiatives which may come up for votes in November 2024. Four of the five initiatives on which the bishops opined concerned LGBTQ+ equality.

The bishops' [mid-June letter](#) concerns "ballot proposals that will undermine the sanctity of life, the family and religious liberty," and it is broken into two parts: 1) the two ballot initiatives Catholics should oppose; 2) three initiatives the faithful should support. The bishops who signed are Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, Bishop Jorge Rodríguez, auxiliary of Denver, Bishop Stephen Berg of Pueblo, and Bishop James Golka of Colorado Springs, representing the three dioceses which make up the state of Colorado.

The bishops ask Catholics to oppose one proposal concerning reproductive rights and one which addresses marriage equality. The first proposal would affirm reproductive autonomy in the state constitution. The second proposal, already approved by Colorado legislators this spring, would remove language from the state's constitution defining marriage in heterosexual terms and will be on the November ballot. The bishops claim that "these are the two most important issues for faithful Catholics to oppose on the November 2024 Colorado ballot," so "[i]t is therefore important that Catholics research each issue and form their conscience before signing a ballot petition."

Moving from opposition to support, the bishops then identify three ballot initiatives which still need the requisite number of voter signatures to be included in this fall's election. The letter's authors explain that these initiatives would "affirm Church teaching on parental rights and the dignity of children" and so "The Bishops of Colorado support these initiatives."

Initiative 142 would force educators at public schools to out gender-diverse students to their parents "within 48 hours," which the bishop claims would "protect parents from government overreach." This initiative would roll back Colorado legislation that empowers LGBTQ+ students to self-identify in schools without outside interference.

Initiative 160 would exclude transgender people from girl's sports. On this issue, the bishops rely on false claims that having trans athletes imperils other students.

Initiative 138 would expand "school choice" for students, diverting taxpayer funding from public schools to private institutions, like Catholic schools. Colorado's legislators have opposed this option. . Currently, the Archdiocese of Denver and two of its parishes are involved in litigation around this issue. The entities sued state officials charged with implementing a universal preschool program because recipients of funding for the program must abide by non-discrimination protections. The [most recent court ruling](#) found the church entities could discriminate based on religion, but not based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

As the [Colorado Times Reporter](#) explained, the state's bishops have a losing record in their deep involvement with ballot initiatives. The outlet explained that church leaders "put their weight behind multiple conservative ballot initiatives in the past, most of which failed."

The reality is that in 2024, the bishops are likely to fail once again as Colorado voters seem ready to preserve marriage equality, expand reproductive autonomy, and reject anti-transgender efforts. But church leaders have already caused harm by sending negative messages to LGBTQ+ people.

Covington, Kentucky

Cassidy, Sarah. "Kentucky Bishop Defends Celebration of Mass with LGBTQ+ Support Group." *New Ways Ministry* (December 5, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/12/05/kentucky-bishop-defends-celebration-of-mass-with-lgbtq-support-group/>

When Bishop John Iffert of Covington, Kentucky, decided to celebrate Mass with Catholics Embracing All God's Children (CEAGC), a support group for LGBTQ+ families, he faced pushback from other faithful. Two dozen people sent letters and emails urging him not to attend the Mass, citing moral issues concerning gender and sexuality. Bishop Iffert was undeterred.

He went to the Mass and later [wrote about his experience](#) on the diocesan website, defending his participation and the support group's work. The St. Joseph's Church, Cold Spring was filled to capacity for the Mass, and the bishop recognized many of the attendees as people who regularly attended his Masses. In his homily, Iffert told the story of a gay man who spoke to him about his love for Christ. The interaction was meaningful for Iffert and had a "lasting effect" on his life.

Iffert also observes that many believe that "homosexual acts — like every sexual act outside of marriage, and any sexual act between spouses that separates the unitive and procreative dimensions of sexuality — are grave matter for sin." However, he notes that all individuals, including the LGBTQ+ community, are "children of God" who deserve love and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation or actions.

"First, the Church firmly asserts that all individuals, without regard to orientation, must be accepted with "respect, compassion and sensitivity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2358). Pope Francis teaches, 'The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception' (Amoris Laetitia, 250). This is to be the attitude of the Church's ministers and all faithful Catholics. The principle is rooted in the belief that every person is made in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity.

"The Church especially recognizes the complexities faced by families whose members identify as gay, lesbian or transgender. 'Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives' (AL, 250). This is precisely what I hoped to accomplish by offering this Mass with and for these CEAGC families and their neighbors. . .

"The presumption that our gay or lesbian brothers and sisters are guilty of unconfessed sin that would preclude them from receiving the Eucharist is discriminatory and never just."

Davenport, Iowa

Diocese of Davenport. "Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities." (October 4, 2023)

<https://files.ecatholic.com/13543/documents/2023/10/Accompaniment%20of%20Sexual%20and%20Gender%20Minorities%2010.4.2023x.pdf?t=1696343672000>

See the report by Robert Shine of *New Ways Ministry* of October 7, 2023 for a sort of executive summary of this Diocesan policy.

Fagnant, Nicholas. "Trusting LGBTQ+ students: We need Catholic schools that listen." *Commonweal* (October 22, 2023)

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/lgbt-catholic-schools-synodality-fagnant-francis-davenport-omaha?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=e51628999e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-e51628999e-92450125

Uses the controversy of the first Omaha Archdiocesan gender policy (which was later revised) to frame the problematic with these approaches by Church authorities to LGBTQ+ students.

The revised policy went into effect in August 2023, and is significantly shorter (and less specific) than the original. Yet in essence it remains the same. It still states that “if at any time, parents, guardians, or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community.”

The Archdiocese of Omaha is not an outlier. In September, officials in the Diocese of Cleveland in Ohio handed down a similar set of policies designed to curtail the self-expression of LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools. The rules expressly prohibit students from “transitioning” or receiving gender-affirming care. They also ban the use of “preferred pronouns” and some nicknames, require students to use bathrooms corresponding with their “God-given biological sex,” and bar them from displaying “sexual attraction to or romantic interest in members of the same sex” at school-sponsored dances and mixers.

At the root of such policies is much of the American hierarchy’s vehement rejection of the amorphous concept of “gender ideology.” In Catholic circles, the phrase is invoked primarily (and pejoratively) by staunch traditionalists, who hold that sex and gender are binary, permanent, and mandated by God. Deviating from or questioning this belief, regardless of the findings of current psychological and medical research, is viewed with intense suspicion. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly expressed concerns that gender-affirming care threatens the Catechism’s teachings regarding the unity of the human body and soul. In their view, the range of treatments that for many Americans constitutes “health care” amounts to a usurpation of God’s role as “loving creator” and a negation of the “natural order.” (Pope Francis, in his 2016 post-synodal exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, recognizes that gender expressions are culturally contingent and vary based on historical context.)

When translated into educational policy, such views can present serious challenges for LGBTQ+ students. Everything from their clothing and hairstyles, to which sports teams and clubs they can join, to their recommendation letters, diplomas, and transcripts reinforces a rigid gender binary that many in the scientific community believe to be out of date. The Trevor Project, a nonprofit research, advocacy, and suicide-prevention organization, releases annual data concerning the mental health of LGBTQ+ young people. In 2023, they found that when transgender and nonbinary young people find their school to be gender-affirming, they report lower rates of suicide attempts than those in schools that do not affirm their gender identity and expression. Gender-affirming school

environments do not just contribute positively to the mental health of transgender and nonbinary students; they actually save lives. It's ironic, then, that the Church's education ministry—designed to promote the life and flourishing of its young people—could also be responsible for placing vulnerable LGBTQ+ lives at greater risk. ...

The Synod on Synodality, convened by Pope Francis and taking place in Rome this October, could potentially bridge some of the divisions currently engulfing the Church, especially in the United States. Catholic theologians here are sharply divided on LGBTQ+ issues, mirroring the country's divergent ideological political poles. In such an environment, how possible will it be for American Catholics to "journey together"?

Retrieving an image from the Book of Isaiah, the "Working Document" for the Synod's Continental Stage called on participants to "[e]nlarge the space of your tent!" "This tent is a space of communion," the document explains. It's also "a place of participation, and a foundation for mission." At the heart of this participatory ethic is the practice of "listening," which is not merely perfunctory or instrumental. In theological parlance, this means incarnating the way God lovingly attends to the cries of God's people. Concretely, it means seeking out and welcoming other perspectives with humility and fidelity. ...

On October 4, the Archdiocese of Davenport in Iowa, a state that borders Nebraska, published a new document on LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools that many found encouraging. The "Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities" cautions against "blanket policies," which "may prove ineffective and may risk doing greater harm." Instead, the Davenport document stresses acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, offering a framework for discernment on a "case-by-case" basis. The language of synodality—terms like "consensus," "fruitful dialogue," and "collective wisdom"—appears throughout.

Most importantly, the Davenport document affirms a key point that has been glaringly absent in diocesan gender policies thus far: we must listen to and trust our LGBTQ+ students. Embracing the synodal call to journey together, the Davenport document asks educators and ministers to "listen first to people who experience differences in sexual orientation or gender discordance and their loved ones or caregivers. They know themselves and their loved ones...more intimately than anyone else."

Nick Fagnant is a Commonweal Synod Writing Fellow and a doctoral student in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, where he specializes in "queering Ignatian education."

Shine, Robert. "Davenport Diocese Releases Positive Framework for LGBTQ+ Pastoral Care." *New Ways Ministry* (October 7, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/10/07/davenport-diocese-releases-positive-framework-for-lgbtq-pastoral-care/>

"This document offers some basic guidance on how to accept sexual and gender minorities in a way that is pastorally sensitive, practical, and faithful to the Church's teachings on sexuality and the nature of the human person. This document does not

provide all the answers, but rather a framework from which to approach these questions. It is important to be mindful that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution, especially to these kinds of delicate pastoral situations. Each person, family, and set of circumstances is unique and personal. Something that is appropriate in one place or situation may not be appropriate in another, but the approach must be intentional and compassionate. Otherwise, we risk doing greater harm not only to the people we seek to serve in these situations but also to the Church as a whole.”

The guidelines are organized around five principles: respecting human dignity, acknowledging sexual and gender diverse people, a commitment to love and listening, collaborative and expansive discernment, and a case-by-case approach. The first section on human dignity contends:

“When it comes to pastoral practice, we are not dealing simply with ideologies or issues but with people who are created in the image and likeness of the Creator. . . We may not always perfectly understand the people to whom we minister, or even agree with all of their viewpoints, but we must recognize and uphold their fundamental human dignity.

“To this end, our first response should be one of welcome, love, and respect. We also should give them the benefit of the doubt in regard to their experiences and motivations. Most sexual minorities and their families who are seeking a relationship with the Church are not trying to sabotage our institutions or challenge all of our beliefs, but are simply looking for a safe, welcoming place to worship, learn, grow in their spiritual journey, and encounter Christ.”

The second principle is titled “Acknowledging the Reality,” which states that diverse gender and sexual identities are not a choice, but an inherent part of a person’s identity. The text continues:

“Often this attraction or understanding of self emerges at a very early age, well before a person is significantly exposed to various cultural influences. It should not be assumed that this is a phase, the result of cultural brainwashing, a desire for attention, or a fad. At the same time, good judgment should be used. We know that adolescence is a time when young people seek to define and express themselves in unique ways that sometimes contrast with their family and cultural norms. This does not preclude the presence of underlying (i.e., genetic, psychological, and/or physiological) factors.”

The third principle, “Love First and Listen for Understanding,” suggests that an exhortation to love “may seem overly simple,” yet “in practice this is often neglected.” The text explains:

“We all need to be aware of our various biases which, unwittingly, can temper or even put conditions on our love. We tend to love those who are most like us and to question, fear, and even exclude those who are more dissimilar. Once we are aware of this and embrace the summons of the Gospel to love all people as ourselves, we do not need to be ruled by our tendency to define people in terms of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ . . .

“The most basic and first expression of our love should be to listen. This is not a listening to refute or with an agenda, but to truly understand people – their experiences, needs, and concerns. This requires humility, patience, and self-control. The more we understand someone, the better we can accompany them.”

The fourth principle, “Involving Others,” emphasizes that in addressing pastoral situations, “the expertise and insights of others” is essential, “especially in this highly sensitive and still-developing area of gender and sexual identity.” The goal is “to draw on collective wisdom and to build consensus” in developing pastoral responses. The text continues:

“We should listen first to people who experience differences in sexual orientation or gender discordance and their loved ones or caregivers. They know themselves and their loved ones – their thoughts, feelings, desires, and needs – more intimately than anyone else. This does not mean they always see themselves or their situations with perfect objectivity, but we should start by accepting their experiences as authentic.

“As Catholic Christians we do not fear the truth. We can confidently turn to the best of what the medical, psychological, and social sciences have to offer. As a Church, we have a robust and longstanding intellectual tradition and have been highly invested in the sciences. We should listen especially, though not without question, to the recommendations of healthcare providers who work directly with people who experience these realities. Any scientific approach can and should be paired with a deep respect for the wholeness of our Catholic intellectual, moral, and social tradition.”

Wide consultation can lead to “the most informed, loving, and pastoral response,” including possibly “reasonable accommodations, outside professional referrals, or more direct intervention in cases of bullying or harassment.” The text adds, “Bringing more people into the dialogue creates a sense of solidarity and avoids placing the entire burden of these decisions on just one or a few people. No one should have to make these difficult pastoral decisions in isolation.”

Finally, the fifth principle, “A Case-by-Case Approach,” acknowledges that LGBTQ+ people’s journeys “can be greatly varied and nuanced.” The diocese rejects any “blanket policies” as potentially “ineffective” and “may risk doing greater harm.” The text continues:

“Pastoral approaches and/or policies may directly address only a minority of people, but they have the potential to affect many more people in a negative way. A policy that is too sweeping may hurt or disenfranchise people. Building trust and dialogue are essential. People are more likely to stay engaged if they believe parish and school leaders know their situation, even if they do not understand everything about their particular circumstances.

“Given different needs, requests may be highly individualized. In recent decades, the evolving fields of medicine, psychology, and education have increasingly seen the value of person-centered, individualized care. This is good practice. A case-by-case approach may not always mean providing everything that is requested, especially when there are competing interests/needs. Some accommodations may not be reasonable or feasible, but every effort should be made to work with individuals and families, keeping paramount the well-being of the person.”

In the guidelines, there are multiple requests for parishes, schools, and other Catholic groups to include the bishop and diocese in their deliberations, not as enforcers of doctrine, but as resources.

At the guidelines’ conclusion, the fact that it is a framework for engagement, not a list of restrictions, is reiterated. In that spirit, the document ends with a series of questions for church officials and pastoral ministers to consider when responding to LGBTQ+ people and their families. The questions inquire about who is involved and what accommodations are appropriate, and include as well:

“What are your biases or blind spots? What experience or expertise do you bring to the table?

“Who else should be consulted to help build understanding?

“Looking at the full picture, what response is needed?”

Bishop Zinkula, recently appointed as Archbishop of Dubuque, explained in his introductory letter the extensive consultation that preceded the guidelines release.

Prompted both by new pastoral questions and Catholics’ desire for better LGBTQ+ inclusion made clear in the synodal process, the committee he formed considered “a variety of sources and perspectives before offering any guidance.” Importantly, Zinkula explained:

“[T]he committee also sought out a number of people who live on this periphery, namely individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ and their families. We heard about their experiences and learned what they hope for from the Church.

“To gain additional insights, we interviewed Church ministers who have been journeying with Catholics experiencing differences in sexual orientation or gender identity and their families. To gain professional perspectives, we consulted a number of medical and psychological experts.

“The committee desired to create a space within the cultural tension associated with this topic where each person feels welcomed and heard, as our Church and society strive to attain a clearer comprehension of this complex situation.

Scott, Katie Collins. “New Iowa guidelines praised as a 'milestone' by LGBTQ Catholics and advocates.” *National Catholic Reporter* (October 7, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/new-iowa-guidelines-praised-milestone-lgbtq-catholics-and-advocates#:~:text=Bishop%20Thomas%20Zinkula%20of%20the,%2C%20love%2C%20and%20respect.%22>

Repeats much of the same material outlined in the *Shine New Ways Ministry* October 7, 2023 article.

Zinkula, recently appointed archbishop of Dubuque, Iowa, where he will be installed Oct. 18, said the guidelines were crafted in response to clergy, school personnel and parish staff expressing a desire to learn how to better minister to individuals and families in their parishes and schools "who are experiencing gender discordance or differences in sexual orientation."

Arland-Fye, Barb. “Gender Committee has been listening and now wants to reach out.” *Catholic Messenger* (of the Diocese of Davenport) (August 18, 2022)
<https://www.catholicmessenger.net/2022/08/gender-committee-has-been-listening-and-now-wants-to-reach-out/>

When Bishop Thomas Zinkula formed the Gender Committee 19 months ago, he and the other members realized quickly how much they needed to learn — and to listen.

“When we first met, the idea was to put together a policy on how to handle sexual and gender identity issues that were beginning to arise in schools and parishes,” he said, “but we didn’t know enough about this topic yet, much less the people who would be affected by any policy we drafted and implemented.”

“We need to keep listening, but now we are ready to discern some steps to take. Pope Francis talks often about going to the peripheries to encounter people living there, to listen and dialogue with them, and to accompany them. That is what we are trying to do with the people who live on this periphery,” Bishop Zinkula said.

Sexual and gender minorities (LGBTQ+ persons), are present in Catholic schools and parish faith-formation programs. That reality requires a renewed commitment to ensure that all people in schools and parish communities feel safe in person, property, space and opinion and are seen, known and loved as a child of God.

Through video conferencing, the committee has listened to the stories of transgender persons, those who minister to them, as well as family members, medical professionals and others. They video-conferenced with Sister Luisa Derouen of central Kentucky who began ministering among the transgender community in 1999, and Deacon Ray Dever of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, whose eldest, adult child is transgender.

Dr. Peter Smith, a pediatrician with the University of Chicago Medical Center, spoke with the committee, as did Dr. James Anthony Sales, a child and adolescent psychiatrist

in Rock Island, Illinois. Both doctors are practicing Catholics who shared their general experiences working with children and their families and acknowledged the complexities of the issue and the need for additional research and study in the medical field.

Commission Marianne Agnoli said: “Being a Church of encounter requires that we meet individuals where they are, not where we may want them to be. It requires that we encounter people exactly how they are and without an agenda.” In his Pentecost address of 2013, Pope Francis said, “With our Faith, we must create a culture of encounter, a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, as well as others who hold other beliefs.... They all have something in common with us: they are images of God; they are all children of God.”

Denver, Colorado

Archdiocese of Denver. “Guidance for Issues Concerning the Human Person and Sexual Identity.”

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23218852/guidance-for-issues-concerning-the-human-person-and-sexual-identity.pdf> [no date given, retrieved from the URL above on November 10, 2022]

This document incorporates, with permission, specific language or substantial portions of “Catholic Schools and Gender Ideology: General Principles and Recommendations,” a document co-authored by Theresa Farnan, PD, Susan Selner-Wright, PhD, and Mary Rice Hasson, JD.

This document is reported in an article by Elizabeth Hernandez entitled “Denver Archdiocese’s guidance to Catholic schools: Don’t enroll transgender students. Treat gay parents differently” in the *Denver Post* (November 7, 2022)

<https://www.denverpost.com/2022/11/07/denver-catholic-archdiocese-lgbtq-guidance-transgender-gay-students/>

Shine, Robert. “Colorado’s Bishops Issue Election Letter Insisting Catholics Vote Against LGBTQ+ Rights.” *New Ways Ministry* (July 17, 2024)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/07/17/colorados-bishops-issue-election-letter-insisting-catholics-vote-against-lgbtq-rights/>

Colorado’s bishops have issued a joint letter about state ballot initiatives which may come up for votes in November 2024. Four of the five initiatives on which the bishops opined concerned LGBTQ+ equality.

The bishops’ [mid-June letter](#) concerns “ballot proposals that will undermine the sanctity of life, the family and religious liberty,” and it is broken into two parts: 1) the two ballot initiatives Catholics should oppose; 2) three initiatives the faithful should support. The bishops who signed are Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, Bishop Jorge Rodríguez, auxiliary of Denver, Bishop Stephen Berg of Pueblo, and Bishop James Golka of Colorado Springs, representing the three dioceses which make up the state of Colorado.

The bishops ask Catholics to oppose one proposal concerning reproductive rights and one which addresses marriage equality. The first proposal would affirm reproductive autonomy in the state constitution. The second proposal, already approved by Colorado legislators this spring, would remove language from the state's constitution defining marriage in heterosexual terms and will be on the November ballot. The bishops claim that "these are the two most important issues for faithful Catholics to oppose on the November 2024 Colorado ballot," so "[i]t is therefore important that Catholics research each issue and form their conscience before signing a ballot petition."

Moving from opposition to support, the bishops then identify three ballot initiatives which still need the requisite number of voter signatures to be included in this fall's election. The letter's authors explain that these initiatives would "affirm Church teaching on parental rights and the dignity of children" and so "The Bishops of Colorado support these initiatives."

Initiative 142 would force educators at public schools to out gender-diverse students to their parents "within 48 hours," which the bishop claims would "protect parents from government overreach." This initiative would roll back Colorado legislation that empowers LGBTQ+ students to self-identify in schools without outside interference.

Initiative 160 would exclude transgender people from girl's sports. On this issue, the bishops rely on false claims that having trans athletes imperils other students.

Initiative 138 would expand "school choice" for students, diverting taxpayer funding from public schools to private institutions, like Catholic schools. Colorado's legislators have opposed this option. . Currently, the Archdiocese of Denver and two of its parishes are involved in litigation around this issue. The entities sued state officials charged with implementing a universal preschool program because recipients of funding for the program must abide by non-discrimination protections. The [most recent court ruling](#) found the church entities could discriminate based on religion, but not based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

As the [Colorado Times Reporter](#) explained, the state's bishops have a losing record in their deep involvement with ballot initiatives. The outlet explained that church leaders "put their weight behind multiple conservative ballot initiatives in the past, most of which failed."

The reality is that in 2024, the bishops are likely to fail once again as Colorado voters seem ready to preserve marriage equality, expand reproductive autonomy, and reject anti-transgender efforts. But church leaders have already caused harm by sending negative messages to LGBTQ+ people.

Stewart, Dan and Beth Mueller. "Catholic Parents Ask Denver's Archbishop Aquila to Drop Anti-LGBTQ+ Lawsuit." *New Ways Ministry* (May 21, 2024) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/05/21/catholic-parents-ask-denvers-archbishop-aquila-to-drop-anti-lgbtq-lawsuit/>

In August 2023, the Archdiocese of Denver and two of its parishes filed a lawsuit against the state of Colorado over LGBTQ+ non-discrimination protections. The state had

launched a universal preschool program, and it required providers to abide by Colorado's non-discrimination laws to receive funding. The lawsuit by the archdiocese and St. Mary's Church, Littleton, and St. Bernadette's Church, Lakewood, claimed their religious liberty was violated because Catholic schools would not be able to discriminate against LGBTQ+ educators, staff, and parents and still receive funding. More details on the dispute are [available here](#).

Today's post is a letter from two Catholic parents asking Denver's Archbishop Samuel Aquila to drop the lawsuit and reverse a **highly LGBTQ-negative trend** in the archdiocese's Catholic parishes and schools.

As lovers and supporters of the Catholic Church, we question the sustainability of the current path that the Archdiocese of Denver is on. It is rooting out anyone not deemed a "good Catholic." You have the power to end the suffering that comes from this lawsuit. You have the power to expand love for the people in this archdiocese who most need a safe place to land, including LGBTQ+ people and their families. Please reconsider the current restrictive approach to governing the local Church, and take up a more hospitable stance. Let's build a longer, broader, and more inclusive table.

Lavenburg, John. "Colorado parishes, archdiocese sue state over pre-school funding requirements." *Crux* (August 22, 2023)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2023/08/colorado-parishes-archdiocese-sue-state-over-pre-school-funding-requirements>

The Colorado Universal Preschool Service was created in 2022. Under the program, any child in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten is eligible for 15 hours of free preschool education, and children that meet additional eligibility requirements – including parental income, foster care placement, and dual language needs – are eligible for additional hours of free preschool education. Three-year-olds who meet certain qualifying factors are eligible for the program as well.

Two Catholic parishes in Colorado and the Archdiocese of Denver have sued the state, alleging that requirements to participate in the Department of Early Childhood's Universal Preschool Service violate their religious liberty and exclude them from the program.

St. Mary's and St. Bernadette's Catholic parishes, along with the archdiocese, filed the lawsuit in Colorado District Court last week. According to the plaintiffs, for the 2023-24 school year the St. Mary's and St. Bernadette's preschools each would have received about \$6,000 per child attending half day preschool, and about \$11,000 per child for attending full day preschool, had they been allowed to participate.

The disputed requirements – found in the service agreement preschool providers must sign to participate, and relating to enrollment and discrimination on the basis of factors like religious affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation – conflict with the parishes' beliefs and guidelines and don't include any kind of religious exemption, which the parishes claim they sought separately and were denied.

One of the requirements deemed problematic is that “each preschool provider provides eligible children an equal opportunity to enroll and receive preschool services regardless of race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, lack of housing, income level, or disability, as such characteristics and circumstances apply to the child or the child’s family.”

According to the lawsuit, the parishes give preference to Catholic families to attend the preschools, require preschool staff to sign employment contracts on an annual basis that they will abide by Catholic teaching, and require parents to “understand and accept” the church’s teaching on moral issues such as life, marriage and human sexuality – all of which are seen to violate the agreement requirements, but which the Catholic parishes say are non-negotiable.

In all, the Archdiocese of Denver operates 36 preschools with over 1,500 preschoolers, the lawsuit states.

Hernandez, Elizabeth. “Denver Archdiocese sues Colorado over right to exclude LGBTQ people from universal preschool.” *The Denver Post* (August 16, 2023)
<https://www.denverpost.com/2023/08/16/colorado-catholic-schools-lawsuit-lgbtq-preschool/>

The Denver Catholic Archdiocese along with two of its parishes is suing the state alleging their First Amendment rights are violated because their desire to exclude LGBTQ parents, staff and kids from Archdiocesan preschools keeps them from participating in Colorado’s new [universal preschool program](#).

The program is intended to provide every child 15 hours per week of state-funded preschool in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten. To be eligible, though, schools must meet the state’s non-discrimination requirements.

The Denver Archdiocese said in the suit they do not believe adhering to their religious beliefs against accepting LGBTQ people qualifies as discrimination. The Denver Post [published written guidance last year issued by the Denver Archdiocese](#) to its Catholic schools on the handling of LGBTQ issues, including telling administrators not to enroll or re-enroll transgender or gender non-conforming students and explaining that gay parents should be treated differently than heterosexual couples.

The lawsuit said St. Mary’s and St. Bernadette’s each require their preschool staff sign annual Archdiocese-approved employment contracts affirming that staff abide by traditional Catholic teachings on life, sexuality and marriage. They require parents who send their kids to their preschools “to understand and accept the community’s worldview and convictions regarding Catholic moral issues like life, marriage, and human sexuality,” the lawsuit said.

Scott, Katie Collins. “Denver-area Catholic women say priest denied them Communion over rainbow masks.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 27, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/denver-area-catholic-women-say-priest-denied-them-communion-over-rainbow-masks>

Susan Doty was one of two women who say a priest denied them Communion when they wore rainbow masks to a Feb. 11 Mass at All Souls Parish in Englewood, a city just south of Denver.

Doty — a former Regis University professor who holds a doctorate in Scripture and a master's degree in theology — said the rainbow face coverings were intended "to show empathy and compassion" for Maggie Barton, who the Denver Archdiocese [fired](#) from her teaching job last month at All Souls School after learning she was in a same-sex relationship.

Barton taught technology at All Souls for the past six years and said she lost her job Jan. 26 after she was told the Denver Archdiocese — headed by Archbishop Samuel Aquila — had obtained a photo of her kissing a woman, according to The Denver Post.

A [statement](#) issued by the archdiocese said it was necessary to "conclude the teacher's employment because she did not honor the commitments she agreed to in her contract."

All teachers in the archdiocese's schools [sign a contract](#) at the start of each year, said the statement, and in it they pledge to personally exemplify "the characteristics of Catholic living," which includes, "refraining from taking any public position or conducting himself or herself in a manner that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church."

Doty, Jill Moore, 64; Cindy Grubenhoff, 48; and Sally Odenheimer, 71, wore masks with multicolored horizontal stripes to the Mass at All Souls Church. Odenheimer had invited the friends to wear LGBTQ-supportive attire to the Mass after she'd learned of Barton's firing.

"Our purpose was not to be disruptive in any way because it's the Mass," said Doty. "But when I pulled down my mask and held out my hands for Communion, the priest shook his head 'no.' "

NCR contacted the parish for comment and was directed to the archdiocese. In response to several questions, Kelly Clark, archdiocesan spokesperson, emailed NCR a statement previously shared with secular news outlets:

Anyone who considers themselves a lifelong Catholic knows that the communion line is not the place for any political statement, especially when such statements highlight that the person is not in communion with Christ. If anyone believes they were wrongly denied communion, we encourage them to speak to the pastor of their church who, unlike secular media, is better equipped to answer their concerns and help them be brought back into communion.

A few years ago, Aquila approved [guidelines](#) for Denver Catholic schools that address sexual orientation and gender identity. It is one of the most far-reaching such documents of the more than 30 [approved by dioceses](#) across the United States, and unlike most others it addresses same-sex relationships in detail.

Enrolling a child of a same-sex couple at a Catholic school "is likely to lead to intractable conflicts," says the Denver document. If a child of a same-sex couple is enrolled, the "school should make clear that it can recognize a couple that is a mother and a father for the child, but cannot recognize 'two mothers' or 'two fathers' as a family structure."

Lavenburg, John. "Denver archdiocese defends guidance on transgender students." *Crux* (November 12, 2022)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2022/11/denver-archdiocese-defends-guidance-on-transgender-students>

The Archdiocese of Denver has defended a policy telling archdiocesan school administrators to not enroll or re-enroll transgender students as simply guidance clarifying church teaching, while critics of the policy say it's "dangerous and harmful" to LGBTQ people.

The archdiocese lamented efforts this week to paint its position in a negative light.

"We don't expect everyone to ascribe to a Catholic worldview, but we strongly reject attempts to paint our position as bigoted or unloving," its statement said. "It is precisely because of our love and reverence for the nature of the human person that we cannot stay quiet on this matter."

The policy has made its rounds in secular media this week after it was obtained and published by The Denver Post. Beyond guidance on transgender students, it states that a Catholic school cannot treat gay parents as an "equivalent to the natural family," and makes it clear that students must act and be treated in accordance with their biological sex.

"The policy is dangerous and harmful because it has no basis in scientific fact or lived reality," Francis DeBernardo, the executive director of New Ways Ministry – an organization that works to bring together the Catholic Church and the LGBTQ community – told Crux in a statement.

"The policy will accomplish only two things: it will increase the incidents of discrimination and violence toward LGBTQ people; and it will continue to push people away from the church in Denver because it shows that archdiocesan officials have no understanding of ordinary people's lives, and its exclusionary tone also sends the message that leaders don't care," he added.

The Archdiocese of Denver is one of many dioceses that have implemented these kinds of policies in recent years. The Archdiocese of Omaha, and Dioceses of Sioux Falls, Green Bay and Lafayette in Louisiana all issued similar policies over the summer.

After the Archdiocese of Omaha issued its policy, Jesuit Father James Martin, an American priest known for his LGBTQ ministry and advocacy, told Crux that on the whole the church needs to do more listening and learning before issuing these kinds of policies.

Martin met with Pope Francis on Nov. 11, where the two spoke about LGBTQ Catholics.

“We still know so little about this phenomenon, so I think this is the time for the church to listen and learn, rather than put out policies, which are often restrictive and even punitive,” Martin told Crux via email. “Before we can be a teaching church we have to be a listening church. And why would we not want to listen to the experiences of the people we’re writing policies about?”

Hernandez, Elizabeth. “Denver Archdiocese’s guidance to Catholic schools: Don’t enroll transgender students. Treat gay parents differently.” *Denver Post* (November 7, 2022) <https://www.denverpost.com/2022/11/07/denver-catholic-archdiocese-lgbtq-guidance-transgender-gay-students/>

This 17-page document, titled “Guidance for Issues Concerning the Human Person and Sexual Identity,” was obtained by The Denver Post and confirmed by the archdiocese. In advising administrators on how to deal with gay and transgender students, parents and staff, it warns that “the spread of gender ideology presents a danger to the faith of Christians.”

Among other guidance, the document said schools should not allow students to use pronouns “at odds with the student’s biological sex.” School officials are advised not to promote students’ acceptance and approval of LGBTQ identities. Teachers who decide to transition are “not suited to teach in a Catholic school or to carry out the school’s mission in any capacity.”

The document provided by the Archdiocese of Denver to its school administrators said a Catholic school cannot affirm a student’s identity as transgender, gender nonconforming, non-binary, gender-fluid, gender-queer “or any other term that rejects the reality of the student’s given male or female sexual identity.”

“Accordingly, enrollment or re-enrollment of such a student at a Catholic school would not be appropriate,” the document reads. “School administrators should communicate this decision to the student and his or her parents in the context of concern for the student’s well-being.”

The Denver Archdiocese’s guidance contradicts the American Academy of Pediatrics, which states LGBTQ youth should not be considered abnormal and are not inherently engaged in “risk behaviors.” Rather, LGBTQ youth who encounter homophobia often experience psychological distress, the academy said, which can lead to health disparities such as depression, suicidality, substance abuse and other mental health issues.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the federal government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration concluded any therapeutic intervention with the goal of changing a youth’s gender expression or identity is inappropriate.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of Social Workers — representing more than 480,000 mental health professionals — all have taken the position that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and is not something that needs to or can be “cured.”

“Reparative approaches have been proven to be not only unsuccessful but also deleterious and are considered outside the mainstream of traditional medical practice,” the AAP said.

LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers, not because of their sexual identity but because of how they are treated in society, according to the Trevor Project, the world’s largest suicide prevention and mental health organization for LGBTQ youth. The Trevor Project estimates more than 1.8 million LGBTQ people between 13 to 24 seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S. and at least one attempts suicide every 45 seconds.

The Trevor Project’s research finds LGBTQ youth report lower rates of attempting suicide when they have access to LGBTQ-affirming spaces.

The Archdiocese of Denver, in its 17-page document, makes clear its opposition to gay marriage, telling Catholic school administration that enrolling a student with gay parents would lead to “intractable conflicts” and to seek guidance from the diocese if posed with this situation.

“A Catholic school cannot treat a same-sex couple as a family equivalent to the natural family without compromising its mission and Catholic identity and causing confusion about the nature of marriage for all students enrolled,” the document reads.

“If teachers and administrators were to treat a same-sex couple as if their relationship — and the situation of two mommies or two daddies — were no different from the mom and dad couples of other families, then it would not be surprising for other students to assume that same-sex couples are ‘just the same’ as other couples and having two mommies or two daddies is no different from having a mother and a father.”

If a child with gay parents is enrolled, the document said the school should list one parent as the mother or father on school paperwork and list the other parent as an emergency contact. The gay couple should agree to avoid public displays of affection at school functions and understand they may “face some limitations on their involvement in the school.”

The Archdiocese of Denver confirmed the document was shared with Catholic school administrators “several years ago to clarify terminology and Catholic Church teaching regarding questions around gender.” Two sources from different Denver-area Catholic schools told The Post that the document was again distributed to administrators earlier this year.

Officials with the Archdiocese of Denver declined an interview request for this story.

Shine, Robert. “Denver Archdiocese’s Gender Policy Bans Transgender Students from Catholic Schools.” *New Ways Ministry* (November 10, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/11/10/denver-archdioceses-gender-policy-bans-transgender-students-from-catholic-schools/>

Summarizes the Archdiocesan policy, with ample quotations from the policy document itself.

Des Moines, Iowa

Scott, Katie Collins. “As Catholic dioceses release new gender policies, grassroots groups demand input.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 1, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-dioceses-release-new-gender-policies-grassroots-groups-demand-input>

The total number of such policies and guidelines has slowly [inched upward](#); there are now about 34 in place. In January a new policy went into effect in [the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa](#), and the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, issued a [catechesis and guidelines](#) on gender identity.

Wiering, Maria (OSV of the EWTN Media Empire). “Diocese issues guidance on gender dysphoria, calling for compassion and coherence with church teaching.” *America* (January 18, 2023)
<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2023/01/18/catholic-diocese-gender-dysphoria-244545>

New guidance and policies on ministering to people experiencing gender dysphoria released Jan. 16 by the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa, call for compassion and coherence with the church’s teaching on gender and identity.

The document, “Gender Identity Guide and Policies,” highlights scriptural and theological underpinnings of the church’s teaching on gender and sex, while emphasizing pastoral concern for children and adults experiencing an incongruence between their sex and gender. It then lists seven policies establishing how this guidance should be implemented in Catholic parishes and schools within the diocese.

The document’s policies are “binding for diocesan parishes, schools, organizations, and institutions of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Des Moines.” They include reflecting biological sex in pronoun use, bathroom use, dress code and uniform adherence, athletic and extracurricular participation, single-sex institution enrollment, the use of single-sex buildings, and participation in single-sex programs, such as retreats and camps.

Additionally, the use or distribution of gender reassignment medication, including “puberty blockers” used for that purpose, on church or parish property is not permitted.

Shine, Robert. “Iowa Diocese’s New Gender Policy Refers to Transgender Healthcare as ‘Mutilation’.” *New Ways Ministry* (January 9, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/01/09/iowa-dioceses-new-gender-policy-refers-to-transgender-healthcare-as-mutilation/>

An Iowa diocese is being criticized after its new gender policy was leaked last week, which refers to gender-affirming healthcare as “mutilation” and bans any gender-affirming medical treatments on church property.

The Diocese of Des Moines' is set to release new gender identity documents on January 16th, which will affect all the Catholic institutions in the region.

"The policies will go to all diocesan parishes, schools, organizations, and institutions. They will apply to all church employees, personnel, volunteers, and those 'entrusted to the care of the church.' . . .

"The document also quotes verses from the Bible for the policy, saying if the church ratifies or reinforces someone's disconnect between biological sex, it is 'not genuine compassion.' It also says 'the disruption of normal sexual development... or the removal of healthy sexual and reproductive organs, is a type of "mutilation.'" The document also says that everyone, man or woman, 'should acknowledge and accept their sexual identity.'"

Coupled with the statement on "mutilation," the policies insist "no person can have on-site, or distribute, medications meant for gender reassignment." Like similar gender policies in the U.S., the Des Moines documents mandate that people in Catholic institutions be treated according to their assigned sex, rather than gender, including when it comes to restrooms, uniforms, and athletics. In addition, "no one may designate a 'preferred pronoun' in speech or writing, when related to minister activities."

The Diocese of Des Moines' new gender policies follow a [blog post from Bishop Joensen last year](#) which took aim at transgender people. Ostensibly writing about the Feast of the Assumption, the bishop proceeded to compare being trans with illnesses like dementia and disordered eating. He also rejected trans people receiving appropriate medical care, suggesting instead that trans identities may result from "sexual or other forms of trauma."

Detroit, Michigan

Vigneron, Archbishop Allen. "The Good News About God's Plan: A Pastoral Letter on the Challenges of Gender Identity." *Archdiocese of Detroit* (February 26, 2024)

<https://www.aod.org/the-good-news-about-gods-plan>

Includes Policies and FAQs at the end of His Grace's Letter

Fullam, Lisa, D.V.D. "The Errors that Archbishop Vigneron Makes about Gender." *New Ways Ministry* (May 9, 2024)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/05/09/the-errors-that-archbishop-vigneron-makes-about-gender/>

Let's focus on the two related errors regarding gender identity in Vigneron's letter:

Error 1: Biological sex (bodily) is fixed and binary

Vigneron reduces the notion of sex to its chromosomal basis. He recognizes the existence of people who don't fit the usual XX-and-phenotypically (i.e. in appearance)-female or XY-and-phenotypically-male model, but says only that "God created them for a special purpose in life."

Given that the number of people who are not simply XX-female or XY-male is not trivial, he seems to rule out that God's "special purpose" for them might be in part to invite us to recognize that biological sex, in fact, is more complicated than a chromosome exam can reveal. Sex has hormonal, environmental, and biochemical determinants, not just XX or XY versions. On this matter, Vigneron is guilty of gross oversimplification, like imagining that all New Yorkers are Yankees fans because, well, New York.

Error 2: Gender identity tracks unerringly with biological sex, and is a matter of "soul"

Here, Vigneron is guilty of the very dualism he claims to oppose. Gender identity is a bodily/biological phenomenon, not merely a matter of "soul," and is influenced by genetic, neuroanatomic, hormonal, and psychosocial factors. The unified human person is a body with particular traits related to sex (chromosomes, hormones, organs, secondary traits) and at the same time ensouled, possessing an inner sense of oneself as male or female or other, based on the same bodily array and a host of psychological, environmental and other influences as we make meaning out of our total selves.

The possibility of gender identity at odds with biological sex becomes obvious when one recognizes the complexity of biological sex, and the bodily as well as psychological nature of gender identity.

Dubuque, Iowa

Jackels, Archbishop Michael. "Gender: Bend but Don't Break." A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels *Archdiocese of Dubuque* (October 24, 2022)

https://dbqarch.org/documents/2022/10/MJ_102422_GenderBendbutDontBreak.pdf

His Excellency's Letter is reported and critiqued by Robert Shine in "Bishop Claims Transgender and Nonbinary Identities Are Result of Original Sin." *New Ways Ministry* (November 3, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/11/03/bishop-claims-transgender-and-nonbinary-identities-are-result-of-original-sin/>

Shine, Robert. "Bishop Claims Transgender and Nonbinary Identities Are Result of Original Sin." *New Ways Ministry* (November 3, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/11/03/bishop-claims-transgender-and-nonbinary-identities-are-result-of-original-sin/>

Shine reports on and critiques the Pastoral Letter of Dubuque, Iowa Archbishop Michael Jackels, "Gender: Bend but Don't Break." A message to the faithful of the archdiocese

from Archbishop Michael Jackels *Archdiocese of Dubuque* (October 24, 2022)
https://dbqarch.org/documents/2022/10/MJ_102422_GenderBendbutDontBreak.pdf

In a little over one page, the archbishop acknowledges the contemporary discourse around transgender and nonbinary identities before rejecting their validity. At one point, in a section on Catholic anthropology, Jackels writes:

“In our human nature we enjoy free-will, which isn’t a limitless autonomy, but circumscribed by the sovereign will of God (Genesis 2:17).

“Our first parents violated those boundaries by trying to commandeer the sovereignty of God, resulting in our soul and body feeling divided (Genesis 3:5).

“One form of that divide is feeling shame when naked (Genesis 3:7). Others may feel it as a disconnect between their chosen gender and their body.”

Jackels acknowledges in the letter that trans people do exist and deserve pastoral care, but claims such identities are a choice.

People who transition and may use new names or pronouns present “a challenge for those who embrace the Catholic worldview,” according to the archbishop.

Ultimately, Jackels claims that Catholics “aren’t able to go along with the idea that people can choose and change their gender, rather than see it as a fact of nature.”

Archbishop Jackels’ bizarrely-titled letter models a poor response to the church’s discourse about gender today. While he repeatedly claims that trans people deserve respect and care, his own words are disrespectful, particularly the suggestion that trans and nonbinary identities are a result of Original Sin. Jackels’ letter reveals the archbishop’s lack of a proper understanding about such identities, which are neither chosen nor sinful. Further studying the issues and engaging the trans community would be helpful going forward as the archbishop continues addressing gender issues.

The Archdiocese of Dubuque’s own [synod report](#) recognized the exclusion LGBTQ+ people feel, a need identified at [every level of the synodal process](#) so far. But, instead of responding with informed compassion, Archbishop Jackels has sadly only furthered such exclusion.

Fall River, Massachusetts

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.” *Outreach* (May 10, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they “repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

Ryan Di Corpo is the managing editor of Outreach. His work has appeared in The Washington Post, America, Boston College Magazine, Peace Review and American Catholic Studies. He holds an M.A. in journalism from Northeastern University, in Boston.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Quiñones, Kate, “Indiana diocese issues school guidelines affirming biological sex, promoting pastoral care.” *Catholic News Agency* of the EWTN Media Empire (September 20, 2024) <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/259411/indiana-diocese-issues-school-guidelines-affirming-biological-sex-promoting-pastoral-care>

The Diocesan Guidelines themselves can be found at <https://wsbt.com/resources/pdf/11b58157-a003-4db5-b92d-b96d1dc5fcdf-FortWayneSouthBendDioceseSexualityIdentityguidelines.pdf>

Bishop Kevin Rhoades notes in the policy that all diocesan institutes must use pronouns that align with a student’s biological sex. The policy does not permit the use of “preferred pronouns” in any capacity.

It further requires that students use the uniforms and bathrooms that match their biological “God-given sexual identity” and attend single-sex sports and programs that match their biological sex as well. ...

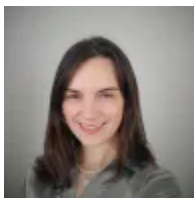
Diocesan institutions may not cooperate in “transgender” surgical or chemical interventions such as puberty blockers or surgery on diocesan property, the guidelines say.

Rhoades highlights the importance of chastity for all people. Single people must live chastity in continence, while married couples must live “conjugal chastity.” ...

Rhoades’ diocese has faced challenges in this area in recent years. The bishop last year **spoke out** against the all-female Catholic St. Mary’s College, accepting any students who “identify” as women. The college has since reversed the policy.

Rhoades notes that in some cases, it may be helpful or necessary to provide referrals to mental health counselors or psychologists “who are faithful to authentic Catholic Christian anthropology.”

“It is also good to help them to bring their needs to God in prayer, to rest in his love, and to have recourse to the Lord’s grace and healing in the sacraments, especially reconciliation and the holy Eucharist,” Rhoades adds.

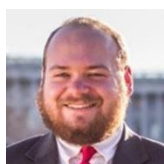


Kate Quiñones is a staff writer for Catholic News Agency and a fellow of the College Fix. She has been published by the Wall Street Journal, the Denver Catholic Register, and CatholicVote, and she graduated from Hillsdale College. She lives in Colorado with her husband.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Arnold, Tyler. “Michigan Parish Files Lawsuit to Protect School From State Intrusion Over Catholic Beliefs on Sexuality.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (January 12, 2023)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/michigan-parish-files-lawsuit-to-protect-school-from-state-intrusion-over-catholic-beliefs-on-sexuality?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=241444523&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-xOAKq8j22aKS0rja6qwmTd47XzF26dJzRmVGiCqnOiX5tYl3OgghUs6qCFyDzFbPbS38TLcstsEQfeb9NI9VM1XjkpQ&utm_content=241444523&utm_source=hs_email



Sacred Heart of Jesus parish, which operates Sacred Heart Academy in the western Michigan city, filed its lawsuit on Dec. 12, after the Michigan Supreme Court reinterpreted the state’s antidiscrimination laws regarding sex. Under the new interpretation, the prohibition on discrimination based on sex also encompasses sexual orientation and gender-identity discrimination.

The parish worries that this reinterpretation would prevent the school from maintaining its standard-of-conduct policies for employees and its approach to how it helps students who struggle with same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria. The lawsuit requests a permanent injunction to prevent the attorney general’s office and Department of Civil Rights from enforcing these rules on Sacred Heart.

Sacred Heart Academy sets itself apart from public education and other private education options by upholding a Catholic culture in the school. When considering job applicants, the school includes a requirement that all employees believe, support and model the Catholic faith, according to the lawsuit. The standard of conduct is clear — employees must support and exemplify in conduct and expression both Catholic doctrine and morality, as articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

As noted in the parish’s lawsuit, the court’s reinterpretation of antidiscrimination law would force the parish and its school to ignore fundamental Catholic teachings on gender and sexuality if it wants to continue operating: the teaching that sexual acts are reserved for a biological man and a biological woman within the bond of marriage; and the rejection of the contemporary claim that a person can change his or her gender to something other than his or her sex.

The lawsuit states that the academy would not approve any request for special treatment based on transgender ideology or other “LGBTQ” ideologies, such as the use of pronouns inconsistent with one’s biological sex or the use of bathrooms that do not match the individual’s sex. The parish asserted that this would conflict with the Catholic vision of the human person and human flourishing and would be contrary to its evangelical mission.

The lawsuit notes that the school has students who experience same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria. The school treats those students with dignity and respect, according to the lawsuit, but would not allow the children to wear the uniforms of the opposite sex, use bathrooms that do not align with their biological sex or participate in the opposite sex's athletic programs.

If a student requests special treatment in accordance with gender dysphoria or same-sex attraction, that student would be denied and might file a complaint that leads to an investigation from the state, the lawsuit notes.

If Sacred Heart is forced to choose between practicing its Catholic faith or shutting down the school, the lawsuit states that the school would choose to shut down. The school currently educates nearly 400 students and has dozens of staff members.

Tyler Arnold is a staff reporter for the National Catholic Register. He previously worked at The Center Square and has been published in a variety of outlets, including The Associated Press, National Review, The American Conservative and The Federalist.

Green Bay, Wisconsin

(suffragan diocese of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Education Policy Manual SY 2022-2023 Revision (July 13, 2022)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rnq1qw_QwtQ7eM0KyBX4HDfnxaoU-9TFh_5O1GUnK5c/edit#

For an article critical of this new policy see Robert Shine, "Diocese of Green Bay's New Policy Compares Being Transgender to Sexual Abuse." *New Ways Ministry* (July 20, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/07/20/diocese-of-green-bays-new-policy-compares-being-transgender-to-sexual-abuse/>

See 5045: General Policy Concerning Gender Identity

All employees and volunteers will be addressed and referred to with pronouns in accord with their biological sex

All employee or volunteer correspondence, documents, and records will reflect the employee's or volunteer's biological sex

All employees and volunteers will use bathrooms that correspond with their biological sex while on Diocesan or Parish property

Violation of this policy by any employee may include immediate corrective action, suspension, and possible termination of employment.

Violation of this policy by any volunteer may include immediate corrective action, suspension, and possible termination of volunteer status.

For an account of this new policy see Sullivan, Maisy. “Green Bay diocese issues gender identity policy consistent with biological sex.” *Catholic News Agency* of the EWTN Media Empire (July 13, 2022)

https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/251781/green-bay-diocese-issues-gender-identity-policy-consistent-with-biological-sex?utm_campaign=CNA%20Daily&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=219613699&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--Vd0uEf88PFqqDfnbNOtMszl45AWSfTraUz0N5So5bY7cfgXk5rEwLH-tmoiyBLwdghbv0zaA7odFl-X9XZEyWPA2zBQ&utm_content=219613699&utm_source=hs_email

Shine, Robert. “Diocese of Green Bay’s New Policy Compares Being Transgender to Sexual Abuse.” *New Ways Ministry* (July 20, 2022)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/07/20/diocese-of-green-bays-new-policy-compares-being-transgender-to-sexual-abuse/>

Critical of this new policy Green Bay, but which just largely “reports” what that diocese has done, along with helpful links to similar diocesan policies elsewhere.

Carlton-Holt, Elsie. “Students, Faculty Protest St. Norbert College’s Change to Regressive Gender Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (November 4, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/11/04/students-faculty-protest-st-norbert-colleges-change-to-regressive-gender-policy/>

St. Norbert College, a Catholic liberal arts school in De Pere, Wisconsin, has changed its gender policy to recognize only two genders, male and female, according to The Green Bay Press Gazette.

The new policy aligns with recent guidelines issued by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in the declaration *Dignitas Infinita*, which reaffirmed the church’s opposition to gender-affirming care and diverse gender identities, by insisting gender is based solely on a person’s sex assigned at birth.

Around 70% of St. Norbert students identify as religious; 41% of those are Catholic. The school is facing financial difficulties, and last year, cut positions like the director of multicultural student services.

Indianapolis, Indiana Archdiocese

“Policy and Complementary Norms on Sexual Identity in School Ministries.”

N.B. While this policy was sent to pastors and school administrators the Archdiocese asked that it not be made available to the public. However, the *National Catholic Reporter* obtained a copy and presented the policy in an article authored by Christopher White, “Indianapolis Archdiocese’s new school policy may bar transgender students,” (June 24, 2020)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/indianapolis-archdioceses-new-school-policy-may-bar-transgender-students>

Lavenburg, John. "Court backs Catholic school that dropped counselor over same-sex marriage." *Crux* (July 15, 2023)

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2023/07/court-backs-catholic-school-that-dropped-counselor-over-same-sex-marriage>

A federal appeals court on July 13 sided with the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in a lawsuit filed by a former guidance counselor who wasn't retained because of her same sex marriage, as the court held that religious institutions have a constitutional right to hire staff who uphold faith teachings.

After the ruling, lawyers for the guidance counselor, Michelle Fitzgerald, reiterated their stance that her role at the school is secular in nature, and therefore she should not have lost her job.

The case, *Michelle Fitzgerald v. Roncalli High School and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis*, dates back to 2018, when Roncalli High School declined to renew Fitzgerald's one-year employment agreement for the reason that her same-sex marriage was contrary to the faith.

A year later Fitzgerald filed a discrimination lawsuit against the high school and the archdiocese, which was dismissed by a district court last year. The July 13 ruling from the Seventh Circuit was on Fitzgerald's appeal of the district court ruling. She now has 90 days to appeal to the Supreme Court.

At the time Fitzgerald filed her lawsuit, her co-director of guidance at Roncalli who was also in a same-sex marriage, Lynn Starkey, also didn't have her contract renewed and sued the school and archdiocese. Her lawsuit concluded last July, with the same outcome.

The July 13 ruling from the Seventh Circuit is based on the explicit freedom of religion in the First Amendment and a legal doctrine known as the ministerial exception.

As explained by the Supreme Court in the case *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. E.E.O.C.*, the language in the First Amendment bars employment discrimination lawsuits "when the employer is a religious group and the employee is one of the group's ministers."

In that case, the Supreme Court explained that "requiring a church to accept or retain an unwanted minister, or punishing a church for failing to do so, intrudes upon more than a mere employment decision," it "interferes with the internal governance of the church, depriving the church control over the selection of those who will personify its beliefs."

In Fitzgerald's case, the Seventh Circuit said it was up to the school and archdiocese to prove Fitzgerald is a minister. Ultimately, it was determined that "there is no genuine dispute that Fitzgerald played a crucial role on the Administrative Council, which was responsible for at least some of Roncalli's daily ministry, education and operations," which is essentially what the district court found, as well.

The Seventh Circuit further explained that Fitzgerald “helped develop the criteria used to evaluate guidance counselors, which included religious components like assisting students in faith formations and attending church services,” adding that “Fitzgerald held herself out as a minister.”

Archbishop Charles Thompson of Indianapolis declined a Crux request for comment.

Watson, Ariell. “Catholic Allies Group in Indianapolis Seeks to Create More LGBTQ-Supportive Schools.” *New Ways Ministry* (April 20, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/04/20/catholic-allies-group-in-indianapolis-seeks-to-create-more-lgbtq-supportive-schools/>

Catholic Allies, a new Indianapolis-based non-profit, is engaging families, alumni, and educators to create a more supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students in local Catholic schools, even as the archdiocese has been more restrictive on LGBTQ+ issues.

Still in its first year of operation, Catholic Allies has already drawn significant support. In February, 300 participants attended the organization’s second in-person meeting, which featured four speakers who shared their experiences and strategies for supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

Catholic schools in Indianapolis, which served 20,000 K-12 students in the 2020-2021 school year, have faced high-profile criticism for anti-LGBTQ+ policies in recent years, including [internal guidelines](#) barring admittance of transgender students, the [firing](#) of several high school employees for queer relationships or support, and the [stripping](#) of Catholic affiliation from another high school because administrators refused to fire an employee in a same-gender marriage.

In the wake of this turmoil, 2003 Bishop Chatard High School graduates Danielle Wiese and Kate Berry, who now have children of their own in Indianapolis Catholic schools, helped organize Catholic Allies because they wanted to start a conversation about how to support LGBTQ+ youth in their community.

However, the Archdiocese also claimed that Catholic Allies is “improperly identifying itself as a Catholic organization” because it is not endorsed by the archdiocese.

Lafayette, Louisiana

Lafayette Diocesan Gender Policy Statement: **Available at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qPssZEX3mvycHNCgbgWyxb8QP8xExn3H/view?usp=share_link [accessed March 29, 2023]

Scott, Katie Collins. “As Catholic dioceses release new gender policies, grassroots groups demand input.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 1, 2023)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-dioceses-release-new-gender-policies-grassroots-groups-demand-input>

The total number of such policies and guidelines has slowly [inched upward](#); there are now about 34 in place. In January a new policy went into effect in [the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa](#), and the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, issued a [catechesis and guidelines](#) on gender identity.

“We Demand More” Website connected with Lafayette, LA that opposes the diocesan gender policy. <https://www.wedemandmore.net/>

On Tuesday, July 26 [2022], it was brought to public attention that St. Thomas More High School (STM) has included the Catholic Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana's "Sexual Identity Policy" in the forefront of its 2022-2023 handbook. The policy, written as a "spiritual mandate," prohibits students' expression of gender or sexuality that is not "God-given" and requires full enforcement by faculty and staff. As news of this policy spread, a group of more than 100 STM alumni—concerned about the well-researched, irreversible harm that this policy will have on students of the diocese—formed We Demand More. The organization's goal is to create an open dialogue with the diocese to amend the policy in respect for the dignity of all LGBTQ+ students.

Nichols, Bobby. “Catholic Schools in Lafayette Diocese Are Latest to Impose Anti-Transgender Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (August 11, 2022)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/11/catholic-schools-in-lafayette-diocese-are-latest-to-impose-anti-transgender-policy/>

The Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana is implementing a new policy requiring students, parents, faculty, and staff at Catholic schools to wear clothing and use the pronouns of “each person’s God-given sexual identity and biological sex at birth.”

The new “Sexual Identity Policy” has been added to the 2022-2023 school handbooks. The language of the policy, as published in three diocesan schools—[Teurlings Catholic High School](#), [St. Thomas More Catholic High School](#), and [Cathedral-Carmel School](#)—states:

“Behavior and expressions of a person’s sexual identity within the school environment that are inconsistent with these principles and/or which cause disruption or confusion regarding Roman Catholic teachings on human sexuality are prohibited. The full cooperation with this policy of school officials, faculty, parents and students is required and a condition precedent to the continued enrollment of each student and the continued employment of each employee, and the enforcement of this policy by the school is deemed a spiritual mandate.

[Lansing, Michigan](#)

(Suffragan diocese in the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan)

Diocese of Lansing. “Love, Truth & Authentic Happiness: A new policy on the Human Person and Gender Dysphoria.” (January 15, 2021)

<https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/news/love-truth-authentic-happiness-new-policy-human-person-and-gender-dysphoria>

Examples of this policy in practice include:

All school students and their parents will be addressed and referred to with pronouns in accord with their God-given biological sex;

Students will participate in competitive athletics in accord with their God-given biological sex;

Catholic schools will not allow, or otherwise cooperate in, the administration of puberty-blocking or cross-sex hormones;

All students will use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their God-given biological sex. On a case-by-case basis, students who have been clinically diagnosed with gender dysphoria may request the use of a single-person, unisex facility.

The Diocese encourages counseling for those whose sexual identity causes them distress or confusion as well as those who suffer from or are diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Counselors or other medical professionals treating those with sexuality-related distress or those with gender dysphoria should hold a correct Christian anthropology of the human person and understand and adhere to Catholic teaching.

The Diocese opposes any transgender therapies or surgeries that are undertaken with the intent of helping a person “transition” away from his or her biological sex, while also recognizing that appropriate medical care may be necessary in rare cases of true genetic or physical anomalies.

The supporting documents for this policy are

Bishop Boyea’s “Policy on the Human Body as a Constitutive Aspect of the Human Person” (January 15, 2021)

https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Sexual_Identity_Policy-The_Human_Body_and_the_Human_Person.pdf

Diocese of Lansing, “Theological Guide - The Human Person and Gender Dysphoria.” (January 15, 2021)

<https://www.flipsnack.com/dolmi/theological-guide-the-human-person-and-gender-dysphoria.html>

Zodrow, Andru. “Lansing Diocese Encourages Parishes to End Scouting Affiliations Over LGBTQ+ Support.” *New Ways Ministry* (March 1, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/01/lansing-diocese-encourages-parishes-to-end-boy-scout-affiliation-over-lgbtq-support/>

The Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, has encouraged parishes to disassociate from Scouts BSA because the scouting organization no longer provides an exemption for religious organizational sponsors of scout groups to exclude young people's whose "personal beliefs" conflict with the sponsoring group.

The diocese also implied that an additional reason for the decision is due to the inclusion of a new merit badge about the importance of civic duty they say is in conflict with church teaching on LGBTQ+ issues.

The diocese sent the directive to parishes advising them not to renew their agreements with the BSA (formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America, but which now goes by the "BSA" acronym because the organization is co-ed) in the future and to find alternatives for youth formation, explaining:

The merit badge in question, "Citizenship in Society," was created in 2017. It is meant to reflect "a legacy of empathy and respect" embedded within the scout oath and law, according to [Scouting Magazine](#). The information about the badge does not specifically mention LGBTQ+ issues.

Yet, according to the [diocesan directive](#), the very presence of a merit badge advocating for social inclusion is a refutation of the church itself. The diocesan statement says: "This required merit badge for Eagle Scouts is an exploration of 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' topics; its regular references to celebrating 'individuality' and different 'identities' contradict Catholic teaching on human sexuality."

Fr. Mathias Thelen, pastor of St. Patrick's Parish, Brighton, the largest parish in the diocese, [promptly removed](#) both Scouts BSA and Girl Scouts groups from the parish.

In 2017, scouting also [opened admission](#) to transgender youth. Despite the fact that local troops are granted the broad authority to make their own determinations as to what is best for their troop, these policy changes have drawn condemnation and dissociation from several conservative Christian denominations, including the Baptist and Mormon churches.

Lexington, Kentucky

McDonald, Matthew. "Transgender Hermit Announcement Poses Questions About Church's Teaching on Religious Life." *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (May 24, 2024)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/transgender-hermit-catholic-church-teaching?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9FGDOiQB2_WWFx5FQeCEx1bK8YC8Lgm05MnLZ8dlRnmp32aw8QL1DxOKLsUxSSalyImg2xTN3di3I-JSRDcvOpbO5EQ&_hsmi=308717984&utm_content=308717984&utm_source=hs_email

Bishop John Stowe's willingness to approve the hermit's profession raises issues that might warrant Vatican intervention.

Brother Christian Matson, the hermit's religious name, went public about Matson's gender identity in [a Religion News Service story](#) published May 19, which was based on interviews with Matson and with Bishop John Stowe, a Conventual Franciscan who leads the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, where the hermit lives.

Theresa Farnan, a founding member of the Ethics and Public Policy Center's [Person and Identity Project](#), which provides resources to Catholic schools and dioceses about the Church's teaching on gender identity, said Matson's public presentation as a male hermit is problematic.

On Tuesday, the Diocese of Lexington published a [statement](#) on the diocese's website:

"On Pentecost Sunday, Brother Christian Matson, a professed hermit in the Diocese of Lexington, has made it public that he is a transgender person. Brother Christian has long sought to consecrate his life to Christ in the Church by living the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. He has consistently been accompanied by a competent spiritual director and has undergone formation in the Benedictine tradition. He does not seek ordination, but has professed a rule of life that allows him to support himself financially by continuing his work in the arts and to live a life of contemplation in a private hermitage."

The statement continued: "Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., accepted his profession and is grateful to Brother Christian for his witness of discipleship, integrity and contemplative prayer for the Church."

In March 2021, Bishop Stowe [announced support](#) for [the Equality Act bill](#), proposed by Democrats in Congress, which would add "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as protected categories in federal civil rights law. Bishop Stowe said the bill would help prevent what he called "harmful discrimination." But the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops [opposed the bill](#), saying it would threaten religious freedom and "discriminates against people of faith precisely because of those beliefs."

In June 2021, Bishop Stowe [made an appearance](#) at an online event celebrating Pride Month, during which he offered a blessing to participants "during this annual celebration of Pride."

A hermit lives alone, in a type of consecrated religious life in the Catholic Church after a public profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience. A hermit is under the authority of the local bishop, and "observes a proper program of living under his direction," [according to canon law](#) (603).

Hammack, Zach. "Diocese of Lincoln, others back out of Give to Lincoln Day over anti-discrimination policy." *Lincoln Journal Star* (May 4, 2023)
https://journalstar.com/news/local/diocese-of-lincoln-others-back-out-of-give-to-lincoln-day-over-anti-discrimination-policy/article_87c97a72-ea8d-11ed-a733-ff95f9cb45fc.html

The Catholic Diocese of Lincoln and other faith-based organizations have backed out of this year's Give to Lincoln Day over concerns about an anti-discrimination requirement officials say goes against their beliefs.

The diocese announced last month it was pulling out of the annual charitable giving day on May 24 because of a policy change that requires nonprofits to affirm they do not discriminate based on factors including sexual orientation in hiring matters.

In an April column posted to the diocese's website, Bishop James Conley said the policy change from the Lincoln Community Foundation, which puts on the event, does not "align with the tenets of the Catholic faith."

"Those requirements could also affect the right of Catholic schools to hire administrators and teachers who strive to live their lives in adherence to the Catholic faith," Conley wrote. In response, Conley said diocesan organizations would pursue their separate fundraising efforts, including a Lincoln Catholic Schools Day of Giving. ...

Alec Gorynski, president and CEO of the Lincoln Community Foundation, said the anti-discrimination policy — which he says is a "best practice" among community foundations — is not new. But last fall, he said, the foundation's board required that the policy be applied more consistently when it comes to its discretionary grant-giving, which includes the foundation's Give to Lincoln Day match funds.

Gorynski said the statement is not a religious or political expression or a criticism of any group, but an "affirmation that everyone has the opportunity to benefit in necessary programs and services."

"We stand behind that," he said. "We stand behind inclusion. We stand behind everyone in our community (having) the opportunity to thrive."

The foundation does not review nonprofits' internal practices and would not challenge an organization that wishes to take part, Gorynski said, emphasizing that the policy only asks nonprofits to "attest they do not discriminate."

Gorynski also emphasized there are exemptions for faith-based organizations that consider religious affiliation when making hiring decisions per the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act.

"... We celebrate and applaud all (the) faith-based organizations that do meaningful work in our community, and wanted to offer them every allowance possible, so we included the exemption to use faith as a factor in hiring, as allowed by law," Gorynski said. ...

Other Catholic organizations not affiliated with the diocese — like the local St. Vincent de Paul Society chapter — are still participating, as are other faith-based groups.

Manchester, New Hampshire

Scott, Katie Collins. "Removal of 4 teachers at New Hampshire Catholic school pushes community into LGBTQ culture war." *National Catholic Reporter* (May 30, 2023) <https://www.ncronline.org/news/removal-4-teachers-new-hampshire-catholic-school-pushes-community-lgbtq-culture-war>

Four well-respected teachers — three with 20-plus years at St. Thomas — were told May 3 by the school president, Paul Marquis, that the school would not renew their contracts. Alumni, parents, teachers and students say the educators were targeted because they support or belong to the LGBTQ community.

School and diocesan leaders, including Bishop Peter Libasci of the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, refute the claims.

On May 26, just before Memorial Day weekend, current St. Thomas families received emailed letters from the bishop and superintendent David Thibault that responded to claims of anti-LGBTQ actions at the school.

"Staffing decisions are hard on the entire community, but most importantly and specifically they are difficult for the individuals involved," wrote Thibault. "I understand the entire community's care and concern for them; however, I would like to reiterate that these non-renewals were not because of a teacher's LGBTQ identity or any personal alignment or views."

Several families have withdrawn their children from the school in recent weeks, outraged alumni have organized to protest the decisions, and at least three other teachers have resigned.

Many in the St. Thomas community told NCR they have observed a shift at the school (about 65 miles north of Boston) since 2020, when longtime principal Kevin Collins retired, a new administrative structure was implemented, and James Broom became chairman of the board of trustees. Under the new model, the president — most recently Marquis — reports to the board.

After a theology teacher told students that God transcends gender, Marquis called members of the theology department into his office and told them they were to refer to God always as "Father" and "He" — never "She." Marquis' directive was confirmed by three teachers.

This spring, Marquis [directed students](#) to remove the word "gay" from a song in the school's spring production of "Legally Blonde."

Multiple teachers also said they were told they would participate in training with the [Person and Identity Project](#) during the coming school year. They said Thibault, the diocesan superintendent, came to the school last fall unannounced and spoke nearly an hour about "gender ideology" and the virtues of the project.

The Person and Identity Project is an initiative of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C. Its stated aim is to assist the Catholic Church "in promoting the Catholic vision of the human person and responding to the challenges of gender ideology," which it describes as an "erroneous system of beliefs" about the human person.

A mental health expert [previously told NCR](#) some of the initiative's content is medically questionable. Its website contains information from the American College of Pediatricians, a non-mainstream medical organization labeled a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Students react

As word got out, students voiced their frustration with the administration and support for the affected teachers, posting flyers that read: "We love you for who you are / We thank you so much for your commitment to us."

On the class of 2024's [Instagram page](#), students shared a message to the four educators.

"We feel helpless," it reads. "We feel disappointed. But above all, we feel a need for justice. Though we are still processing and developing a plan of action, we wanted to reach out to tell you that we will not let this go."

Staff removed the signs, and on May 8, juniors and seniors on the student advisory board were pulled out of class without notice and told to leave their phones in a locked room, said Liam Lena. He recounted the events based on a summary he'd written up with fellow seniors the night after the meeting, "to assure that we couldn't be told that we remembered events incorrectly."

Students met with Marquis, along with the school's director of counseling, the communications director for the Manchester Diocese, and the diocesan director of marketing, enrollment and development.

Marquis "claimed that none of the staffing decisions were made on the basis of LGBTQ support or alignment," according to the students' summary shared with NCR. And he "told us that we as student leaders needed to go and spread the message that the 'rumors' of the teachers being fired for their support were untrue."

Marquette, Michigan

(Suffragan diocese in the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan)

Created in the Image and Likeness of God: An Instruction on Some Aspects of the Pastoral Care of Persons with Same-Sex Attraction and Gender Dysphoria (July 29, 2021)

<https://www.dioceseofmarquette.org/images/files/07-29-21%20Instruction-Created%20in%20the%20Image%20and%20Likeness%20of%20God%281%29.pdf>

Shine, Robert. “Marquette Diocese’s New Policy Could Ban LGBTQ People from Sacraments and Ministry.” *New Ways Ministry* (December 9, 2021)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/12/10/marquette-dioceses-new-policy-could-ban-lgbtq-people-from-sacraments-and-ministry/>

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.” *Outreach* (May 10, 2023)

<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from

the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they “repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

Ryan Di Corpo is the managing editor of Outreach. His work has appeared in The Washington Post, America, Boston College Magazine, Peace Review and American Catholic Studies. He holds an M.A. in journalism from Northeastern University, in Boston.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin Archdiocese

Bretzke, James T. S.J. “Principles, Policies & Prudence: Reflecting on and Responding to Milwaukee Archdiocese Policy Statement on Gender Theory.”

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tEf7zECjz9dI8JSKBpiqROgw9FaP2_pK/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103519537108777764442&rtpof=true&sd=true

McDonald, Matthew. “Almost All Catholic Women’s Colleges Admit Men Who Identify as Women.” *National Catholic Register* (February 17, 2024)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/almost-all-catholic-women-s-colleges-admit-men-who-identify-as-women?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=294557291&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-88XllxDlhmpLSWA2463HZ1BHKydrel6P2KPOYZijtMGBF28TPQ7_xkXAO7p2rL203VXgkgKlt7MualQbyC8HF5Tc7jg&utm_content=294557291&utm_source=hs_email

Praises Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome ListECKi for his attempts to punish two women’s colleges (Alverno and Mount Mary) for their policy of admitting transgender females.

The Register contacted spokesmen for the bishops of the dioceses where these schools are, asking for comment. Only one — the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, home of two Catholic women’s colleges — said the diocese is taking action about the gender-admissions policies.

A spokeswoman for Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome ListECKi provided the Register with the archdiocese’s 2022 “Gender Theory Policy,” which states that “single-sex schools” are “restricted to persons of the designated biological sex.” The policy argues that charity demands truth and that recognizing a disconnection between biological sex and gender identity “opposes the truth of our sexual unity.”

“Our Gender Theory Policy applies to all Catholic parishes, schools, universities, colleges, and organizations that operate within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Our Policy Implementation Team is aware of some inconsistencies and is working to correct them,” said Sandra Peterson, communication director of the archdiocese, by email. ...

Alverno College

Among the Catholic women's colleges that already accept transgender students, some present their gender-identity policy as inspired by their Catholicism. One example is Alverno College in Milwaukee, affiliated with the School Sisters of St. Francis, which says on its website, "In the Catholic tradition of caring and respect for each human person, we support students on their journey of self-discovery and recognize that gender identity may change over time."

"Alverno has put guidelines and services in place to support transgender students as integral members of our diverse campus community. Specifically, Alverno College admits students who consistently live and identify as women," the Alverno website states. "In addition, continuing students whose gender identity changes after admission are encouraged to persist through graduation, experiencing the personal and academic support each student deserves from an Alverno education."

Mount Mary University

Mount Mary University, also in Milwaukee, on its website calls itself "a Catholic university that believes and acts in accordance to the tradition of caring, respect, and educational access."

"As such, MMU strives to create an environment that is inclusive of all gender identities and intersectionality," the website states. "At the undergraduate level, all individuals who identify as women (including cisgender and transgender women), intersex individuals who do not identify as male, and non-binary individuals are eligible for admission to MMU." ...

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Gender Theory Policy takes a different view. It closely tracks the Catholic Church's teaching on gender identity, stating that God creates each person male or female, that "biological sex ... cannot be changed because it is bestowed by God as a gift and as a calling" (original emphasis), that a person's gender "is inseparable from biological sex," and that human beings "work out our salvation via our masculinity or femininity."

"In other words, human persons do not experience the freedom and joy of salvation despite their biological sex, but only in it and through it," the archdiocese's policy states.

What Other Colleges Say

There are five other Catholic women's colleges in the United States.

Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles, associated with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, states on its website, "Our admission policy is that any student who was born female or who identifies as female is eligible for admission to our traditional undergraduate women's university." The school also encourages students with documents

“that include a gender designation that does not accurately reflect their gender identity ... to bring this to the attention of the Office of Admission at the time of application.”

A spokesman for Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, where Mount Saint Mary’s University is located, told the Register by email, “It is the understanding of the Archdiocese that university programs are open to all students. Since the university is independent and not an Archdiocesan institution, any questions regarding admissions would be addressed by the university.”

St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, associated with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, states on its website, “St. Catherine University admits students of all genders and gender identities to the College for Adults and the Graduate College and admits all students who identify as women to the College for Women.”

The College of Saint Benedict, in St. Joseph, Minnesota, affiliated with the Order of St. Benedict, states on its website, “In furtherance of our mission, tradition, and values as a college for women ... and in recognition of our changing world and evolving understanding of gender and gender identity, the College of Saint Benedict will consider for undergraduate admission those applicants who were assigned female at birth as well as those who were assigned male or female at birth but now consistently live and identify as female, transgender, gender fluid or nonbinary.”

The College of Saint Benedict has a close relationship with Saint John’s University, a Benedictine men’s school in nearby Collegeville. The two schools have similar policies on gender identity.

Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C., associated with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, does not state a policy on gender identity in admissions information on its website. Campus Pride, a pro-transgenderism organization that tracks women’s colleges’ admissions policies, says that “trans women are considered for admission to its women’s college, the College of Arts and Sciences,” citing a “personal communication” on Feb. 8 as the source.

The College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Nebraska, associated with the Sisters of Mercy, does not state a policy on gender identity in admissions. But Campus Pride says the College of Saint Mary “accepts applications from individuals who identify as women,” citing a “personal communication” on Dec. 7, 2021, as the source.

A representative for the school did not respond to a request for comment. The school is in the Archdiocese of Omaha, which is led by Archbishop George Lucas.

Riley Johnson, director of communications for the archdiocese, told the Register by email:

“We are not familiar with the source of that information or the veracity of its claim, but Archbishop Lucas has not been informed by the College of St. Mary of any admission policy of that nature.”

Matthew McDonald is a staff reporter for The National Catholic Register and the editor of New Boston Post.

Rowe, Brian. "Milwaukee Archdiocese takes aim at trans persons in sweeping new policy."

National Catholic Reporter January 26, 2022

https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/milwaukee-archdiocese-takes-aim-trans-persons-sweeping-new-policy?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=08e214ed57-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_01_25_10_48&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-08e214ed57-230519238

Gives a brief overview of the new Milwaukee Archdiocesan Gender Policy and some critique and pushback. The Archdiocese did not respond to requests for comment. For a sharply different view see Ann Schneible below.

Schneible, Ann. "Milwaukee's Gender Theory Document Receives High Praise for Pastoral Tone and Clarity." *National Catholic Register* (of the EWTN Media Empire). January 27, 2022

https://www.ncregister.com/news/milwaukee-s-gender-theory-document-receives-high-praise-for-pastoral-tone-and-clarity?utm_campaign=NCR%202019&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=202132023&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-96r65pNVKExZ9vrWQskCJ6LO1P_-HRlyx6WYca9WgDCW1w_qT-MjbkrIv6XJ9DeyPpimlamH9x5ws5r0Sr_Ry-l94oJg&utm_content=202132023&utm_source=hs_email

Never is heard a discouraging word from this EWTN "journalist" who interviews only fellow commentators who are in agreement with the EWTN editorial stance on this and related matters. For a sharply different view see Brian Rowe above.

Schneible is a freelance journalist who currently resides in Virginia with her cat, Cordelia. She has an S.T.L. in Institutional Church Communications from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, and a B.A. in English literature from Christendom College.

Rowe, Brian. "Milwaukee Archdiocese takes aim at trans persons in sweeping new policy."

National Catholic Reporter January 26, 2022

https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/milwaukee-archdiocese-takes-aim-trans-persons-sweeping-new-policy?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=08e214ed57-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_01_25_10_48&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-08e214ed57-230519238

Gives a brief overview of the new Milwaukee Archdiocesan Gender Policy and some critique and pushback. The Archdiocese did not respond to requests for comment. For a sharply different view see Ann Schneible above.

Shine, Robert. "Milwaukee Archdiocese's New Gender Policy Bans Certain Transgender Medical Care." *New Ways Ministry* January 20, 2022

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/01/20/milwaukee-archdioceses-new-gender-policy-bans-certain-transgender-medical-care/>

Provides a fairly objective overview of the Milwaukee policies, but then concludes with this negative assessment: “While not limited to youth, such policies disproportionately impact gender-diverse young people in Catholic education and parish life, and do so in period of particular vulnerability for them. By not referencing any scientific literature on gender, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee does not qualify as any sort of authority on transition-related healthcare. By ignoring what science and medicine reveal about the best ways to care for trans youth, Archbishop ListECKI and his staff are endangering the safety of children and adults.”

Montana

Ring, Trudy. “Montana Supreme Court upholds block on gender-affirming care ban.” *The Advocate* (December 11, 2024)

https://www.advocate.com/news/montana-trans-care-ban-blocked?utm_source=equalpride&utm_campaign=da1b04db2c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_12_11_07_34&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_11dd7c7578-da1b04db2c-387186965&mc_cid=da1b04db2c&mc_eid=245a5aca81

The **Montana** Supreme Court has upheld a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement of the state’s ban on gender-affirming care for **transgender** youth while a lawsuit against it is heard.

The court upheld a lower court’s decision to grant the injunction on the basis that those who sued are likely to succeed in proving that the ban violates the Montana constitution and citizens’ right to privacy. Two justices filed concurring opinions in which they argued that the court should clarify that discrimination based on **transgender** status is sex discrimination and therefore prohibited under the state constitution’s equal protection clause.

“The Legislature did not make gender-affirming care unlawful,” the Supreme Court’s **opinion** states. “Nor did it make the treatments unlawful for all minors. Instead, it restricted a broad swath of medical treatments only when sought for a particular purpose. The record indicates that Provider Plaintiffs, or other medical professionals providing gender-affirming care, are recognized as competent in the medical community to provide that care. The law puts governmental regulation in the mix of an individual’s fundamental right ‘to make medical judgments affecting her or his bodily integrity and health in partnership with a chosen health care provider.’” ...

Gov. Greg Gianforte, a Republican, **signed the ban**, Senate Bill 99, into law in April 2023. Health care professionals who violate the law could see their licenses suspended for up to a year. SB 99 further allows them to be sued for up to 25 years after performing a banned procedure, and these procedures could not be covered by malpractice insurance. Banned treatments for people under 18 include puberty blockers, hormones, and surgeries

if done for the purpose of gender transition; they're allowed for young people who have a disorder of sexual development. Genital surgeries are almost never performed on minors.

Trans youth and families, along with some health care providers, **sued the following month** to challenge the law. They are represented by Lambda Legal, the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Montana, and the law firm of Perkins Coie. In September 2023, Missoula County District Court Judge Jason Marks **issued a preliminary injunction**, saying the state cannot enforce the ban as the lawsuit against it proceeds.

Oakland, California

Shine, Robert. "Catholic School Staff, Parents, Students Protest Oakland Diocese's Proposed Gender Policy." *New Ways Ministry* (August 25, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/08/25/catholic-school-staff-parents-students-prot-est-oakland-dioceses-proposed-gender-policy/>

News that the Diocese of Oakland was developing a gender policy broke earlier this year, though no policy has been released as of yet. [*The Oaklandside*](#), a local news outlet, did a three-part series on how even the proposal of such a policy has shaken Catholic schools there with a focus on St. Joseph Notre Dame High School, Alameda. ...

Diocesan officials claim there has been an extensive "listening phase" that featured consultations with trans people and relevant experts. Parents rejected that claim, with one saying, "That was not a dialogue. And no one from the church was listening." Some St. Joseph Notre Dame High School parents have already removed their children from the school, and more are considering doing so. ...

A transgender-negative policy from Oakland's Bishop Michael Barber, SJ, is likely. Barber is on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, which earlier this year [released a document](#) seeking to stop gender-affirming care at Catholic hospitals. Previously, Barber enforced a "morality clause" in church workers' contracts which explicitly targeted LGBTQ+ people and allies.

Oklahoma City Archdiocese

Coakley, Archbishop Paul S. "On the Unity of the Body and Soul: Accompanying Those Experiencing Gender Dysphoria." (April 30, 2023 [Good Shepherd Sunday])
https://files.ecatholic.com/20256/documents/2023/5/On%20the%20Unity%20of%20the%20Body%20and%20Soul_Archbishop%20Paul%20Coakley_Pastoral%20Letter_English_2023.pdf?t=1682957274000

Sins and injustices against us can create wounds that make it difficult to recognize the body as a gift. Our own fallen natures exacerbate the internal and external disharmony we experience in varying ways.²¹ [CCC 397-401] These factors add to the challenge of recognizing the goodness of our bodies and foster discord within the unity of body and soul. Both often are keenly experienced by those who struggle with gender dysphoria, which is defined as “strong, persistent feelings of identification with another gender and discomfort with one’s own [biological] gender and sex.”²² [See “Gender Dysphoria,” Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/genderdysphoria>]

Ultimately, it means inviting the suffering person to surrender to the truth. Through their trust in Jesus Christ, they can receive assurance that despite the challenges and pain of bringing gender into alignment with one’s God-given sex, it will ultimately be for their happiness, holiness, and peace.

Admittedly, the path the Church lays out — accepting the gift of your biological sex and working to heal your felt incongruity mentally, emotionally somatically and spiritually — is arduous and currently countercultural. But it also is a glorious, grace-filled, path on which Jesus offers ever deepening wholeness and holiness.

The culturally dominant transgender movement has an understanding of nature and purpose radically at odds with the Catholic understanding of the human person.

The transgender movement is rooted in a modern form of dualism where body and soul/mind/spirit are separate realities. In this view, the human person is the immaterial inhabitant of a physical host. The material body therefore can be manipulated in service to the immaterial soul/mind/spirit. Where the transgender movement sees a disconnect between the material and immaterial, Catholics see a beautiful unity as described earlier in this letter.

The movement is, simply put, an evil infecting our world in this time and place, and it must be rejected completely even as we love unconditionally those bound in its snares.

Omaha, Nebraska Archdiocese

Archdiocese of Omaha Gender Policy (Revised, December 9, 2022; Implementation August 1, 2023) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1imHwIfqh-Wzzr8iK4j05v01EPQvFRqfL/view>

For a report on this revised policy see John Lavenburg, “Omaha archdiocese walks back controversial gender policy for schools.” *Crux* (December 14, 2022) <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2022/12/omaha-archdiocese-walks-back-controversial-gender-policy-for-schools>

The biggest difference between the revised policy and original policy is the absence of a section for school employees and volunteers. The original policy stated that they must publicly be in accord with their biological sex at all times, including with dress, bathroom usage and names and titles.

For students and parents, the essence of the revised policy is largely the same as that of its predecessor, though it's more straightforward and doesn't go nearly as deep into specific scenarios.

For example, the original policy stipulated that behaviors that cause disruption or confusion regarding the church's teaching on sexuality is prohibited, and that social media conduct by students must not endorse a view contrary to the church's teachings. It also stated that a student showing hostility or defiance towards church teaching in the classroom could face dismissal.

Further, the original draft policy stated that a child whose parent(s) permit gender-affirming care and medications, or authorizes sex procedures or surgery, cannot be enrolled in an archdiocesan school, and that every current and prospective student and his or her parents must respect Catholic teaching.

The revised policy expresses more of a desire to work with parents, and only goes as far as to say that a possible transfer should be explored if a situation becomes untenable for both sides. While a number of dioceses have released similar gender policies in recent years, it appears the Archdiocese of Omaha is the first to revisit and eventually revise its original plan.

For a critique of this revised policy see Robert Shine, "Omaha Archdiocese Issues Revised Transgender Policy, But Still Faces Criticism." *New Ways Ministry* (December 16, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/12/16/omaha-archdiocese-issues-revised-transgender-policy-but-still-faces-criticism/>

Part of that reaction was also the establishment of [Catholic Families for Love](https://catholicfamiliesforlove.com/#page-0) (<https://catholicfamiliesforlove.com/#page-0>), a group of people affiliated with Omaha Catholic schools and parishes. The group has largely rejected the revised policy, too, saying in a [statement](#):

"While we are grateful the archdiocese revised the policy from an earlier, farther-reaching version, we fear without further understanding of the proposed implementation, training and resources, the new policy has the potential to further stigmatize transgender and non-binary children, push them out of their school communities, and cause them harm."

Archdiocese of Omaha Policy on Human Sexuality for Employees and Volunteers.

<https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/archdiocese-of-omaha-policy-on-human-sexuality-school-employees-and-volunteers-final-002-1661290153.pdf>

Lucas, Archbishop George. "Letter on Gender Dysphoria." (August 31, 2022)

<https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/policyimplementationdelay-1661974873.pdf>

Letter in which His Grace indicates that because of some resistance to his new policy targeting transgender expression and support in Catholic schools he has decided to "delay implementation" of the policy, but promises a new, revised policy by the end of the calendar year which will take effect in the 2023-24 school year.

Nevertheless, he underscored “The thought that gender can be a matter of personal choice threatens the well-being of children and young people. It threatens the relationship between parents and their children established by God. It is a rejection of the place of God as the author of life and the object of true worship, as expressed in the first commandment. It is incompatible with our Catholic faith and the mission of Jesus.”

Commentary and/or News Reports on the Omaha Gender Policy

Fagnant, Nicholas. “Trusting LGBTQ+ students: We need Catholic schools that listen.”

Commonweal (October 22, 2023)

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/lgbt-catholic-schools-synodality-fagnant-francis-davenport-omaha?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=e51628999e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-e51628999e-92450125

Uses the controversy of the first Omaha Archdiocesan gender policy (which was later revised) to frame the problematic with these approaches by Church authorities to LGBTQ+ students.

The revised policy went into effect in August 2023, and is significantly shorter (and less specific) than the original. Yet in essence it remains the same. It still states that “if at any time, parents, guardians, or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community.”

The Archdiocese of Omaha is not an outlier. In September, officials in the Diocese of Cleveland in Ohio handed down a similar set of policies designed to curtail the self-expression of LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools. The rules expressly prohibit students from “transitioning” or receiving gender-affirming care. They also ban the use of “preferred pronouns” and some nicknames, require students to use bathrooms corresponding with their “God-given biological sex,” and bar them from displaying “sexual attraction to or romantic interest in members of the same sex” at school-sponsored dances and mixers.

At the root of such policies is much of the American hierarchy’s vehement rejection of the amorphous concept of “gender ideology.” In Catholic circles, the phrase is invoked primarily (and pejoratively) by staunch traditionalists, who hold that sex and gender are binary, permanent, and mandated by God. Deviating from or questioning this belief, regardless of the findings of current psychological and medical research, is viewed with intense suspicion. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has repeatedly expressed concerns that gender-affirming care threatens the Catechism’s teachings regarding the unity of the human body and soul. In their view, the range of treatments that for many Americans constitutes “health care” amounts to a usurpation of God’s role as “loving creator” and a negation of the “natural order.” (Pope Francis, in his 2016 post-synodal exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, recognizes that gender expressions are culturally contingent and vary based on historical context.)

When translated into educational policy, such views can present serious challenges for LGBTQ+ students. Everything from their clothing and hairstyles, to which sports teams and clubs they can join, to their recommendation letters, diplomas, and transcripts reinforces a rigid gender binary that many in the scientific community believe to be out of date. The Trevor Project, a nonprofit research, advocacy, and suicide-prevention organization, releases annual data concerning the mental health of LGBTQ+ young people. In 2023, they found that when transgender and nonbinary young people find their school to be gender-affirming, they report lower rates of suicide attempts than those in schools that do not affirm their gender identity and expression. Gender-affirming school environments do not just contribute positively to the mental health of transgender and nonbinary students; they actually save lives. It's ironic, then, that the Church's education ministry—designed to promote the life and flourishing of its young people—could also be responsible for placing vulnerable LGBTQ+ lives at greater risk. ...

The Synod on Synodality, convened by Pope Francis and taking place in Rome this October, could potentially bridge some of the divisions currently engulfing the Church, especially in the United States. Catholic theologians here are sharply divided on LGBTQ+ issues, mirroring the country's divergent ideological political poles. In such an environment, how possible will it be for American Catholics to “journey together”?

Retrieving an image from the Book of Isaiah, the “Working Document” for the Synod's Continental Stage called on participants to “[e]nlarge the space of your tent!” “This tent is a space of communion,” the document explains. It's also “a place of participation, and a foundation for mission.” At the heart of this participatory ethic is the practice of “listening,” which is not merely perfunctory or instrumental. In theological parlance, this means incarnating the way God lovingly attends to the cries of God's people. Concretely, it means seeking out and welcoming other perspectives with humility and fidelity. ...

On October 4, the Archdiocese of Davenport in Iowa, a state that borders Nebraska, published a new document on LGBTQ+ students in Catholic schools that many found encouraging. The “Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities” cautions against “blanket policies,” which “may prove ineffective and may risk doing greater harm.” Instead, the Davenport document stresses acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, offering a framework for discernment on a “case-by-case” basis. The language of synodality—terms like “consensus,” “fruitful dialogue,” and “collective wisdom”—appears throughout.

Most importantly, the Davenport document affirms a key point that has been glaringly absent in diocesan gender policies thus far: we must listen to and trust our LGBTQ+ students. Embracing the synodal call to journey together, the Davenport document asks educators and ministers to “listen first to people who experience differences in sexual orientation or gender discordance and their loved ones or caregivers. They know themselves and their loved ones...more intimately than anyone else.”

Nick Fagnant is a Commonweal Synod Writing Fellow and a doctoral student in the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, where he specializes in “queering Ignatian education.”

Scott, Katie Collins. “As Catholic dioceses release new gender policies, grassroots groups demand input.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 1, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-dioceses-release-new-gender-policies-grassroots-groups-demand-input>

In Omaha, Nebraska, a group of Catholic school parents, alumni, grandparents, students and parishioners formed to address the gender policy to be implemented in their Midwest archdiocese.

"As Catholics we are called to protect the vulnerable and marginalized, to make sure they are safe and cared for, and we had serious concerns about the adverse outcomes of this policy," said Omaha resident Kaela Volkmer.

In Omaha, the first draft of a gender identity policy from Archbishop George Lucas received feedback last summer, including ample criticism, and a significantly pared-down version was shared in December. It goes into effect in the upcoming 2023-24 school year.

The original version of the policy addressed school employees and volunteers, while the latest single-page document focuses solely on students. It retains "biological sex" as the determining factor for questions of students' dress, personal pronouns, bathroom use and participation in activities.

Around 150 individuals with diverse backgrounds, including pediatricians, school leaders and "individuals with first-hand experience with gender dysphoria" contributed to the revised policy, according to the archdiocese.

Julia Pick is principal of an Omaha Catholic school who said she will leave her post at the end of the year because of her diocese's new gender policy.

"I can't imagine how it makes children feel who are just trying to figure themselves out," Pick told NCR. "The archdiocese is not leading with love but politics in a way that I just can't make peace with."

Pick said personally and professionally she believes gender identity and sexual orientation issues "are not even on the top 10 list of what needs to be addressed in schools and churches right now."

"There are so many more important things we are called to address," she said, mentioning issues of racism and homelessness.

Echoing most critics of the policies, Pick said situations should be addressed on a [case-by-case basis](#). "You rely on your relationships with families, you rely on the ability to maybe have uncomfortable conversations when a family is ready. Parents are the first teacher, and we want to support them. We can't do that in the same way with a black-and-white policy."

Pick, a convert to Catholicism, said she has heard from priests that the Omaha policy is intended to protect children from "militant LGBTQ families."

"But these families are not militant; they want equal rights and to live safely," said Pick.

"In classrooms, these issues are not a talking point. Kids are in there loving each other no matter what. And when it comes down to it, they are going to continue to be the wonderful creatures they are. They will show us the faith, and they will continue to show how the Holy Spirit is moving them."

Lavenburg, John. "Omaha archdiocese walks back controversial gender policy for schools."

Crux (December 14, 2022)

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2022/12/omaha-archdiocese-walks-back-controversial-gender-policy-for-schools>

Walking back a controversial six-page gender policy it planned to add to the archdiocesan school's handbook on January 1, 2023, the Archdiocese of Omaha has replaced it with a narrower single-page policy that will be implemented for the 2023-2024 school year.

The revised policy, which was approved on Dec. 9 and obtained by Crux, states:

- In the Archdiocese of Omaha, all Catholic schools shall respect the biological sex of each student and shall apply all policies and procedures in relation to that student according to each student's God-given biological sex.
- All students shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex as it relates to the use of personal pronouns, dress code, use of public bathrooms, and participation in school-sponsored activities. All official school documents shall likewise reflect the student's biological sex.
- Admission or retention will not be denied based solely on a student's experience of gender dysphoria. If a student experiences gender dysphoria and/or incongruence, school leaders and pastors shall partner with parents to establish an accompaniment plan. This plan must follow the teachings of the Catholic faith.
- If at any time, parents, guardians or students desire accommodations or accompaniment that do not follow this policy, it may be necessary to begin the school transfer process for the good of the student and the school community. At every stage of this process, parents and guardians will be invited to their parish for pastoral support.

The revised policy was formulated with the help of more than 150 people, including school leaders, priests, deacons, mental health professionals, professors, pediatricians, community leaders, parish leaders, and individuals with first-hand experience of gender dysphoria, according to the archdiocese.

There are 70 Archdiocese of Omaha schools to which the new policy will apply.

In announcing the revisions, the archdiocese said that the "reality of creation, sex and gender is sometimes misunderstood and ignored" in modern society. The revised policy,

“rooted in the Catholic understanding of gender,” is intended, it said, “to guide the accompaniment offered to those experiencing gender dysphoria and/or incongruence in our school communities.”

The biggest difference between the revised policy and original policy is the absence of a section for school employees and volunteers. The original policy stated that they must publicly be in accord with their biological sex at all times, including with dress, bathroom usage and names and titles.

For students and parents, the essence of the revised policy is largely the same as that of its predecessor, though it’s more straightforward and doesn’t go nearly as deep into specific scenarios.

For example, the original policy stipulated that behaviors that cause disruption or confusion regarding the church’s teaching on sexuality is prohibited, and that social media conduct by students must not endorse a view contrary to the church’s teachings. It also stated that a student showing hostility or defiance towards church teaching in the classroom could face dismissal.

Further, the original draft policy stated that a child whose parent(s) permit gender-affirming care and medications, or authorizes sex procedures or surgery, cannot be enrolled in an archdiocesan school, and that every current and prospective student and his or her parents must respect Catholic teaching.

The revised policy expresses more of a desire to work with parents, and only goes as far as to say that a possible transfer should be explored if a situation becomes untenable for both sides. While a number of dioceses have released similar gender policies in recent years, it appears the Archdiocese of Omaha is the first to revisit and eventually revise its original plan.

McKeown, Jonah. “Omaha Archdiocese to Delay and Revise New Gender Identity Policy.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (September 8, 2022)
https://www.ncregister.com/cna/omaha-archdiocese-to-delay-and-revise-new-gender-identity-policy?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=225424031&_hsenc=p2ANqtz_-NM7hoc0tDtv5u4udyJ_C0SIlgHnpxpUt6obBdxVTXGxWlzOKCIBlcCtctVsD3KJnMwAtLZKz5Jj173vUnq0wCQmo79w&utm_content=225424031&utm_source=hs_email

A very positive overview of the Omaha policy, though it does not that there has been some pushback that caused Archbishop Lucas to “delay” its implementation in light of possible revisions.

Shine, Robert. “Three Catholic Schools Reject Omaha Archdiocese’s New Anti-Transgender Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 8, 2022)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/09/08/three-catholic-schools-reject-omaha-archdioceses-new-anti-transgender-policy/>

Three Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Omaha have made clear they will not be adopting new transgender-negative policies, the implementation of which has now been delayed, as Bondings 2.0 reported yesterday.

Officials with the three schools—Creighton Prep, Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart, and Marian High School—all released statements distancing their institutions from the archdiocesan document that was issued last month and then quickly retracted for further review. The document included prohibitions against affirming trans and nonbinary youth, mandating instead that students, staff, and volunteers all be treated according to assigned sex, among other restrictions.

The full statement from each school is available [here](#).

More and more anti-transgender policies are being released in U.S. dioceses, each one seemingly more punitive than the next. Rarely have any church officials in public so simply, yet firmly, said they would not comply. The leaders at Creighton Prep, Duchesne Academy, and Marian did not need to refute the archbishop directly to do so. They avoided conflict without compromise. And they did so by leaning into their missions and the charisms of their sponsoring congregations to see that harming trans and nonbinary students and community members was inconsistent with their educational witness.

Second, this incident should prompt more Catholic schools sponsored by religious communities nationwide to object when local bishops seek policies that will knowingly harm LGBTQ+ youth. In law and in spirit, such schools have a certain independence on which they can rely to protect the well-being of students, parents, staff, volunteers, and alumni. The response in Omaha shows that being firmly LGBTQ-inclusive need not lead schools and chanceries into conflict even when disagreements exist. A simple, insistent “no thank you” will suffice.

. “After Criticism, Omaha Archdiocese Delays Anti-Transgender Policy Implementation.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 7, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/09/07/after-criticism-omaha-archdiocese-delays-anti-transgender-policy-implementation/>

A newly-announced policy on gender identity for the Archdiocese of Omaha’s Catholic parishes and schools has now been retracted for revisions. Today’s post features details of this development, while tomorrow’s post is about the Catholic schools who have already objected to the policy.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, commented:

“This document is designed to exclude and turn people away. The terse and clipped style of the Omaha policy seems to indicate that it was written for legal, not pastoral reasons. This policy shows that these church leaders are more concerned with shielding church teaching from any kind of questioning than they are with the human flourishing of the youth in their care or the adults with whom they work.

“One of its most unreasonable statements is ‘Showing hostility toward or defiance of church teaching demonstrates that a student is not a proper fit for the school.’ Hostility and defiance in a school child more often demonstrates a problem with that child’s personal development, not a hardened theological position, which it would be ludicrous to assume that a child is intellectually capable of. It is astonishing that church officials would consider a child’s personal problems to be a threat to the church’s magisterium. It

is disheartening and upsetting that church officials would rather expel a student with such problems than work to help the child become healthy and whole.”

Salzman, Todd, and Michael Lawler. “Midlands Voices: Response to Omaha Archdiocese’s policy on human sexuality for Catholic schools.” *Omaha World Herald* (September 4, 2022)

https://omaha.com/opinion/columnists/midlands-voices-response-to-omaha-archdiocese-s-policy-on-human-sexuality-for-catholic-schools/article_3fac6b98-2add-11ed-83e4-7778b826a2ab.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share

Also found under the title “Omaha Archdiocese’s new school policy alienates LGBTQ+ Catholics.” *National Catholic Reporter* (September 21, 2022)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/omaha-archdioceses-new-school-policy-alienates-lgbtq-catholics?fbclid=IwAR2VK0yt9LMXTvvcMB6qk7mtvpEUCa5teLZdeHXkaa5qZc5ebg-SsUCTClS>

Two ethicists from Creighton University do a close analysis the Omaha Archdiocese’s new policy on gender conformity, pointing out its many weaknesses, vagueness, and inconsistency with the Catholic social teaching tradition.

Based on widespread negative responses to the policy, Archbishop Lucas announced that he is delaying its implementation (Aug. 31, 2022) and invites additional feedback. We offer constructive feedback on the policy in our response.

The policy, which has three specific directives, sparked outrage among many faculty, administrators, students, and parents. First, the school “shall not sponsor, endorse, facilitate, host, or provide any accommodation to any person, group, entity, event, or activity that would condone or promote a view of sexual identity that is contrary to the church’s teachings, including views of gender and sexuality contrary to Catholic teachings.”

Second, schools “shall, at all times, act toward a person in accordance with his or her biological sex at birth. In all cases, the school must act in accord with Christian charity.”

Third, “at all times, students, children, and youth participating in ... activities shall conduct themselves in accord with their biological sex at birth.”

We have several comments to make regarding this policy. First, the language of the policy is ambiguous. It allows for students to have a “romantic date ... only with a person of the opposite biological sex.” What constitutes “a romantic date?” What are the criteria for making this distinction between same-sex friends and heterosexual friends? It notes that if an “expression of gender, sexual identity or sexuality should cause confusion, disrupt the educational integrity of the Catholic education program, or cause scandal, the matter will be discussed with the student and his/her parent.” If unable to be resolved, the student will be dismissed from the school. All of these criteria are ambiguous and open to interpretation.

In addition, “students will conduct themselves in accord with their biological sex at all times ...” What does this mean? Catholic teaching affirms that sex and gender are distinct though inseparable and promotes scientific studies that attempt to discern how sexual difference is lived out in various cultures. Such studies should inform our

understanding of the interrelationship between sex and gender. Church teaching acknowledges a plurality of cultural influences and understandings of how gender is expressed, which is not even acknowledged in the policy. Who is qualified to judge what constitutes an acceptable and unacceptable cultural expression of one's biological sex and to interpret and apply policy guidelines?

Second, the policy fails to distinguish between different, and even conflicting, Catholic teachings, which all students, parents, faculty, etc., must conform to, and gives unjustified emphasis to Catholic sexual teaching (CSeT) over Catholic social teaching (CSoT). Catholic teaching recognizes that people do not choose their sexual orientation, it is part of their very identity, and calls for people with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" to be "accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity," but it immediately goes on to state that "every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided."

The condemnation of "unjust discrimination" opens the door for the promotion of so-called "just discrimination" against them. Yet CSOT is clear that discrimination is immoral. It teaches that "The equality of men [and women] rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: 'Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design.'"

Pope Francis' distinction between same-sex marriage and same-sex civil unions sheds light on the policy's prioritization of CSeT over CSOT. His recognition of legal protections for same-sex civil unions makes an important distinction between civil law and church teaching, prioritizes Catholic social teaching over sexual teaching, recognizes that LGBTQ+ people are discriminated against and need legal protection, and calls the church to practice respect, compassion, and hospitality towards them. If respect, compassion, and hospitality should extend to the civil and legal realms, it should certainly extend to our Catholic institutions, including Catholic schools. The Archdiocesan policy fails miserably on this account.

Third, one of the leading causes of young people leaving the church and teen suicides or attempted suicides are discrimination and bullying related to one's sexual identity, which is being formed throughout adolescence. An international survey in 2016 demonstrated that those raised Catholic were more likely than those raised in any other religion to cite negative treatment of LGBTQ+ persons as their primary reason for leaving the church, 39% vs. 29% respectively.

A 2020 report on LGBT mental health reports that 48% of those surveyed reported engaging in self harm in the past twelve months and 40% had seriously considered suicide in the past twelve months. Jesuit James Martin accurately states that "Stigmatizing language, especially stigmatizing language from religion [as found in the policy]...can have life-and-death consequences."

Fourth, the policy violates the authority and inviolability of conscience. Pope Francis states the church is called "to form consciences, not to replace them." A well-formed conscience can, and should, have the freedom to voice disagreement with the church's non-infallible teaching on sexual ethical issues without fear of any punitive response.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the policy designates all employees and volunteers, whether they are involved in religious education or not, as ministerial. The “ministerial exception” is a specific legal designation that allows the archdiocese to fire or dismiss anyone, regardless of their role in a specific ministerial capacity, if that person is judged to have violated the policy. In other words, it protects the archdiocese from discrimination lawsuits and promotes so-called “just discrimination.”

Human dignity, not legal protection against lawsuits, should be the motivation behind any Catholic policy. Unfortunately, the current policy violates human dignity and will further alienate many young people and those who educate them from the church.

Dejka, Joe. “Three religious-order schools don't plan to adopt Omaha Archdiocese's gender-identity policies.” *Omaha World Herald* (September 2, 2022)
https://omaha.com/news/local/three-religious-order-schools-dont-plan-to-adopt-omaha-archdioceses-gender-identity-policies/article_4e43ea3c-248e-11ed-9ab2-b3b179e26579.html

Leaders of the three Catholic high schools run by religious orders in the Archdiocese of Omaha indicate they have no plans to institute policies similar to those mandated by Archbishop George Lucas for the other diocesan schools. The three schools are the Jesuit-run Creighton Prep (for boys), Duchesne Academy (for girls) run by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and Marian High School (for girls) run by Servants of Mary.

“Archdiocese of Omaha puts gender-identity policy on hold.” *Channel 6 WOWT* (August 31, 2022)
<https://www.wowt.com/2022/09/01/archdiocese-omaha-puts-gender-identity-policy-hold/>

Contains a brief report about Archbishop Lucas’ decision to “delay” implementation of his anti-transgender policy, along with links to the policy itself and the Archbishop’s Letter announcing the delay.

Sambol, Laura. “Omaha Catholic schools clarify new transgender policy from Archdiocese.” *Channel 6 WOWT* (August 26, 2022)
<https://www.wowt.com/2022/08/26/omaha-catholic-schools-clarify-new-transgender-policy-archdiocese/>

Contains the statements from the three Catholic high schools in Omaha that indicated they would not be changing their school handbooks to adopt the anti-gender policies announced by the Archdiocese of Omaha. The three schools are the Jesuit-run Creighton Prep (for boys), and two girls’ schools: Duchesne Academy run by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and Marian High School run by the Servants of Mary.

Lavenburg, John. “Omaha archdiocese defends transgender policy critics call exclusionary.” *Crux* (August 25, 2022)
<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2022/08/omaha-archdiocese-defends-transgender-policy-critics-call-exclusionary>

The new six-page “Policy on Human Sexuality” says students must conduct themselves in accord with their biological sex at all times publicly and at school, including with

uniforms, competitive and recreational activities, bathroom usage and dates at school-sponsored functions.

The policy also stipulates that behaviors which cause “disruption or confusion regarding the church’s teaching on human sexuality are prohibited,” and that “social media activity and other conduct by students shall be respectful of others and not promote, advocate, or endorse a view or conduct contrary to the Catholic Church’s teachings, including on human sexuality.”

A separate portion of the new policy applies to school employees and volunteers. It states that they must publicly be in accord with their biological sex at all times, including with dress, bathroom usage and names and titles.

In all, the policy covers students, parents, guardians, teachers, and volunteers. Violation can be grounds for dismissal or disciplinary action. The policy will officially become a part of each of the 70 archdiocesan school’s handbooks on Jan. 1, 2023.

However, Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry – an organization that works to bring together the Catholic Church and LGBTQ+ community – told Crux in an email that the document looks like it “was designed to exclude and turn people away.”

“It is astonishing that church officials would consider a child’s personal problems to be a threat to the church’s magisterium,” he said. “It is disheartening that church officials would rather expel a student with such problems than work to help the child become healthy and whole.”

The Omaha announcement follows a similar move from the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, earlier this month, and from the Dioceses of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Lafayette, Louisiana in July. In recent years, a number of other Catholic dioceses have issued similar policies as the conversation on gender ideology has become more prevalent.

The section outlines similar regulations for prospective students, and further states that a child whose parent(s) permit gender-affirming care and medications, or authorizes sex procedures or surgery cannot be enrolled in an archdiocesan school. It continues that every current and prospective student and his or her parent(s) must respect Catholic teaching.

Midgdon, Brooke. “Omaha archdiocese releases new ‘human sexuality’ policy for Catholic schools.” *The Hill: Changing America* (August 25, 2022)
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/3615632-omaha-archdiocese-releases-new-human-sexuality-policy-for-catholic-schools/>

A student cannot be enrolled in — and may be dismissed from — a Catholic school in the archdiocese if they “resist” the school’s instruction on “respecting the human person” by using a different name or pronouns than those they were assigned at birth or receive gender-affirming medical care including puberty blockers or hormones.

Students are required to conduct themselves in accordance with their sex assigned at birth “at all times publicly” — including online — and adhere to their school’s dress code or

uniform policy. Access to facilities like multiperson restrooms and locker rooms will be determined by students' sex assigned at birth.

If parents of transgender children do not willingly withdraw them from a Catholic school in the archdiocese, the school will dismiss the student and refer the family to counseling or mental health treatment.

Larsen, Carl. "Parents, activists worry about children's safety with new Omaha Catholic school policy." *KETV Channel 7 ABC Omaha* (August 24, 2022)
<https://www.ketv.com/article/parents-activists-worry-childrens-safety-new-policy/40984357>

Reports opposition to Archbishop Lucas' new policy targeting transgender students in the diocesan schools.

Phoenix, Arizona

Dolan, John P. "Bishop Dolan to LGBTQ Catholics: 'I wish to reaffirm your sacred identity'." *Outreach* (July 19, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/07/bishop-john-p-dolan-to-lgbtq-catholics-i-wish-to-reaffirm-your-sacred-identity/> **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vfU6toUvXbp2TguF8FFXbVQTA6O0H8Sh/view?usp=s_haring



I wanted to unpack the meaning of "being Christian." To Catholics within the LGBTQ community, I wish to reaffirm your sacred identity. You are Christian—not just in name, but in fact.

This "being Christian" begins with the Spirit of God, who has been poured out on you through faith and baptism. You have been configured to Christ and branded as Christian, even though some would like to re-brand you and consider you as objects to be discarded, rather than as beloved communal members of the Body of Christ.

I believe that every Christian, before asking the Lord for an increase in the virtues of faith, hope and love, should ask God, "Do you have faith in me? Do you have hope for me? Do you love me?" If you let the Lord answer you in the affirmative, then you'll know who you are: a beloved child of God in Christ. ...

When people re-brand Catholics in the LGBTQ community as sinners, intrinsically disordered or as persons inclined to disorder, while forgetting that they are Christian, they have not only ruptured the "being" of the other, but even their own Christian selves.

I have come to believe that rupturing our “being Christian” is the source of sin and disorder. We certainly understand that life is chaotic and disordered. Even our age-old Catholic teaching regarding concupiscence acknowledges this fundamental theological construct that, due to original sin, our essential goodness has been disordered and we are each inclined to sin. ...

Whenever people say that we must defend the deposit of faith, I wish to remind them that the truth is Christ. Faith (fides) is Christ, who is with us. He is with us not just remotely, but imminently, intimately and sacramentally.

We can often be like Pontius Pilate asking “What is truth?” while missing that the fundamental truth—Christ Emmanuel—is staring us straight on (Jn. 18:38). The worn-out and tortured Christ standing before Pilate, or the objectified and disenfranchised members of the Body of Christ standing before an accusatory lot, is the same truth hiding in plain sight.

When, in our attempt to define or defend truth, we fail to ask the question, “Who is truth among us?” we treat the other as a puzzle and not as a mystery to celebrate.

Our deepest sin, our original sin, misses the mark when we fail to celebrate our sense of being. Cardinal-designate Fernández is correct. We must indeed experience and celebrate the mystery of the living Christ, who is with us to shape our “being Christian.”

John P. Dolan is the Bishop of Phoenix, Ariz.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Zubik, Bishop David. [Pittsburgh] Report by Aleja Hertzler-McCain. “Pittsburgh's Bishop Zubik cancels LGBTQ Mass after pressure online.” *National Catholic Reporter* (June 14, 2023) <https://www.ncronline.org/news/pittsburghs-bishop-zubik-cancels-lgbtq-mass-after-pressure-online>

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik canceled a Corpus Christi Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ people, to be held on Duquesne University's campus, after a flyer advertising it as a “Pride Mass” was circulated on social media and anti-LGBTQ Catholic influencers urged their followers to contact the prelate.

The Pittsburgh-based group [Catholics for Change in Our Church](#) has held monthly social justice Masses at Duquesne University for more than two years. The group was formed in the wake of a [2018 grand jury report](#) in which more than 300 Pennsylvania priests were accused of sexual assault over some 70 years.

The group invited the LGBTQ Ministries at St. Joseph the Worker and St. Mary Magdalene parishes, Pax Christi and the Association of Pittsburgh Priests, a church renewal group, to collaborate on the June 11 Mass.

"It was mistakenly called a Pride Mass on a flyer created by one of the people of one of the groups helping to plan the Mass. The correct designation was a Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics," said Kevin Hayes, president of the board of Catholics for Change in Our Church.

The group held a Mass in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics at Duquesne last year with support from campus minister and Spiritan Fr. Bill Christy, so Hayes said that he did not expect any problems this year.

"The purpose was to stand in solidarity with LGBTQ Catholics and affirm and encourage LGBTQ Catholics as beloved sons and daughters of a loving God," said Hayes, who expressed confusion about the meaning of a Pride Mass. "The Mass was not going to promote any ideas or initiatives contrary to church teaching," he said.

In a May 30 [blog post](#) about whether Catholics can celebrate Pride month, Jesuit Fr. [James Martin](#) wrote that Pride month is "a recognition of the human dignity of a group of people who have, for centuries, been treated with contempt, rejection and violence."

Martin wrote that it is "especially important for churches to mark Pride Month since much of the rejection that LGBTQ people have faced has been motivated by Christianity," including LGBTQ teens becoming homeless after their parents kick them out for religious reasons.

Consuelo "Chelo" Cruz-Martínez, a mother of two adult children who are part of the LGBTQ community, said she was "very hurt" that the Mass was canceled.

"As a mother, you are not sending me the message that you are an open church, that you are welcoming my children," said Cruz-Martínez, a psychologist and a former Sacred Heart sister who now volunteers in various Pittsburgh Catholic ministries. "I don't feel like the institution is supporting the many who are leaving the church because they do not feel at home."

"What is the problem with having a Mass to say to the gay community: We love you, you are welcome, you are a human being worthy of respect?" she asked.

O'Loughlin, Michael and Christopher Parker. "Catholic Pride month events face increasing backlash." *America* (June 12, 2023)
https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2023/06/12/pride-month-june-2023-245471?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=rrVnEjkZL7tFiqueet27uSI2U7ki1VZd3d_6837o0oRNmLlokIOqRcS_y6aJgvOWjRvnOc6m4

On Monday, the bishops conference said in an announcement, "Catholic Christians traditionally recognize June as the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," and urged believers "to pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart on June 16, offering this prayer as an act of reparation for the blasphemies against our Lord we see in our culture today."

Increased visibility among L.G.B.T. Americans has created a backlash to some Pride events, with some activists zeroing in on events and programming appealing to children, especially related to gender identity. Catholic celebrations are not immune to the pressure. ...

Back in Pittsburgh, an email from Bishop David Zubik said that while the “Church has invested much energy in welcoming people who are dealing with sensitive issues in their lives, [it] cannot support behavior that goes against God’s law.”

The bishop, who last year released a pastoral letter about hospitality that included a call for the church to be welcoming to L.G.B.T. Catholics, said that ministers want “to do more in our pastoral care,” but he nonetheless asked organizers to cancel the event.

“My hope is that the Church of Pittsburgh is welcoming to the LGBTQ community and in turn that the LGBTQ community is welcoming of the Church and her teachings,” Bishop Zubik continued.

Cassidy, Sarah and Robert Shine. “Cancelling Pittsburgh’s Pride Mass Legitimizes Anti-LGBTQ+ Behavior, Says Theologian.” *New Ways Ministry* (June 9, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/06/09/cancelling-pittsburghs-pride-mass-legitimizes-anti-lgbtq-behavior-says-theologian/>

Zubik’s request—which did lead to the Mass’ cancellation—drew criticism from theologian Todd Salzman. [WESA](#) reported:

“‘The church does not exclude Catholics who practice artificial birth control, even though the church condemns that — the vast majority of Catholics do practice artificial birth control in a marital relationship,’ [Salzman] said. ‘So there’s a singling out of LGBTQ people.’

“Salzman argued that by calling to cancel the Mass Zubik has legitimized the threatening behavior of those who called or sent messages to the diocese, university and parishes, effectively promoting such discrimination against the LGBTQ community.”

Salzman highlighted the “great deal of polarization and tension” on LGBTQ+ issues in the church. With his colleague at Creighton University, Michael Lawler, Salzman [has written repeatedly over the years](#) in support of LGBTQ+ rights, [including for *Bondings* 2.0](#), emphasizing that social justice must be prioritized in that tension.

Portland, Oregon

The Policy is listed first, with commentaries following in reverse chronological order



Sample, Archbishop Alexander. “A Catholic Response To Gender Identity Theory.” (January 25, 2023)

https://files.ecatholic.com/12494/documents/2023/1/EN_A%20Catholic%20Response%20to%20Gender%20Identity%20Theory_FINAL2023.pdf?t=1674605305000

III. Pastoral Guidelines

Catholic institutions and programs should not endorse gender identity theory nor enable any form of gender transition, whether social or medical. This means that names, pronouns, facilities use, attire, and sports participation should depend upon biological sex identity, rather than self-perceived gender identity.

- Language: designations and pronouns should accord with biological sex.²⁰ Any formal institutional documentation should use legal names. Nicknames may be used on an informal basis, according to prudential judgment, as long as this is not part of a social transition process.

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

- Sports and extracurriculars: participation in any sex-segregated activity should be based on biological sex, rather than self-perceived gender.

- Attire: all persons should abide by the dress or uniform code that accords with his or her biological sex.

- Educational materials: all informational and pedagogical materials should align with a Catholic understanding of the human person.

- Formation: schools should offer age-appropriate curricula and conversations about gender and sexuality in the context of the Catholic worldview.

- Parental involvement: as parents are the primary educators, parents should be fully included in any discussions of accommodations.

- Medication: no person should have on-site or distribute medications

for the purpose of medical gender transition.

- Signage: Catholic institutions should not post signage or display symbols in support of gender identity theory.

Some key terms are “defined” as follows:

Gender Identity: a central concept in Gender Identity Theory that is often defined in a circular way as “an inner sense of one’s own gender.”

Gender Identity Theory: the belief that one’s identity as a man/boy or girl/woman (or both/neither) is based on subjective self-perception rather than biological sex.

Scott, Katie Collins. “Portland archbishop closes schools office amid gender document backlash.” *National Catholic Reporter* (June 26, 2023)

https://www.ncronline.org/news/portland-archbishop-closes-schools-office-amid-gender-document-backlash?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=8788333ba7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_06_26_11_57&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-8788333ba7-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland, Oregon, has closed his archdiocesan Department of Catholic Schools amid backlash over a new [gender identity document](#) for students. The unexpected move appears to indicate that nearly all oversight of Catholic schools across Western Oregon will now be done instead by other chancery staff and parish priests.

The measure has triggered speculation and confusion, while also rattling many members of the Catholic school community who already were distressed following the release of the gender-identity guidelines in January.

A notice posted on the [archdiocese's website](#) says the Catholic schools department — providing support to more than 15,000 students and 1,300 educators and school staff — is temporarily closed “as we work to reevaluate how best to integrate schools more fully into our mission.”

“Our Catholic schools are an essential part of our mission of evangelization,” reads the notice. “They serve a vital role in teaching, witnessing to, and spreading the Gospel. We have seen great changes in the environment in which our schools operate, but the importance of the mission and our dedication to our families is unchanging.”

A senior leader in the archdiocese who asked not to be named for fear of retribution told NCR that, beyond the office being closed, the positions of superintendent and associate superintendent were both eliminated. That leader said diocesan school pastors are now being charged with overseeing their schools.

Since the document's release, at least [two administrators have resigned](#) in protest, several teachers have opted not to renew contracts and many families have withdrawn students.

Additionally more than 1,000 parents and educators, representing nearly 50 schools and Catholic entities in the archdiocese, signed a [petition](#) expressing their distress about the document and its impact on the LGBTQ community.

On Wednesday, June 21, a letter with contents from the petition was delivered to the pastoral center. The following day, Sample informed pastors he had closed the schools department.

[Tim Uhl](#) previously served as a lay consultant to the U.S. bishops' education committee and currently is superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Buffalo, New York. He called the closure "very drastic and unusual" and said he knows of only two other U.S. dioceses that have had similar closures, and both instances were tied to bankruptcies. "This is a much different situation," said Uhl.

In an interview with [The Catholic World Report](#) about a month after issuing the gender-identity document, Sample said reactions had been "largely positive" in the Portland Archdiocese.

"Many people, especially parents, have thanked me for releasing a clear teaching document," he said.

"The church is strong here and we have many faithful Catholics, but we live in the Pacific Northwest, which has a very secular culture, which has embraced gender ideology theory," added the archbishop. "So, I've received some pushback or disagreement, but nothing that causes me any grave concerns."

The recent petition signed by 1,000 people, however, may indicate the pushback is sizable and organized.

"Many faithful Catholics," says the petition, are "profoundly concerned about the consequences" of the document because it "ignores commonly accepted best practices in education, medicine, psychology, and child development, and has the potential to cause grave harm to an already vulnerable population."

The guidelines were released quietly, the petition continues, and school communities were not given the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the archdiocese about its contents or express their opinions on it before it was presented to them. ...

At one diocesan school, a strict implementation of the guidelines "decimated our beautiful community," according to a teacher who said he was asked to verbally pledge to abide by the document. The individual told NCR that when they refused, they were told their contract would be rescinded.

Aihiokhai, Simonmary Asese. "Portland's gender policy shows a church uninterested in 'signs of the times'." *National Catholic Reporter* (May 26, 2023)

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/portlands-gender-policy-shows-church-uninterested-signs-times>



While this article makes specific reference to Archbishop Sample's diocesan policy, most of the article deals with gender and ecclesial documents, including those from the Holy See.

Over two decades ago, if someone had asked my opinion on the phenomenon of fluid gender awareness, I would have opined that such a phenomenon was either immoral or disordered. However, I have encountered many persons who have shared with me their life successes, stories and struggles as they attempt to make sense of who they are.

Through these encounters, I have come to the realization that perhaps, our theological views that offer rigid meanings to what is not of its nature rigid is where the problem lies.

It is noticeable how the church tends to frame the conversation around gender and sexuality as though they are solely within the domain of cognitive awareness. For example, the opening lines of the guidelines offered by Sample use the term, "to conceptualize" in relation to a person's gendered self-understanding.

From my experience of the discourses around gender in ecclesial circles, I have come to the realization that there seems to be a lack of awareness of the phenomenological nature of gender. Gendered self-understanding is not within the domain of conceptualization. Rather, it is within the domain of sociocultural and political constructions of identities.

Reading the document that first came out from the Vatican's former Congregation for Catholic Education in 2019, titled " ['Male and Female He Created Them.' Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education](#)," alongside the pastoral guidance from Sample, one notices a conflation of the understanding of gender and sexuality as though they are interchangeable and they have the same meaning.

Work has also been done to highlight the differences between gender and sexuality, for example, in [this essay](#) by Cynthia Vinney.

Too often, the church tends to conflate gender and sexuality. This is particularly true in the document released by the Vatican in 2019. This conflation continues to be reflected in the diocesan adoptions and implementations of that text.

SimonMary Asese Ahiokhai is associate professor of systematic theology at the University of Portland, Oregon.

*For another summary of this article see Andru Zodrow, "Portland Archdiocese's Gender Policy Seemingly Ignores Vatican II, Writes Theologian." *New Ways Ministry* (June 30, 2023)*

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/06/30/portland-archdioceses-gender-policy-seemingly-ignores-vatican-ii-writes-theologian/>

Zodrow, Andru. “University of Portland Downplays Archdiocese’s Transgender-Negative Policy; More News.” *New Ways Ministry* (May 6, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/05/06/university-of-portland-downplays-archdioceses-transgender-negative-policy-more-news/>

The University of Portland has affirmed its support for transgender students after the local archdiocese issued an LGBTQ-negative policy regarding Catholic education.

In addition to the university’s administration emphasizing the importance of treating all students with dignity and respecting diverse gender identities, the president of the Gender and Sexuality Partnership on campus condemned Archbishop Alexander Sample’s negative statements on trans identities, while questioning the university’s response:

“‘Frankly, what the archbishop said was dangerous... There’s research showing that the importance of using chosen names with younger people decreases the risk of suicide and depression greatly. . .

“[The university says] ‘we want gender identities to feel affirmed,’ but they don’t say ‘we affirm the dignity of gender identities.’ That’s just something interesting to note ... because it’s one thing to feel affirmed. It’s another thing to be affirmed.’

Shine, Robert. “Portland Archdiocese Describes Gender Affirming Care as “Totalitarian” in New Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (February 21, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/02/21/portland-archdiocese-describes-gender-affirming-care-as-totalitarian-in-new-policy/>

The archdiocese’s policy comes from a small committee that worked for about a year to develop it. No details were provided about whether trans people, pastoral ministers to them, families, or other experts were included in the process.

Catholics in Portland and LGBTQ+ advocates more broadly are expressing concern about the policy, according to the [*National Catholic Reporter*](#):

“Fr. Dave Zegar, pastor of St. Andrew, said he would argue the document is not a ‘Catholic’ response, ‘but rather a particular hierarchical response to the issue of gender identity.’

“‘The sources cited are sources that align with the archbishop’s personal views, while there are many, including Catholic theologians, who believe differently,’ Zegar told NCR.

“Zegar said he doesn’t see how the document helps those ‘who are struggling with their sexual identity, often a death and life moment.’

“‘I wish our archbishop would have been open to listening to the people of God,’ said the priest. ‘This document will be a source of deep hurt to many of our brothers and sisters.’”

Scott, Katie Collins. “New Portland guidelines direct Catholic LGBTQ students to use birth names, pronouns.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 2, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/new-portland-guidelines-direct-catholic-lgbtq-students-use-birth-names-pronouns>

Early in his episcopate, Sample was in the local news several times over LGBTQ-related conflicts, including for telling members of St. Andrew Parish in Portland they should [not attend a Pride parade](#) as a community. Parishioners attended together anyway.

Abigail Favale, a writer and professor at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame and author of [The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory](#), served as a consultant to the archdiocese during the drafting process.

Several Oregon Catholic school educators, speaking anonymously because of fear of retribution, told NCR that not being able to use a student's preferred name harms the teacher-student relationship and can leave students feeling disenfranchised by the school and the church.

[Sr. Luisa Derouen](#), a Dominican Sister of Peace who has ministered among the transgender community, told NCR this summer that she views the church's reliance on binary gender science as "extremely simplistic" and said it ignores current scientific views.

Studies suggest, she said, that sex is determined by a complex interplay between gonadal hormones, sex chromosomes, internal genitalia, external genitalia and gender identity, sometimes referred to as "brain sex."

_____. “As Catholic dioceses release new gender policies, grassroots groups demand input.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 1, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-dioceses-release-new-gender-policies-grassroots-groups-demand-input>

The total number of such policies and guidelines has slowly [inched upward](#); there are now about 34 in place. In January a new policy went into effect in [the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa](#), and the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, issued a [catechesis and guidelines](#) on gender identity.

Providence, Rhode Island

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.” *Outreach* (May 10, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they “repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

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Pueblo, Colorado

Shine, Robert. “Colorado’s Bishops Issue Election Letter Insisting Catholics Vote Against LGBTQ+ Rights.” *New Ways Ministry* (July 17, 2024)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/07/17/colorados-bishops-issue-election-letter-insisting-catholics-vote-against-lgbtq-rights/>

Colorado’s bishops have issued a joint letter about state ballot initiatives which may come up for votes in November 2024. Four of the five initiatives on which the bishops opined concerned LGBTQ+ equality.

The bishops’ [mid-June letter](#) concerns “ballot proposals that will undermine the sanctity of life, the family and religious liberty,” and it is broken into two parts: 1) the two ballot initiatives Catholics should oppose; 2) three initiatives the faithful should support. The bishops who signed are Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, Bishop Jorge Rodríguez, auxiliary of Denver, Bishop Stephen Berg of Pueblo, and Bishop James Golka of Colorado Springs, representing the three dioceses which make up the state of Colorado.

The bishops ask Catholics to oppose one proposal concerning reproductive rights and one which addresses marriage equality. The first proposal would affirm reproductive autonomy in the state constitution. The second proposal, already approved by Colorado legislators this spring, would remove language from the state’s constitution defining marriage in heterosexual terms and will be on the November ballot. The bishops claim that “these are the two most important issues for faithful Catholics to oppose on the November 2024 Colorado ballot,” so “[i]t is therefore important that Catholics research each issue and form their conscience before signing a ballot petition.”

Moving from opposition to support, the bishops then identify three ballot initiatives which still need the requisite number of voter signatures to be included in this fall’s election. The letter’s authors explain that these initiatives would “affirm Church teaching on parental rights and the dignity of children” and so “The Bishops of Colorado support these initiatives.”

Initiative 142 would force educators at public schools to out gender-diverse students to their parents “within 48 hours,” which the bishop claims would “protect parents from government overreach.” This initiative would roll back Colorado legislation that empowers LGBTQ+ students to self-identify in schools without outside interference.

Initiative 160 would exclude transgender people from girl’s sports. On this issue, the bishops rely on false claims that having trans athletes imperils other students.

Initiative 138 would expand “school choice” for students, diverting taxpayer funding from public schools to private institutions, like Catholic schools. Colorado’s legislators have opposed this option. . Currently, the Archdiocese of Denver and two of its parishes are involved in litigation around this issue. The entities sued state officials charged with implementing a universal preschool program because recipients of funding for the program must abide by non-discrimination protections. The [most recent court](#)

[ruling](#) found the church entities could discriminate based on religion, but not based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

As the [Colorado Times Reporter](#) explained, the state's bishops have a losing record in their deep involvement with ballot initiatives. The outlet explained that church leaders "put their weight behind multiple conservative ballot initiatives in the past, most of which failed."

The reality is that in 2024, the bishops are likely to fail once again as Colorado voters seem ready to preserve marriage equality, expand reproductive autonomy, and reject anti-transgender efforts. But church leaders have already caused harm by sending negative messages to LGBTQ+ people.

[Rochester, New York](#)

Matano, Bishop Salvatore R. "Rochester bishop: 'Are we free to live our faith?'" *Catholic Courier* (July 31, 2023)

<https://catholiccourier.com/articles/rochester-bishop-are-we-free-to-live-our-faith/>

Pastoral Letter attacking the Democrats who issued a statement on the one-year anniversary of the *Dobbs* decision. Bishop Matano broadens his attack to include a range of other culture war issues, including same-sex marriage and transgender rights, which he presents as implicit attacks on the Church's freedom of religion to teach its doctrines.

After stating that "The Church is not a forum for political agendas, aligned with any one political party or platform," Bishop Matano then concludes with the following rhetorical statement: "As citizens, we rightfully can expect that those charged with the governance of people according to the Constitution will protect the rights of the Church and her members to profess our Catholic faith freely, without attack and avoiding hostile and volatile language that only fans the flames of division, undermines the unity among people and distorts the path to truth, again the Truth who is Christ the Lord. Let us pray for all in public office, on both sides of the aisle, that they will seek God's guidance, put aside personal agendas and understand that God indeed has the ultimate "plans for (our) welfare and not for evil, to give (us) a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Bishop Matano (born 1946) succeeded the liberal Bishop Matthew Clark upon the latter's age-related retirement in January, 2014. Though he himself reached retirement age in 2021, at the time of this Pastoral Letter his resignation and not yet been accepted.

[Saint Louis, Missouri Archdiocese](#)

“Compassion and Challenge: Reflections on Gender Ideology.” (June 1, 2020)

<https://www.archstl.org/compassion-and-challenge>

Salzman, Todd A., and Lawler, Michael. “The Catholic Church must listen to transgender and intersex people.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 1, 2020)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/catholic-church-must-listen-transgender-and-intersex-people>

Critiques the official Church teaching on transgender and intersexuality as being scientifically underinformed and methodological deficient in terms of moral theology. The authors use as a touchstone for their critique the Pastoral Letter of retiring St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson “Compassion and Challenge: Reflections on Gender Ideology” released earlier on June 1, 2020 (see

<https://www.archstl.org/Portals/0/Pastoral%20letters/Compassion%20and%20Challenge%20-%20letter%20size.pdf>) and the February 2019 Vatican Congregation for Catholic

Education document “Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education” (see

http://www.educatio.va/content/dam/cec/Documenti/19_0997_INGLESE.pdf)

Instead, the authors argue, “[t]he biological reality of intersex people can give insight into the complex reality of transgender people and provide direction for the church's moral response to both groups. A quick scan of medical literature reveals that about two in every 1,000 live human births (0.2%) is a child who is intersex.

Now, 0.2% is a small frequency, but it is almost double the frequency of the birth of Down syndrome children, who deservedly get attention and respect in our society. Surely intersex children, lost and crying out in the social and Catholic wilderness, deserve the same attention and respect as human beings created by and in the mysterious image of the mysterious God. Their intersex bodies are troubling to their parents, their society and their church for only one reason: They are judged to be biologically sexually ambiguous when compared to the dominant female-male binary. They would not be ambiguous and troubling, we suggest, if society and church were to listen to their claim that they constitute a minority third sex.”

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

(Suffragan diocese of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN)

Diocesan Policy Conforming With The Church’s Teaching On Human Sexuality In Education Settings (July 1, 2022)

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/22131508/bishop-ogorman-policy.pdf>

Critical overview of the Diocesan Policy is provided by Robert Shine, “Diocese of Sioux Falls’ New Transgender Policy Admits It Is ‘Intentionally Exclusionary’.” *New Ways Ministry* (August 22, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/22/diocese-of-sioux-falls-new-transgender-policy-admits-it-is-intentionally-exclusionary/>

Moreover, the Sioux Falls policy is notably more restrictive than policies elsewhere. For example, when it comes to all parish ministry or liturgical involvement at Catholic schools, trans people are barred from serving any roles such as Eucharistic ministers or parish council members. The diocese admits its rules are “intentionally exclusionary,” but tries to suggest such exclusion would apply to all who are in “a state of grave sin or public scandal.” Further rules in the new policy include:

Urging that trans people should not receive Communion if they are “publicly living a transgender lifestyle or undergoing a transition,” while those who “are privately harboring thoughts about transitioning” may receive.

A ban on baptism for transgender people “until Church teachings are accepted,” as well as prohibiting them serving as godparents, confirmation sponsors, or members of bridal parties.

Funerals are allowed for trans people, but there may be “no endorsement that the individual ‘transitioned,’ and the person must be referred to using their assigned birth name and pronouns only. Obituaries which respect a trans person’s chosen identity are banned from distribution, and eulogies are also restricted in ways that would disrespect the trans person.

Likewise restrictive in quite some detail are policies for Catholic schools. The policy is explicit that “the Catholic school’s mission. . .[is] the greater consideration than a school administration’s concern for any one student.” It includes standard rules that threaten LGBTQ+ students with expulsion and employees with termination, but also the following:

Schools may not have a “transgender bathroom,” nor can there be “any investments made in physical structure that is meant to provide accommodation for a youth claiming to be transitioning or transitioned.”

Students who respect a trans or non-binary classmate’s chosen name and/or pronouns are to be reprimanded “immediately” with “instruction given to refrain from using” them.

There must be “particular consideration” given to the gender identity of potential employees if there is “high probability of the adult spending extended time alone with youth.”

Athletics are to be gender-segregated according to assigned sex, and if a visiting team from another school has a trans or non-binary member, the Catholic school may bar that visiting team from using its facilities.

DeGrood, Bishop Donald. “Gifts of the Divine Creator: on being Male and Female.” Pastoral Letter to the People of the Diocese of Sioux Falls (August 4, 2022)

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/22131509/gifts-of-the-divine-creator-1.pdf>

“Transgender ideology undermines the very basis for marriage and family, which are foundational to human society itself. This problem is so very concerning, as all children need and have a right to a mom and a dad.”

Commentary and Other News Reports on the Sioux Falls Diocese Transgender Policy

Di Corpo, Ryan. “Catholic bioethics lecture suggests transgender experience is ‘contagion’.”
Outreach (May 10, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/05/catholic-bioethics-lecture-suggests-transgender-experience-is-contagion/>



Reports on a March lecture at a Catholic parish of St. John Neumann Church in East Freetown, MA, by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education at the Philadelphia-based National Catholic Bioethics Center, who talk, “Welcoming in Truth and Charity: The Church and Transgender Issues,” described transgender people as mentally ill and blamed both academia and the mainstream media for a national increase in young persons identifying as transgender.

Comparing transgender people who undergo surgical intervention to someone who claims to be a pirate and amputates his hand for a hook, Father Pacholczyk claimed that the transgender experience “spreads almost like a contagion through high schools” once one student comes out.

His talk was not unique to one Massachusetts. In 2018, some 100 parishioners in the Diocese of Providence attended a lecture by Dr. Michelle Cretella, the president of the American College of Pediatricians. (The College, which promotes anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, has been designated as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the nation’s largest pediatricians’ group.)

Her talk—which was met with around 20 protestors—compared gender dysphoria to anorexia and rejected medical intervention as appropriate healthcare for transgender youth. Rhode Island Catholic, the diocesan newspaper, described Dr. Cretella as “a leading critic of the ideology behind transgenderism.”

Providence and Fall River are not the only U.S. Catholic dioceses to address transgender experiences in recent years, as numerous American bishops have issued policies that aim to curtail LGBTQ expression in schools and deny transgender Catholics roles in church ministry.

Calling its policy on transgender expression “intentionally exclusionary,” the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., states that “those living a transgender lifestyle” should be barred from the Sacrament of Confirmation and excluded from receiving the Eucharist “until they fully accept the teachings of the church.”

The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan, issued similar guidance in December 2021, moving to restrict LGBTQ Catholics from baptism and wider church ministry until they “repent.” The policy, as reported by NBC News, again compared being LGBTQ to suffering from anorexia—a psychological illness.

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Bingham, Jack. “South Dakota bishop bans ‘publicly’ transgender people from Holy Communion.” *Life Site News* (August 25, 2022)
<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/south-dakota-bishop-bans-publicly-transgender-people-from-holy-communion/>

In defence of the Catholic Church’s authentic teaching on human sexuality, Bishop Donald DeGrood of the Diocese of Sioux Falls published new guidelines banning people publicly living as the opposite sex from baptism, Holy Communion, membership in parish councils and being godparents.

Despite Church teaching being clear and unchangeable on the issue of same-sex relations and transgenderism, many other prelates continue to push the radical LGBT agenda within the Church.

Even high-ranking churchmen like Germany’s Cardinal Reinhard Marx and Cardinal Walter Kasper, along with America’s Cardinal Blase Cupich and Bishop Robert McElroy have been able to push the anti-Catholic LGBT agenda openly for years, often receiving appointments from Pope Francis rather than any type of censure.

As recently as Thursday, prominently pro-LGBT Jesuit priest Fr. James Martin was re-appointed to another five-year term as a consultor for the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communication by Francis, despite his public, continued rejection of perennial Catholic teaching on LGBT issues.

Gaskins, John. “‘It’s bigotry.’ Parent of transgender student condemns Catholic schools’ new LGBTQ policies.” *Dakota News Now* (August 16, 2022)
<https://www.dakotanewsnow.com/2022/08/16/its-bigotry-parent-transgender-student-condemns-catholic-schools-new-lgbtq-policies/>

“However, upon further reflection, it is just consistent (since) they are an arm or an organ of the new culture wars in America,” [parent of a transgender child] John Wilka said.

“They lost on gay marriage, they lost on interracial marriage years ago. And now, they are attacking trans and non-binary youth.”

“These policies in that letter are very frightening and very dangerous,” Wilka said. “It is my fear that it will cause more harm to children. That there will be suicide attempts. That there will be actual suicide occurrences.”

Wilka’s 15-year-old son Kris is the only known openly transgender athlete in South Dakota, and his story of transferring from the Bishop O’Gorman system to Harrisburg — a public school system — so he could play football was the subject of national outlets like GQ Magazine, ESPN, and ABC News.

Wilka feels the policies will “ignite or whip up possible violence against” transgender students like his son.

Some of what Wilka considered to be the strongest language in DeGrood's letter was the claim that "transgender ideology undermines that very basis for marriage and family, which are foundational to human society itself."

Wilka's response?

"My son is no threat to you," Wilka said. "He's not going to come into your home and try to convert your children and win an air fryer. He just wants to grow up to be the young man God wanted him to be."

Kris was the grand marshal of the Sioux Falls Pride parade on June 18, but declined an interview for this story and asked his image not be used for it.

"My son wants to become the man he was born to be," Wilka said. "And he wants to live his life. He wants to keep learning how to play his guitar. He wants to keep playing on his Xbox or Playstation probably more than he should. Things like that, like every other kid."

Both father and son believe Kris' experience as a transitioning male in Bishop O'Gorman's middle school is the root of these new policies. Kris transferred to Harrisburg before he started seventh grade two years ago. He is now a freshman at Harrisburg High School and on the football team.

In the 14-page "Human Sexuality in Educational Settings" document, the Diocese said "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."

The same rules applied to "transgenderism."

Wilka's translation: "If you're transphobic or if you're not against same sex marriage... or if you refuse to be quiet about it, you're not welcome here — faculty or students."

"My son tells people that the moment he could process thought, he knew he was a boy," Wilka said. "He didn't decide. He didn't make a choice. Someone didn't come by and try to convert him (so they could) win an air fryer. It's just a fact."

"It's biology, pure and simple."

In January, the World Health Organization decided to no longer classify transgender health issues as "disorders."

All 194 countries in the WHO have defined "gender incongruence" — a condition in which the gender identity of a person does not align with the gender assigned at birth — as a medical condition, not a mental health condition, as the Diocese claims.

Yang, Allie. "Trans teen speaks out against trans athlete bans, says football has been 'lifesaving'" *ABC News* (May 12, 2021)
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/trans-teen-speaks-trans-athlete-bans-football-lifesaving/story?id=77632754>

Spokane, Washington

McDonald, Matthew. “Bishop Daly: USCCB Meeting Needed to Address Transgender Treatments in Catholic Hospitals.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (October 16, 2024)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/mcdonald-bishop-daly-usccb-meeting-on-transgender-treatment?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9lf8D3wo4eGUcHjUK1N9FMJocdzMDpS5v6ogWc1pV6gzL36n0z8dDNFP7ZzBAxU0mSe_Ujf7PBm_wjkM0tqZZimqUkfiw&hsmi=329620298&utm_content=329620298&utm_source=hs_email

Reacting to a [recent report](#) that shows that scores of Catholic hospitals have provided children with drugs or surgeries to change their gender identity, a U.S. bishop has called for a special meeting of the country’s bishops to address what he sees as a major breach of Catholic medical ethics.

“As bishops, I think we need to confront Catholic health care, because they are violating their mission,” Bishop Thomas Daly of the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, told the Register.

The medical watchdog group Do No Harm published a [database](#) of public hospital records on Oct. 8 that catalogs nearly 14,000 sex-change-related treatments — including 5,747 sex-change surgeries — patients age 17 and under received from health-care facilities from 2019 to 2023.

Nearly 150 Catholic hospitals were among the health-care facilities that appear in the database, an [EWTN News analysis found](#).

The Register sent a request for comment about the report to every bishop who heads a diocese in the United States. Bishop Daly of Spokane was among those who responded.

“I’m appalled, but sadly I’m not surprised,” he told the Register.

Several bishops contacted by the Register expressed disgust with reports that Catholic hospitals have provided such services.

“The surgical mutilation and chemical castration of young kids under the rubric of ‘gender-affirming care’ is a moral outrage. That any of it takes place within the confines of a Catholic hospital is appalling,” said Bishop Robert Barron of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, by email through a spokesman. (None of the Catholic hospitals in the database is in that diocese.)

Fourteen of the Catholic hospitals that the database says assisted gender transitioning are in Ohio.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio, which represents the bishops of the state’s six dioceses in public-policy matters, provided the Register a written statement saying that people

“experiencing gender incongruence must receive compassionate treatment and personal accompaniment without resorting to medical interventions that harm the created body.”

Springfield, Illinois

(Suffragan diocese of the Ecclesiastical Province of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Illinois)

PASTORAL GUIDE Regarding Policy §650 Gender Identity Diocese of Springfield in Illinois
(January 13, 2020)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pastoral-Guide-and-650-Gender-Identity-Policy.pdf>

Virginia

Payne, Daniel. “New Virginia Transgender Student Policies Emphasize Parental Rights.”

National Catholic Register of the EWTN Media Empire (July 19, 2024)

https://www.ncregister.com/cna/new-virginia-transgender-student-policies-emphasize-parental-rights?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=267115037&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--M-1YV_n2l_XnRhk-lotHl5jC5j-BQlgs_e7UO83rvVPG8Yl1Fexcu5zwapGv7iL6W7vIUvGbmseLgliExkmwNKYKF0w&utm_content=267115037&utm_source=hs_email

New education policies issued by the administration of Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, this week affirm that parents in the state will enjoy broad oversight of their children while they are enrolled in public schools, with the state settling several key questions related to school policies regarding transgender-identifying students.

The new model policies released by the government say that education rules “shall be drafted to safeguard parents’ rights with respect to their child and to facilitate the exercise of those rights.”

The guidance, which is an update from a version released in September of last year, comes after several years of contentious debate in Virginia and other states over the extent to which education officials can implement transgender ideology within schools.

Provided in the documentation is a “sample policy” that schools can use as a guide for implementing the new state rules. Among them is the expectation that a student “shall use bathrooms that correspond to his or her sex, except to the extent that federal law otherwise requires.”

As well, “for any athletic program or activity that is separated by sex, the appropriate participation of students shall be determined by sex rather than gender or gender identity.”

Worcester, Massachusetts

Diocese of Worcester. “Catholic Education and the Human Person.” (2023)
<https://schools.worcesterdiocese.org/human-person> (accessed August 18, 2023)

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 INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE, therefore, must reflect these fundamental truths.

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 Catholic school classes, activities, or events. When discussing homosexuality or homosexual inclinations in school settings, 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 students are expected to conduct themselves at school in a manner consistent with their biological sex. School practice 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 (with rare exceptions only on a limited, case-by-case basis, to be determined by the principal of the school); titles, names, and pronouns; and official school documents. If a student’s expression of 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 student may be dismissed from the school, after the parents are first given the opportunity to withdraw the student from the school.

OFFICIAL SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

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, a.k.a. New Legal Name.”

Shine, Robert. “LGBTQ+ Advocates Gather at Worcester Diocese’s Chancery to Protest Gender Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 12, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/09/12/lgbtq-advocates-gather-at-worcester-dioceses-chancery-to-protest-gender-policy/>

More than 100 people in Massachusetts gathered to oppose one diocese's new LGBTQ-negative policy for Catholic schools, adding to sustained criticism of the policy, which has even seen Catholic educators rejecting it.

LGBTQ+ advocates rallied outside the Diocese of Worcester's chancery in late August to decry Bishop Robert McManus' new guidelines for Catholic schools that, among other restrictions, would force educators to misgender students and lead to potential expulsions for LGBTQ+ students who come out.

In addition to Catholic leaders who have already rejected the policy, Vincent Rougeau, president of the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, has added his comments, saying that the diocesan policy does not apply to the Jesuit institution. Previously, leaders of Saint John's High School and Notre Dame Academy, as well as the religious congregations that sponsor them, respectively the Xaverian Brothers and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, said that those schools [would not be adopting the policy](#).

Palmieri, David. "The Diocese of Worcester's New Gender Policy Is a Bit Too Familiar." *New Ways Ministry* (August 24, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/08/24/the-diocese-of-worcesters-new-gender-policy-is-a-bit-too-familiar/>

While this policy document may be new to the Worcester diocese, a close examination reveals that it is almost an exact copy of the "Addenda to the Manual of Policies and Regulations for Elementary and Secondary Catholic Schools of Arkansas" released on July 15, 2016 by the [Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas](#). I have spent countless hours studying [more than 40 diocesan policies](#) on gender identity, so there were some signals that revealed the amazing similarity.

Finding these unusual coincidences, I dug deeper and discovered the Worcester policy is a near-total match to the Little Rock document. Policies from the Diocese of [Wichita](#) and the Archdiocese of [San Antonio](#) also belong to this Little Rock "family tree" of policies. This discovery is significant for at least three reasons.

First, it demonstrates cooperation among dioceses in the creation of these policies. For example, in addition to the Little Rock "family tree" there are additional policy groupings. The policies in the dioceses of Boise and Memphis are copied from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee policy. The policies in the Archdiocese of Fairbanks and the dioceses of Lansing and Salina share significant similarities with the policy in the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois. Similarity can be seen again policies from the dioceses of Las Vegas, Joliet, and the Archdiocese of New York.

Second, these undisclosed partnerships demonstrate a lack of transparency in the process of policy development. To expect the announcement of every detail in the policy process

is admittedly unwise, but there needs to be an attempt at transparency of process. What are the goals? What is the timeline? Who are the people involved? Without this information, we continue to see the same pattern emerge over and over again. People are surprised and hurt, and dioceses fall into the negative news cycle. It is a bad look for our one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Third, the “family tree effect” does not promote confidence that there is local consultation when the policies are written. Instead, it looks like some church leaders consult other church leaders in other parts of the country, overlooking the people and credentialed experts in their own dioceses. That kind of process is inconsistent with the development of a synodal church.

The Diocese of Worcester provides the latest example of “no compromise” policies regarding gender identity. After more than three dozen such policies in the U.S. church, we need to find a better way forward that transcends bitter conflicts in the public forum. The first principle was already given to us in “[Always Our Children](#),” when the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Marriage and Family wrote, “Strive first to listen.” And much before that, Jesus gave it to us right: “Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear” ([Mk 4:23](#))

Shine, Robert. “Massachusetts Catholics, LGBTQ+ Advocates Condemn Worcester Diocese’s Gender Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (August 22, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/08/22/massachusetts-catholics-lgbtq-advocates-condemn-worcester-dioceses-gender-policy/>

Backlash against the Diocese of Worcester’s new policy on gender identity continues, with some LGBTQ+ organizations launching a petition ahead of local Pride celebrations to be held next month.

[The article reports comments and statements from several different groups]

As *Bondings 2.0* noted before, Bishop McManus’ has a highly LGBTQ-negative record, often due to his provoking conflicts in local Catholic schools (the details of which are [available more fully here](#)). Catholics and LGBTQ+ advocates can do much good by celebrating the religious communities and Catholic schools who choose an affirming path, like Saint John’s High School, Notre Dame Academy, and the [Nativity School of Worcester](#) have done. Letting these schools know how supported they are will not only encourage them, it can show other Catholic institutions facing difficult choices on LGBTQ+ issues that choosing an LGBTQ-positive path is not only possible, but best.

. “Catholic High Schools Refuse to Implement Worcester Bishop’s LGBTQ-Negative Policy.” *New Ways Ministry* (August 18, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/08/18/catholic-high-schools-refuse-to-implement-worcester-bishops-lgbtq-negative-policy/>

Two Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Worcester have rejected a new diocesan policy statement on LGBTQ+ issues, saying in a joint letter that the school’s current

policies are sufficient for “respecting the sacred dignity of the students entrusted to our care.”

Bishop Robert McManus issued the policy statement, titled “[Catholic Education and the Human Person](#),” in June. The policy is consistent with other LGBTQ-negative U.S. diocesan policies released in recent years, requiring educators to misgender students and uphold notions of gender complementarity, which can be harmful for transgender and nonbinary people. (More details about this specific policy statement can be found below.)

The boards of Saint John’s High School, Shrewsbury, and Notre Dame Academy, Worcester, reviewed the new diocesan policy this summer, and they decided to not include it in their own policies. Leaders of the religious communities which sponsor the schools, respectively the Xaverian Brothers and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, issued a joint letter in mid-August explaining their decisions.

The controversy over this new policy is just the latest LGBTQ+ dispute McManus has had with schools in the Worcester diocese. In 2022, McManus [stripped](#) the Nativity School of Worcester of its Catholic designation after school officials [refused](#) the bishop’s [request to take down](#) Pride and Black Lives Matter flags, following [two charged letters](#) McManus released on the issue. He has also [feuded](#) with the College of the Holy Cross, [boycotting](#) its commencement ceremonies repeatedly for the school’s support of LGBTQ+ students, and even [attacked a theologian](#) there for LGBTQ-positive writings. McManus has also tried [to ban LGBTQ-inclusive sex education](#) at public schools which rent diocesan property, and he [encouraged](#) parents of public school students to opt out of such education.

DiCorpo, Ryan. “Massachusetts diocese sets “misleading” and “belittling” policy on LGBTQ students.” *Outreach* (August 18, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/08/massachusetts-diocese-sets-misleading-and-belittling-policy-on-lgbtq-students/>

Two single-sex diocesan schools, both run by religious orders, **rejected the new guidelines** and informed the bishop last week that they would continue to follow prior rules. Brother Daniel Skala, general superior of the Xaverian Brothers, and Patricia Chappell, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, wrote a joint letter to the bishop and stated that the Worcester schools were acting “in a manner that respects the dignity of all persons.”

A current Worcester mayoral candidate **described the policy** as relying on “outdated, hate-filled rhetoric” and called it a step backwards for LGBTQ Catholics. David Palmieri, a longtime Catholic educator and contributing writer at Outreach, criticized the guidelines as distorting the words and ministry of Pope Francis. ...

But late last month, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, who serves as the U.S.C.C.B. vice president, used “LGBT” in his policy directive on diocesan schools and promoted a more measured approach to complex issues of identity and sexuality. “I hope the document helps by offering a model for those on the ground, in ministries throughout

the archdiocese, giving them the tools they need to accompany Catholics who identify as LGBT and their families in the fullness of truth and the fullness of charity,” **wrote the archbishop** in an email to Outreach.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed pastoral care for LGBTQ persons, calling for the worldwide decriminalization of homosexuality in January and writing that Catholics must encounter the gay community with **“closeness, mercy and tenderness.”**

Simon Ariell Watson. “Worcester Diocese Seeks to Bar LGBTQ-Inclusive Sex Education from Church Property” (February 9, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/02/09/worcester-diocese-seeks-to-bar-lgbtq-inclusive-sex-education-from-church-property/>

In the Diocese of Worcester, La Familia Dual Language School, which is a public school in that city, rents space at the former school of St. Stephen’s parish. At the beginning of this school year, Msgr. Robert Johnson, pastor of St. Stephen’s, contacted La Familia leaders to inform them that the public school’s sex education classes must be taught outside of the church-owned building leased by the school, according to Patch.

The Worcester public school district’s sex ed curriculum, approved in 2021 and now in its second year of instruction, is known as “The 3 Rs” – Rights, Respect, and Responsibility, and was strongly opposed Worcester’s Bishop Robert McManus when the curriculum was being debated. ...

Previously, Bishop Robert McManus publicly urged parents to opt out of the public school sex education curriculum, writing, “It is age-inappropriate, explicit and reflects a shallow, trivial, amoral view of sex. It is a radical program of indoctrination of children with views contrary to the Catholic understanding of sex, gender and the human person.” Last year, in a separate controversy, McManus stripped the Nativity School of Worcester of its Catholic affiliation after school officials refused to stop flying Pride and Black Lives Matter flags.

Nativity School of Worcester MA. “Statement to the Nativity Worcester Community.” (June 15, 2022) <https://nativityworcester.org/statement-to-community/>



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FVX-s98WUAEpwPF?format=jpg&name=small>



<https://assets3.cbsnewsstatic.com/hub/i/r/2022/04/04/315db871-ec90-4ea6-ad0f-b20527b49d56/thumbnail/1200x630/8f23705fc2ba58a78ff8b73b260cc3b7/flags.jpg>

Issued in response to Worcester Bishop Robert McManus' stripping of "Catholic Identity" from the school and prohibition of the celebration of the sacraments.

For Bishop McManus' Statement see "Bishop Issues Decree on Nativity School." Diocese of Worcester, MA (June 16, 2022)

<https://worcesterdioocese.org/news/bishop-issues-decree-on-nativity-school>

On behalf of the Nativity School of Worcester Board of Trustees, leadership and staff, I write to share news regarding a change in Nativity's relationship with the Diocese of Worcester and our continued commitment to providing an excellent education rooted in the Jesuit tradition. Nativity was founded in 2003 as an independent, Catholic, Jesuit middle school that provides a quality, tuition-free education to boys from under-resourced communities. Nativity is the only tuition-free Catholic school in the Diocese of Worcester and the only school in Central Massachusetts that solely educates students experiencing economic insecurity. The school is entirely funded through the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations. We receive no funding from the Diocese and our governance and control of school operations are fully independent of the Diocese.

The Issue: In January 2021, Nativity started flying the Pride and Black Lives Matter flags following our students' (the majority of whom are people of color) call to express support for making our communities more just and inclusive. As a multicultural school, the flags represent the inclusion and respect of all people. These flags simply state that all are welcome at Nativity and this value of inclusion is rooted in Catholic teaching. Pope Francis has praised the outreach and inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports the spirit and movement of "Black Lives Matter." Both flags are now widely understood to celebrate the human dignity of our relatives, friends and neighbors who have faced, and continue to face hate and discrimination. Though any symbol or flag can be co-opted by political groups or organizations, flying our flags is not an endorsement of any organization or ideology, they fly in support of marginalized people.

The Bishop's Position: Bishop Robert McManus, as leader of the Diocese of Worcester, indicated to Nativity and to the public that he believes flying these flags is inconsistent with Catholic teaching. In March 2022, he told the school to remove the flags. Sadly, in

mid-March 2022, our flags were torn down by an unknown person, an act that caused harm to our entire community. In late May, the Bishop told Nativity that if the flags were not removed, Nativity will “be prohibited from identifying itself as a Catholic school.” A formal decree announcing the Bishop’s decision will be published in the *Catholic Free Press* on Thursday, June 16.

Nativity Worcester’s Response: Nativity will seek to appeal the decision of the Diocese to remove our Catholic identity through the appropriate channels provided by the Church in circumstances like this. At the same time, after meaningful deliberation and discernment by its Board, leadership team, faculty, and partners, Nativity will continue to display the flags in question to give visible witness to the school’s solidarity with our students, families, and their communities. Commitment to our mission, grounded and animated by Gospel values, Catholic Social Teaching, and our Jesuit heritage compels us to do so.

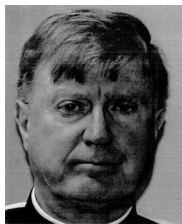
Going Forward: The past few months have been galvanizing for our entire community. We are grateful for the overwhelming support we have received from long-time and many new partners, the Worcester community and beyond and the Jesuit community. Nativity is stronger than ever because of the understanding and support of its amazing community members, benefactors and – most of all – students and their families. Please know that any decisions made by the Diocese will not change the mission, operations or impact of Nativity. With your ongoing partnership, we will continue to provide a transformational education for many years to come.

For a media report see Michael O’Loughlin, “Bishop forbids Jesuit-run school from calling itself ‘Catholic’ for flying LGBT and Black Lives Matter flags.” *America* (June 16, 2022)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/06/16/worcester-nativity-lgbt-blm-243176?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=v7lqCXpdNKIX2abCpSrlCc2N5QmtU4RtP.WtnPl4tkFm5Biq6vnzH.BkS9pLqCeUm6jp_wK8

McManus, Bishop Robert (Worcester MA). “Bishop Issues Decree on Nativity School.” Diocese of Worcester, MA (June 16, 2022)

<https://worcestardiocese.org/news/bishop-issues-decree-on-nativity-school>



<https://patch.com/img/cdn/users/1923478/2013/05/raw/5ce18b0bbfd41fe132b3f90c3c455ff4.jpg>

Bishop McManus’ Statement:

The school claims to be a “Catholic” school affiliated with the Roman Catholic/Jesuit tradition. The administration of the school has permitted the flying of “Black Lives Matter” and “Gay Pride” flags in front of the school for a period of time.

I publicly stated in an open letter dated, May 4, 2022, that “these symbols (flags) embody specific agendas or ideologies (that) contradict Catholic social and moral teaching.” It is my contention that the “Gay Pride” flag represents support of gay marriage and actively living a LGBTQ+ lifestyle.

This is also true of “Black Lives Matter.” The Catholic Church teaches that all life is sacred and the Church certainly stands unequivocally behind the phrase “black lives matter” and strongly affirms that all lives matter.

However, the “Black Lives Matter” movement has co-opted the phrase and promotes a platform that directly contradicts Catholic social teaching on the importance and role of the nuclear family and seeks to disrupt the family structure in clear opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The flying of these flags in front of a Catholic school sends a mixed, confusing and scandalous message to the public about the Church’s stance on these important moral and social issues.

According to canon 803, §§ 1-3, of the Code of Canon Law, the Diocesan Bishop must maintain vigilance over Catholic Schools within his Diocese, even those operated by lay groups who seek the use of the title “Catholic” for their schools. Such usage requires ecclesiastical approbation (canon 803, §3). ...

After prayerful consideration of this matter, I, the Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, Bishop of Worcester, holding before me my pastoral responsibilities to this particular Church, in view of canon 381, §1, hereby declare and decree the following:

- The Nativity School of Worcester is prohibited from this time forward from identifying itself as a “Catholic” school and may no longer use the title “Catholic” to describe itself;
- Mass, sacraments and sacramentals are no longer permitted to be celebrated on Nativity School premises or be sponsored by Nativity School in any church building or chapel within the Diocese of Worcester;
- The Nativity School is not allowed to undertake any fundraising involving diocesan institutions in the Diocese of Worcester and is not permitted to be listed or advertise in the Diocesan Directory;
- The name of Bishop Emeritus Daniel P. Reilly must be removed from the list of the Board of Trustees of Nativity School.

This decree is effective immediately.

I order that this decree be published.

Given at Worcester, Massachusetts, this the tenth day of June, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand twenty-two.

For the Worcester Nativity School's Response see “Statement to the Nativity Worcester Community.” (June 15, 2022) <https://nativityworcester.org/statement-to-community/>

Issued in response to Worcester Bishop Robert McManus’ stripping of “Catholic Identity” from the school and prohibition of the celebration of the sacraments.

For a media report see Michael O’Loughlin, “Bishop forbids Jesuit-run school from calling itself ‘Catholic’ for flying LGBT and Black Lives Matter flags.” *America* (June 16, 2022) https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/06/16/worcester-nativity-lgbt-blm-243176?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=v7lqCXpdNKIX2abCpSrlCc2N5QmtU4RtP.WtnPl4tkFm5Biq6vnzH.BkS9pLqCeUm6jp_wK8

For a commentary on the Bishop's actions see James T. Bretzke, S.J., “Could the Sanctioning of Nativity School Have Been Handled Differently? | Part One” *New Ways Ministry* (August 2, 2022) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/02/could-the-sanctioning-of-nativity-school-have-been-handled-differently-part-one/>

Abstract: The standoff between Bishop Robert McManus of Worcester and the Jesuit-Sponsored Nativity Middle School in his diocese over the School’s flying of Gay Pride and Black Lives Matter flags resulted in the Bishop’s stripping the designation of “Catholic” from the School, and forbidding the celebration of the Sacraments in any School sponsored venue. This article looks at the morally relevant features of this decision and suggests that a broader application of the Roman concept of auctoritas (moral authority or prudence) would be a helpful complement to the exercise of episcopal potestas (juridical power). Flags as symbols can often have multivalent meanings, and exploration of some of these differing meanings may help to resolve the standoff.

_____. “Could the Sanctioning of Nativity School Have Been Handled Differently? | Part 2” *New Ways Ministry* (August 3, 2022) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/08/03/could-the-sanctioning-of-nativity-school-have-been-handled-differently-part-two/>

Other Catholic Institutions Gender-Related Policies

Shine, Robert. “Berlin’s Archbishop Will Not Sanction Priests Who Bless LGBTQ+ Couples.” *New Ways Ministry* (September 4, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/09/04/berlins-archbishop-will-not-sanction-priests-who-bless-lgbtq-couples/>

A German archbishop has said that while he will not perform blessings of LGBTQ+ couples, no priest or pastoral minister who does so will be sanctioned in his archdiocese, a position he roots in the teachings of Pope Francis.

Archbishop Heiner Koch of Berlin announced the new policy in [a five-page pastoral letter](#) released August 21st. He explained that this approach results from the archdiocese's efforts to implement more concretely the proposals made by Germany's Synodal Way process that concluded this spring. The Synodal Way was remarkably LGBTQ-positive, and [approved a document](#) that calls for queer couples and others in relationships the church deems "irregular" to receive church blessings.

Koch outlines six points about the new blessings policy, which he emphasizes is pastoral, not juridical or administrative. He writes (via Google Translate):

"1. Due to the different positions and arguments that speak for and against the blessing of couples, I expect that full-time ministers can make a carefully considered decision for themselves. . .

"3. So long as the status quo on the question of blessings for couples who cannot or do not wish to marry sacramentally exists, I will not take disciplinary action against pastoral workers who, for pastoral reasons, bless the couples in their special personal situations after a pastoral conversation that serves to form their conscience and make decisions.

"4. I expect that the pastors' decision for or against a blessing is respected."

Koch adds that respecting a decision includes that "blessings not to be used politically or in the media," nor to suggest one position is superior to another, but rather, to focus blessings in the realm of personal pastoral care. He also shares the course of action he will take personally:

Shine, Robert. "Catholic Colleges in Minnesota Announce Joint Policy on Nonbinary Student Admissions." *New Ways Ministry* (August 15, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/08/15/catholic-colleges-in-minnesota-announce-joint-policy-on-nonbinary-student-admissions/>

The College of Saint Benedict (CSB) and Saint John's University (SJU), Minnesota, announced the updated admissions policy in July. The schools, which are Benedictine-sponsored, provide education to undergraduate students. CSB is a college for women, while SJU serves men, though students take courses and access resources at both. Previously, the colleges' admissions policies recognized applicants based on their self-identified gender as male or female.

The policy update expands access for "those who do not identify within the binary including transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, and gender-nonconforming individuals." It acknowledges that the institutions exist in a "changing world" with an "evolving understanding of gender and gender identity." The policy continues, in part:

“The College of Saint Benedict will consider for undergraduate admission those applicants who were assigned female at birth as well as those who were assigned male or female at birth but now consistently live and identify as female, transgender, gender fluid or nonbinary. The College of Saint Benedict will continue to use gendered language that reflects its tradition and mission as an undergraduate residential college for women. Likewise, Saint John’s University will consider for undergraduate admission those applicants who were assigned male at birth as well as those who were assigned female or male at birth but now consistently live and identify as male, transgender, gender fluid or nonbinary. Saint John’s University will continue to use gendered language that reflects its mission as an undergraduate residential college for men.”

The updated admissions policy has no impact on current students, including those who transition, and the schools promise “individualized support” for accepted students who later decide to transition.

“Germany's Catholic bishops vote to approve blessings for same-sex couples.” *National Catholic Reporter/Associated Press* (March 10, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/germanys-catholic-bishops-vote-approve-blessings-same-sex-couples>

A majority of 176 participants voted in favor of same-sex blessings starting from March 2026. Fourteen participants voted against them, while 12 abstained. Crucially, the necessary two-thirds backing of the 67 German bishops was also reached, the news agency dpa reported.

Many congregations already perform such ceremonies, but these aren't formally approved by the Catholic Church, a position the Vatican restated in 2021.

O’Loughlin, Michael. “Pronouns, uniforms and bathrooms: How Catholic schools are facing questions of gender identity.” *America* (September 6, 2022)
https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/09/06/catholic-schools-gender-identity-243689?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=pLk2DS5Wb6lEw.mYvDSqEYCFpE68SJJuNfKjKJOJ28B9mfgUwYRgJCsfKPHFJjZbSMUQZxmL

Gives an overview of some of the contentious gender policy protocols instituted by a variety of dioceses such as Omaha, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Sioux Falls, etc., as well as blowback to these, and different standards employed by a number of other Catholic institutions such as Villanova and DePaul University.

Scott, Katie Collins. “New Catholic policies across US create 'culture of fear' for LGBTQ students, advocates say.” *National Catholic Reporter* (September 15, 2022)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/new-catholic-policies-across-us-create-culture-fear-lgbtq-students-advocates-say>



LGBTQ advocates say many Catholic secondary schools are working hard to support students. But they also believe there's a particularly harmful trend: LGBTQ youths face a growing number of diocesan-approved policies or guidelines on gender identity and sexual orientation. According to critics, the newest are among the harshest.

This summer new or updated written policies were released by the dioceses of Green Bay, Wisconsin; Lafayette, Louisiana; Memphis, Tennessee; Sioux Falls, South Dakota*; and the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska.

Across the country at least 30 dioceses have policies addressing gender identity, and — to a lesser extent — sexual orientation. Many cover all diocesan institutions but some focus solely on schools.

While they exist in only an estimated 15% of U.S. dioceses, "the fear of them affects people broadly," said Marianne Duddy-Burke, executive director of DignityUSA, a Massachusetts-based advocacy organization for LGBTQ Catholics.

"We get calls from Catholic school parents all over the country who have heard about a policy that they know would be harmful to their kid. They ask, 'Could it be coming here?'"

In addition to the five new policies this summer, a minimum of four dioceses — among them the archdioceses of Boston and Portland, Oregon — are in "various stages of discussing documents," according to David Palmieri, a theology teacher at Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, Massachusetts, who holds a master's in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School. Palmieri has conducted extensive research on the policies and created a [public folder](#) containing copies of most.

The policies or directives frequently share similar language, format and content. They begin by critiquing the culture's acceptance of "gender ideology" and/or feature a mini-catechesis on gender identity and sexuality. The tone often is pastoral, emphasizing compassion and the need to protect LGBTQ youths from "unjust discrimination" and bullying. Then they move into the policies.

The document issued by the Sioux Falls Diocese, led by Bishop Donald DeGrood, admits it is "intentionally exclusionary," and, like the one from [Marquette](#), Michigan, places limits on who can receive the sacraments.

Individuals who "live a transgender lifestyle" may not receive Communion or be confirmed "until they fully accept the teachings of the Church," reads the Sioux Falls policy.

By admitting it is "intentionally exclusionary," the policy introduces its own form of scandal by putting limits on Christ's love for the marginalized, said Palmieri. In addition,

the use of "transgender lifestyle" multiple times in the document "is a pejorative choice that unfairly groups transgender persons as one kind of person."

A 2018 study suggests that when transgender teens are called by the name they believe aligns with their gender identity, it reduces depressive symptoms and overall suicidal risk by as much as 56%.

According to a [2022 national survey](#) by The Trevor Project, an organization providing crisis support to LGBTQ young people, nearly half of LGBTQ youths ages 13-24 seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.

Villanova University. "Gender Inclusive Practices Guide." (August 2022)

<https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/vital/pdfs/genderinclusivepracticesvu0822.pdf>

In a Statement released to the conservative *Washington Examiner* the University stated: "Villanova upholds and maintains the Catholic Church's teaching that all people are accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. As part of our Augustinian values of Veritas, Unitas, Caritas — Truth, Unity and Love — Villanova seeks to be a welcoming and inclusive community that respects members of all backgrounds and faiths. Calling someone by their name and pronouns is a show of respect for them as a person and fellow Villanovan."

The *Washington Examiner* critique can be found in the article by Jeremiah Poff, "Villanova defends using preferred pronouns, saying it affirms Catholic teaching," *Washington Examiner* (August 29, 2022)

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/education/villanova-preferred-pronouns-affirms-catholic-teaching>

This Policy is favorably discussed by Andru Zodrow "Villanova University Issues New Guide on Being Transgender and Nonbinary Inclusive," in *New Ways Ministry* (September 12, 2022)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2022/09/12/villanova-university-issues-new-guide-on-being-transgender-and-nonbinary-inclusive/>

"Especially for those who identify within transgender, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and/or gender questioning communities. How can we cultivate gender-inclusive teaching and work environments? How can we invite full participation from people of all genders and respond to the harmful effects of gender stereotyping or misgendering?"

The document also affirms gender inclusivity as an indispensable component of the university's mission:

"Gender inclusivity is crucial within our diversity mission to 'commit ourselves to cultivating an academic environment marked by genuine curiosity about different perspectives, ardent receptivity to knowledge generated through intercultural connections and a genuine sensitivity to the variety of human experiences marked by domestic and global differences.'"

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The *Washington Examiner* critique can be found in the article by Jeremiah Poff, “Villanova defends using preferred pronouns, saying it affirms Catholic teaching,” *Washington Examiner* (August 29, 2022)

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/education/villanova-preferred-pronouns-affirms-catholic-teaching>

Non-United States Church Related Reports

Australia

Rodrigues, Marilyn. “Gender diverse persons need acceptance, love, says bishop following maltreatment study.” *The Catholic Weekly* (Sydney) (August 23, 2024)

<https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/gender-diverse-people-need-love-says-bishop-following-maltreatment-study/>

Discussion of Bishop Daniel Meagher’s response to a study that found that those who identify as “gender diverse” need acceptance and love, especially in light of new research which shows such people “are dramatically more likely to have suffered abuse and neglect.”

The [study](#) found Australians who identify as having a “diverse gender” are up to 17 times more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder and up to 52 times more likely to have engaged in self-harm over the last year than the rest of the population.

The study also found that the cohort, representing an estimated 196,000 Australians, are 16 times more likely to have attempted suicide in the previous 12 months.

The new research draws on a landmark national survey of 8,503 people aged 16-65 measuring child abuse and neglect led by the Australian Catholic University last year.

It examined rates of four mental health disorders and five health risk behaviours in people with diverse gender identities, and their associations with five types of child maltreatment.

It found that individuals who identified as transgender, gender fluid, non-binary, or in other ways not aligned with their biological sex at birth had significantly higher

prevalence of any mental disorder (52.7 per cent of the “diverse gender” group) compared with men (38 per cent) and women (37.7 per cent).

The majority, 90 out of the 126 people who identified as gender diverse, were aged 16-24.

An earlier study found those who experienced childhood sexual and emotional abuse were substantially more likely to have poor mental health.

Bishop Meagher has worked among Sydney’s marginalised communities and said he had been aware of similar findings “for some time.”

“Clearly, gender diverse people have many challenges to face in life. Community acceptance is undoubtedly one,” he said.

“I hope we can find room in our hearts for compassion, respect and love. We are all children of God, hoping to find happiness and meaning in our lives.”

This story was also reported on by Robert Shine, “Australian Bishop Promotes Acceptance of Gender-Diverse People, *New Ways Ministry* (September 19, 2024) <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzQXJGpBQSQFVhHKDIXknSwGKhpj>

Commentaries and/or Other Material on Gender and Transgender Issues

Beattie, Tina. Human Dignity and Rights in the Context of Gender and the Sacramental Priesthood, *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 6/1 (2020): 140-157. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30965/23642807-00601009>.

From the author: “The essay is a theological analysis of dignity, ontology, baptism and priesthood in the context of the question of the ordination of women.”

Beattie teaches at the University of Roehampton, London.

Block, Elizabeth Sweeny, and Abigail Favale. “Conversation: How should Catholics think about gender identity and transgender persons?” *America* (October 13, 2022) https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/10/13/catholic-church-teaching-gender-transgender-243943?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=25467&pnespid=sKt2CHwdL78FgOudpzCxEI_K5kizTsMtLbmxyzedyowZmZ0hwyTVQfu6I94YUSaUTB4r0I8

Block is highly critical of Church documents on gender and transgenderism while Favale is enthusiastically supportive of these same teachings.

Abigail Favale is a professor in the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. Most recently, she is the author of *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory* (Ignatius, 2022).

Elizabeth Sweeny Block is an associate professor of Christian ethics at Saint Louis University. She is writing a book on conscience, moral agency and social sin.

. “What does God reveal in transgender bodies? A conversation on Catholic teaching and gender.” *America* (February 8, 2023)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2023/02/08/transgender-catholic-244677?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=t6BgGn5MNPIc0ffO.TS4S4jcugrwBIpxLvHhxepwqk1mdCLtJ73In0cGd0IgrKX7.XWjGMhC

Favale outlines what she states are Pope Francis’ considerable objections to any form of consideration of transgender identity. She then concludes “This is the aspect of Francis’ approach that is overlooked by Dr. Block: the ministry of teaching, articulating the faith in light of contemporary challenges,”

Block counters Favale’s moral certainty in this way: “However, it is the work of our entire moral lives to discover that moral truth, to refine and adjust our grasp of reality as we uncover new information and discover God’s revelation in new places. I am less sure than Dr. Favale that we know perfectly God’s plan for human gender and sexuality. We are learning and discovering, and our understanding is always a work in progress, informed by new information we encounter.” ...

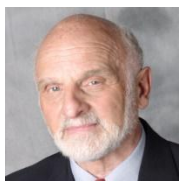
Many external forces shape our self-perceptions, but I would not venture to say that all transgender people are transgender because they were influenced by “the concept of subjective gender identity and a medicalized approach to gender.” Also, in many cases, a medicalized approach to gender provides relief and hope to transgender people. Moreover, theoretical frameworks are informed by, and can help us to get closer to, reality and truth. Indeed, theory helps us to make sense of human experience and does not merely obscure it. Can gender theory, in conversation with church teaching, illuminate human experience? Can these three sources work together and learn from each other? I think so.

Bretzke, James T. S.J. “Principles, Policies & Prudence: Reflecting on and Responding to Milwaukee Archdiocese Policy Statement on Gender Theory.”

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tEf7zECjz9dI8JSKBpiqROgw9FaP2_pK/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103519537108777764442&rtpof=true&sd=true

Brueggemann, Walter. “How to read the Bible on homosexuality.” *Outreach* (September 4, 2022)

<https://outreach.faith/2022/09/walter-brueggemann-how-to-read-the-bible-on-homosexuality/>



Well, start with the awareness that the Bible does not speak with a single voice on any topic. Inspired by God as it is, all sorts of persons have a say in the complexity of Scripture, and we are under mandate to listen, as best we can, to all of its voices.

On the question of gender equity and inclusiveness, consider the following to be set alongside the most frequently cited texts. We may designate these texts as texts of welcome. Thus, the Bible permits very different voices to speak that seem to contradict those texts cited above. Therefore, the prophetic poetry of Isaiah 56:3-8 has been taken to be an exact refutation of the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:1:

This text issues a grand welcome to those who have been excluded, so that all are gathered in by this generous gathering God. The temple is for “all peoples,” not just the ones who have kept the purity codes.

Beyond this text, we may notice other texts that are tilted toward the inclusion of all persons without asking about their qualifications, or measuring up the costs that have been articulated by those in control. Jesus issues a welcoming summons to all those who are weary and heavy laden:

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mt. 11:28-30).

No qualification, no exclusion. Jesus is on the side of those who are “worn out.” They may be “worn out” by being lower-class people who do all the heavy lifting, or it may be those who are “worn out” by the heavy demands of Torah, imposed by those who make the Torah filled with judgment and exclusion.

Since Jesus mentions his “yoke,” he contrasts his simple requirements with the heavy demands that are imposed on the community by teachers of rigor. Jesus’ quarrel is not with the Torah, but with Torah interpretation that had become, in his time, excessively demanding and restrictive. The burden of discipleship to Jesus is easy, contrasted to the more rigorous teaching of some of his contemporaries. Indeed, they had made the Torah, in his time, exhausting, specializing in trivialities while disregarding the neighborly accents of justice, mercy and faithfulness (cf. Mt. 23:23).

It is impossible to harmonize the mandates to exclusion in Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 and Deuteronomy 23:1 with the welcome stance of Isaiah 56, Matthew 11:28-30, Galatians 3:28 and Acts 10.

Other texts might be cited as well, but these are typical and representative. As often happens in Scripture, we are left with texts in deep tension, if not in contradiction, with each other. The work of reading the Bible responsibly is the process of adjudicating these texts that will not be fit together.

Every reading of the Bible—no exceptions—is an act of interpretation. There are no “innocent” or “objective” readings, no matter how sure and absolute they may sound.

Everyone is engaged in interpretation, so that one must pay attention to how we do interpretation. In what follows, I will identify five things I have learned concerning interpretation, learnings that I hope will be useful as we read the Bible, responsibly, around the crisis of gender identity in our culture.

1. All interpretation filters the text through the interpreter’s life.

It is immensely useful to recognize this filtering process. More specifically, I suggest that we can identify three layers of personhood that likely operate for us in doing interpretation.

First, we read the text according to our vested interests. Sometimes we are aware of our vested interests, sometimes we are not. It is not difficult to see this process at work concerning gender issues in the Bible. Second, beneath our vested interests, we read the Bible through the lens of our fears that are sometimes powerful, even if unacknowledged. Third, at bottom, beneath our vested interests and our fears, I believe we read the Bible through our hurts that we often keep hidden not only from others, but from ourselves as well.

2. Context inescapably looms large in interpretation.

There are no texts without contexts and there are no interpreters without context that positions one to read in a distinct way. Thus, the purity codes of Leviticus reflect a social context in which a community under intense pressure sought to delineate, in a clear way, its membership, purpose and boundaries.

3. Texts do not come at us one at a time

Texts do not come at us one at a time, *ad seriatim*, but always in clusters through a trajectory of interpretation. Thus, it may be correct to say that our several church “denominations” are, importantly, trajectories of interpretation. Location in such a trajectory is important, both because it imposes restraints upon us, and because it invites bold imagination in the context of the trajectory.

We do not, for the most part, do our interpretation in a vacuum. Rather we are “surrounded by a cloud of [nameable] witnesses” who are present with us as we do our interpretive work (Heb. 12:1).

4. We are in a “crisis of the other”

We are, for now, deeply situated in a crisis of the other. We face folk who are quite unlike us, and their presence among us is inescapable. We are no longer able to live our lives in a homogenous community of culture-related “look alike.” There are, to

be sure, many reasons for this new social reality: global trade, easier mobility, electronic communication and mass migrations among them.

We are thus required to come to terms with the “other,” who disturbs our reductionist management of life through sameness. We have a fairly simple choice that can refer to the other as a threat, a rival enemy, a competitor, or we may take the other as a neighbor.

5. The Gospel is not to be confused with the Bible.

The Gospel is not to be confused with or identified with the Bible. The Bible contains all sorts of voices that are inimical to the good news of God’s love, mercy and justice. Thus, “biblicism” is a dangerous threat to the faith of the church, because it allows into our thinking claims that are contradictory to the news of the Gospel. The Gospel, unlike the Bible, is unambiguous about God’s deep love for all peoples. And where the Bible contradicts that news, as in the texts of rigor, these texts are to be seen as “beyond the pale” of gospel attentiveness.

Because:

our interpretation is filtered through our close experience,
our context calls for an embrace of God’s newness,
our interpretive trajectory is bent toward justice and mercy,
our faith calls us to the embrace of the other and
our hope is in the God of the gospel and in no other,
the full acceptance and embrace of LGBTQ persons follows as a clear mandate of the Gospel in our time. Claims to the contrary are contradictions of the truth of the Gospel on all the counts indicated above.

These several learnings about the interpretive process help us grow in faith:

We are warned about the subjectivity of our interpretive inclinations;
we are invited in our context to receive and welcome God’s newness;
we can identify our interpretive trajectory as one bent toward justice and mercy;
we may acknowledge the “other” as a neighbor;
we can trust the gospel in its critical stance concerning the Bible.

Walter Brueggemann is one of the world's leading Old Testament scholars and the author of more than 50 books. From 1986 to 2003, he was the William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga.

Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA). Statement of support and concern for the GLBTQIA+ Community (June 10, 2022) <https://www.ctsa-online.org/Resolutions>

At the Business Meeting on June 10, 2022 of its 2022 Annual Convention those attending approved by a large majority the following Statement of support and concern for the GLBTQIA+ Community:

“It is resolved that the CTSA members in attendance at the Business Meeting on June 10, 2022, approve the following statement as the position of the CTSA:

The Catholic Theological Society of America stands in solidarity with members of the GLBTQIA+ community. We affirm their dignity and rights as persons made in the image of God and stand committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of our GLBTQIA+ colleagues, both in society at large as well as at our annual meetings. As the CTSA convenes in Atlanta for its 2022 annual meeting, its members deplore the unprecedented wave of attacks on the community across the nation. Legislative restrictions or attacks are frequently combined with dehumanizing and abusive rhetoric, which have predictably led to a surge in hate crimes and murders against the transgender community and others dehumanized by these policies and rhetoric. As Catholics it is our responsibility to denounce this systematic marginalization and disenfranchisement of transgender persons and any other vulnerable communities subjected to a comprehensive assault on their basic dignity and rights of citizenship. We call upon the USCCB along with local and state legislators to reconsider any policy positions that may have contributed to the current explosion of anti-GLBTQIA+ hate. We implore church leaders to consider how these policies alienate GLBTQIA+ persons, their families, and young Catholics from their parishes and from the Church, frequently discrediting Christianity itself. We commit in the words of Galatians 3:28 to that koinonia in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for (we) all are one in Christ Jesus.”

Cavender-McCoy, Kathleen. “An Analogical Anthropology of Sex Difference: Erich Przywara, William Desmond, and the Imago Dei in Intersex Persons.” *Irish Theological Quarterly* (December 27, 2022) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140022114474>

Abstract: This article argues that an analogical approach to the metaphysics of bodily sex difference, such as that found in Erich Przywara and William Desmond, offers a fruitful way forward in a fraught global discussion on sexed embodiment and the imago Dei. After discussing the unique ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ dimensions of Przywara’s anthropology of sex difference, I discuss the common intersex condition called Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome and how Przywara’s system accommodates it as an authentic form of human being imaging God. I then draw from William Desmond’s metaxological approach to sexed bodies to show the great flexibility provided by analogical anthropologies and suggest that theology begin to rely more heavily on these models in future inquiries into sexed embodiment.

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Cedergren, Bénédicte. “European Countries’ Restrictions on Gender Treatment for Minors Contrasts Sharply With US Push.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (July 20, 2023)

https://www.ncregister.com/news/european-countries-restrictions-on-gender-treatment-for-minors-contrasts-sharply-with-us-push?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=267115037&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_ndg8fkTo2r9dEoBlnSRSnkDkm788GA7DMAVZpi9KIWCVRkfiTaCnF3Fhb4CLsMcI3wJE6Oz4f4V_leMIIK7zooXm_sQ&utm_content=267115037&utm_source=hs_email



At both the federal and the state level, and in the American culture more broadly, there is a concerted effort to remove obstacles to minors’ access to controversial “gender affirming care.” ...

In Europe, however, a trend in the opposite direction is unfolding. Judging that the scientific evidence is lacking, that long-term effects remain unknown and that the benefits are outweighed by the risks, governments and health authorities in at least five countries — several of which pioneered in “gender-affirming” hormonal and surgical treatments for minors — seem to be re-examining their decisions.

Bénédicte Cedergren is a Swedish-French freelance journalist. After graduating from the University of Stockholm with a degree in Journalism, Bénédicte moved to Rome where she earned a degree in Philosophy at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas. She also sings sacred music and works as a photographer. Passionate about spreading the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith, Bénédicte enjoys sharing the testimonies of others and writing stories that captivate and inspire.

Cloutier, David and Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Church & Transgender Identity: Some Cautions, Some Possibilities." *Commonweal* (10 March 2017): 15-23.

Contrasting (though not outright competing) approaches to the question of transgender responses by the Church. Cloutier concludes that “Given the conceptual difficulties involved in discerning the gender implications of ‘who I really am’, plus the longstanding preference in both Christianity and in the general society for a unified body-soul anthropology, and the significant capacity for human folly and self-deception in these matters, at the very least we would seem to need a yellow light, not a green one.” (P. 18)

Johnson calls for a careful discernment of the Spirit in regards to this question and argues that “the church ought to be the place where openness to change is a corollary of belief in the new creation and its endless inventiveness, even as it remains the place where the moral of change is greater than the discovery of the autonomous self. As Paul wrote to

the Corinthians, ‘Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes the Lord, the Spirit’.” (P. 23).

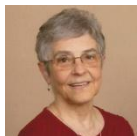
Cloutier is a moral theologian who taught for a number of years at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD and is at this writing associate professor at the Catholic University of America. Johnson is a well-known New Testament biblical scholar and emeritus Woodruff Professor at Emory University.

Cloutier, David. “The stark choices the Vatican’s gender theory document is raising.” *America* June 12, 2019, released online at https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/12/stark-choices-vaticans-gender-theory-document-raising?utm_source=Newsletters&utm_campaign=b5efeecde2-DAILY_CAMPAIGN_2019_6_11_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0fe8ed70be-b5efeecde2-58760285

A largely appreciative consideration of the Congregation for Catholic Education’s document critiquing contemporary gender theory that had been released two days earlier. See “‘Male and female he created them. For a path of dialogue on the issue of gender in education’” 2 February 2019 (released 10 June 2019).

<https://zenit.org/articles/new-vatican-document-provides-schools-with-guidance-on-gender-issues/> (accessed June 13, 2019). For a less sympathetic assessment of the Vatican document see James Martin, S.J. “Listen to the L.G.B.T. person: a response to the Vatican’s gender theory document.” *America* June 11, 2019, released online at <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/11/listen-lgbt-person-response-vaticans-gender-theory-document>

Derouen, Sr. Luisa, O.P. “Catholics are called to believe transgender people.” *Outreach* (May 17, 2023) <https://outreach.faith/2023/05/sister-luisa-derouen-catholics-are-called-to-believe-transgender-people/>



This edited article is adapted from a speech delivered by Sister Luisa Derouen, O.P., at last year’s Outreach conference, in New York, on June 25, 2022.

For the past 23 years, I’ve had the profound privilege of accompanying transgender people as a spiritual companion on their sacred journey to wholeness and holiness—being able to embrace the truth of themselves as Catholic and trans. My mantra to them all these years has been that the truth leads us to God and not away from God. It has been a sheer grace for me to be a witness to the process of their coming to life.

But what I can never say enough is that what transgender people experience is holy and good, not sinful or deluded or selfish.

The process of coming to human maturity, and Christian maturity, is the same for them as it is for the rest of us—releasing whatever in us that is false and not of God, and claiming our true self, where God lives in us. But for trans people, it's so much harder. The first stage in the process often takes years, in which they make herculean efforts to deny that they are transgender and try to be who others say they are.

They're told by religious leaders and family, "You just think you're a woman, or a man, but I know better, and you're really not." Generally, after a few years and hundreds of hours of praying, pondering, therapy and talking with those they trust, they reach the second stage. They must live in the truth of who they know themselves to be, even though they don't know who and what they will lose in the process—a spouse, a child, a home, a job, a friend, a faith community.

What transitioning means is different for everyone, but at some point, most arrive at the third stage of their sacred journey and can declare, "I may have lost much, but I have found myself. Now I know who I am in God, and I'm on solid ground."

The bottom line is that we must believe that they are who they say they are, and that their lives are as holy as anyone else. They are the Body of Christ, the precious children of God who deserve to be supported in their desire for wholeness and holiness.

Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington, D.C., has often been quoted as telling a Catholic trans man: "You belong to the heart of this church. There is nothing that you may do, may say, that will rip you from the heart of this church."

And I say Amen to that.

Sister Luisa Derouen is a Dominican Sister of Peace and has been ministering nationally among the transgender community since 1999. She is retired and lives in central Kentucky.

_____. "For transgender people, a name is a deliberate expression of identity." *Outreach* (November 21, 2022)

<https://outreach.faith/2022/11/sister-luisa-derouen-for-transgender-people-a-name-is-a-deliberate-expression-of-identity/>

Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity. They carry deep personal, cultural, familial and historical connections. When we are called by name, with respect, we have a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong and our place in the world.

This is all the more important for transgender people, who are increasingly under attack by state legislatures and Catholic diocesan policies. In spite of abundant, data-based, evidence that transgender people are who they say they are, the voices decrying their existence, though a minority, are loud and persistent.

Without exception, these harsh, and arguably unchristian, policies forbid the use of a trans person's stated name and significantly raise the risk of harm, particularly to transgender youth. Studies show that when their chosen name is not used, they are at much greater risk for depression and suicide.

_____. "Four things Catholics need to know about transgender people." *Outreach* (July 28, 2022)

<https://outreach.faith/2022/07/four-things-catholics-need-to-know-about-transgender-people/>

1) Transgender people are who they say; 2) Transitioning is a spiritual journey; 3) We Catholics can support transgender people; and 4) Transgender people have much to teach us.

_____. "I'm a nun who has ministered to transgender people for over 20 years. These are some of their courageous stories." *America* (February 25, 2021)

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/02/25/transgender-catholics-lgbt-religious-sister-240106?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=8039&pnespid=1Os0_OkDFBCN5Nnep3ojIRO9QIZEVfm0pgEA3XgH

But then in short order comes the foundational message [from the bishops] that the very existence of transgender people is impossible because God does not make transgender people. They are suffering from a psychological disorder, and we must gently and respectfully help them understand that they are not who they say they are. Furthermore, they are risking their eternal salvation by putting themselves above God in believing they can change their bodies based on superficial feelings and selfish wants, or some kind of "gender ideology."

However well-meaning bishops may be, I cannot say strongly enough that it is impossible to extend respect and compassion for people while declaring at the same time that they do not exist.

Favale, Abigail. *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2022.



From the publisher: Favale traces the genealogy of gender to its origins in feminism and postmodern thought, describing how gender has come to eclipse sex, and how that shift is reshaping language, law, medicine, sexuality, and our own self-perceptions.

Abigail Favale, Ph.D., is a writer and professor in the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. A Catholic convert with an academic background in gender studies. Favale lives with her husband and four children in South Bend, Indiana.

Negatively reviewed by Maxwell Kuzma, "A transgender Catholic responds to 'The Genesis of Gender'" National Catholic Reporter (October 8, 2022)

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/transgender-catholic-responds-genesis-gender>

Writing in a matter-of-fact rhetorical style, Favale highlights philosophers and writers that either prove her point or provoke outrage while sprinkling in personal anecdotes and stories from detransitioners (while trotting out scientific studies that play to one side), to ultimately make the claim that she has fully and fairly vetted the field of gender studies — and found it wanting.

She creates a boogeyman called the "gender paradigm," a phrase she uses to refer to the increased visibility of the transgender and genderqueer community in modern social and legal discourse. (In Favale's mind, this increase of visibility is negative.) She intends for us to believe the goal of this gender paradigm is social and individual destruction — and that it is succeeding.

Favale talks about the body from a view that transgender identities reject the truths contained within the body. Her thesis is "the body reveals the person." This is undoubtedly true, but a further understanding of the body requires us to acknowledge that the person animates the body.

It is the person who, over their lifetime, smiles and laughs or yells and frowns to the extent that physical wrinkles are left upon their body when they die. We may be born with dewy soft skin, but few of us are privileged enough to make it to the end of our lives without a few scars. Christ himself bears witness to this, allowing the marks of his death to remain visible on his heavenly body in the Resurrection.

Favale, Abigail, and Block, Elizabeth Sweeny. "Conversation: How should Catholics think about gender identity and transgender persons?" *America* (October 13, 2022)
https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/10/13/catholic-church-teaching-gender-transgender-243943?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=25467&pnespid=sKt2CHwdL78FgOudpzCxEI_K5kzTsMtLbmxyzedyowZmZ0hwyteTVQfu6I94YUSaUTB4r0l8

Block is highly critical of Church documents on gender and transgenderism while Favale is enthusiastically supportive of these same teachings.

Abigail Favale is a professor in the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. Most recently, she is the author of *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory* (Ignatius, 2022).

Elizabeth Sweeny Block is an associate professor of Christian ethics at Saint Louis University. She is writing a book on conscience, moral agency and social sin.

Ford, Craig, Jr. "Born That Way? The Challenge of Trans Gender Identity for Catholic Theology." Chapter 8 in *Sex, Love, and Families: Catholic Perspectives*, 91-101. Edited by Jason King and Julie Hanlon Rubio. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2020.

Ford outlines problems in the traditional paradigm dealing with non-heterosexual normativity (the “born-that-way” model) and suggests instead an approach that would consider transgender choices in terms of a virtue ethics understanding of “alignment” as a key virtue to individual growth and human flourishing.

Ford did his doctorate in theological ethics at Boston College and at this writing was assistant professor of theology at St. Norbert’s College in Wisconsin. He has since moved to Emory University.

. “New Anti-Trans Policies Move Church from Vital Core Teachings.” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* (February 1, 2022)

<http://www.conversationsmagazine.org/alumni-views-1/2022/2/1/new-anti-trans-policies-move-church-from-vital-core-teachings?fbclid=IwAR0iiEVMLuxDuhTk9xehwnjESghE8oL1JrfnHLlhZnuoHNOxuf8AhETkE58>

First, despite the implication of these documents, accepting transgender people according to their own self-understanding does nothing to threaten Catholic institutions or the individuals associated with these institutions. There simply is no threat in asking to be addressed by one’s preferred name and pronouns, or in being able to go to the bathroom during the course of the day. Further, since data indicates that there is no connection between trans-inclusive policies and bathroom safety, there is no physical danger, at least not any based in reality.

Instead, the danger lies entirely in the fact that Church leaders’ refusal to respect people will only continue to alienate them.

Second, documents like these are misguided and dangerous because they distort Pope Francis’s vision for the Church by only offering half of that vision.

With each official statement of this type, we are witnessing Church teachings used as bricks to build walls, when Francis’s full vision calls us—in an image he’s made famous—to build bridges instead that bring people together in joy.

Furton, Edward J., ed. *Transgender Issues in Catholic Health Care*. Philadelphia: The National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2021.

Abstract: Through careful analysis, narrative case studies, and policy language, *Transgender Issues in Catholic Health Care* critiques current interventions for gender dysphoria and provides practical guidance for professionals and institutions committed to providing whole-person care.

Gehring, John. “Catholic conservative Napa Institute's profile grows in Washington, DC.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 13, 2022)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-conservative-napa-institutes-profile-grows-washington-dc>

At the Napa gathering on November 30, 2022 Archbishop Paul Coakley delivered a 45-minute speech titled "Transgenderism and the Eclipse of Truth."

"We see the plague of relativism in nearly every aspect of life," the archbishop said. "In politics, we speak of alternative facts, in education this emphasis on equally valid perspectives, and sadly sometimes even in the church with its push to change her moral teaching, especially her sexual ethic. There is no starker proof that we live in a culture where experience and a desire eclipse the truth than the transgender movement."

The archbishop pointed to the sexual revolution, the widespread acceptance of birth control, and the 1973 Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion as laying the groundwork for mainstream support of LGBTQ rights.

"In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality as a category of mental illness," Coakley said. "Support for homosexuality severed the connection between sexual activity and the inherent difference between men's and women's bodies, turning sexual orientation into an individual's choice based solely on desire."

"Gender is now determined simply by how one feels and how one identifies," he continued. "In order to avoid being labeled transphobic, these feelings must be accepted as the true indicators of gender and these feelings must be supported even to the point of inalterable gender affirmation surgeries. ... Nonbinary identities have mushroomed and their spread has gone mainstream. This transgender ideology, this transgender philosophy, is based on a false and defective and totally inadequate anthropology."

Coakley, who claimed that "the trans movement is doing great damage to society," criticized those who oppose so-called "conversion therapy" — a widely rejected practice designed to alter a person's sexual orientation or gender identity to align with heterosexual or cisgender norms. More than 20 states have some form of ban on conversion therapy. The American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association have condemned the practice. The archbishop called this opposition "well-intentioned madness."

Coakley also criticized what he described as efforts to "marginalize parents in order to protect their children's so-called gender rights" and railed against "the injustice of men identifying as women in sports."

The church faces "growing legal threats" to its network of charitable services, Coakley argued, noting challenges to Catholic adoption agencies that prohibit same-sex parents from adopting as one example.

"New threats to the church's good works are due to the intolerance of some extremists within the political left and their marriage to the most radical forms of social movements," he said.

He ended with a stark observation. "If the devil can confuse society about sex and gender, he obscures our understanding of God's plan for humanity at its very roots."

Gordon, Stephanie. *Ask Your Husband: A Catholic Guide to Femininity*. TAN Books, 2022.

From the publisher: There is, perhaps, no more controversial statement today than “the husband is the boss of his wife.” Stephanie C. Gordon explains how this proposition proves to be required by Scripture and by two millennia of Catholic teaching. She instructs Catholic wives how properly to serve their husbands in Christian marriage: by emulating our Lady and by embracing the household patriarchy, just as she did. This is a counter-cultural manifesto of the domicile. Against the fetid rot of feminism, Christian wives should employ this book in their labors to rehabilitate the wayward popular Christian view of their sexual roles, their souls, their marriages, and their mothering.

However, even ultra-conservative Catholic publications, such as Abigail Favale’s scathing review in *The Catholic World Report* raise some flags about this book:

Gordon’s view of femininity and marriage has all the hallmarks of the fundamentalist complementarianism of my upbringing, in both content and method. First, she makes no attempt at a coherent theology of marriage or womanhood; instead, she proof-texts, pulling quotes from scripture, magisterial texts, and random websites (gotquestions.org?) to support her claims. She reads the Bible like a good fundamentalist: literally and legalistically. Verses are not contextualized in the scope of scripture as a whole, or even within the biblical book itself.

Magisterial quotes are similarly wrested out of their overarching textual and historical context, and no account is given of how tensions or apparent contradictions among these texts might be fruitfully embraced. Gordon doesn’t seem to consider whether Pius X and John Paul II could both be contributing to the Church’s deepening understanding of marriage amidst shifting socioeconomic contexts. If Pius is right, she reasons, John Paul II is wrong; in all ways, Gordon prefers the either/or to the both/and.

Gordon also privileges doing over being—she never delves into the sacramental significance of manhood and womanhood, a significance that can be lived out in a variety of contexts, within and beyond the home. Neither does she discuss the shared vocation of women and men, as expressed in Genesis 1:28: to be God’s image, to be fruitful, to steward the earth. Instead, Gordon is preoccupied with rules and roles, and the sexes as cartoonish opposites. (See

<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/03/13/ask-your-husband-is-a-superficial-ideological-and-incoherent-guide/>)

Another quite critical review is authored by Rachel Amiri in *Where Peter Is* (March 15, 2022)

<https://wherepeteris.com/ask-your-husband-a-how-to-guide-for-catholic-patriarchy-part-1/>

Stephanie Gordon is the wife of Timothy Gordon, a podcaster and author of *The Case for Patriarchy*, Crisis Publications (a division of Sophia Institute Press), 2021.

Grabowski, John. *Unraveling Gender: The Battle Over Sexual Difference*. Gastonia NC: TAN Books, 2022.

Enthusiastically (!) reviewed by Susanna Spencer as “Embracing Our ‘Givenness’” in *National Catholic Register* (July 16, 2022)

https://www.ncregister.com/features/embracing-our-giveness?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=219876407&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--o2ylbAtX5V-V-h4R3ck3SHDd1-8QEjiwztxx8NKpuRlm_PzL5lpwX3ZacnQf_KNp2cb-zigHFBV6Ncp3wBOI9C_Gj8g&utm_content=219876407&utm_source=hs_email

From Spencer’s Review: Unraveling Gender is his well-researched, thorough explanation of what gender ideology consists, the problems it causes, and the response the Church gives to it through Scripture and Tradition. What is most striking is his description of it as a spiritual battle against “the powers of evil.” He explains that the spiritual battle shows the truth of human sexuality is not against people who do not know it, but instead against “the ideas they promote and disseminate, and the spiritual roots of these ideas, that are the primary opponents in this battle. In a Christian context, the language of warfare always has a spiritual referent.”

Spencer describes herself as having a masters in theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville. She is a writer and the theological editor for *Blessed is She* and co-author of the children's devotional book, *Rise Up: Shining in Virtue*. She is a homeschooling mother of four and lives with her family in St. Paul, Minnesota. Find her at her blog, *Living With Lady Philosophy*.

From Grabowski’s web-page: Dr. Grabowski earned his B.A. in theology at the University of Steubenville and his Ph.D. at Marquette University. For the last thirty years he has been on the faculty of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. where he is currently Ordinary Professor of Moral Theology/ Ethics. He and his wife were appointed to the Pontifical Council for the Family by Pope Benedict XVI in the fall of 2009 where they served as a member couple. He has served two terms as a theological advisor to the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family, and Youth and one term as an advisor to the subcommittee which produced the “Pastoral Letter Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan” (2009). In 2015 he was appointed by Pope Francis to serve as an expert (adiutor) at the Synod of Bishops on the Family.

Habemus Gender! The Catholic Church and 'Gender Ideology'. *Religion and Gender* 6/2 (2016)

<https://www.religionandgender.org/580/volume/6/issue/2/>

Articles: Mary Anne Case. The Role of the Popes in the Invention of Complementarity and the Anathematization of Gender (155-172)

Eric Fassin Gender and the Problem of Universals: Catholic Mobilizations and Sexual Democracy in France (173-186).

Sara Garbagnoli. Against the Heresy of Immanence: Vatican’s ‘Gender’ as a New Rhetorical Device against the Denaturalisation of the Sexual Order (187-204)

Mario Pecheny, Daniel Jones, Lucía Ariza. Sexual Politics and Religious Actors in Argentina (205-225)

Interview: The Sin of Turning Away from Reality: An Interview with Father Krzysztof Charamsa (226-246) David Paternotte, Mary Anne Case, Sarah Bracke. With Responses: Tina Beattie: Gender and Meaning in a Postmodern World: An Elusive Quest for Truth (247-250); Gloria Careaga-Pérez: Moral Panic and Gender Ideology in Latin America (251-255); Sonia Corrêa: 'Theologies' and Contexts in a Latin American perspective (256-263); Elsa Dorlin: Unreal: Catholic Ideology as Epistemological War (264-267); Agnieszka Graff: 'Gender Ideology': Weak Concepts, Powerful Politics (268-272); Mary Hunt: Catholic Gender Denial (273-275); Mark Jordan: *Vetera novis augere*: Notes on the Rhetoric of Response (276-281); Kapyka Kaoma: The Vatican Anti-Gender Theory and Sexual Politics: An African Response (282-292); Elzbieta Korolczuk: The Vatican and the Birth of Anti-Gender Studies (293-296); Andrea Peto: How are Anti-Gender Movements Changing Gender Studies as a Profession? (297-299); Joan W. Scott: Gender and the Vatican (300-301); Juan Marco Vaggione: Francis and 'Gender Ideology': Heritage, Displacement and Continuities (302-307).

Horan, Daniel P., OFM. "Let's hear transgender people tell their own stories." *National Catholic Reporter* (June 15, 2023)
https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/lets-hear-transgender-people-tell-their-own-stories?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=d76f407f44-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_06_14_09_47&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-d76f407f44-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D



In both the case of the doctrinal note and the anticipated health care directive revisions, the U.S. bishops are choosing to inform their actions based on false narratives told by others about what it means to be a trans person, including the lie that there is no such thing as transgender people.

One factor that has been consistently noted in responses to nearly every anti-trans diocesan policy or statement is that there is little evidence that transgender people were ever consulted in the development of such policies and statements. Instead, their own experiences, stories, struggles, joys and needs are dismissed and ignored. ...

When bishops and other church leaders, nonexpert pundits and church observers treat the serious issues related to LGBTQ persons generally and trans folks in particular as some kind of "culture war" horse race, they actively contribute to the dehumanization and erasure of real people who have real joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties, which ought also be the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of said church leaders and commentators (*Gaudium et Spes*).

In honor of Pride Month and in an effort to listen to more to the stories of trans folks as told by them, I decided to read two recent memoirs by trans authors this month. The first

is by Elliot Page, the Oscar-nominated actor and transgender man, whose book is titled [*Pageboy: A Memoir*](#). The second is by Danica Roem, the Virginia state delegate and transgender woman, whose book is titled [*Burn the Page: A True Story of Torching Doubts, Blazing Trails, and Igniting Change*](#). ...

If you are a cisgender person who doesn't know any out trans people, who has only heard the false stories told by others, then picking up Roem's or Page's or some other trans person's book might be a good place to begin hearing the fully human, fully complex, fully authentic stories of some of our trans siblings.

(Former) Franciscan Fr. Daniel P. Horan was the director of the Center for Spirituality and professor of philosophy, religious studies and theology at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. His most recent books are *A White Catholic's Guide to Racism and Privilege* and *The Way of the Franciscans: A Prayer Journey Through Lent*. Follow him on Twitter: @DanHoranOFM.

Ivereigh, Austin. "Transgender debates require distinction between theory and people." *Crux* October 23, 2016
<https://cruxnow.com/analysis/2016/10/23/transgender-debates-require-distinction-theory-people/> (accessed March 5, 2017)

Jones, David Albert. "Gender Identity, Analogy and Virtue: A Response Newton and Watt, *New Blackfriars* 101/1094 (July, 2020) DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12548.

See Helen Watt's "Gender Transition: The Moral Meaning of Bodily and Social Presentation." *New Blackfriars* 101/1094 (July 2020): 465-477. (first published online April 18, 2019); DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12465

Abstract: William Newton and Helen Watt have both criticised the attempt to draw an analogy between gender recognition and adoption. Newton argues that recognition of adoptive fatherhood rests on an "analogy of proportion" whereas to use the word "woman" of someone whose natal sex is male is, at most, "a weak form of analogy". However, the definition of woman provided by Newton excludes those who are infertile and neglects the cultural dimension of gender. The case of Casimir Pulaski shows that someone could participate in many of the cultural aspects of being male, as these were expressed in his society, irrespective of the facts of his internal anatomy. Watt thinks the analogy, if modified, shows that there is an onus against transitioning. She does not regard cross-dressing or taking cross-sex hormones or use of pronouns to express gender incongruence as being intrinsically wrong but argues that transitioning is potentially misleading and can have harmful consequences. Watt's practical arguments are weak as they do not include a broad range of considerations, especially considerations about inclusion and discrimination. On the other hand, Watt's concession is significant as it implies that, at least in some circumstances, transitioning could be virtuous.

_____. "Truth in transition? Gender identity and Catholic anthropology." *New Blackfriars*
First published: 28 May 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12380>

Author supplied abstract: There is no high level Magisterial teaching directly on gender dysphoria nor on gender non-conformity in matters of dress. Nevertheless, the relationship of gender identity to biology raises profound theological questions. Transitioning between gender roles has been construed as an attempt “to alter what is unalterable” and “to establish a false identity in place of one's true identity”. However, the anthropological reality of incongruent gender identity is complex. It has something in common with body dysmorphia, something in common with the feminist criticism of gender roles, something in common with being a eunuch or with having a divergence of sexual development and something in common with homosexuality, but in each case with important differences. This paper sets out a further analogy, between legal gender recognition and legal adoption. Intellectual humility is required to help develop more adequate concepts in this area. At the same time, practical considerations require that one comes to a provisional judgement, at least, concerning this phenomenon. The analogies from divergences of sexual development and from adoption demonstrate that it is possible in principle to affirm the incongruent gender identity without being untruthful or contradicting a sound Catholic anthropology that is adequate to this complex human reality.

Keenan, James, S.J. “What one priest learned from listening to transgender Catholics.” *National Catholic Reporter* (February 7, 2022)
https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/what-one-priest-learned-listening-transgender-catholics?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=642dd9c6b4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_02_04_10_29&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-642dd9c6b4-230519238

Keenan spends the majority of the article speaking of his own conversations and counseling people over transgender issues. He concludes by making these points:

“The scientific community is only beginning to learn to listen to the transgender community. In fact, the process of gathering data on the experience of people facing the question about their bodies and their gender is only now about 10 years old. The church can learn from the scientific community that if it wants to accompany the people who are facing gender dysphoria, we need to learn first to listen to them. Indeed, on Jan. 26, Pope Francis told parents of gay children not to condemn them, but to accompany them. That sounds to me like the right message. But we need the hierarchy to hear that message, too. And that means learning humility and learning to listen, especially to those people who are being terrorized not by the question they are facing but by the moralistic deafness of the church that thinks ‘it knows everything better than others’.”

King, Ursula, and Beattie, Tina, eds. *Gender, Religion and Diversity*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

Lakeland, Paul. "Created to Love: A response to Paul Baumann" *Commonweal* (6 April 2022)
<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/created-love>

Responding to Paul Baumann's rebuke of Margaret Rankl for being too liberal ("From the Church to the Woods," March 23, 2022).

I am not so sure, however, that Baumann gets it right when he asks, "How is one to make sense of Catholicism's traditional anthropology and sexual ethics if marriage, long solemnized as an act performed by 'a man and a woman' before God, is no longer defined by such God-given identities?" Phrasing his question this way might seem eminently sensible until we recognize that it is the wrong question. Let me rephrase it: "How is one to make sense of Catholicism's traditional anthropology and sexual ethics if marriage, long solemnized as an act performed by 'a man and a woman' before God, is no longer defined by the biological distinctions found in the creation story of Genesis?"

When we ask the question this way, we are forced to ask about the valence of "traditional anthropology." Is anthropology impervious to or absolved from the historical process? If not, should the male/female identities as Baumann here seems to understand them be so confidently described as "God-given"? It seems to me a mistake to assume that sexual ethics can be tied to an "unchanging" anthropology. Sexual ethics depends upon anthropology, for sure, on our understanding of what it is to be a human being. Philosophical or theological anthropology is no more immune to changing historical understanding than was geocentrism, or indeed than was the heliocentrism that replaced it for a time. What is unchanging in the vision of Genesis is to be found in the theological truth that human beings are dependent upon a creator God, who chose to make them in the divine image and likeness. The rest of the story, the details, are what the author of Genesis lays upon the Creator, extrapolating from what the author or authors knew to be the case in their own times to the origins of life billions of years before. When science comes to understand more fully what it is to be human, science is not disproving our dependence on a creator God; rather, it is advancing our knowledge of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God.

Among the salient historical facts of our present moment that seem to require an adjustment to Christian anthropology are two of great importance. First, men and women who have same-sex sexual attraction are following their natural inclinations, and seem in all or almost all respects to live and function in our modern world in precisely the same way as do their heterosexual fellow citizens. A corollary to this is the fact that sexual activity has been decoupled from procreation. The instinct-driven sex drive of the animal world has now found its way to the opportunity for truly human responsible sexual choices. Biology says that sexual intercourse between men and women tends towards procreation. Catholic theology has said for a very long time that sexual intercourse that is not open to the possibility of procreation is objectively sinful. Common sense says that human beings know how to employ sexual relations responsibly, whether in the service of procreation or in that of loving intimacy and mutual sexual pleasure.

Second, it is beyond dispute that same-sex relationships, whether blessed by ritual or not, are marked by loving mutuality just about as much as heterosexual relationships are. One of the most momentous changes in our world today is that there is what is still a relatively

new openness about sexual identity, in consequence of which we all know men and women who are gay or lesbian or transgender, and we can see that they are not better or worse than anyone else, and that they succeed or fail in life in about the same percentages. In other words, they are normal in all the important ways. And nothing is more normal than the wish to love and to be loved.

When we bring these two thoughts together, and we insist on the Creator's intent to make human beings in the divine image and likeness of God—an image that is neither gendered nor sexualized—and on the impossibility of frustrating that divine will, it is surely clear that to be made in the divine image is to be created to love. Wherever there is genuine love, there is God. When we step away from outdated anthropology and trust our God-given eyes, there is no rational way to deny that genuine love is not confined to heterosexual relationships. If the Church were to reflect on these facts, both the biological and the theological, it might find its way to celebrating loving unions wherever it is fortunate enough to find them.

Paul Lakeland is the Director of the Center for Catholic Studies at Fairfield University and a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Lenhart, Erik, OFM, Cap. "People Born with Intersex Conditions: Pastoral and Bioethical Considerations." *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 15/3 (Autumn 2015): 453-463. Also available at https://www.pdnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=ncbq&id=ncbq_2015_0015_0003_0453_0463&onlyautologin=true

Martin, James, S.J. "Can Catholics celebrate Pride Month? Yes, and here's why." *Outreach* (May 30, 2023) <https://outreach.faith/2023/05/can-catholics-celebrate-pride-month-yes-and-heres-why-2/>



But the second kind of pride is a consciousness of one's own dignity. And that's closer to what Pride Month is meant to be for the LGBTQ community: a recognition of the human dignity of a group of people who have, for centuries been, treated with contempt, rejection and violence.

For the religious person, this month is also a reminder that LGBTQ people are beloved children of God. Pride Month reminds Catholics to treat LGBTQ people with the "respect, compassion and sensitivity" that the Catechism commands, the "**closeness, compassion and tenderness**" that Pope Francis has taught, and the love and mercy that Jesus showed to all people, especially those on the margins, during his public ministry.

It's especially important for churches to mark Pride Month since much of the rejection that LGBTQ people have faced has been motivated by Christianity—at least what many

people think Christianity teaches. An example: One of the most common reasons for homelessness among LGBTQ teens is that they have been kicked out of their families for ostensibly **religious reasons**.

Churches have also been places where LGBTQ people have felt insulted, rejected and unwelcome, a result of the words and deeds of not only some bishops and pastors, but Catholic lay leaders and the faithful. So, it's important for churches to mark Pride Month and remind our LGBTQ friends that they are welcome in what is, after all, their church, too.

We also have to remember that in many countries, being LGBTQ is a **life and death issue**. In several countries, you can be executed simply for being gay or engaging in same-sex relations. In these places, LGBTQ issues are life issues. In some 70 countries, you can be jailed for LGBTQ advocacy. And in many others, LGBTQ people are regularly harassed, assaulted or murdered. The church is called to stand with these persecuted people throughout the year, but especially during Pride Month.

James Martin, S.J., is the editor of Outreach and the editor at large of America Media.

McDonald, Matthew. "Catholic Schools Tiptoeing the Line on Gender Identity." *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (November 2, 2022)
https://www.ncregister.com/news/catholic-schools-tiptoeing-the-line-on-gender-identity?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=232248359&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_pW_Yq1cv0HH-oTP0Ee4LPOu17W57yvb2peI9G410YuS4rp4dADAbTr2NA0xUQwT2p7snfrp2YXFGaleRtnQ7-r6eYzQ&utm_content=232248359&utm_source=hs_email

McDonald puts forth one discernment criterion which he presumes is utterly self-evident *and* self-interpreting, but which in fact would be precisely the locus of the *quaestio disputata*, i.e., just what constitutes "sexual identity" and "how" do we know what an individual's actual sexual identity is?

The Church's teaching is clear: "Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity," the Catechism of the Catholic Church states (2333). Pope Francis, in his 2016 apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, said: "Beyond the understandable difficulties which individuals may experience, the young need to accept their own body as it was created ..." (285).

McDonald then presents an overview of various dioceses who have addressed this issue, praising those who have instituted strict policies.

Murray, Rev. Gerald. "Church Teaching On Trial." *First Things* (April 20, 2023)
<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2023/04/church-teaching-on-trial>

Fr. Murray, who is part of the "Papal Posse" on the EWTN Media Empire "The World Over" program hosted by Raymond Arroyo, sharply criticizes the North American Synodality Draft in its misguided efforts to being more inclusive as being anti-Catholic in several ways.

I must also note that the acronym “LGBTQ+” has no proper place in the Church’s discourse. Church teaching does not recognize homosexuals or bisexuals as a constitutive category of persons created by God that is distinct from the category of heterosexuals. Rather, some people misuse their God-given sexual and reproductive faculty by engaging in homosexual acts. And no one can change into a member of the opposite sex. That is impossible.

The synodal process is an exercise in “platforming” the grievances of selected “Catholic” interest groups that unapologetically reject the Church’s teaching. The claim that this out-in-the-open subversion is the work of the Holy Spirit speaking to the Church today is a gambit to insulate this revolution from criticism. What is happening is an attempted power grab by those who want to change the Catholic Church’s teaching according to their worldly views about power, sex, and anything else they decide is important. That this is happening is a scandal and a disaster. We must pray that God spare us from this calamity.

Pacholczyk, Rev. Tadeusz. “Rapid onset gender dysphoria.” *Boston Pilot* (September 1, 2023) http://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.php?utm_source=ConstantContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Echoes&Source=we&ID=195439

While not denying there is absolutely no legitimate gender dysphoria, this neuroscientist cites research that claims that most of those identifying with gender dysphoria do so in an effort to achieve victim hood. This is especially true, he argues, “girls with other mental conditions who are mistakenly self-identifying as trans because there is social capital built into marginalized identities.”

He goes on to hypothesize that many of these “young people appear to be escaping into a victim group into which they don’t actually fit, in part because within the broader culture, gender dysphoria has become one of the few victim identities one can choose.”

He also claims that claims “that gender transitioning reduces the risk of suicide remain highly controversial and unsupported by well-designed and properly-controlled scientific studies.”

He also charges (without evidence) that “various authority figures in the lives of teens, including teachers, therapists, and doctors, have started encouraging and affirming the idea of gender transitioning. These respected individuals may energetically advocate for a young person to transition, claiming they know best what the young person needs, and it is virtually always: ‘transition’.”

Paris, Francesca and Claire Cain Miller. “What It’s Like to Be a Queer Teenager in America Today.” *New York Times* (June 3, 2023) https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/06/03/upshot/up-lgbtq-teens.html?campaign_id=29&emc=edit_up_20230605&instance_id=94252&nl=the-upshot®i_id=87222459&segment_id=134722&te=1&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a

The article also includes many first-person anecdotal reports of GLBTQ youth.

For L.G.B.T.Q. teenagers, high school is a much more accepting place than even a decade ago. They change their pronouns, go to school dances with people of the same gender, and are more likely than any previous generation to openly identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or otherwise queer. ...

Yet there is a darker side. Even as they are increasingly welcomed by peers, [their mental health is significantly worse](#) than that of heterosexual young people. Many young transgender and gay people have been affected by a wave of [recent Republican-led legislation](#) questioning their identity or putting restrictions on their lives. They're being raised by generations whose approval of and comfort with L.G.B.T.Q. identities lag their own.

Their experiences highlight a “paradoxical finding,” as researchers [have described it](#): Even as social inclusion for young L.G.B.T.Q. people has grown, large health disparities between them and their non-L.G.B.T.Q. peers have not shrunk. ...

Researchers say many factors are probably contributing to L.G.B.T.Q. teenagers' contradictory experiences. To better understand, we took a national poll and talked to two dozen high school students in five states. The students were from states like Florida, Kansas and Iowa, which have passed various restrictions affecting L.G.B.T.Q. minors, and Oregon, which has no such restrictions and has passed protections.

One in five adults in Gen Z (those roughly 18 to 26) identify as L.G.B.T.Q., [according to Gallup polling](#), compared with 7 percent of adults in the United States overall. The majority of them identify as bisexual. About 2 percent of Gen Z adults are transgender, and about half of adults under 30 report knowing someone transgender. Often, young people don't identify in only one category, and think of them as overlapping. ...

Researchers say that as being gay or transgender became more accepted, more people came out of the closet than in previous generations, and earlier. Today, young people don't necessarily feel the need to formally come out at all.

As acceptance has grown, though, the mental health of queer youth has continued to suffer. Reported rates of mental health problems among all young people have been rising for the last decade, but non-heterosexual students face far higher rates than straight students.

About 70 percent of high school students who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual reported persistent sadness, [according to recent data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, twice the rate of their heterosexual peers. One in five attempted suicide in the past year, nearly four times the rate of straight young people. (The C.D.C. does not track the mental health of transgender youth, but other data shows that [roughly half](#) had [considered suicide](#) in the past year.) ...

Research shows that being in a minority group, especially if people in that group face stigma, causes stress that can [affect their health](#) — a phenomenon known as [minority](#)

[stress theory](#). Since adolescents feel a drive to [conform with their peers](#), being a minority during this period may be particularly challenging. Studies have shown that L.G.B.T.Q. youth who experience more stress about their minority identity are [more likely](#) to have [mental health challenges](#).

Young people are also affected by the culture at large, researchers say, as anti-trans [legislation](#) and what critics call “Don’t Say Gay” bills reverberate [across](#) the country. Among other bills, there has been [a wave of legislation](#) this year banning what doctors call gender-affirming care for trans minors, such as puberty blockers and hormones. Although research in the United States and Europe is continuing on the benefits and risks of medical transition treatments for young people, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association have urged states not to ban or limit this care.

Many teenagers, particularly in Republican-leaning states, said protesting these bans had become a big part of their lives. ...

[Parents](#) and [schools](#) play big roles and can do specific things to support L.G.B.T.Q. youth, [researchers say](#). Studies find that [family acceptance](#) is among the most important protective factors, something that teenagers also said in interviews.

Parsons, Susan E. *Ethics of Gender*. Boston and Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

Salzman, Todd A., and Lawler, Michael. “The Catholic Church must listen to transgender and intersex people.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 1, 2020)
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/catholic-church-must-listen-transgender-and-intersex-people>

Critiques the official Church teaching on transgender and intersexuality as being scientifically underinformed and methodological deficient in terms of moral theology. The authors use as a touchstone for their critique the Pastoral Letter of retiring St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson “Compassion and Challenge: Reflections on Gender Ideology” released earlier on June 1, 2020 (see <https://www.archstl.org/Portals/0/Pastoral%20letters/Compassion%20and%20Challenge%20-%20letter%20size.pdf>) and the February 2019 Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education document “Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education” (see http://www.educatio.va/content/dam/cec/Documenti/19_0997_INGLESE.pdf)

Instead, the authors argue, “[t]he biological reality of intersex people can give insight into the complex reality of transgender people and provide direction for the church's moral response to both groups. A quick scan of medical literature reveals that about two in every 1,000 live human births (0.2%) is a child who is intersex.

Now, 0.2% is a small frequency, but it is almost double the frequency of the birth of Down syndrome children, who deservedly get attention and respect in our society. Surely intersex children, lost and crying out in the social and Catholic wilderness, deserve the

same attention and respect as human beings created by and in the mysterious image of the mysterious God. Their intersex bodies are troubling to their parents, their society and their church for only one reason: They are judged to be biologically sexually ambiguous when compared to the dominant female-male binary. They would not be ambiguous and troubling, we suggest, if society and church were to listen to their claim that they constitute a minority third sex.”

. *Sexual and Gender Doctrinal Language: A Source of Pain and Trauma in the Catholic Church*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2025. ISBN: 978-08091-5744-0

From the publisher: Doctrinal language on sexual and gender ethical issues continues to cause pain and trauma among Catholic faithful. Relying on the sources of ethical knowledge (tradition, scripture, reason, and experience), Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler propose revisions to the anthropology, ecclesiology, and ethical methodology supporting those doctrines to move the Church forward and to realize the synodal ecclesiology and "new pastoral methods" of Pope Francis, as exemplified in his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*.

Schnabel, Landon, et al. “Gender, Sexuality, and Religion: A Critical Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 61/2 (2022): 271-292. First Published: 27 January 2022

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jssr.12781>

Author Supplied Abstract: This article sets forth a critical integrative review of the study of gender, sexuality, and religion. Treating religion as a cause, an effect, and an intermediary factor in relation to gender and sexuality, it draws on and synthesizes multiple theoretical approaches, including gender and queer lenses on religion, cultural analysis, and intersectionality. The article is structured around 10 big-picture questions about gender, sexuality, and religion and argues that gender and sexuality are a key symbolic boundary and cultural divide in religious and political life in the United States and around the world. It concludes with an agenda for future research.

Shine, Robert. “USCCB Secretary Claims Transgender Equality Is ‘Doing Great Damage to Society’.” *New Ways Ministry* (December 14, 2022)

Shine’s report makes extensive use of quotations found in John Gehring’s “Catholic conservative Napa Institute's profile grows in Washington, DC.” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 13, 2022)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-conservative-napa-institutes-profile-grows-washington-dc>

A top U.S. archbishop gave a speech in which he suggested the devil was behind the LGBTQ+ movement, claiming in particular that "the trans movement is doing great damage to society."

Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City made his comments while addressing a Napa Institute-sponsored "Catholic CEO men's group" in late November.

Coakley asserted "'We see the plague of relativism in nearly every aspect of life,' the archbishop said. 'In politics, we speak of alternative facts, in education this emphasis on equally valid perspectives, and sadly sometimes even in the church with its push to change her moral teaching, especially her sexual ethic. There is no starker proof that we live in a culture where experience and a desire eclipse the truth than the transgender movement.'"

In particular, he lamented the American Psychiatric Association's 1973 decision to delist homosexuality as a mental illness and instead make "sexual orientation into an individual's choice based solely on desire." The archbishop continued:

"'Gender is now determined simply by how one feels and how one identifies,' he continued. 'In order to avoid being labeled transphobic, these feelings must be accepted as the true indicators of gender and these feelings must be supported even to the point of inalterable gender affirmation surgeries. ... Nonbinary identities have mushroomed and their spread has gone mainstream. This transgender ideology, this transgender philosophy, is based on a false and defective and totally inadequate anthropology.'"

The archbishop seemingly defended conversion therapy, which has been debunked and labeled a harmful practice by the psychological community, calling opposition to it "well-intentioned madness." He criticized supporting transgender children and allowing trans athletes to participate in sports according to their gender. He claimed the church was threatened by non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people, and made the false claim that healthcare providers would be forced to provide gender-affirming surgeries. Coakley concluded:

"'In the face of all these dangers from the trans movement, we are called to love and accompany every person struggling with gender dysphoria, especially because they are typically in immense pain,' the archbishop said.

"But he ended with a stark observation. 'If the devil can confuse society about sex and gender, he obscures our understanding of God's plan for humanity at its very roots.'"

Archbishop Coakley's strident opposition to transgender people being able to live openly and safely is not surprising. In his previous USCCB roles, he joined fellow bishops in [opposing](#) the Equality Act and President Biden's [efforts](#) to implement LGBTQ+ non-discrimination protections. During the Trump administration, he [applauded](#) the president's rules allowing social service agencies and homeless shelters to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people.

Suited. HBO Documentary 2016. <https://www.hbo.com/documentaries/suited> Trailer at <https://www.hbo.com/video/documentaries/suited/videos/promo>

From producers Lena Dunham and Jenni Konner (*Girls*), *Suited* tells the story of Bindle & Keep, a Brooklyn tailoring company that looks beyond the gender binary, creating custom-made suits for gender non-conforming and transgender clients.

Clothier duo Rae Tuter and Daniel Friedman take a holistic approach to their work, considering each client's personal narrative, which becomes inextricable from the creation of the perfect suit. Among those who share their unique stories are a transgender man preparing for his wedding, a New York City cab driver looking to feel comfortable for a big birthday, a young law student struggling through job interviews, and a 12-year-old trans boy whose bravery is only rivaled by his nervousness about looking good for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah.

A modern, evolved look at gender through the conduit of clothing, this illuminating documentary elucidates the private and emotional experience that those who struggle with gender identity go through when it comes to fashion. With heart and optimism, *Suited* spotlights the intimate journey of coming into a new identity, accepting difference, and living bravely in one's own skin, underscoring the important message that one size truly doesn't fit all.

The Trevor Project. "2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health."
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/> (accessed June 5, 2023)

The full report is available at

https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/assets/static/trevor01_2022survey_final.pdf It details a much higher rate of suicide, suicidal ideation, and psychological distress among GLBTQ youth in comparison with the general youth population.

The summary of their findings and conclusions state:

that rates of suicidal thoughts have trended upward among LGBTQ young people over the last three years, making our life-saving work all the more important.

Capturing the experiences of nearly 34,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13 to 24 across the United States, with 45% of respondents being LGBTQ youth of color and 48% being transgender or nonbinary, our fourth annual national survey is one of the most diverse surveys of LGBTQ youth ever conducted.

These data provide critical insights into some of the unique suicide risk factors faced by LGBTQ youth, top barriers to mental health care, and the negative impacts of COVID-19 and relentless anti-transgender legislation. This research also highlights several ways in which we can all support the LGBTQ young people in our lives—and help prevent suicide.

It's essential to emphasize that we still do not have known counts or registries of the LGBTQ youth population—and comprehensive, intersectional data on LGBTQ youth mental health outcomes remain limited. So our annual national survey strives to fill in these gaps and amplify the experiences of young LGBTQ people, a marginalized group consistently found to be at significantly increased risk for suicide because of how they are mistreated and stigmatized in society.

Trujillo, Yunuen. *LGBTQ Catholics: A Guide to Inclusive Ministry*. Foreword by Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL. New York: Paulist Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-08091-5577-4

From the publisher: Yunuen Trujillo addresses the need for ministry for LGBTQ Catholics and the need for support ministry for parents of LGBTQ Catholics. The book gives a full-picture template to serve as a model that can be replicated in any parish community around the world. It is as well for LGBTQ people and their families, not only for those who feel marginalized, but also for the parishioners themselves who are called to live out the social doctrine of the Church.

Ulishney, Megan Loumagne. “Gender as Context in Science and Religion: 'Natural' Sexual Difference as a Case Study.” *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* (PTSc) 9/2 (2022) : 151-172. DOI: [10.1628/ptsc-2022-0014](https://doi.org/10.1628/ptsc-2022-0014) Published 24.11.2022 See https://www.mohrsiebeck.com/en/article/gender-as-context-in-science-and-religion-101628ptsc-2022-0014?no_cache=1&fbclid=IwAR1unb8lyl7e-lu7P5JBb9DLHSiU4pI_4ImoJ3nP4Bs1_xky4OwsAVbxcZ8

Supplied Abstract: Recent developments in science and religion highlight the important role played by context in shaping the development of questions, concepts, and practices in the sciences, in diverse religions, and in the study of the relationship between the sciences and religious or theological forms of thought. This essay argues that gender is an important contextual factor that impacts research in both the sciences, theology, and in the field of science and religion. It examines as a case study the example of gender bias in scientific and theological understandings of the 'nature' of sexual difference to argue that gender bias has influenced the development of both questions and conclusions about 'natural' sex differences in the contexts of both scientific and theological research, even, or especially, when those questions and conclusions are cast in neutral, 'objective' terms. It concludes with some reflections on the role of gender in shaping research trajectories in the field of science and religion. Developing greater awareness about the role played by gender as a contextual factor shaping scientific and theological research projects can help to motivate the inclusion of a greater diversity of voices in these areas of research.

Velour, Sasha. “I’m a drag queen. Here’s what my art really is.” *Washington Post* (July 28, 2022; reposted January 3, 2023) https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/07/28/sasha-velour-drag-not-dangerous-children/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_opinions&utm_campaign=wp_opinions

Our art has never really been about deception. Drag is about self-expression without shame, and free thinking about others — about showing respect and care for everyone and for all the ways we present ourselves. It’s at once illuminating and not particularly serious; in drag, we playfully reject our assumptions about how a man or a woman “should” act so we can find our own ways of being. And drag, certainly, is nothing dangerous.

The critics who cry otherwise do so because they don’t understand drag. They don’t want to. Right-wing politicians such as Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Arizona state Sen. Vince Leach aren’t trying to inform the public of any real threat when they condemn drag acts. Their inflammatory speech and scare

tactics have one goal only: recirculating deeply homophobic stereotypes about “grooming” to defend their campaign against queer and trans existence.

Whether the queer community’s opponents know this or not, they do know prejudice has to be taught, and taught early. Drafting laws to ban children from our performances is much less about the imagined sexual dangers of a drag show than the imagined dangers of failing to indoctrinate children with fear and shame around queerness from an early age.

Drag is, more than anything, an antidote to that fear and shame. A child who sees queens and kings onstage twirling in costume, acting absurd and authentic before all of society, is bound to develop empathy and tolerance. I think that’s healthy!

Queer people are real, even in the face of injustice and discrimination. We deserve to be treated equally, whether or not you like our genders, our art or our clothes. Just get to know us. Let your children get to know us; the next generation ought to be introduced to the world in as full and honest a way as they can be, so they can figure out exactly where they fit in it — and celebrate where others fit in, too.

Watt, Helen. “Gender Transition: The Moral Meaning of Bodily and Social Presentation.” *New Blackfriars* 101/1094 (July 2020): 465-477. (first published online April 18, 2019): <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.1246>

Abstract: Medical and/or social gender transition need not involve denial of one’s biological sex, but raises other taxing ethical issues. These range from sexual ethics issues narrowly understood to consideration of the claims of any spouse or children and indeed, of gender discordant younger people who may follow one’s example. As with intersex conditions, not all crossdressing or use of cross-sex hormones is excluded absolutely. Detransition, for example, could be rightly deferred for various reasons. However, as illustrated by the analogy of an infertile woman wanting to present as the pregnant mother of a child she plans to adopt, there is a significant social value in accurate bodily and other outward communication of one’s actual/predominant sex (and occupancy of key allied roles).

See the “Response” by David Albert Jones, “Gender Identity, Analogy and Virtue: A Response Newton and Watt, *New Blackfriars* 101/1094 (July, 2020) DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12548.

Weber, Lauren, Caitlin Gilbert and Taylor Lorenz “Documents show how conservative doctors influenced abortion, trans rights”. *Washington Post* (June 15, 2023) https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2023/06/15/abortion-transgender-christian-doctors/?utm_campaign=wp_post_most&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_most&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F3a4fafa%2F648b342c2e7a825a07a1324e%2F5d82fccd9bbc0f783cfa627d%2F8%2F72%2F648b342c2e7a825a07a1324e

A small group of conservative doctors has sought to shape the nation's most contentious policies on abortion and transgender rights by promoting views rejected by the medical establishment as scientific fact, according to documents reviewed by The Washington Post that describe the group's internal strategies.

The records show that after long struggling to attract members, the American College of Pediatricians gained outsized political influence in recent years, primarily by using conservative media as a megaphone in its quest to position the group as a reputable source of information.

The organization has successfully lobbied since 2021 for laws in more than a half-dozen states that ban gender-affirming care for transgender youths, with its representatives testifying before state legislatures against the guidelines recommended by mainstream medical groups, according to its records. It gained further national prominence this year as one of the plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit to limit access to mifepristone, a key abortion drug.

Despite efforts to invoke the credibility of the medical profession, the American College of Pediatricians is viewed with skepticism by the medical establishment. For years, the group has presented statistics and talking points to state legislators, public school officials and the American public as settled science while internal documents emphasize how religion and morality influence its positions. Meeting minutes from 2021 describe how the organization worked with religious groups to "affect the idea makers through the high courts, professional literature, and legislatures."

It promotes conversion therapy, a discredited practice intended to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBTQ people that most medical societies warn can result in harm. Pediatric experts deemed a June 2022 report crafted by the group that undergirds a new Florida policy banning transgender care for Medicaid recipients as "unscientific." Francis Collins, former longtime director of the National Institutes of Health, accused the group in 2010 of distorting his research to "make a point against homosexuality."

The American College of Pediatricians formed in 2002 after dozens of conservative doctors split from the nation's leading interest group of pediatricians, the 67,000-member American Academy of Pediatrics, over the academy's support for same-sex parenting. The academy had determined from its review of scientific literature that children with same-sex parents fare as well as those with heterosexual parents in emotional, cognitive, social and sexual functioning.

According to more recent research, suicide risk rises with therapy directed at changing sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people who experienced conversion therapy were almost twice as likely to think about suicide and to attempt suicide compared with peers who had not experienced conversion therapy, according to the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law.

Weiss, Rebecca Bratten. "The Catholic Church's gender ideology is complementarian and binary. That's not how nature works." *National Catholic Reporter* (April 24, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/catholic-churchs-gender-ideology-complementarian-and-binary-thats-not-how-nature>



But there is a more fundamental problem with the idea that we are obliged to defend the gender binary. And that is that it is not an accurate account of reality.

I was trained to believe that it was. In my college philosophy classes, I was taught that there can only be two sexes, that gender identity was based exclusively in biological sex, and that the male/female distinction was not only about physical characteristics but also about immutable essences of "masculine" and "feminine," rooted in the unchanging mind of God, and informing all of nature.

So I began reading about how maleness, femaleness, sex and reproduction occur across different species and kingdoms in the natural world, and what I found was that the "truth" I had felt obligated to defend was a simplistic fantasy. The categories of male and female, as they exist in nature, are not an either/or, nor [an absolute binary](#). Rather, they reside on a spectrum. Maleness and femaleness manifest in different ways depending on the species. It is difficult to pin down any set of conditions or characteristics we could point to as the sine qua non for identifying an organism as one or the other. Additionally, some species [can change sexes](#). Others [are hermaphrodites](#).

In the human species, male and female categories also exist on a spectrum. There is no singular cluster of necessary or sufficient conditions for male versus female identity. So sex organs can't be used as absolute determinants for gender identity. Chromosomes also won't work as determinants, because individuals can be chromosomally male or female while presenting characteristics typically associated with the opposite sex. Intersex people exist, and some researchers argue that intersex conditions [are more common](#) than once believed.

The gender binary I had long considered a way of categorizing all living beings was, I realized, more like a general taxonomical marker signaling a fluctuating set of characteristics on one side of a scale. As a kind of organizational shorthand, it is useful. But this does not mean that "male" and "female" are fixed and immutable metaphysical categories, or even fixed and immutable natural categories. What people refer to today as "gender ideology" is closer to accurately reflecting reality than the traditional binary view I grew up with.

The debate over gender is framed by traditionalist Christians as a struggle between "reality" and "ideology." But the church already has a preferred ideology of gender, which is complementarian, essentialist and committed to a rigid binary view of the entire

natural world. The real debate is not over whether gender ideology is bad but over which ideology about gender aligns better with reality.

The church has changed before. Magisterial teachings develop. Maybe it's time for church teaching to develop once again, to better reflect truth and offer pastoral care to those who do not fit neatly into the artificial gender categories on which our church leaders seem fixated. Our LGBTQ siblings are vulnerable to new threats of anti-Christian and anti-life violence. Catholics who claim to be defenders of the truth and living witnesses to the Gospel should not be compounding these threats. And church leaders, including Pope Francis, might do well to ask themselves whether their stance toward trans people is truly in line with the teachings of Jesus.

Rebecca Bratten Weiss is digital editor for U.S. Catholic magazine.

Winters, Michael Sean. "Different approaches in Europe and US highlight complexity of transgender care." *National Catholic Reporter* (August 18, 2023)
https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/different-approaches-europe-and-us-highlight-complexity-transgender-care?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=aef60a7174-E_MAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_08_17_07_36&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-aef60a7174-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Republican-controlled state legislatures have introduced at least [150 bills](#) this legislative season that seek to limit certain medical treatments for minors, ban trans athletes from participating in some sports and even bar drag shows. This last is especially strange because most drag shows I have been to do not feature transgender people but cross-dressers.

In response, advocacy groups like the Human Rights Campaign have [declared a "state of emergency"](#) for LGBTQ+ Americans. President Joe Biden, in his [proclamation for National Transgender Day of Visibility](#) denounced the GOP-led efforts and noted that "the Department of Justice is pushing back against extreme laws that seek to ban evidence-based gender-affirming health care."

What left-leaning Americans rarely mention is that gender-affirming care for adolescents is not only being banned in states with GOP-dominated legislatures like Florida or Alabama. In June, the [National Health Service of England banned the use of puberty-blocking drugs for children](#) except those involved in clinic trials.

The [report from the NHS's Independent Review](#) stated: "The draft interim clinical commissioning policy proposes that puberty suppressing [sic] hormones (GnRH analogues) are 'not routinely commissioned' as there is not enough evidence to support their safety or clinical effectiveness as a routinely available treatment and that they should only be accessed as part of research."

The NHS had previously [closed its gender identity clinic](#), the Tavistock Center, in 2022 and ordered an independent review of all NHS services to transgender young people.

In France, the [National Academy of Medicine stated](#), "a great medical caution must be taken in children and adolescents, given the vulnerability, particularly psychological, of this population and the many undesirable effects, and even serious complications, that some of the available therapies can cause."

In Norway, an independent government health agency has also recommended restricting gender-affirming care. [According to this March news report](#), the Norwegian Healthcare Investigation Board stated, "The knowledge base, especially research-based knowledge for gender-affirming treatment (hormonal and surgical), is deficient and the long-term effects are little known. This is particularly true for the teenage population where the stability of their gender incongruence is also not known."

It goes without saying that the medical establishments in these post-Christian countries are not responding to the demands of the religious right. The BBC is not Fox News. Yet health officials in these countries are raising questions about the liberal orthodoxy on the moral necessity of gender-affirming care found in our country.

My takeaway from reading about the different discussions happening in some European countries from those happening here in the U.S. is that there is a lot of scientific work to be done, and a lot of dialogue between scientists, clinicians, ethicists and with both those who identify as transgender in adulthood and those who questioned their gender identity in adolescence but no longer report gender incongruence. In layman's terms, it was an adolescent phase.

Morally, my reading leads me to conclude with two old-fashioned moral lessons, one for each side in the debate.

To my friends on the political and cultural right, I would remind them that if the science proves them to be correct about the need to limit or at least go slow regarding gender-affirming care, there are few things more morally repugnant than the right thing done for the wrong reasons. And, to my friends on the left, let us remember that we can, with the best of intentions, do something that proves objectively wrong, and we know what road is paved with good intentions.

To everyone, and especially to Catholic dioceses figuring out how to deal with this issue in schools or hospitals or other ministries, it is imperative to remember that when discussing adolescents, we are talking about vulnerable, changing and changeable, impressionable and determined children. If I have reached any certainty in this debate, it is that there is no place for cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all policies, that each child must be considered in his or her own integrity and individuality. Guidelines, yes. Predetermined policies, no. And let's all show some patience and understanding with each other.

Zuba, Christine. "I'm a transgender woman. Here's what I want the Catholic Church to know about my life." *America* (November 17, 2022)
<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/17/catholic-transgender-woman-view-24>

[4164](https://outreach.faith/2022/06/i-am-a-transgender-catholic-woman/) Also posted with various photos to *Outreach* (June 5, 2022)
<https://outreach.faith/2022/06/i-am-a-transgender-catholic-woman/>

After 29 years of heterosexual marriage and two children life-long Catholic Zuba finally accepted a life-long realization of being a woman herself in her core sexual identity.

She discussed this awakening transgender identity in confession and found herself treated with basic respect:

When I told our associate pastor I was transgender, the conversation immediately diverted to sex. “Excuse me, Father,” I remember saying, “this has nothing at all to do with sex; this has to do with who I am. You can throw me out if you want, but if you do, I’m coming right back. This is my church too.” Father said he was not planning to do that. After a little more discussion, he said, “Let’s together say a prayer to our Blessed Mother to help guide you on your journey.” I was crying as I left confession.

About a month later, I returned to confession again, this time to our monsignor, whose first words were, “God loves everyone.” I cried again. Monsignor did say, however, that while he understood what it meant for people to identify as gay, “the transgender subject is somewhat new.” He told me: “I’ll need you to help me learn.”

I’ve been blessed. While I had a very positive reaction from my priests, I know others who have experienced the complete opposite. They were told that they are sinners, evil or that they’re not Catholic. One of my best friends was even physically carried out of church during Mass after being refused Communion.

Today’s science recognizes that something can happen between the body and mind, causing a misalignment between the two. I don’t often quote science, though. I just know that “I am,” that God made me this way, and that God made me this way for a reason.

Pope Francis has spoken out for L.G.B.T. Catholics, saying that God “does not disown any of his children.” He is reported to have told Juan Carlos Cruz, a sexual abuse survivor and a gay Catholic man, that “God made you this way and loves you this way,” in reference to his identity. I pray that someday our church will take this to heart and that this message will reach trans Catholics, too.

Transgender persons are not an ideology. We are not a threat. All of us are a part of God’s great universe, made in the image and likeness of God, a God who is neither male nor female.

Political Aspects of Gender and/or Transgender Issues

More than One State

Winters, Michael Sean. “The Supreme Court and transgender rights: Did they get it right?”

National Catholic Reporter (June 20, 2025)

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/supreme-court-and-transgender-rights-did-t>

[hey-get-it-right](#) Also found at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zHybuAQfQDa4ZoDcq2USEZ5DJtxthBgs/view?usp=drive_link

Winters agrees with the SCOTUS majority opinion that the Tennessee law blocking drug treatment of minors meets the standards of “rational basis” of what can be prohibited (such as restricting tobacco and alcohol purchases by minors, etc.).

Cochrane, Emily. “Federal Appeals Court Dismisses Florida Case Over Gender Identity in Schools.” *New York Times* (March 13, 2025)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/13/us/politics/florida-school-gender-identity.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

A federal appeals court ruled this week against a Florida couple who had sued officials in their child’s school district for disregarding their wishes and excluding them from discussions about the child’s gender identity.

The ruling adds to a complicated legal landscape concerning minors and gender identity. While Republican lawmakers across the country have sought to restrict gender-transition care and the expression of gender identity, federal courts have remained divided over whether such laws violate equal protection.

The school officials named in the case “did not force the Littlejohns’ child to do anything at all,” Judge Rosenbaum of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals wrote. “And perhaps most importantly, defendants did not act with intent to injure. To the contrary, they sought to help the child.”

Wiggins, Christopher. “Pentagon says it will start kicking transgender people out of military this month [March 2025].” *Advocate* (March 13, 2025)

https://www.advocate.com/news/trans-military-ban-moves-ahead?utm_source=equalpride&utm_campaign=df0d8e475b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_03_13_11_38&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_11dd7c7578-df0d8e475b-387186965&mc_cid=df0d8e475b&mc_id=245a5aca81

One day after Department of Justice lawyers struggled to explain the need for a ban on **transgender** people’s service in the U.S. Armed Forces to a federal judge in Washington, D.C., the Trump administration’s aggressive efforts to purge **transgender service members from the military have taken** another step forward. The U.S. Department of the Navy has issued formal procedures for the removal of transgender personnel, **filing the directive in federal court** Thursday as part of an ongoing legal battle. The new guidance orders the Navy and Marine Corps to begin involuntary separations of service members with a history of gender dysphoria after March 28, two days after a previous March 26 deadline for voluntary separations—unless they obtain a so-called “waiver,” which, according to legal experts, is nothing more than an illusion.

The administration claims **the waiver provides a path for transgender troops** to remain in service, but critics and attorneys involved in the case say **the requirements are designed to**

be impossible to meet. For a waiver to even be considered, service members must have lived as their assigned sex at birth for 36 consecutive months, never attempted a gender transition, and be willing to adhere to all military standards associated with their sex assigned at birth. In short, the waiver is only available to those who are not—and have never been—transgender.

The Navy's directive follows President Donald Trump's executive orders—Executive Order 14168, “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government,” and Executive Order 14183, “Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness,” which reversed previous policies that allowed transgender individuals to serve openly. The new procedures not only eliminate accommodations for transgender service members but also revoke past exemptions and establish rigid guidelines for both voluntary and involuntary separation.

Acting Secretary of the Navy Terence G. Emmert's directive formally rescinds all prior policies allowing transgender personnel to serve in alignment with their gender identity. It states that the Department of the Navy will only recognize two sexes—male and female—and asserts that sex is “immutable.” Under these new rules, transgender service members who have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria or have undergone gender transition will face automatic administrative separation. According to the directive, those affected may request voluntary separation with an honorable discharge and certain benefits retained.

The new policy bars individuals with a history of gender dysphoria, hormone therapy, or gender-affirming surgery from enlisting or receiving commissions in the Navy or Marine Corps.

Service members identified for separation will be placed on administrative absence and designated non-deployable while awaiting final discharge. The document states that those who choose voluntary separation will be eligible for full pay and benefits during this period, while those forced out involuntarily may not qualify for voluntary separation incentives.

The procedures were disclosed in a court-mandated filing in *Talbott v. Trump*, where plaintiffs argue that the administration's policies violate Equal Protection and Due Process rights under the U.S. Constitution.

U.S. District Judge Ana C. Reyes, who is presiding over *Talbott v. Trump*, one of two legal challenges to the ban, has openly criticized the administration's justification for the policy. In a Wednesday hearing, Reyes questioned the government's failure to provide evidence that transgender service members negatively impact military readiness. She also addressed the impossibility of meeting the waiver's requirements, emphasizing concerns raised by legal experts who have called the process a deceptive attempt to avoid outright acknowledging a ban.

Reyes has indicated that she will rule on a preliminary injunction in the case, which would block the administration's implementation of the trans military ban, by March 19.

Picciotti-Beyer, Andrea. “‘Preferred Pronouns,’ ‘Misgendering’ and Religious Freedom.”

National Catholic Register of the EWTN Media Empire (October 19, 2023)

https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/preferred-pronouns-misgendering-and-religious-freedom?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=279045706&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8HBt5Z0g45jNdP2aL_3moHYT0MSBVvQ7JxF5AweHZ6uStw8Quq9uNWCKjOHRXqAat1KO8R3TkfVTD8rzbUizXVC7QIRw&utm_content=279045706&utm_source=hs_email



Diatribes against gender ideology and applauds hard-core episcopal responses, such as Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia’s “impressive [pastoral letter](#).” Focuses on possible legal battles.

Andrea Picciotti-Beyer is a legal analyst for EWTN News, and director of the Conscience Project.

Griffin, Leslie. “Why We Should Like Public Accommodations Laws: A Response to ‘303 Creative’.” *New Ways Ministry* (July 5, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/07/05/why-we-should-like-public-accommodations-laws-a-response-to-303-creative/>

I’d like to sell you a website. That is my business. But I don’t want to sell it to you because you’re gay, or lesbian, or transgender, or female, or Black, or Jewish, or Muslim, or Asian, or Atheist, or Hispanic, or old, or disabled—or Catholic. The public accommodations laws say I cannot make that choice. They say that the marketplace has to be open to all customers without discrimination. The anti-discrimination laws protect the ability of everyone to do business equally with one another. Otherwise, White businesses could still refuse Black customers, as they did in the past. These laws are a key part of our life of living together.

The majority of the U.S. Supreme Court just disagreed with that fundamental idea in the case, *303 Creative v. Elenis*. They ruled free speech is more important than the anti-discrimination laws. An opinion by Justice Neil Gorsuch said designing websites is expressive speech, and therefore the government cannot compel Lorie Smith, the web designer in the case, to provide websites to same-sex couples. The majority said it was okay for her to provide marriage sites for heterosexual couples, but refuse same-sex ones, even though Colorado law forbids discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA).

Some commentators think the opinion is a narrow, correct reading of the law. I disagree. I think everyone, including you, should join together in rejecting its reasoning. The public

accommodations laws protect everyone's ability to go to any business and buy their products. They give equality to everybody.

That is why Justice Sonia Sotomayor's dissent is so much better than Justice Gorsuch's majority opinion. She says the majority's opinion is "[p]rofoundly wrong." She is right. It is.

Sotomayor wrote, "Today, the Court shrinks." Here is her powerful language about what the Court has done:

"Today, the Court, for the first time in its history, grants a business open to the public a constitutional right to refuse to serve members of a protected class. Specifically, the Court holds that the First Amendment exempts a website-design company from a state law that prohibits the company from denying wedding websites to same-sex couples if the company chooses to sell those websites to the public. The Court also holds that the company has a right to post a notice that says, " 'no [wedding websites] will be sold if they will be used for gay marriages.'"

Re-read that first sentence. That is what this case is about. The Court found a way to say it is legal for businesses to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote an [amicus brief](#) supporting Lorie Smith's argument, while [lay Catholics](#) wrote a brief on the state of Colorado's side. New Ways Ministry's Executive Director, Francis DeBernardo, signed the lay brief. DeBernardo also wrote a post about how the case "[Greatly Wounds People of Faith and Entire Nation](#)" right after the opinion was released.

DeBernardo was right. The public accommodations laws are supposed to protect everyone, including Catholics, from discrimination. But this opinion opens the door, giving freedom to many people to discriminate.

If they can come for gay and lesbian people, they can come for you. That is why we all must unite to oppose invidious discrimination wherever it occurs. Free speech should not keep the state from promoting the anti-discrimination laws. Equality is what we are all about in this nation.

Professor Leslie Griffin is the William S. Boyd Professor of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Law. Professor Griffin, who also has a doctorate in Religious Studies and was on the faculty of the Theology Department at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, is a leading expert on the intersection of religion and law. She has filed several amicus curiae briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court on religious liberty cases.

White House. "FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Actions to Protect LGBTQI+ Communities." (June 8, 2023)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/08/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-new-actions-to-protect-lgbtqi-communities/>

Over a dozen states have enacted anti-LGBTQI+ laws that violate our most basic values and freedoms as Americans, and are cruel and callous to our kids, our neighbors, and those in our community. The Biden-Harris administration stands with the LGBTQI+ community and has their backs in the face of these attacks, and today, federal agencies are announcing new actions.

McMillan, Jeff and Kimberlee Kruesi. “Meet the influential new player on transgender health bills.” *Associated Press* (May 20, 2023)

<https://apnews.com/article/transgender-bills-lobbying-do-no-harm-94f56059d24608d724eb78fefcf4e09>

Do No Harm, a nonprofit that launched last year to oppose diversity initiatives in medicine, has evolved into a significant leader in statehouses seeking to ban gender-affirming care for transgender youths, producing model legislation that an Associated Press analysis found has been used in at least three states.

The nonprofit, not widely known outside conservative medical and political circles, describes itself on its website as a collection of doctors and others uniting to “protect healthcare from a radical, divisive, and discriminatory ideology.”

An AP analysis of statehouse bills to restrict gender-affirming care for youths found passages identical or nearly identical to Do No Harm’s model legislation in [Montana](#), [Arkansas](#) and [Iowa](#).

Its [model legislation](#) on gender-affirming care has been criticized for using technical medical terminology as political rhetoric to scare people.

“Every single line of this contains some sort of falsehood,” said Dr. Meredith McNamara, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Yale School of Medicine.

PBS News Hour. “Parents share why gender-affirming care is vital for their trans kids.” (March 7, 2023) <https://youtu.be/x5u4cBaZpdM> (9:52)

Across the country, at least 150 bills have been filed by Republican legislators targeting transgender Americans. Roughly 100 of those bills specifically restrict doctors and other providers from offering transition-related health care for minors. The PBS NewsHour spoke with concerned parents whose children are most impacted.

More from March 1, 2023 at

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/parents-concerned-as-new-state-laws-restrict-rights-of-transgender-children>

Migdon, Brooke and Madeline Simon. “It's not just Florida. 15 other 'Don't Say Gay'-style bills are cropping up nationwide.” *The Hill* (February 19, 2022)

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/594980-florida-isnt-the-only-state-with-a-dont-say-gay-bill-15>

Tennessee, Kansas, Indiana and Oklahoma are some of the states proposing bills to restrict how LGBTQ+ identity, issues and history are taught in schools.

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Yet Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill is one part of a nationwide trend. There are 15 similar bills moving through state legislatures that restrict how textbooks and curriculums teach LGBTQ+ topics, who can be hired and what teachers are allowed to say around gender identity and sexual orientation.

A House bill in Tennessee would ban textbook and instructional materials that “promote, normalize, support, or address lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) lifestyles” in K-12 schools. Another, in Kansas, seeks to amend the state’s obscenity law to make using classroom materials depicting “homosexuality” a Class B misdemeanor. Legislators in Indiana are working to bar educators from discussing in any context “sexual orientation,” “transgenderism” or “gender identity” without permission from parents.

While Florida is currently a poster state for anti-LGBTQ+ curriculum laws, others are proposing and moving faster on farther-reaching bills. Oklahoma legislators have put five measures before its Congress that regulate how schools from K-12 to higher education teach LGBTQ+ issues. Two bills, SB 1142 and SB 1654, would prohibit librarians and teachers from distributing materials on or outright discussing “any form of non-procreative sex,” gender identity, and “lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender issues.”

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Some worry that the passage of legislation like “Don’t Say Gay” will come at the expense of LGBTQ+ youth in particular, who are already at greater risk of mental health issues, self-harm and suicide.

A recent report from the LGBTQ+ suicide prevention and crisis intervention group The Trevor Project found that LGBTQ+ youth who learned about LGBTQ+ people or issues in school had 23 percent lower odds of reporting a suicide attempt in the last year.

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“We are seeing entire chapters of textbooks being erased,” they said. “Do you not talk in a civics class about Pete Buttigieg? Do you not talk in a history class about Harvey Milk or Marsha P. Johnson? These are fundamental moments, not just in LGBTQ history, but in American history, that are being written out of existence.”

Astor, Maggie. “G.O.P. State Lawmakers Push a Growing Wave of Anti-Transgender Bills.” *New York Times* (January 25, 2023)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/us/politics/transgender-laws-republicans.html?algo=editorial_importance_fy_email_news&block=4&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20230125&fallback=false&imp_id=475168065&instance_id=83665&nl=for-you&nid=8722459&pool=pool%2Fa2fc9efa-4a9f-46ae-8506-967a38fc2099&rank=5®i_id=8722459&req_id=876390797&segment_id=123511&surface=for-you-email-news&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_edimp_fye_news_dedupe

Four states could ban transition care into young adulthood. Lawmakers in several others want to restrict drag shows in ways that could affect transgender performers broadly. It’s part of a long-term plan.

The flood of legislation is part of a long-term campaign by national groups that see transgender rights as an issue on which they can harness voter anger — as with the campaigns against remote learning and critical race theory that reshaped many school boards and lifted Republicans in Virginia’s elections in 2021 — though the midterm elections provided little evidence of it.

The potential consequences for transgender people, for whom harassment and threats have become common and suicide rates are high, are profound. Many express a sense that the power of their government is being turned against them as they try to live their lives.

A bill in Mississippi — declaring that “separate is not inherently unequal,” an allusion to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 ruling in which the Supreme Court upheld segregation — would define sex as immutably set at birth, denying transgender identities under state law. A measure in West Virginia would define “any transvestite and/or transgender exposure, performances or display” as obscene, potentially outlawing transgender people’s presence around children.

Conservative activists have emphasized parental control and child protection, calling transition care harmful, an assertion rejected by the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups. Transgender people have higher rates of depression and suicide, and research shows that transition care — which can involve puberty blockers, hormones or surgery, though minors rarely receive surgery — can improve mental health.

Some activists and politicians also say exposing young people to transgender identities, whether through a book reading by a drag performer or a classroom discussion,

“sexualizes” them — an echo of anti-gay campaigns dating to the 1970s, which cast gay people as preying on children.

One in Nebraska, for instance, would apply to any show whose “main aspect” is “a performer which exhibits a gender identity that is different than the performer’s gender assigned at birth using clothing, makeup, or other physical markers; and the performer sings, lip syncs, dances, or otherwise performs before an audience for entertainment.”

In a recent poll conducted by Morning Consult for the Trevor Project, 86 percent of transgender and nonbinary youths said debates over state laws had hurt their mental health.

Ms. Oakley of the Human Rights Campaign said this was why she disliked the framing of anti-transgender legislation as a culture war.

“It’s not a war,” she said, “when there are powerful politicians on one side and there are terrified kids on the other.”

"Understanding Transgender Access Laws" *New York Times* (February 25, 2017):

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/us/transgender-bathroom-law.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share&_r=0 (accessed March 5, 2017)

Arkansas

Branigin, Anne. “Arkansas federal judge blocks first ban on gender-affirming care.” *Washington Post* (June 20, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/06/20/transgender-care-arkansas-court-ruling/?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere&location=alert

A federal judge has struck down a 2021 Arkansas law banning gender-affirming care for transgender youth, forbidding the enforcement of the nation’s first law blocking medical treatment for transitioning young people.

U.S. District Judge James Moody of the Eastern District of Arkansas ruled the law unconstitutional Tuesday, saying it violated the rights of doctors and discriminated against transgender people. Gender-affirming medical care includes such treatments as puberty blockers and hormone therapy. The law also prohibited doctors from referring trans youth to other providers for gender-affirming care.

Moody’s closely watched ruling marks the first time a federal court has decided the legality of such bans, which have been taken up by a growing number of state legislatures in recent years. As of June 20, at least 20 additional states had enacted restrictions or bans on gender-affirming care, according to data compiled by the ACLU. Florida’s effort to limit such care for trans youth has also severely restricted access to transition-related care for adults.

A few doctors have raised concerns about gender-affirming care, but leading medical associations, including the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Endocrine Society, have recommended that transgender youth be able to access this kind of health care.

Before 2020, not a single state had introduced legislation to ban gender-affirming care, according to the Movement Advancement Project, a nonpartisan think tank that tracks LGBTQ+ policy. When Arkansas passed its ban in 2021, it was considered the strictest anti-trans law in the country. Called the Save Adolescents From Experimentation (SAFE) Act, the ban was intended to stop physicians from providing “gender transition” treatments, including hormones, puberty blockers and surgeries, to those under 18. It was originally vetoed by then-Gov. Asa Hutchinson (R), who called it “vast government overreach.” A Republican supermajority in the state legislature then overrode his veto.

But these bans, as well as other restrictions on transition care, have gained steam since. Two states, Arizona and Alabama, passed similar bans last year. In the first six months of 2023, roughly 34 states have introduced more than 100 different gender-affirming care restrictions in their legislatures, according to the ACLU. In some states, such as Texas and Florida, state officials have also tried to bar access to gender-affirming care through executive action and state medical boards.

DeMillo, Andrew. “Court: Arkansas can’t ban treatment of transgender kids.” *Associated Press* (August 25, 2022)
<https://apnews.com/article/health-arkansas-gay-rights-asa-hutchinson-08d27112399e14ab2f7ed8c34d1bfd30>

A federal appeals court on Thursday said Arkansas can’t enforce its ban on transgender children receiving gender-affirming medical care.

A three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a judge’s ruling temporarily blocking the state from enforcing the 2021 law. A trial is scheduled for October before the same judge on whether to permanently block the law.

Arkansas was the first state to enact such a ban, which prohibits doctors from providing gender-confirming hormone treatment, puberty blockers or surgery to anyone under 18 years old, or from referring them to other providers for the treatment. There are no doctors who perform gender-affirming surgery on minors in the state.

“Because the minor’s sex at birth determines whether or not the minor can receive certain types of medical care under the law, Act 626 discriminates on the basis of sex,” the court’s ruling Thursday said.

The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the law on behalf of four transgender youth and their families, as well as two doctors who provide gender-confirming treatments.

“The Eighth Circuit was abundantly clear that the state’s ban on care does not advance any important governmental interest and the state’s defense of the law is lacking in legal or evidentiary support,” Chase Strangio, deputy director for Transgender Justice at the ACLU’s LGBTQ & HIV Project, said in a statement. “The state has no business categorically singling out this care for prohibition.”

A federal judge in May blocked a similar law in Alabama. A Tennessee ban that was enacted last year on transgender treatments for youth, which is limited to providing gender-confirming hormone treatment to prepubescent minors, remains in effect.

In Texas, child welfare officials have been blocked from investigating three families of transgender youth over gender-confirming care the minors have received. A state judge is considering whether to prevent additional investigations.

Ghorayshi, Azeen. “Report Reveals Sharp Rise in Transgender Young People in the U.S.” *New York Times* (June 10, 2022)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/10/science/transgender-teenagers-national-survey.html?searchResultPosition=1>

The number of young people who identify as transgender has nearly doubled in recent years, according to a new report that captures a stark generational shift and emerging societal embrace of a diversity of gender identities.

The analysis, relying on government health surveys conducted from 2017 to 2020, estimated that 1.4 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds and 1.3 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were transgender, compared with about 0.5 percent of all adults.

Experts said that young people increasingly have the language and social acceptance to explore their gender identities, whereas older adults may feel more constrained. But the numbers, which vary widely from state to state, also raise questions about the role of peer influence or the political climate of the community.

The surveys, created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, did not ask younger teenagers about nonbinary or other gender identities, which also have been rising in recent years. But nearly one-quarter of the adults in the surveys who said they were transgender identified as “gender nonconforming.”

Although the total estimated number of transgender people was small — around 1.6 million people 13 and up, or about 0.6 percent of the population — trans identification in recent years has become political dynamite, driven in part by the rise in minors seeking medical treatments. Republican legislators across the country have sought to prohibit such care by criminalizing doctors or investigating parents for abuse, which professional medical groups have condemned.

Social media has been a significant catalyst for teenagers questioning their gender identities today.

Fawcett, Eliza. “After Arkansas Trial, Judge Weighs Legality of Ban on Care for Transgender Youth.” *New York Times* (December 4, 2022)

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/04/us/arkansas-hormone-therapy-transgender.html?algo=editorial_importance_fy_email_news&block=4&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20221205&fallback=false&imp_id=822614087&instance_id=79317&nl=for-you&nid=87222459&pool=pool%2Fa2fc9efa-4a9f-46ae-8506-967a38fc2099&rank=3®i_id=87222459&req_id=566412888&segment_id=115037&surface=for-you-email-news&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_edimp_fye_news_dedupe



For Dylan Brandt, a transgender teenager in Arkansas, two years on testosterone has meant that “my outside finally matches the way I feel on the inside.”

But that sense of relief was jeopardized last year when Arkansas lawmakers passed the country’s first ban on physicians administering hormone therapy or puberty blockers to transgender people younger than 18. In its wake, Dylan, 17, a plaintiff in a legal challenge to the ban, was confronted with the prospect of moving out of the state to continue his hormone therapy.

“It would mean uprooting our entire lives, everything that we have here,” Dylan testified in a federal courtroom in Little Rock in October, at the start of a trial over the legality of the ban. “I have a job, my mom has a business, we have family, friends. We have a house, we have a community, we have a life here.”

The trial, the first in the country over a challenge to a state ban on what has become known as gender-affirming care, concluded on Thursday after four days of testimony in October and four more last week. The landmark case is set to be decided at a time when violence against transgender people is on the rise and Republican-led efforts to restrict transgender rights have gained momentum in state legislatures across the country. United States District Judge James M. Moody Jr., who last year temporarily blocked the ban from taking effect while the lawsuit played out — a decision affirmed by a federal appeals court this past summer — has not indicated when he will issue a ruling.

Iowa

Migdon, Brooke. "Iowa school district sued over transgender student policy." *The Hill Changing America* (August 3, 2022)
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/diversity-inclusion/3586960-iowa-school-district-sued-over-transgender-student-policy/>

A parental rights group is suing an Iowa school district over its adoption of a new policy designed to support transgender students, alleging the policy violates the constitutional rights of students and excludes parents from important conversations about their children's gender identity.

The group Parents Defending Education (PDE) on Tuesday filed a complaint in federal court against the Linn-Mar Community School District in eastern Iowa arguing that a policy adopted by school board members in April violates students' First and 14th Amendment rights.

Under the district policy in question, transgender students may use school facilities like restrooms or locker rooms consistent with their gender identity and should be identified by faculty and staff using their preferred names and pronouns.

Students may meet at any time with a school counselor or administrator to develop a "gender support plan," according to the policy. A meeting with school staff will be held within 10 school days of a student's request for support, and the student may choose whether or not they want their parents to be in attendance.

The complaint filed Tuesday claims the policy authorizes children "to make fundamentally important decisions about their gender identity without any parental involvement and to then hide these decisions from parents."

The suit also alleges that the policy violates the First Amendment rights of students and faculty by requiring them to use a transgender student's correct pronouns. An "intentional" or "persistent" refusal to do so constitutes a violation of district anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, as well Title IX, which prohibits sex-based discrimination.

"Nearly a century of Supreme Court precedent makes two things clear: parents have a constitutional liberty interest in the care, custody, and control of their children, and students do not abandon their First Amendment rights at the schoolhouse gate," the complaint states, accusing the school district of "flouting both of these constitutional guarantees" by adopting the policy.

Florida

Beaty, Thalia ,Brendan Farrington and Hannah Schoenbaum. "Transgender adults in Florida 'blindsided' that new law also limits their access to health care." *Associated Press* (June 4, 2023)

<https://apnews.com/article/florida-transgender-health-care-adults-e7ae55eec634923e6593a4c0685969b2>

Debate surrounding Florida's new restrictions on gender-affirming care focused largely on transgender children. But a new law that Republican presidential candidate and Gov. Ron DeSantis [signed last month](#) also made it difficult – even impossible – for many transgender adults to get treatment.

The new law that bans gender-affirming care for minors also mandates that adult patients seeking trans health care sign an informed consent form. It also requires a physician to oversee any health care related to transitioning, and for people to see that doctor in person. Those rules have proven particularly onerous because many people received care from nurse practitioners and used telehealth. The law also made it a crime to violate the new requirements.

Another new law that allows doctors and pharmacists to refuse to treat transgender people further limits their options.

Migdon, Brooke and Madeline Simon. "It's not just Florida. 15 other 'Don't Say Gay'-style bills are cropping up nationwide." *The Hill* (February 19, 2022)
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/594980-florida-isnt-the-only-state-with-a-dont-say-gay-bill-15>

Tennessee, Kansas, Indiana and Oklahoma are some of the states proposing bills to restrict how LGBTQ+ identity, issues and history are taught in schools.

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Yet Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill is one part of a nationwide trend. There are 15 similar bills moving through state legislatures that restrict how textbooks and curriculums teach LGBTQ+ topics, who can be hired and what teachers are allowed to say around gender identity and sexual orientation.

A House bill in Tennessee would ban textbook and instructional materials that "promote, normalize, support, or address lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) lifestyles" in K-12 schools. Another, in Kansas, seeks to amend the state's obscenity law to make using classroom materials depicting "homosexuality" a Class B misdemeanor. Legislators in Indiana are working to bar educators from discussing in any context "sexual orientation," "transgenderism" or "gender identity" without permission from parents.

While Florida is currently a poster state for anti-LGBTQ+ curriculum laws, others are proposing and moving faster on farther-reaching bills. Oklahoma legislators have put five measures before its Congress that regulate how schools from K-12 to higher education teach LGBTQ+ issues. Two bills, SB 1142 and SB 1654, would prohibit librarians and teachers from distributing materials on or outright discussing "any form of non-procreative sex," gender identity, and "lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender issues."

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“We are seeing entire chapters of textbooks being erased,” they said. “Do you not talk in a civics class about Pete Buttigieg? Do you not talk in a history class about Harvey Milk or Marsha P. Johnson? These are fundamental moments, not just in LGBTQ history, but in American history, that are being written out of existence.”

Kansas

Migdon, Brooke and Madeline Simon. “It’s not just Florida. 15 other ‘Don’t Say Gay’-style bills are cropping up nationwide.” *The Hill* (February 19, 2022)
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/594980-florida-isnt-the-only-state-with-a-dont-say-gay-bill-15>

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Rodriguez, Matthew. “Kansas Republicans Want to Legally Ban Trans Women from Female-Designated Public Spaces.” *Them* (February 13, 2023)

https://www.them.us/story/kansas-ban-trans-women-female-public-spaces?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=them&utm_mailing=THEM_Weekly_021523&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=6102ac88139b9360dfefdbec&cndid=65847929&hasha=1c1a95393880dcafe911d21ef9fe495&hashb=29b9fc9330a7b07a6b1882c50d143300a541d479&hashc=cd7e7d43adb5c100ff846936eb83c2422b04f7eb3be9b63ff8e6450def52a262&src=bounceX&utm_term=THEM_Daily

Kansas Republicans recently introduced three separate bills, including a ban on gender-affirming care for minors, a ban on trans athletes in girls’ sports, and the ban that would prevent trans women from entering spaces designated for women in publicly-funded areas, according to the *Kansas City Star*.

“Trans women are not women,” Kansas state senator Beverly Gossage, a Republican who chairs the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee and who will preside over discussions of the bills, told the *Star*. “Trans women can think they’re a woman and that’s fine,” while adding, “They should not be allowed into women’s spaces.”

Alongside this ban on trans women in female-designated spaces is a proposed ban on gender-affirming care for people under 21 and a bill blocking trans girls from playing in sports leagues dedicated to girls.

Much anti-trans legislation is actually copy-and-paste bills known as “model legislation” that are only marginally changed to apply to whatever state a lawmaker files it in. As the *Star* points out, this female-designated spaces bill is a copy of a proposal written by the right-wing group Independent Women’s Voice.

Heather Meyer, a Democratic state legislator with a trans son, said the proposed legislation would “erase and endanger” trans children. “There is a clear concerted effort by the GOP to continue their war against our country’s most vulnerable children,” Meyer told the *Star* in a text message. “None of these bills will protect our children from harm.”

These latest Kansas bill join a wave of anti-trans legislation that has baffled, overwhelmed and sometimes debilitated trans people, especially trans youth and their advocates. Before 40 days had past in this year, 300 bills attacking LGBTQ+ people, especially gender-affirming care and drag, were filed in state legislatures.

Kentucky

Wan, William. “Kentucky lawmakers pass major anti-trans law, overriding governor’s veto.” *Washington Post* (March 29, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/29/kentucky-anti-transgender-law-override-vote/?utm_campaign=wp_the7&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_the7&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F3990271%2F64256caaf19a510b042be35e%2F5d82fccd9bbc0f783cfa627d%2F15%2F58

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/29/us/kentucky-anti-transgender-bill.html>

Kentucky lawmakers passed a sweeping bill Wednesday that restricts how doctors and schools treat transgender youths, overriding the governor's veto and forceful objections by state medical associations, education officials and parents with trans children.

The law — which sparked protests inside and outside the Capitol and takes effect this summer — bans access to gender-affirming health care for trans children, restricts which bathrooms and lockers they use, prohibits discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, and allows teachers to use students' birth names and pronouns against their wishes.

For another report on this veto override see

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/29/us/kentucky-anti-transgender-bill.html>

Wan, William. "She lost her trans son to suicide. Can a Kentucky lawmaker make her colleagues care?" *Washington Post* (March 26, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/25/transgender-suicide-karen-berg-henry-brousseau-kentucky/?utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere_trending_now&utm_medium=email&utm_source=alert&location=alert Also found at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oyYJMDZB9JpTnIJd8CNvwFfFne0lzHXy/view?usp=share_link

"If they're going to pass these bills," she said, "I want them to see me and my dead child and know that they are killing other Henrys out there."

As a doctor, Karen had pored over research about transgender teens. She'd read about the terrifying rates of anxiety, depression and PTSD because of the hostility they encountered. She knew that almost half of trans teens experienced suicidal thoughts, that more than a third try to kill themselves.

With Henry's help, Karen won. In 2020, she entered the Kentucky legislature as its first Jewish female physician — and the only state senator with a transgender son.

State legislatures were being inundated with anti-LGBTQ bills — 315 in 2022 alone, according to the Human Rights Campaign. Transgender teens, in particular, had become a favorite conservative target. In Texas, state leaders ordered child protective services to [investigate parents](#) of transgender kids. Florida [passed legislation](#) restricting what elementary school teachers could say about gender identity and sexual orientation. Arkansas made it illegal for doctors to [provide gender-affirming](#) care to kids.

Gay teachers were being portrayed as pedophiles trying to groom kids. Schools acknowledging the existence of trans people were accused of encouraging kids to have sex-reassignment surgery.

Henry spent weeks knocking down a [bizarre false claim](#) that schools were installing litter boxes for students to pee in because they wanted to be identified as cats.

In spring of 2022, he went to the hospital after his body began convulsing. The doctors ran neurological tests and told him he was experiencing psychogenic seizures — convulsions that looked like epilepsy but were caused by distress and trauma.

In December, he told his mom about the mounting number of anti-trans bills he was fighting at work. He was dreading the approaching legislative season.

“He could see how many more bills would be coming this year,” she said. “He said, ‘Mom, I’m tired and scared.’”

On Dec. 15, Henry went out with his kickball friends for a night of karaoke. Like everyone else, Henry had a lot to drink, so he went to Creason’s apartment to sober up.

There, Henry told his friend that he’d recently been struggling with suicidal thoughts again.

Creason persuaded Henry to check himself into the hospital and called an Uber to take him. A few hours later, at 5:30 a.m., Henry sent a text: “You’re going to hate me, but I’m going home. Sorry.”

Concerned, Creason wrote back, “Hit me up tomorrow.”

“I won’t be able to...I’m about to do something really stupid,” Henry replied. Then came a photo of empty pill bottles.

Creason called 911 and rushed over to Henry’s apartment. But by the time he and the police got inside, Henry was dead. ...

When one lawmaker asked why trans children were suddenly popping up everywhere, Karen compared it to left-handed kids.

“You look at the data in the 1950s and ’60s when we stopped forcing kids to be right-handed. The number of left-handed children exploded exponentially, then plateaued,” she said. “They were always there but never were allowed to exist.”

In 2015, Wise had been one of the Republicans praising Henry’s testimony. Now, as a GOP candidate for lieutenant governor, he wanted to allow teachers to call trans teens by their birth names and pronouns even if they were asked not to. His measure would become known as the pronoun bill.

Wise, who declined requests for an interview, attacked state education materials suggesting teachers use trans students’ declared pronouns.

“This is absolute nonsense that has no place within our educational system,” he said, deriding “the new pronouns that seem to land in Webster’s Dictionary daily” and “woke ideologies” emanating from Washington.

Wise invoked the “litter box” myth that Henry had spent weeks debunking. He warned of teachers being fired for not calling supposed “furry” students by their “pet names.”

From three seats away, Karen sat in shock as the chamber erupted in applause.

She rose to give a short response: “I’m going to make an open plea to the members of this body that we avoid politicizing issues that are literally killing our children, that are literally putting them into the grave.”

No one clapped. ...

“I’m no longer speaking for my child,” she said when it was her turn to talk. “You know my child is dead. I am speaking for every mother and father who has held my hand with tears running down their face, saying, ‘What do we do?’”

She pointed out the ramps schools build for children in wheelchairs and the peanut bans for children allergic to nuts. So why not call trans kids by their rightful pronouns, she demanded, “an accommodation that costs you nothing? Zero!”

“Your vote ‘yes’ on this bill means one of two things. Either you believe that trans children do not exist or you believe that trans children do not deserve to exist.”

The chamber was quiet as the clerk called out the senators’ names to vote. Some almost whispered their response, but Karen could see their names turning green as yes votes were recorded on a screen above.

Then it was over, 29 to 6. Not a single Republican vote against the pronoun bill.

In the coming days, senators would add more provisions banning gender-affirming care and prohibiting schools from discussing sexual orientation or gender identity — measures that would prompt a veto by the governor and the prospect of a vote to override him.



William Wan is an enterprise reporter focused on narrative and high-impact stories at The Washington Post. He often writes about mental health and people on society's margin. He previously served as a national health reporter during the pandemic, China correspondent, roving U.S. correspondent, national security reporter and religion reporter. Twitter @thewanreport

Maryland

Zodrow, Andru. “Transgender Patient Denied Care by Catholic Hospital Wins Discrimination Lawsuit.” *New Ways Ministry* (January 16, 2023)
<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/01/16/transgender-patient-denied-care-by-catholic-hospital-wins-discrimination-lawsuit/>

A federal court has ruled that a Catholic hospital violated the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by denying a transgender man gender-affirming healthcare.

The ruling in the District Court of Maryland found that St. Joseph Medical Center, which merged with the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) in 2012 and is located

in suburban Baltimore, could not legally deny a transgender individual care simply because of their gender identity.

Hammons was scheduled for a hysterectomy in January of 2020, which is a medically-necessary procedure for some people experiencing gender dysphoria. According to NBC News, he was abruptly told that the hospital would be canceling the procedure, even though the hospital regularly performs hysterectomies.

According to the *Washington Post*, Gail Cunningham, a senior vice president at the hospital, “ordered the surgery canceled, telling the surgeon that Hammons’ gender dysphoria did not qualify as a sufficient medical reason to authorize the procedure.”

The new ruling is a win for nondiscrimination advocates who argue that Catholic hospitals which utilize public funding (St. Joseph’s received upwards of \$40 million in state funding in 2018 according to NBC) cannot violate the ACA’s civil rights protections.

“Judge Deborah K. Chasanow ruled that UMMS and St. Joseph Medical Center had violated Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act – which prohibits discrimination in health care on the basis of sex – in denying Hammons [the patient] a hysterectomy simply because he is transgender. . .

“‘The undisputed facts establish that the decision to cancel Mr. Hammons’ hysterectomy pursuant to a policy that prohibits gender-affirming care was discrimination on the basis of his sex,’ Chasanow wrote.

“UMMS had tried to remove itself as a defendant in Hammons’ case, arguing that only the funding recipient for the ‘specific discriminatory program’ – which in this case is St. Joseph Medical Center – is liable under Section 1557.

“Chasanow on Friday denied that claim, arguing that UMMS is ‘undoubtedly’ engaged in the business of providing health care through its network of hospitals.”

Michigan

Simon, Ariell. “Michigan’s Bishops Fail to Undermine State’s New LGBTQ+ Non-Discrimination Law.” *New Ways Ministry* (March 27, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/03/27/michigans-bishops-fail-to-undermine-states-new-lgbtq-non-discrimination-law/>

The Michigan Catholic Conference’s efforts to water down new LGBTQ+ protections in the state were ultimately unsuccessful as new non-discrimination legislation was signed into law this month.

The new law, passed by legislators and signed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, expands Michigan’s Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, first passed in 1977, to include discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation when it comes to many areas of life, including employment, public accommodations, and housing. The law already “prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations and

services based on religion, race, skin color, national origin, age, height, weight, familial status, and marital status,” according to *Michigan Advance*.

The Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC), the public policy arm of the state’s seven dioceses, proposed the addition of language to the law that would allow for exceptions on the basis of religious belief. The proposed language would have effectively exempted both religious organizations and individuals from adhering to the act. Michigan Advance reported that “based on the language the MCC is proposing, religious groups could discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as sex in general, and not face legal consequences.”

After the Senate passed the bill on March 10th, MCC lamented the decision as a defeat for religious liberty. Tom Hickson, MCC’s vice president for public policy, claimed:

“By failing to strike a balance and voting against amendments to ensure religious organizations are not targeted for their long-standing religious beliefs about marriage and gender differences, the Senate has signed off on creating a class of citizens against which discrimination and targeted litigation will be likely.”

Civil rights advocates, however, interpreted the vote as a triumph for non-discrimination. Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan’s LGBTQ+ Project, said that the MCC’s proposed amendments “would gut civil rights protections... What they’re proposing is ... an incredibly broad-based license to discriminate in the name of religion.”

While the fight over this particular piece of legislation is concluded, MCC has signaled its intention to continue pushing against LGBTQ+ rights. Its biennial “Blueprint for the Common Good,” released in late February, identifies “Protecting religious liberty and the freedom to serve” as a key legislative priority.

Opposition to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act’s expansion is just the most recent battle in MCC’s longstanding campaign to oppose legislation protecting LGBTQ+ people. Michigan Advance reports that in 2021, MCC “spent more than \$200,000 funding a group opposing a ballot measure to expand the non-discrimination act to LGBTQ+ people.”

Mississippi

Astor, Maggie. “G.O.P. State Lawmakers Push a Growing Wave of Anti-Transgender Bills.” *New York Times* (January 25, 2023)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/us/politics/transgender-laws-republicans.html?algo=editorial_importance_fy_email_news&block=4&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20230125&fallback=false&imp_id=475168065&instance_id=83665&nl=for-you&nid=8722459&pool=pool%2Fa2fc9efa-4a9f-46ae-8506-967a38fc2099&rank=5®i_id=8722459&req_id=876390797&segment_id=123511&surface=for-you-email-news&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_edimp_fye_news_dedupe

Four states could ban transition care into young adulthood. Lawmakers in several others want to restrict drag shows in ways that could affect transgender performers broadly. It's part of a long-term plan.

The flood of legislation is part of a long-term campaign by national groups that see transgender rights as an issue on which they can harness voter anger — as with the campaigns against remote learning and critical race theory that reshaped many school boards and lifted Republicans in Virginia's elections in 2021 — though the midterm elections provided little evidence of it.

The potential consequences for transgender people, for whom harassment and threats have become common and suicide rates are high, are profound. Many express a sense that the power of their government is being turned against them as they try to live their lives.

A bill in Mississippi — declaring that “separate is not inherently unequal,” an allusion to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 ruling in which the Supreme Court upheld segregation — would define sex as immutably set at birth, denying transgender identities under state law. A measure in West Virginia would define “any transvestite and/or transgender exposure, performances or display” as obscene, potentially outlawing transgender people's presence around children.

Conservative activists have emphasized parental control and child protection, calling transition care harmful, an assertion rejected by the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups. Transgender people have higher rates of depression and suicide, and research shows that transition care — which can involve puberty blockers, hormones or surgery, though minors rarely receive surgery — can improve mental health.

Some activists and politicians also say exposing young people to transgender identities, whether through a book reading by a drag performer or a classroom discussion, “sexualizes” them — an echo of anti-gay campaigns dating to the 1970s, which cast gay people as preying on children.

One in Nebraska, for instance, would apply to any show whose “main aspect” is “a performer which exhibits a gender identity that is different than the performer's gender assigned at birth using clothing, makeup, or other physical markers; and the performer sings, lip syncs, dances, or otherwise performs before an audience for entertainment.”

In a recent poll conducted by Morning Consult for the Trevor Project, 86 percent of transgender and nonbinary youths said debates over state laws had hurt their mental health.

Ms. Oakley of the Human Rights Campaign said this was why she disliked the framing of anti-transgender legislation as a culture war.

“It's not a war,” she said, “when there are powerful politicians on one side and there are terrified kids on the other.”

Nebraska

Hennessy-Fiske, Molly. “Nebraska passes 12-week abortion, gender-affirming care for minors ban.” *Washington Post* (May 19, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/05/19/nebraska-abortion-transgender-bill-lb574/?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere&location=alert

Conservatives in the Nebraska legislature won just enough votes Friday to pass a combined ban on abortion at 12 weeks and gender-affirming treatment for minors, amid continuing protests at the state capitol.

The bill was a gamble that could have seen both issues shelved for the year, had it failed to win the 33 votes needed to end debate. Instead, conservatives’ novel legislation, billed as a compromise, passed by a vote of 33 to 15, swaying holdout Republican state Sen. Merv Riepe, who voted for it after blocking a proposed six-week abortion ban last month.

The abortion ban will take effect immediately; the transgender care restrictions will begin as of Oct. 1.

The 12-week abortion ban includes exceptions for rape, incest and to save the life of the mother, but not for fatal fetal anomalies. It does not protect doctors who perform abortions from criminal prosecution.

The transgender measure bans gender reassignment surgery for those under age 19, Nebraska’s age of majority. It gives the state’s chief medical officer — an ear, nose and throat doctor appointed by the Republican governor — authority over the use of gender-affirming treatments for transgender minors as of October.

The erosion of transgender rights has been particularly alarming in Nebraska, the bill’s opponents said. It was here that Brandon Teena, a transgender man, was raped and killed in 1993, a murder that spawned the film “Boys Don’t Cry” and lobbying for LGBTQ hate crimes laws nationwide.

Hertzler-McCain, Aleja. “Catholic lawmaker filibusters in Nebraska Legislature to block bill targeting trans youth.” *National Catholic Reporter* (April 26, 2023)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/catholic-lawmaker-filibusters-nebraska-legislature-block-bill-targeting-trans-youth>

As bills targeting trans people sweep through state legislatures around the country, a Nebraska state senator's nearly two-month-long filibuster of a ban on gender-affirming care for trans youth has drawn national attention. But most people don't know she's Catholic.

Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh attended Catholic schools from elementary school through undergraduate college and served as development director for the American province of the Servants of Mary from 2005-2008.

[Multiple studies have shown](#) that access to gender-affirming care is associated with positive mental health outcomes for transgender youth, including a decrease in [suicidality](#). Trans youth have a higher [suicide risk](#) than cisgender youth.

Additionally, a [study](#) in *Pediatrics*, an official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, shows that going through puberty without care is associated with depressive disorders and anxiety disorders.

Astor, Maggie. “G.O.P. State Lawmakers Push a Growing Wave of Anti-Transgender Bills.” *New York Times* (January 25, 2023)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/us/politics/transgender-laws-republicans.html?algo=editorial_importance_fy_email_news&block=4&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20230125&fallback=false&imp_id=475168065&instance_id=83665&nl=for-you&nid=8722459&pool=pool%2Fa2fc9efa-4a9f-46ae-8506-967a38fc2099&rank=5®i_id=8722459&req_id=876390797&segment_id=123511&surface=for-you-email-news&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_edimp_fye_news_dedupe

Four states could ban transition care into young adulthood. Lawmakers in several others want to restrict drag shows in ways that could affect transgender performers broadly. It’s part of a long-term plan.

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“It’s not a war,” she said, “when there are powerful politicians on one side and there are terrified kids on the other.”

New Hampshire

Simon, Ariell Watson. “Six Sisters of Mercy in New Hampshire Join Interfaith Letter to Defeat Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill.” *New Ways Ministry* (May 29, 2023)

Six Sisters of Mercy have joined interfaith leaders in an effort to defeat anti-LGBTQ legislation in New Hampshire. The sisters signed an [open letter](#), published by the New Hampshire Council of Churches, asserting that “LGBTQ+ people, especially youth, are created in the image of God. Their civil rights are sacred and must be protected.”

The letter criticized New Hampshire Senate Bill 272 for “target[ing] our transgender youth for increased monitoring and surveillance at school.” The bill would require educators to inform parents, when asked, about their children’s involvement in school clubs and their child’s gender identity. The legislature was proposed as a “parental bill of rights.”

Ninety faith leaders signed the open letter addressed to the state’s legislators. “We agree with the authors of this legislation that the relationship between parents, caregivers, and teachers works best with strong, open communication,” they said, but contended that, “Such communication is grounded in our students having access to appropriate confidentiality with their teachers as trusted adults.”

The letter cites evidence from the [Trevor Project](#), a suicide prevention organization, indicating that “LGBTQ+ youth with one safe adult are 40% less likely to die by suicide.” This reality makes it morally imperative to safeguard student-teacher confidentiality. The letter argues that making a law compromising that trust “based on one, narrowly defined set of religious beliefs” would be “death dealing.” It continues, “To quote our colleague, The Hon. Mo Baxley, if legislation puts even one child in NH at higher risk of suicide, then we must ITL [vote against it in committee]. It is the moral, and ethical choice.”

The group argued that the Bible instructs people of faith to welcome and care for those who are marginalized—“those we might deem ‘other.’” In the faith leaders’ words, “We are not to cause them harm, or to make their lives harder, but instead to show compassion, to seek understanding, and to craft systems that care for their well-being.”

Senate Bill 272 has been postponed indefinitely by a narrow vote of 195-190, according to a [local news source](#).

North Dakota

Riedel, Samantha. “A North Dakota Bill Would Fine State Employees for Respecting Trans Peoples’ Pronouns.” *Them* (January 20, 2023)

<https://www.them.us/story/north-dakota-pronouns-bill>

A North Dakota lawmaker (pictured below) wants to ban publicly-funded transgender pronouns.



North Dakota Senate Bill 2199, introduced by Republican David Clemens last week, proposes that gender and sex are the same thing, and that any words used to refer to, well, anyone should be “used in the context of that person's sex as determined at birth.” When there is confusion, the bill says, “determination is established by the individual's deoxyribonucleic acid,” or DNA. Any entity that receives state funding while using pronouns or any type of gendered language for someone that doesn’t match their sex at birth, especially if they do so in print, could be fined up to \$1500.

According to the Bismarck Tribune, Clemens was confronted after he left the room by Christina Feldmann, the mother of a trans girl who died by suicide in 2021. Feldmann reportedly tried to tell Clemens that proper pronouns were “the simplest way to validate”

trans people like her daughter, but Clemens repeatedly misgendered her child and asked whether Feldmann had tried conversion therapy.

Another version (with the same basic information) by Rodric Hurdle-Bradford is found under the title of “North Dakota Republican floats fining state-funded groups \$1,500 if they use 'wrong' pronouns.” *Raw Story* (January 18, 2023)

<https://www.rawstory.com/anti-transgender-bill/>

Oklahoma

Migdon, Brooke and Madeline Simon. “It's not just Florida. 15 other 'Don't Say Gay'-style bills are cropping up nationwide.” *The Hill* (February 19, 2022)

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/594980-florida-isnt-the-only-state-with-a-dont-say-gay-bill-15>

Tennessee, Kansas, Indiana and Oklahoma are some of the states proposing bills to restrict how LGBTQ+ identity, issues and history are taught in schools.

Since Florida’s House committee passed the Parental Rights in Education bill – known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill – in January, a national spotlight has turned on the state as it proposes banning school instruction on LGBTQ+ people and issues.

Yet Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill is one part of a nationwide trend. There are 15 similar bills moving through state legislatures that restrict how textbooks and curriculums teach LGBTQ+ topics, who can be hired and what teachers are allowed to say around gender identity and sexual orientation.

A House bill in Tennessee would ban textbook and instructional materials that “promote, normalize, support, or address lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) lifestyles” in K-12 schools. Another, in Kansas, seeks to amend the state’s obscenity law to make using classroom materials depicting “homosexuality” a Class B misdemeanor. Legislators in Indiana are working to bar educators from discussing in any context “sexual orientation,” “transgenderism” or “gender identity” without permission from parents.

While Florida is currently a poster state for anti-LGBTQ+ curriculum laws, others are proposing and moving faster on farther-reaching bills. Oklahoma legislators have put five measures before its Congress that regulate how schools from K-12 to higher education teach LGBTQ+ issues. Two bills, SB 1142 and SB 1654, would prohibit librarians and teachers from distributing materials on or outright discussing “any form of non-procreative sex,” gender identity, and “lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender issues.”

Another Oklahoma Senate bill would ban public schools from employing anyone who “promotes positions in the classroom or at any function of the public school that is in opposition to closely held religious beliefs of students.” And SB 1141 would bar requiring public university courses on “gender, sexual, or racial diversity, equality, or inclusion,” supplementing an already-passed House bill that is currently part of a federal lawsuit brought by the ACLU.

Some worry that the passage of legislation like “Don’t Say Gay” will come at the expense of LGBTQ+ youth in particular, who are already at greater risk of mental health issues, self-harm and suicide.

A recent report from the LGBTQ+ suicide prevention and crisis intervention group The Trevor Project found that LGBTQ+ youth who learned about LGBTQ+ people or issues in school had 23 percent lower odds of reporting a suicide attempt in the last year.

“We know that what happens in schools impacts mental health and suicide risk,” Sam Ames, director of advocacy and government affairs at the Trevor Project, told Changing America. “We know that youth learning about themselves, being able to see themselves reflected in their curriculum, being able to speak openly about who they are to their classmates and their teachers reduces suicide risk significantly.”

Ames said striking LGBTQ+ figures and stories from the classroom would mean stamping out swaths of American history.

“We are seeing entire chapters of textbooks being erased,” they said. “Do you not talk in a civics class about Pete Buttigieg? Do you not talk in a history class about Harvey Milk or Marsha P. Johnson? These are fundamental moments, not just in LGBTQ history, but in American history, that are being written out of existence.”

Tennessee

Gans, Jared. “Federal judge rules Tennessee restrictions on drag shows unconstitutional.” *The Hill* (June 3, 2023)
<https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/4033015-federal-judge-rules-tennessee-restrictions-on-drag-shows-unconstitutional/>

A federal judge ruled on Friday that a Tennessee law banning drag shows in public or in places where children could view them is unconstitutional, finding that it violates freedom of speech protections.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Parker said in his ruling that the law, which Gov. Bill Lee (R) signed in March, is both “unconstitutionally vague and substantially overbroad.”

The Tennessee law was the first in the country to directly target drag shows. First-time violators of the law could have faced a \$2,500 fine and up to a year in prison.

Migdon, Brooke and Madeline Simon. “It’s not just Florida. 15 other ‘Don’t Say Gay’-style bills are cropping up nationwide.” *The Hill* (February 19, 2022)
<https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/594980-florida-isnt-the-only-state-with-a-dont-say-gay-bill-15>

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Texas

Schneid, Rebecca. “Texas judge who doesn’t want to perform gay marriage ceremonies hopes web designer’s Supreme Court case helps her fight.” *Texas Tribune* (July 13, 2023) <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/07/12/texas-judge-gay-weddings-supreme-court/>

McLennan County Justice of the Peace Dianne Hensley filed a lawsuit after a state agency warned her about refusing to marry gay couples. She hopes a recent U.S. Supreme Court case about religious freedom helps her cause.

Since Waco judge Dianne Hensley received a public warning from the State Commission on Judicial Conduct for refusing to perform same-sex marriages in 2019, she’s waged a public battle against the state agency.

She’s long claimed the governmental body violated state law by punishing her for actions taken in accordance with her religious faith. Now, she has submitted a brief arguing that the recent Supreme Court ruling in favor of a business owner who refused services to same-sex couples will help her case.

After Hensley was warned by the judicial conduct commission, she filed a lawsuit claiming the investigation and warning “substantially burdened the free exercise of her religion, with no compelling justification.” She seeks damages of \$10,000. She has been represented by the First Liberty Institute, a high-profile religious liberty legal group based in Plano. The legal group also has strong ties to suspended Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Her lawsuit alleges that the commission violated her rights under the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Her lawsuit was dismissed by a lower appeals tribunal, but last month, the Texas Supreme Court said it will hear arguments on whether to revive the state judge’s lawsuit.

This new brief, submitted last week by Hensley’s legal team, argues that though the Supreme Court used the First Amendment and not state law in the 303 Creative LLC v. Elenis case, the decision is also applicable in her lawsuit. The First Amendment case decided last month said a Colorado web designer cannot be forced by the state to compromise her beliefs and serve same-sex couples.

According to the Texas judicial commission’s 2019 warning, Hensley referred gay couples who wanted her to preside over their marriage ceremony to other people who

would officiate. The state's judicial code requires judges to conduct "extra-judicial activities" in ways that don't cast doubt on their impartiality on the bench. The commission issued a public warning, saying she cast doubt "on her capacity to act impartially to persons appearing before her as a judge due to the person's sexual orientation."

According to Dale Carpenter, chair of constitutional law at Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law, the U.S. Supreme Court case has little to do with Hensley's case, since one is dealing with private businesses, and Hensley is a government official acting in an official capacity. Carpenter has written extensively on the Colorado case and agreed with the 6-3 Supreme Court decision. He says the two cases are similar in that they include services to a same-sex couple, but "that's where the similarities end."

"The service in [Hensley's] case is the service of a government official, so if 303 Creative had involved that government denying services to a same-sex couple, then that'd be a very different case," Carpenter maintained. "I don't think 303 helps the judge's case at all."

He believes this is the first of a "slew" of cases that will be coming through the state and country that will attempt to expand the reach of the Colorado case and when LGBTQ+ people can be denied certain services on First Amendment grounds.

"This is going to have to be worked through the judicial system, including trial courts and appellate courts, over a period of probably several years at this point because 303 Creative is going to lead us to see many, many more of these cases," Carpenter said.

Josh Blackman, a constitutional law professor at the South Texas College of Law Houston, says it's also important to understand that if the Texas Supreme Court were to rule in Hensley's favor, they "would have to expressly extend the holding of 303 Creative" to her case. This means that Hensley's case goes beyond the current bounds of what the SCOTUS decision says.

Carpenter says the implications of Hensley's case are hard to predict, since the Texas Supreme Court has agreed to hear arguments only on whether to revive the lawsuit, not if the lawsuit has merit. He believes it will be a long time before Hensley's lawsuit has real effects.

Conversely, Ash Hall, an ACLU of Texas policy and advocacy strategist, believes that the case could be substantial, if the lawsuit is eventually won.

"If Judge Hensley were to actually win this case, it would basically gut a good portion of marriage equality that we got," Hall said. "Your ability to get married then would be dependent on your ZIP code and kind of what resources were around you."

Jeong, Andrew. "Texas lawmakers vote to ban gender-affirming care for trans children." *Washington Post* (May 18, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/05/17/texas-transgender-bill-children-health-care/?utm_campaign=wp_post_most&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_most&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2Fs2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ln-tr%2F3a0cd4f%2F64664c9046cd7852d92f298c%2F5d82fccd9bbc0f783cfa627d%2F31%2F72%2F64664c9046cd7852d92f298c

The Republican-majority Texas legislature passed a bill to ban health-care professionals from providing gender-transitioning treatment such as sterilization or puberty-suppressing drugs to children, sending it to Gov. Greg Abbott (R) for final approval.

If Abbott signs the bill, he will make Texas the most populous state to ban gender-affirming care for minors. At least 18 states ban gender-affirming medication or surgical care for transgender youths, according to the Movement Advancement Project, a Colorado-based nonprofit think tank that advocates for LGBTQ rights. Alabama, Florida, Idaho, North Dakota and Oklahoma have made it a felony to provide gender care.

Texas's Senate Bill 14 threatens to take away the licenses of violating health-care providers but has some exceptions. Children who are already receiving treatment for gender transition or dysphoria may continue to receive care. But those children must "wean off" any drugs they are taking, and they will not be legally able to begin a new course of treatment.

Physicians have repeatedly objected to legislation impeding access to gender-affirming care. In 2021, six health-care associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, said they are "strongly opposed to any legislation or regulation that would interfere with the provision of evidence-based patient care for any patient." This means "gender-diverse individuals" must receive gender-affirming care, they said. Doctors generally advise waiting until a child reaches puberty before taking puberty blockers or hormone treatments, The *Washington Post* has reported.

West Virginia

Astor, Maggie. "G.O.P. State Lawmakers Push a Growing Wave of Anti-Transgender Bills." *New York Times* (January 25, 2023)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/25/us/politics/transgender-laws-republicans.html?algo=editorial_importance_fy_email_news&block=4&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20230125&fallback=false&imp_id=475168065&instance_id=83665&nl=for-you&nid=8722459&pool=pool%2Fa2fc9efa-4a9f-46ae-8506-967a38fc2099&rank=5®i_id=8722459&req_id=876390797&segment_id=123511&surface=for-you-email-news&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_edimp_fye_news_dedupe

Four states could ban transition care into young adulthood. Lawmakers in several others want to restrict drag shows in ways that could affect transgender performers broadly. It's part of a long-term plan.

The flood of legislation is part of a long-term campaign by national groups that see transgender rights as an issue on which they can harness voter anger — as with the campaigns against remote learning and critical race theory that reshaped many school boards and lifted Republicans in Virginia's elections in 2021 — though the midterm elections provided little evidence of it.

The potential consequences for transgender people, for whom harassment and threats have become common and suicide rates are high, are profound. Many express a sense that the power of their government is being turned against them as they try to live their lives.

A bill in Mississippi — declaring that “separate is not inherently unequal,” an allusion to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 ruling in which the Supreme Court upheld segregation — would define sex as immutably set at birth, denying transgender identities under state law. A measure in West Virginia would define “any transvestite and/or transgender exposure, performances or display” as obscene, potentially outlawing transgender people's presence around children.

Conservative activists have emphasized parental control and child protection, calling transition care harmful, an assertion rejected by the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups. Transgender people have higher rates of depression and suicide, and research shows that transition care — which can involve puberty blockers, hormones or surgery, though minors rarely receive surgery — can improve mental health.

Some activists and politicians also say exposing young people to transgender identities, whether through a book reading by a drag performer or a classroom discussion, “sexualizes” them — an echo of anti-gay campaigns dating to the 1970s, which cast gay people as preying on children.

One in Nebraska, for instance, would apply to any show whose “main aspect” is “a performer which exhibits a gender identity that is different than the performer's gender assigned at birth using clothing, makeup, or other physical markers; and the performer sings, lip syncs, dances, or otherwise performs before an audience for entertainment.”

In a recent poll conducted by Morning Consult for the Trevor Project, 86 percent of transgender and nonbinary youths said debates over state laws had hurt their mental health.

Ms. Oakley of the Human Rights Campaign said this was why she disliked the framing of anti-transgender legislation as a culture war.

“It's not a war,” she said, “when there are powerful politicians on one side and there are terrified kids on the other.”

Miscellaneous Articles with Political and/or Legal Ramifications

Roberts, Judy. “Has the US Put Gender Ideology in the Rearview Mirror?” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (August 26, 2025)
<https://www.ncregister.com/news/has-the-us-put-gender-ideology-in-the-rearview-mirror>

Enthusiastically supportive of the Trump Administration, which Mrs. Roberts credits with turning tide against acceptance or support trans individuals. Gives a fairly complete list of supporting organizations and media reports.

Judy Roberts is a journalist who has worked for both the secular and Catholic press. In addition to the Register, she has written for Legatus Magazine, Franciscan Way and Our Sunday Visitor, and is a former religious books reviewer for Publishers Weekly. She also blogs about living more serenely in a busy world at quietkeepers.com.

Redburn, Kate. “All Americans Have the Right to Dress Exactly How They Want,” *New York Times* (May 24, 2023)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/24/opinion/anti-drag-laws-anti-trans-law-suits.html>

Legal attacks on gender expression like those being passed today in Florida, Iowa, Montana and elsewhere have disturbing similarities to those that were on the books throughout most of the 20th century: Then, cities across the country criminalized appearing in public “[in a dress not belonging to his or her sex](#).” Others prohibited “female impersonators” or “masquerade.” These laws were routinely used to harass and discredit anyone who transgressed gender norms, including feminists who wore men’s clothes to protest gender inequality, sex workers signaling that they were available to be engaged, drag performers, cross-dressers and people who today might identify as transgender. Arrests could have major consequences. Many people arrested under these ordinances lost their jobs and families.

Some litigants argued that cross-dressing bans were unconstitutionally vague. Lawyers even brought fashion writers into court to testify that it was impossible to determine, for instance, the gender of a pair of shoes. In the words of one judge: “What distinguishes the male high-heeled shoe from the female? Is it the thickness of the heel or the sole, the design of the toe, the contour of the instep or just what?” Other litigants suggested that gender nonconformity deserved constitutional protection in its own right. When two trans women were arrested in Chicago, for example, they successfully argued that the law violated their constitutional right to dress as they pleased, based on the guarantee of free expression in the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

These victories linked transgender rights to the broader idea that the Constitution protects gender nonconformity in general. They reminded courts that all people have an equal right to choose how they present in public, including in their choice of clothing and hairstyle. Transgender people, certainly, but also people who perform drag or enjoy a range of fashions or reject norms of masculine or feminine presentation for whatever

reason. In other words, the virtue of these lawsuits was that they both advanced transgender rights and protected a key realm of self-expression for others.

Whether we are transgender or cisgender, we are all harmed by state-mandated gender norms. Much like those of the 1970s, today's fashions [crisscross the gender binary](#), from [luxury brands](#) to [athleisure](#). Gender play through clothing — whether someone is trying out traditionally masculine or feminine styles or selecting gender-neutral options — is more popular than ever. Drag bans strike at this fundamental freedom to express our gender through personal appearance and performance, regardless of our sex assigned at birth. History serves as a powerful reminder that trans civil rights strengthen freedom of personal expression for all.

Kate Redburn (@k_redburn) is a legal historian and an academic fellow at Columbia Law School.

Zodrow, Andru. "Transgender Patient Denied Care by Catholic Hospital Wins Discrimination Lawsuit." *New Ways Ministry* (January 16, 2023) <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/01/16/transgender-patient-denied-care-by-catholic-hospital-wins-discrimination-lawsuit/>

A federal court has ruled that a Catholic hospital violated the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by denying a transgender man gender-affirming healthcare.

The ruling in the District Court of Maryland found that St. Joseph Medical Center, which merged with the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) in 2012 and is located in suburban Baltimore, could not legally deny a transgender individual care simply because of their gender identity.

Hammons was scheduled for a hysterectomy in January of 2020, which is a medically-necessary procedure for some people experiencing gender dysphoria. According to NBC News, he was abruptly told that the hospital would be canceling the procedure, even though the hospital regularly performs hysterectomies.

According to the *Washington Post*, Gail Cunningham, a senior vice president at the hospital, "ordered the surgery canceled, telling the surgeon that Hammons' gender dysphoria did not qualify as a sufficient medical reason to authorize the procedure."

The new ruling is a win for nondiscrimination advocates who argue that Catholic hospitals which utilize public funding (St. Joseph's received upwards of \$40 million in state funding in 2018 according to NBC) cannot violate the ACA's civil rights protections.

"Judge Deborah K. Chasanow ruled that UMMS and St. Joseph Medical Center had violated Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act – which prohibits discrimination in health care on the basis of sex – in denying Hammons [the patient] a hysterectomy simply because he is transgender. . .

"The undisputed facts establish that the decision to cancel Mr. Hammons' hysterectomy pursuant to a policy that prohibits gender-affirming care was discrimination on the basis of his sex,' Chasanow wrote.

“UMMS had tried to remove itself as a defendant in Hammons’ case, arguing that only the funding recipient for the ‘specific discriminatory program’ – which in this case is St. Joseph Medical Center – is liable under Section 1557.

“Chasanow on Friday denied that claim, arguing that UMMS is ‘undoubtedly’ engaged in the business of providing health care through its network of hospitals.”

Arnold, Tyler. “Joe Biden’s Disrespect for Marriage.” *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (December 13, 2022)

https://www.ncregister.com/blog/joe-biden-s-disrespect-for-marriage?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=237920490&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--GN0DQ_OPVuPeE06sSe2ZlsliDwjF9FWqGaiC-OmrZGDeJK3wG5enOnUBCR1FvaGtvRsLiJEvVE5vptwJsudksIHNeUA&utm_content=237920490&utm_source=hs_email



Author claims that Biden has shown “complete rejection of what the Church teaches about the truth and meaning of marriage.”

Wise, Noel. "Judge: Gender Laws Are at Odds With Science." *Time* March 8, 2017.

<http://time.com/4679726/judge-biological-sex-laws-marriage-bathrooms/>

Considers the current legal controversies over trans-gender access to public bathrooms in light of the significant incidence of inter-sex individuals and what this implies for the principle "equal protection under the law." "A regularly cited 1991 study of nearly 35,000 newborn children found that 1 in 426 did not have strictly XX or XY chromosomes. In addition, the World Health Organization reports that 1 in every 2,000 births worldwide are visibly intersex, because the child's genitals are either incomplete or ambiguous, which equates to five newborn Americans a day. This represents a sizable U.S. population that cannot be ignored by the law.

"If such individuals have the right to equal protection, to privacy and to use a public restroom, what clear and science-based legal principle can our judiciary employ to determine whether they lawfully used the correct bathroom?"

Wise is a Superior Court Judge in California.

Medical Aspects of Gender/Transgender Issues

Boylan, Jennifer Finney. “To understand biological sex, look at the brain, not the body.”

Washington Post (May 1, 2023)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/05/01/transgender-biology-brain-science>

[-freedom/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_opinions&utm_campaign=wp_opinions](#)

So what, then, *is* a biological male, or female? What determines this supposedly simple truth? It's about chromosomes, right?

Well, not entirely. Because not every person with a Y chromosome is male, and not every person with a double X is female. The world is full of people with [other combinations](#): XXY (or Klinefelter Syndrome), XXX (or Trisomy X), XXXY, and so on. There's even something called [Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome](#), a condition that keeps the brains of people with a Y from absorbing the information in that chromosome. Most of these people develop as female, and [may not even know](#) about their condition until puberty — or even later.

In the past decade, there has been some fascinating research on the brains of transgender people. What is most remarkable about this work is not that trans women's brains have been found to resemble those of cisgender women, or that trans men's brains resemble those of cis men. What the research has found is that the brains of trans people are unique: neither female nor male, exactly, but [something distinct](#).

All the science tells us, in the end, is that a biological male — or female — is not any one thing, but a collection of possibilities.

No one who embarks upon a life as a trans person in this country is doing so out of caprice, or a whim, or a delusion. We are living these wondrous and perilous lives for one reason only — because our hearts demand it. Given the tremendous courage it takes to come out, given the fact that even now trans people can still lose everything — family, friends, jobs, even our lives — what we need now is not new legislation to make things harder. What we need now is understanding, not cruelty. What we need now is not hatred, but love.

Jennifer Finney Boylan is a professor of English at Barnard College of Columbia University and a fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. Her most recent book is "Mad Honey," co-written with Jodi Picoult.

Bazon, Emily. "A Medical Frontier: Doctors who provide gender-affirming care are split on how to evaluate teens." *New York Times* (June 15, 2022)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/briefing/transgender-care-experts-divide.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Not surprisingly, there is a sharp divide among those who support gender-affirming care — the approach major American medical organizations have adopted for embracing children and teenagers who come out as transgender — and those who oppose medical treatments for minors, including medications that suppress puberty and hormones that change secondary-sex characteristics.

But there is also a divide among gender-affirming providers. It doesn't break down along transgender-cisgender lines — both groups express a range of perspectives. The debate starts with how to evaluate kids who want these treatments.

For transgender adults, the benefits of medical transition are well established and the rate of regret is low. Two studies also show positive long-term results for people who transitioned as teenagers.

Underlying the debate about assessments is the question of why the number of teenagers in the U.S. who identify as transgender has nearly doubled in recent years.

The authors of the adolescent chapter in the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care said that the increased visibility of trans people in entertainment and the media had played a major — and positive — role in reducing stigma and helping many kids express themselves in ways they might have previously kept buried. But they also wrote about the role of "social influence," absorbed online or peer to peer. During adolescence, the chapter recognizes, peers and culture often affect how kids see themselves and who they want to be.

The backdrop for these debates is a right-wing effort to ban gender-related medical treatment for minors. So far, bans have passed in Arkansas, Arizona, and Alabama and have been proposed this year in about a dozen other states. As with other fraught issues like abortion, America is becoming a split screen. In red states, gender-related care for young people is already rare yet faces legal threats. At clinics that are mostly in progressive metropolitan areas, meanwhile, it's not clear how common comprehensive assessments are.

Conaboy, Chelsea. "Maternal Instinct Is a Myth That Men Created." *New York Times* (August 26, 2022)

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/26/opinion/sunday/maternal-instinct-myth.html?campaign_id=39&emc=edit_ty_20220826&instance_id=70285&nl=opinion-today®i_id=87222459&segment_id=102426&te=1&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a

New research on the parental brain makes clear that the idea of maternal instinct as something innate, automatic and distinctly female is a myth, one that has stuck despite the best efforts of feminists to debunk it from the moment it entered public discourse.

[The article next traces the development, and pushback, to the views that "motherhood" was inscribed in nature and/or ordained by God]

Belief in maternal instinct and the deterministic value of mother love has fueled "pro-family" conservative politicians for decades. The United States, to its shame, still lacks even a modest paid leave policy, and universal child-care remains far out of reach. The Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 was the last serious attempt to establish a national day care system. Richard Nixon vetoed it, saying it was a "family-weakening" bill and the government must "cement the family in its rightful

position as the keystone of our civilization.” Implicit in that statement was a belief about a woman’s natural place. ...

The myth of maternal instinct places a primacy on biological mothers, suggesting the routes to parenthood fall into two categories: “natural” and “other.” It sustains outdated ideas about masculinity that teaches fathers that they are secondary — assistants, babysitters — and encourages mothers to see them that way, too. It undermines the rights and recognition of same-sex couples and transgender and nonbinary parents, whose ability to care for their children is often questioned.

The science of the parental brain — much of it now the work of female scientists who are mothers themselves — has the potential to pull back the curtain, exposing old biases and outdated norms, revealing how they are woven throughout our individual and societal definitions of mother or parent or family, and offering something new.

Using brain imaging technology and other tools, and building on extensive animal literature, researchers around the globe have found that the adaptation of the human parental brain takes time, driven as much by experience — by exposure to the powerful stimuli babies provide — as by the hormonal shifts of pregnancy and childbirth.

What happens if we look at this new science with full knowledge of how the old science was interpreted? What if we examine it with urgency and with an awareness of the cultural baggage we bring to the task? Then what story will we tell?

It might acknowledge parents in all their forms and celebrate the fact that human babies have always relied on more than just their mothers for survival. It could recognize new parenthood to be a major overhaul for the brain, a new stage of development that takes time and that brings with it incredible adaptation and incredible risk.

It certainly will be a call to action, to overhaul clinical care to address the radical transformation new parents experience, including screening during pregnancy for depression risk factors, more home- and community-based support, and meaningful efforts to reduce the prevalence of postpartum post-traumatic stress disorder, which as many as 9 percent of mothers develop.

Chelsea Conaboy is a journalist specializing in personal and public health and the author of the forthcoming book “Mother Brain: How Neuroscience Is Rewriting the Story of Parenthood,” from which this essay has been adapted.

Cohn, Corinna. “What I wish I’d known when I was 19 and had sex reassignment surgery.” *Washington Post* (April 11, 2022)
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/04/11/i-was-too-young-to-decide-about-transgender-surgery-at-nineteen/>

First-person account of a transgender woman approaching 50 who had sex reassignment surgery at 19. She looks back on her decision made at that time, and her life since, and

expresses a number of regrets about the process for the decision she made, as well as expectations she had at the time which had not developed as she had hoped.

“There is much debate today about transgender treatment, especially for young people. Others might feel differently about their choices, but I know now that I wasn’t old enough to make that decision. Given the strong cultural forces today casting a benign light on these matters, I thought it might be helpful for young people, and their parents, to hear what I wish I had known. ...

“Surgery unshackled me from my body’s urges, but the destruction of my gonads introduced a different type of bondage. From the day of my surgery, I became a medical patient and will remain one for the rest of my life. I must choose between the risks of taking exogenous estrogen, which include venous thromboembolism and stroke, or the risks of taking nothing, which includes degeneration of bone health. In either case, my risk of dementia is higher, a side effect of eschewing testosterone. ...

“What advice would I pass on to young people seeking transition? Learning to fit in your body is a common struggle. Fad diets, body-shaping clothing and cosmetic surgery are all signs that countless millions of people at some point have a hard time accepting their own reflection. The prospect of sex can be intimidating. But sex is essential in healthy relationships. Give it a chance before permanently altering your body.

“Most of all, slow down. You may yet decide to make the change. But if you explore the world by inhabiting your body as it is, perhaps you’ll find that you love it more than you thought possible.”

Corinna Cohn, a software developer in Indianapolis, is an officer in the Gender Care Consumer Advocacy Network.

Furton, Edward J., ed. *Transgender Issues in Catholic Health Care*. Philadelphia: The National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2021.

Abstract: Through careful analysis, narrative case studies, and policy language, *Transgender Issues in Catholic Health Care* critiques current interventions for gender dysphoria and provides practical guidance for professionals and institutions committed to providing whole-person care.

Lenhart, Erik, OFM, Cap. “People Born with Intersex Conditions: Pastoral and Bioethical Considerations.” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 15/3 (Autumn 2015): 453-463. Also available at https://www.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=ncbq&id=ncbq_2015_0015_0003_0453_0463&onlyautologin=true

Other (Non-Catholic) Churches, Institutions and Religious Communities

Caldwell, Simon. "Christian teacher who 'misgendered' pupil banned from profession." *Catholic Herald* (May 24, 2023)
<https://catholicherald.co.uk/christian-teacher-who-misgendered-pupil-banned-from-profession/>

Highly critical reporting of the handling of Christian teacher who refused to abide school policies and instead calling students not by their preferred pronouns but what the teacher had identified as their biological sex assigned at birth.

In the first case of its kind in the UK, Joshua Sutcliffe, 33, was reprimanded for "unprofessional conduct" and "bringing the profession into disrepute" after he refused to use the preferred pronouns of a female student who identified as transgender.

The Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) professional conduct panel, backed by the Department for Education acting on behalf of Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, banned Mr Sutcliffe from teaching in any capacity indefinitely.

Following a seven-day hearing, the TRA recommended a prohibition order removing Mr Sutcliffe from the classroom.

The panel sided with the evidence from the pupils who gave evidence for the TRA to conclude that "on the balance of probabilities" it was proved that Mr Sutcliffe had repeatedly "misgendered" Pupil A, which he denied.

Evidence was also accepted by the panel that Mr Sutcliffe had "misgendered" Pupil A on another occasion in the classroom when he was alleged to have said: "I borrowed her calculator."

The panel concluded: "Given the evidence of the pupils that Mr. Sutcliffe had failed to use Pupil A's pronoun on various occasions, and Mr Sutcliffe's own admission that he had failed to use pupil A's pronoun on one occasion, the panel found that it was more probable than not that Mr Sutcliffe had failed to use Pupil A's preferred pronoun in the classroom during teaching on one or more occasions.

"The panel therefore concluded on balance that by failing to use pupil A's preferred pronouns, Mr Sutcliffe had failed to uphold Pupil A's dignity and respect and failed to safeguard Pupil A's wellbeing."

In January, the Daily Telegraph reported that the guidelines are likely to advise teachers and schools that allowing pupils to "socially transition" and use preferred pronouns contrary to their sex, can cause "major psychological harm".

Mr Sutcliffe said: "I am devastated by the panel's ruling and will appeal.

"Based on this ruling, every teacher is at risk if they share their beliefs and views in the classroom.

"I believe affirming children who are in gender distress in the classroom is psychologically damaging for them. I refuse to go against my conscience and cause a child harm and cannot apologise for that.

“The TRA wanted me to capitulate and say that I was wrong. I have been mercilessly punished for refusing to do so.

“Indoctrinating children across the country to celebrate and promote Pride, to fly the Pride flag is celebrated, but if Christian beliefs are raised or expressed in the classroom, you face having your career and life torn apart.

“I have been bullied and pursued and have had every part of my life scrutinised for expressing my Christian faith and biological truth.”

He added: “This decision is putting my family and I at risk. I have a young son and everything that is happening is affecting him.

Graber, Jason. “Video of Pastor Saying Parents of Trans Children Should Be Shot Goes Viral.”

News report by Anders Anglesey. *Newsweek* (May 21, 2023)

<https://www.newsweek.com/video-pastor-saying-parents-trans-children-should-shot-goes-viral-1801663>

Jason Graber, pastor of Sure Foundation Baptist Church in Spokane said he believed parents of transgender children deserved to be killed.

During a Sunday, April 23, 2023 sermon titled "In Defense of Children," Graber said: "Any parents that would have their child have a transgender surgery done on them. Any parent that would do that should be shot in the back of the head. They need to be convicted in trial and immediately shot in the back of the head, and then we can string them up above a bridge so the public can see the consequences of that kind of wickedness."

Graber also called on the federal government to "invade" Washington and arrest state senators and representatives and convict them in a Nuremberg-style trial over their support for transgender people. He then said they should be stoned to death by people in Washington state.

In the same sermon, Graber made disparaging comments about homosexual people and insisted there was no difference between them and pedophiles.

Graber also spoke out against women who have had multiple sexual partners and insisted fathers should protect young women while young men "need to go out and be independent" and "function by themselves."

Planas, Antonio. “Florida Christian school says it will refer to students only by 'biological gender,' asks gay and transgender students to leave.” *NBC News* (August 18, 2022)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/florida-school-will-only-refer-students-biological-gender-rcna43545> **Also found at**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q4Xc5iOvEEf0nNkndPqN4yiDsSSdgsVr/view?usp=sharing>

NBC News obtained an email from Grace Christian School in Valrico, about 20 miles east of Tampa, sent before the beginning of the school year by Administrator Barry McKeen.

The June 6 correspondence to parents cited scripture and said that students will be referred to by the "gender on their birth certificates" during the school year beginning this month. While the email refers to "biological gender," the National Institute of Health defines "gender" as a social construct, as opposed to "sex," which is the biological difference between females and males.

"We believe that God created mankind in His image: male (man) and female (woman), sexually different but with equal dignity," the email said.

"Therefore, one's biological sex must be affirmed and no attempts should be made to physically change, alter, or disagree with one's biological gender — including, but not limited to, elective sex reassignment, transvestite, transgender, or non-binary gender fluid acts of conduct (Genesis 1:26-28). Students in school will be referred to by the gender on their birth certificate and be referenced in name in the same fashion."

It continued: "We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transgender identity/lifestyle, self-identification, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful in the sight of God and the church (Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1; I Corinthians 6:9; I Thessalonians 4:2-7)."

"Students who are found participating in these lifestyles will be asked to leave the school immediately," the email said.

"It is true that a student can not come to our school ... and be transgender or homosexual. This is rooted in scriptures," McKeen said. "God has spoken on those issues, explicitly, aggressively, and we have had these policies in our school since day number one in the early 1970s. This is not new."

The email was a factor in prompting the family of a 16-year-old girl, who is gay and was a student at the school, to transfer her to another religious school that is more accepting.

"It's not like my daughter goes around wearing rainbow flags or anything like that," the teenager's mother said. "But I'm not going to have her feel ashamed of herself for any reason."

The woman and her daughter asked that their identities be withheld out of fear of harassment.

The teen said she felt like a "social outcast" at Grace Christian, but that her new school allows her to "just be myself."

"At the new school, I feel normal," she said.

Other Related Material

The items in this section are listed in *alphabetical order*

Adamczeski, Ryan. "Anti-trans laws caused a significant spike in suicide attempts among trans youth: study." *The Advocate* (September 26, 2024)

https://www.advocate.com/news/anti-trans-laws-youth-suicide?utm_source=equalpride&utm_campaign=252b6120c6-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_09_27_02_36&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_11dd7c7578-252b6120c6-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Suicide attempts among trans youth increased anywhere from 7 percent to 72 percent in states that enacted **anti-trans laws**, according to a new peer-reviewed study from **The Trevor Project** published in **Nature**.

The report examined the relationship between suicide risk and the 48 anti-transgender laws enacted in the across 19 different state governments between 2018 and 2022, using national survey data from more than 61,000 **transgender** and nonbinary youth. It concluded that anti-transgender laws "significantly increased" past-year **suicide attempts among trans youth**.

The highest increase in suicide attempt rates – which ranged from 7 percent to 72 percent — was reported by participants younger than age 18. An increase of 38 percent to 44 percent was documented across the full sample of trans and nonbinary youth ages 13-24.

Bowers, Marci, M.D. "What Decades of Providing Trans Health Care Have Taught Me." *New York Times* (April 1, 2023)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/01/opinion/trans-healthcare-law.html?campaign_id=39&emc=edit_ty_20230404&instance_id=89373&nl=opinion-today®i_id=87222459&segment_id=129543&smid=url-share&te=1&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a

But a [study published in 2021](#) found that fewer than 1 percent of those who have received gender-affirming surgery say they regret their decision to do so, a much lower rate than has been reported for more common medical interventions like plastic surgery and orthopedic care. A [separate analysis of a survey](#) of more than 27,000 transgender and gender-diverse adults found that the vast majority of those who detransition from medical affirming treatment said they did so because of external factors (such as family pressure, financial reasons or a loss of access to care), not because they had been misdiagnosed or their gender identities had changed.

The presumption that gender-diverse identities are not real — that young people will eventually come to accept their birth assigned gender as their minds catch up to their maturing bodies — is not supported by the evidence and is likely harmful. There are, after all, more than [40 identified intersex variations](#) representing diversity in the development of genitalia. Gender identity is similarly diverse. In nature, for every rule, there is an exception.

Anti-treatment bills will not protect children, and they will not help the medical community provide better care for patients in need. We should instead take anti-transgender legislation for what it is: thinly veiled cruelty to a specific minority population of the country. These bills are symptoms of a larger problem, where belittlement and bullying are reminders of what many trans people endure as children, teenagers and young adults.

Dr. Marci L. Bowers (@marcibdoc) is a gynecologic and reconstructive surgeon who was the first woman with trans history to perform gender-affirming vaginoplasty. She is a founder of Mt. Sinai's Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery, is the president of WPATH and sits on the board of directors of the Trevor Project.

Boylan, Jennifer Finney. "Why Do Conservatives Attack Abortion and Trans Rights in the Same Ways?" *New York Times* (September 21, 2023)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/21/opinion/abortion-trans-rights-republicans.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>



The issue of trans rights, and trans identity, has joined — if not displaced — abortion as one of the go-to issues riling up the conservative base.

To some degree, we've arrived at this moment because abortion and trans rights are, in some ways, two sides of the same coin — issues that go to the core of what we mean by bodily autonomy, and what kinds of choices individuals get to make about our private, physical selves.

We've also arrived at this moment because the same tactics that succeeded in marginalizing, demonizing and even criminalizing abortion have been trained upon us.

Now that anti-abortion efforts following the Dobbs decision aren't proving to be the political win Republicans had hoped, many are doubling down on the belief that demonizing the [0.6 percent](#) of Americans over the age of 12 who identify as trans, and [the 1.2 million adults](#) in America who identify as nonbinary, is a surefire ticket to electoral success.

What are those tactics? Well, for one, conservative political strategists and G.O.P. presidential hopefuls alike have taken to describing the more controversial aspects of trans experience as the defining issues, just as they have long exaggerated the frequency of exceedingly rare abortions performed later in pregnancy, pretending that they are routine. (For the back of the house: Abortions occurring at or after 21 weeks of pregnancy represented [less than 1 percent](#) of all legal abortions performed in the United States in 2020.)

This same group of conservatives has also exploited Americans' impatience with nuance to define extremely complex issues in the most simplistic of terms. And finally, they have taken advantage of the fact that many Americans think they don't know a transgender person, at least in part because, just like me in that bathroom, so many of us choose to be

invisible, out of weariness, and out of fear — just as so many American women never share that the decision to terminate a pregnancy is one they’ve had to make themselves.

I have often said that the most important thing needed to understand trans people is what has been termed a “[moral imagination](#),” the ability to understand what the experience of being human is like for people who are different from ourselves. But how can strangers learn about us if they don’t know us?

Knowing a person who has had an abortion — just like knowing someone who is trans — can [change Americans’ opinions](#) about it. Only 50 percent of people who say they don’t know anyone who’s had an abortion think it should be legal in most, or all, cases, but 69 percent of people who say they have an “acquaintance” who’s had an abortion think it should be legal in most, or all cases — and that number increases to 78 percent among those with a “close friend” who’s had one.

These numbers echo attitudes toward trans people, too: [Only about 33 percent of Americans](#) who say they’ve never known anyone trans believe that gender can be different from the sex assigned at birth. But among people who *do* know a trans person, that number jumps to more than half — 54 percent.

Ms. Boylan is a professor of English at Barnard College, and a vice president of PEN America

Branigin, Anne. “At trans prom, joy is a political statement.” *Washington Post* (May 24, 2023) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/05/24/trans-teens-prom-capitol-activism/>

Kids from around the country converged on the U.S. Capitol to dance, celebrate and uplift one another.

Unlike the proms held in school gyms and hotel ballrooms across the country, this event featured organizers and advocates who combined words of affirmation and praise with the language of battle. “We are still in a war,” one speaker reminded the crowd.

The story contains mostly pictures and brief reports of those participating in the event which took place on the National Mall May 22, 2023.

Burbach, Nicolette. “‘Everything about Us, for Us’: Avoiding ‘Perlocutionary Dominion’ in Catholic Writing about Trans People.” *Heythrop Journal* 64/3 (May 2023): 301-317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.14194> (first published online March 1, 20223)

Given that we are currently still laying the groundwork for this nascent field, it is important to try to anticipate issues before they become deeply rooted, and the purpose of this paper is to do so. It seeks to highlight the danger of what I will call ‘perlocutionary dominion’, in which a writer/speaker exerts influence on their audience in such a way as to disempower trans people within the speaking community. It does this by looking to the example of Helen Watt’s ‘Gender Transition: The Moral Meaning of Bodily and Social Presentation’, which, it argues, risks this peril through the gratuitous presentation of

negative themes, and a certain way of expressing care for individuals suffering from gender dysphoria.

This paper begins by reflecting on the potential perlocutionary effects of Watt's text on trans readers within the Catholic theological community, including, but not exclusively, by reflecting on its effects upon myself as one such reader. It then draws from this to anticipate the community-shaping effects which might emerge from these experiences. Finally, it develops a reading of Pope Francis's 'four principles' for navigating social tension, as outlined in *Evangelii gaudium*, to evaluate critically these effects, and develops this evaluation to suggest ways of working in light of Francis's principles in this context.

. "The Limits of Liminality: Where do Trans People Fit in to Pope Francis's Church?" *Heythrop Journal* 65/3 (May 2024): 274-291. First published: 15 April 2024
<https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.14308>

Author supplied Abstract This paper explores a tension between Francis's openness to 'liminality' and certain papal statements condemning transness that reproduce the ways in which people are marginalised as trans. It seeks to make sense of these tensions, reading them back through Francis's theology of history, and suggesting a place for trans people to locate ourselves within the Church in spite of them. It argues that Francis's failings around transness can be viewed as 'limitations' to be overcome in a redemptive movement. It then argues that Francis's theology of history is reflected in his 'dialogical' use of authority, which admits a space and role for us as pastorally accompanying the Church beyond these limitations. Finally, it argues that Francis's pastoral theology is founded on a theology of encounter which suggests that this process is an expression of divine love that draws people to God through a loving encounter with others. Trans people are thus called to put ourselves at the service of this love, and can take hope in its powers even amidst our own weakness.

Burbach is is an employee of the London Jesuit Centre.

Burbach, Nicolette and Lisa Sowle Cahill, eds. *Trans Life and the Catholic Church Today*. London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2024. ISBN 9780567706942

From the publisher: This volume considers the various questions to do with trans people in the life of the Church from an interdisciplinary, Catholic, ecumenical perspective, reaching out to academics, clergy and educated lay readers. It brings together perspectives from a variety of disciplines to provide a rigorous, wide-ranging engagement with these pressing issues; and includes a number of trans contributors, making their voices present in these discussions, which are about them, but from which they are often excluded.

The first three chapters illustrate the development of Catholic thinking on transgender issues in recent decades. The second section of the book considers transgender identity from multiple perspectives: canon legal; legal; sociological, clinical; bioethical; and

educational. The last two chapters of the second section shift the focus in the direction of theology and pastoral practice, themes that are explored by emerging theological scholars in the third section of the book.

More information and the Table of Contents can be found at

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/trans-life-and-the-catholic-church-today-9780567706942/>

Butler, Judith. “Judith Butler Can’t “Take Credit or Blame” for Gender Furor/” *New Yorker Radio Hour* (March 15, 2024)

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/tnyradiohour/articles/judith-butler-cant-take-credit-or-blame-for-gender-furor> Also at <iframe frameborder="0" scrolling="no" height="130" width="100%" src="https://www.wnyc.org/widgets/ondemand_player/wnycstudios/#file=/audio/json/1431241/&share=1"></iframe>

Long before gender theory became a principal target of the right, it existed principally in academic circles. And one of the leading thinkers in the field was the philosopher Judith Butler, who popularized ideas about gender as a social construct, a “performance,” that proved highly influential for a younger generation. And Butler also became the target of traditionalists who abhorred those ideas. A protest at which Butler was burned in effigy, depicted as a witch, inspired their new book, “**Who’s Afraid of Gender?**” Butler speaks with David Remnick about the backlash; they also discuss Butler’s identification as nonbinary after many years of identifying as a woman. “The young people gave me the ‘they,’ ” as Butler puts it. “This generation has come along with the idea of being nonbinary. [It] never occurred to me! Then I thought, Of course I am. What else would I be?” Also this week, Erin Reed talks about the escalating legal assault on trans rights that’s sweeping the U.S. “We are at around five hundred [anti-trans bills] as of this morning. And last year we had five hundred and fifty the entire year.”

_____, “Judith Butler Knows What Makes Transphobes Tick.” Interview with Wren Sanders *Them* (April 5, 2024)

https://www.them.us/story/judith-butler-whos-afraid-of-gender-interview?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=them&utm_mailing=THEM_Weekly_040624&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=6102ac88139b9360dfefdbec&cid=65847929&hasha=1c1a95393880dcafe911d21ef9fe495&hashb=29b9fc9330a7b07a6b1882c50d143300a541d479&hashc=cd7e7d43adb5c100ff846936eb83c2422b04f7eb3be9b63ff8e6450def52a262&esc=bounceX&utm_term=THEM_Daily

Much of the content of this interview is similar to the one entered above.

_____. *Who's afraid of gender?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024.

Introduction: Gender ideology and the fear of destruction -- The global scene -- Vatican views -- Contemporary attacks on gender in the United States: Censorship and rights-stripping -- Trump, sex, and the Supreme Court -- TERFs and British matters of sex: How critical is gender-critical feminism? -- What about sex? -- What gender are you? -- Nature/culture: Toward co-construction -- Racial and colonial legacies of gender

dimorphism -- Foreign terms, or the disturbance of translation -- Conclusion: The fear of destruction, the struggle to imagine.

Somewhat negatively reviewed by Tina Beattie, “Phantasms & Fascists,” *Commonweal* (August 7, 2024)

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/phantasms-fascists?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=c83f2b734e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-c83f2b734e-92569063

After reading their new book, *Who’s Afraid of Gender?*, I realize that I should have paid more attention to how radical they are in seeking to dissolve any significant distinction between sex and gender. Butler argues that these are historical and cultural constructs with no stable material significance. Sex is real but mutable. This has devastating implications for any attempt to defend the sex-based rights of women and girls.

Butler asks: “*What kind of phantasm has gender become, and what anxieties, fears, and hatreds does it collect and mobilize?*” (The italics are Butler’s.) The core of their argument is that a global “anti-gender ideology movement” is fueled by the phantasm of gender, which has become the psychological repository of all our fears in a world threatened by spiralling economic, environmental, and political crises. Conservative political and religious leaders, whom Butler describes as fascist authoritarians, weaponize these anxieties by displacing the “causes of destruction” onto gender so that it becomes “a phantasm with destructive powers, one way of collecting and escalating multitudes of modern panics.”

If this book had focused on the American Far Right and the widespread influence of U.S. culture wars, if its arguments had been more nuanced and its sources more reliable, if its editors had been more rigorous in eliminating its many repetitions and inconsistencies, it might have been more persuasive. But *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* is a rambling diatribe.

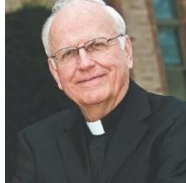
Butler’s observations about the extent to which Western ideas of gender have been shaped by repressive and abusive regimes of enslavement, colonial domination, and racial and sexual prejudice are weakened by the book’s superficiality and reflexively polemical tone. But the problem goes deeper, starting with the way the author talks about gender itself. Butler reifies gender, referring to it as if it were an entity that the Far Right is out to destroy rather than a concept that some reject. Their main target of condemnation is the Vatican, which comes in for many negative mentions. ...

In a 1999 review in the *New Republic*, Martha Nussbaum wrote that Butler’s “obscurity fills the void left by an absence of a real complexity of thought and argument.”

Nussbaum argued that, under the influence of theorists such as Butler, the American academy had succumbed to a “virtually complete turning from the material side of life, toward a type of verbal and symbolic politics that makes only the flimsiest of connections with the real situation of real women.” I cannot think of a better description of Butler’s new book. It takes us through the looking glass to a world in which nothing is what it seems, with a methodology that owes more to Humpty Dumpty than to sociolinguistic

theory: “‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’”

Clifford, Richard, S.J. “‘Using ‘Male and female he created them’ to adjudicate gender controversies is ‘thoroughly misguided’.” *Outreach* (June 25, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/06/richard-j-clifford-s-j-using-male-and-female-he-created-the-m-to-adjudicate-gender-identity-controversies-is-thoroughly-misguided/>



But does the phrase in Genesis 1:27 negate the claims of trans people cited above? Does it even say anything about the issue? Here is the full verse in the NRSV: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

The first duty is to determine the context of the verse. Outside of its context, the wording alone might seem to support the claim that God endowed the human race with only two genders: male and female. Yet this verse should not be interpreted apart from its context; it is part of a carefully crafted creation account in which each verse gains meaning from the whole account. ...

The expectation that this single verse in Genesis can adjudicate modern controversies about gender is thoroughly misguided. There is no hint that the ancient author knew anything about the modern issue of gender identity. And the text gives no hint either. To use “male and female he created them” against (or for) contemporary discussions of gender is to read into the biblical text rather than read the biblical text.

Father Clifford, a leading Old Testament scholar, is the founding dean of the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry and the former dean of the Weston Jesuit School of Theology from 1983 to 1987. A past president of the Catholic Biblical Association, he began teaching at the former Weston College in 1964 and retired from Boston College in 2023.

For a related article that complements this biblical interpretation see Sarah Imhoff, “Nonbinary gender would have been no surprise to ancient rabbis.” Religion News Service (RNS) (July 7, 2023)
<https://religionnews.com/2023/07/07/nonbinary-gender-beyond-male-and-female-would-have-been-no-surprise-to-ancient-rabbis/>

_____, “Is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah about homosexuality? No.” *Outreach* (March 14, 2024)
<https://outreach.faith/2024/03/richard-j-clifford-s-j-is-the-story-of-sodom-and-gomorrah-about-homosexuality-no/>

Readers should take account of the context of all the Genesis stories and trace their links to other episodes in the book. A good example of meaning deepened by context is Genesis 22:1-10, when God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, for whom he long waited. Like Genesis 19, this episode is misunderstood if we read it without considering similar divine commands.

The parallel commands make it clear that Abraham must be ready to surrender to God what he most values —his homeland and beloved son—to receive them back as God’s gift.

...Given our interest not to allow the terms Sodom and sodomy to take over our interpretation, it is important to note that Lot’s offer to surrender his two daughters to the mob’s lust implicitly reveals his own take on what the men of Sodom really intended.

In Lot’s eyes, the men of Sodom were not intent on homosexual rape specifically, but rather on humiliating Lot, whom they despised as an immigrant (19:9), and his two guests. Recent accounts of warfare make clear that systematic sexual assault on non-combatants is an all-too-common means of demoralizing and defeating enemies. Lot’s words seem to indicate he is referring to that very practice. ...

In conclusion, the sexual assault on the two angelic servants is certainly not a warning against homosexuality, and all attempts to interpret the narrative in that direction seriously misread the story. Rather, the story gives us a portrait of Abraham and his wife as they were, both in their own actions and in contrast to Abraham’s nephew Lot. It displays Abraham’s ability to bring God’s blessings to the nations, offer hospitality to strangers, care for his family and live trustingly by God’s promise.

Clifford taught Old Testament at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology and the Boston College School of Theology & Ministry before his retirement, from which he wrote this article.

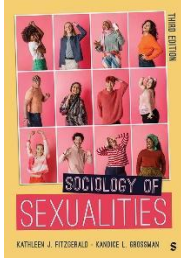
Correa Lima, Luis, S.J. *Theology of the LGBTQ+ Community. Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges*. Translated from Spanish. Mahwah: Paulist Press.

This book describes the evolution of Catholic teaching on sexuality and homosexuality, the evolution of public attitudes, and invites inclusive attitudes – the book shows a very positive attitude.

Correa Lima teaches at the University of Rio de Janeiro

Fitzgerald, Kathleen, and Kandice Grossman, eds. *Sociology of Sexualities* 3rd ed. Sage, 2024. ISBN: 9781071918234

Is an exploration of sexuality through a sociological lens, offering a comprehensive understanding of sexualities and gender identities. The Third Edition brings to light the current societal challenges faced by LGBTQ+ and reproductive rights, the influence of technology on sexuality, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sexual behaviors.



Fitzgerald, Kevin, S.J., and Lauler, David. “Viewing the Transgender Issue from the Catholic and Personalized Health Care Perspectives.” *Catholic Health Association* (2016)
<https://www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/hceusa/fitzgerald.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

Ford, Craig. “Our New Galileo Affair.” *Horizons* (posted December 29, 2023) DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.41>

Abstract: This essay argues that the current Roman Catholic ecclesial climate with respect to its teachings on gender identity and sexual orientation constitutes our own contemporary version of the Galileo Affair. After a consideration of the historical circumstances of the Galileo Affair of the 17th century, I argue not only that the institutional risk factors for a subsequent Galileo Affair have not been adequately mitigated; I argue also that the presence of discourse impasse, preemptive judgments, and exclusionary policies on the part of Church leaders make it likely that we are in the midst of another Galileo Affair.

Craig A. Ford, Jr., Ph.D. (Boston College), is Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at St. Norbert College in De Pere, WI. He is also on faculty at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, the United States’ only Catholic Historically Black College or University (HBCU). He writes at the intersection of Queer theory/theology, Black studies, and the Catholic moral tradition. He is the recipient, for the present essay, of the Catholic Theological Society of America’s 2022 Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award.

Gremmels, Beckert. “Sex Reassignment Surgery and the Catholic Moral Tradition: Insight from Pope Pius XII on the Principle of Totality.” *Catholic Health Association* (2016)
<https://www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/hceusa/sex-reassignment-surgery-and-the-catholic-moral-tradition.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

From Daniel Horan’s analysis in his own article, “US bishops’ document against transgender health care is a disaster.” *National Catholic Reporter* (March 23, 2023)
<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/us-bishops-document-against-transgender-health-care-disaster> states

Gremmels, who is system vice president of theology and ethics at CommonSpirit Health, acknowledges that this is an area of medical, psychological and sociological research that is ongoing and that we must approach these complex questions with intellectual humility; that we have a lot we must still learn before we can make absolute moral claims....

Gremmels concludes his article acknowledging that many questions still need to be considered and that we cannot rush to conclusions. Importantly, on the question of the principle of totality, on which the U.S. bishops' statement places significant justificatory weight, Gremmels writes: "In the meantime, we can at least be confident that Pope Pius XII's insights on the principle of totality show that simply because SRS [sex reassignment surgery] removes healthy, non-pathological body parts and results in sterility does not mean it is unjustified."

. "More Insight from Pius XII, a Reply to Brugger and Brehany, and a Clarification."

Catholic Health Association (2016)

<https://www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/hceusa/more-insight-from-pius-xii-a-reply-to-brugger-and-brehany-and-a-clarification.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Gress, Carrie. "LGBTQ+ May Seem New, but It Grew From an Old Ideology." *National Catholic Register* of the EWTN Media Empire (June 6, 2023)

https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/lgbtq-may-seem-new-but-it-grew-from-an-old-ideology?utm_campaign=NCR&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=261515948&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-aLROQkMRTBEMfVjN93pEkG3jgzHQBmlduRKtRX1u9zcJrq8T0vxcE4HsNynFN1geAR8fsLxFavhhSrxsz2M2Dc4sQLw&utm_content=261515948&utm_source=hs_email



Her thesis: "The ideas underpinning our societal wreckage are much older than most of us realize. The blueprint for it was set centuries ago, going back to the earliest stages of the feminist movement.

Carrie Gress, Ph.D., is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a scholar at the Institute for Human Ecology at The Catholic University of America. She is the editor at the online women's magazine Theology of Home and co-author of its book series. Holding a doctorate from The Catholic University of America, she is the author of several books, including *The End of Woman: How Smashing the Patriarchy Has Destroyed Us*, *The Marian Option: God's Solution to a Civilization in Crisis* and *The Anti-Mary Exposed: Rescuing the Culture from Toxic Femininity*. Carrie is the co-author with George Weigel of *City of Saints: A Pilgrims Guide to John Paul II's Krakow*. A home-schooling mother of five, she and her family live in Virginia. Visit her blog at www.carriegress.com.

Imhoff, Sarah. "Nonbinary gender would have been no surprise to ancient rabbis." *Religion News Service (RNS)* (July 7, 2023)

<https://religionnews.com/2023/07/07/nonbinary-gender-beyond-male-and-female-would-have-been-no-surprise-to-ancient-rabbis/>

“Genderqueer” and “nonbinary” are contemporary terms for people who [don’t fit neatly into male or female categories](#). But acknowledging that not everyone fits neatly into those two groups has a much longer history than you might suspect.

As [a scholar of Judaism and gender](#), I find that people across the political spectrum often assume religion must be inherently conservative and unchanging when it comes to sex and gender. They imagine that religions have always embraced a world in which there are only men and women.

But for Judaism – and [for many other religious traditions](#), too – history shows that’s just not true.

Traditional Jewish sources discuss the categories “man” and “woman,” but these aren’t the only designations rabbinic texts use for sex and gender.

Rabbinic literature, the body of texts written by Jewish leaders in antiquity, includes several other categories. In these texts, a person with both sets of external genitalia is called an “androgynos,” a term borrowed from Greek. A person with neither is called a “tumtum,” and a person who loses his male sexual organs [is called a “saris.”](#) There is also a term for someone whose sex assigned at birth is female but does not develop to female sexual maturity – in some cases, because they develop “male” traits: [an “aylonit.”](#)

For example, [Genesis Rabbah](#), a collection of creative Biblical interpretation from late antiquity, records an interpretation of a creation story in [the biblical book of Genesis](#) in which God forms the first humans. Genesis 1 includes the phrase, “Male and female He created them,” which many readers interpret to mean that God created a man and a woman.

But some of the rabbis quoted in Genesis Rabbah believed that God had made an androgynos.

[One rabbi explained](#): “In the hour when the Holy One Blessed Be He created the first human, He created an androgynos, as it is written, ‘male and female He created them.’”

The Mishnah, a text compiled in the third century C.E. which includes halakhic material, roots its interpretations in the categories men and women, yet also affirms the idea that sex and gender go beyond those terms.

For example, [a section called Mishnah Bikkurim](#) explains: “There are some ways the androgynos is like men, and some ways he is like women, and some ways he is like men and women, and some ways he is like neither men nor women.” Another section of the Mishnah explains that, like women, neither a tumtum nor an androgynos [is obligated to go to the Temple](#) in Jerusalem as part of certain religious festivals. Meanwhile, an androgynos must [dress like a man](#), and a priest cannot [marry an aylonit](#) unless he already has children.

It is also important to note how these categories differ from the ways people understand gender today. A nonbinary person [in the 21st century](#) does not have the same experience as a tumtum in late antiquity. The idea of “aylonit” does not map clearly onto any common gender identity today. Even the term “androgynos” is not quite the same as intersex. And none of the rabbinic categories match current ideas about trans identity.

Many of these Jews recognize that the [diversity of sex and gender](#) in these ancient texts is different from gender identity today, but they believe the past can still serve as [an important tool](#) in the present.

Rabbinic texts illustrate that there is no magical time in the past when every person fit easily and naturally into gender categories.

Sarah Imhoff is a professor of religious studies at Indiana University.

For a related article that complements this biblical interpretation see Richard Clifford, S.J. 'Using "Male and female he created them" to adjudicate gender controversies is 'thoroughly misguided'. *Outreach* (June 25, 2023)
<https://outreach.faith/2023/06/richard-j-clifford-s-j-using-male-and-female-he-created-the-m-to-adjudicate-gender-identity-controversies-is-thoroughly-misguided/>

Jeon, Namun. “Swapping Gender Traditionalism: Christianity, Buddhism, and Gender Ideology in South Korea.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 62/2 (June 2023)
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12826> First published: 07 February 2023

Abstract South Korea provides an ideal setting for studying religion and gender because Western and local religions are both prominent, and Confucianist beliefs still shape gender norms. Using the 2018 Korean General Social Survey, this study examines the extent to which two dimensions of gender traditionalism in South Korea—Confucian patriarchal ideology (i.e., belief in the subordination of women for Confucian patriarchy) and separate spheres ideology (i.e., belief that men are better suited to work and women to domestic responsibilities)—vary across Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and the nonaffiliated. The findings show that Christians have the lowest endorsement for Confucian patriarchal ideology while supporting separate spheres ideology as much as Buddhists, who are most gender traditional in both dimensions. The results illustrate the dynamics between religion and gender norms in South Korea's context, demonstrating how Christianity combines Western modernization with gender-essentialist traditionalism, while Buddhism maintains Confucian patriarchal values.

Kolakowski, Victoria S. “Toward a Christian Ethical Response to Transsexual Persons.” *Theology and Sexuality* 6 (March 1997): 10-31.

The author is a post-operative transsexual who offers this well-written account of some of the ethical issues involved in reflecting on the meaning of transsexuality.

Mahdawi, Arwa. “After his executive order on sex, is Trump legally the first female president?” *The Guardian* (January 25, 2025)

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jan/25/trump-executive-order-sex?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-1

“‘Female’ means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the large reproductive cell,” reads the order. “‘Male’ means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the small reproductive cell.”

Is Trump the first female president?

Has the moment we’ve all been waiting for arrived? After both Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris failed to break the biggest glass ceiling, has a woman finally ascended to the highest office in America? Legally speaking, is Donald J Trump the first female president?

There was a flurry of commentary this week suggesting that, by the Trump administration’s own definition, this could very well be the case. On Monday, you see, Trump kicked off his second term by signing a barrage of executive orders, including one stating that sex starts at the moment of conception – at which point, Trumpian science decrees, you are female or male and that’s it.

“‘Female’ means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the large reproductive cell,” reads the order. “‘Male’ means a person belonging, at conception, to the sex that produces the small reproductive cell.”

Despite Trump’s decree that sex is “immutable”, the wording of his executive order left some room for interpretation. Indeed, some critics noted that because the undifferentiated genitalia that males and females share very early in fetal development are “phenotypically female”, you could argue he just made everyone legally female.

Most scientists now reject the idea that sex is strictly binary. The likes of *Nature*, possibly one of the most prestigious scientific journals in the world, has noted that “the research and medical community now sees sex as more complex than male and female”. And there’s a huge amount of disagreement as to how these categories should be described. “Scientists ourselves cannot agree on how to define the two sexes,” Rachel Levin, a Pomona College neuroscientist who studies the development of sex, told me over the phone. “To say that sex is simple and easily defined – and defined at conception – is factually incorrect.”

There are lots of factors that contribute to how we think about sex, including physical characteristics, hormone levels, gamete size (larger gametes are eggs while smaller gametes are sperm), sex chromosomes, etc. Trump’s executive order seems to tie sex to just gamete size at conception. This is despite the fact that a lot of academics have moved away from a sex-classification system based primarily on gametes because some people will never produce a gamete. And, while it’s true that most people inherit either XX (typically female) or XY (typically male) chromosomes at conception, declaring that sex is determined so early is overly simplistic. “Most of us develop along a certain fairly common pathway, but a lot of us do not,” Levin notes. “One really important thing for the

public to realize is that the president declaring something to be the case doesn't make it true.

What all this boils down to, in short, is that sex is a hell of a lot more complicated than Trump's executive order would have you believe. Shocking, I know. Who would have thought that the guy who suggested "nuking hurricanes" to stop them hitting America wouldn't be the most trustworthy scientific voice?

I'll tell you what is clear, though: Trump's executive order has absolutely nothing to do with its stated intention of "defending women". Rather, abortion-rights supporters are warning that its focus on sex being determined at "conception" seems to point to Trump's embrace of "fetal personhood": the idea that life begins at conception and that embryos and fetuses deserve full legal rights and protections.

"I think this was an intentional way to continue to normalize the idea that embryos are people," said Dana Sussman, senior vice-president of Pregnancy Justice, told the Guardian. "This is yet another attempt to codify it in one form or another."

And these attempts to give embryos full legal rights – which could result in miscarriages being treated as manslaughter – are only going to continue. We've only had a week of Trump and, I don't know about you, but I'm already exhausted.

Meckler, Laura. "Trans kids crave acceptance at school in a nation that often resists it."

Washington Post (May 24, 2023)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/24/trans-kids-school-poll-laws/>

A Washington Post-KFF poll conducted in late 2022 found that about 1 in 3 transgender adults was 10 years old or younger when they began to understand that their gender was different from their sex assigned at birth. Forty-five percent of them said they felt unsafe at school, the place where they spent most of their time and where acceptance or rejection can make a deep impression. The isolation and discrimination that many trans people experience can lead to depression, substance abuse, self harm and suicide, experts say. ...

In other words, what trans Americans say is needed appears at odds with what many Americans appear comfortable providing. That's unsettling to the trans community at a time when gender identity has taken center stage in the culture wars and Republican lawmakers have attacked the very existence of trans people.

The poll found support for teaching these issues in high school, with more than 6 in 10 saying it was appropriate. Americans were divided when asked about middle school. But at the same time, nearly 7 in 10 Americans supported laws that would bar discrimination against trans people in K-12 schools.

Republicans are turning the discomfort into legislation. Lawmakers across the country have introduced more than 400 anti-trans bills this year, up from about 150 in 2022, according to a Post analysis of ACLU data. Several states have enacted measures that bar

teachers from discussing gender or sexuality in the classroom. In some cases, the laws target younger students, though in Florida, for instance, state policy covers all grades. And books with LGBTQ themes are frequently subject to school book challenges.

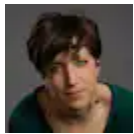
Trans advocates say that affirming trans identity is essential to raising emotionally healthy and academically successful students. The Post-KFF poll found that trans adults who had a trusted adult to talk to about personal issues when growing up were significantly more likely to say they are satisfied with their lives today.

The article includes quite a number of first-person accounts of trans individuals.

Natanson, Hannah. "School is a 'nightmare' for trans and nonbinary kids. Here's why."

Washington Post (April 12, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/interactive/2023/trans-kids-school-stress/?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere&location=alert



The poll found that 45 percent of trans adults felt unsafe in school, compared with 37 percent who felt unsafe at religious gatherings, 30 percent who felt unsafe in their homes and 25 percent who felt unsafe participating in youth sports or extracurriculars. In each of these situations, cisgender people were far more likely to report positive experiences, with just 10 percent of cisgender adults recalling feeling unsafe at school.

Poor treatment at school can spur mental health crises, curbing academic achievement and generating consequences that span lifetimes. The Post-KFF poll found that, compared with Americans as a whole, trans adults are more than twice as likely to face depression or anxiety growing up. In Idaho, Scott said his sufferings at school led to a suicide attempt at age 15 and decades of substance abuse.

Ortiz, April. "I Am A Trans Texan." *Texas Observer* (March 16, 2023)

<https://www.texasobserver.org/i-am-a-trans-texan/> **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iRePU4Xv7wC8mhZ8FVpVTYmWuurZT2qM/view?usp=share_link

A Texas state resident ties the current gender panic to fascist politics through the lens of their own experience.

I'm hardly an ideal spokesperson. I'm 43, and I've lived my entire life up to this point (with fleeting exceptions) in the gender assigned to me at birth, which is male. Think of my biography as a cautionary tale. It's painful and messy, and I'm going to tell you some of it. You may find this unpleasant, but I have no other way to say what I need to say.

Only bear in mind that my experiences, though common, are not normative. I don't speak for anyone but myself.

But something seemed to be awry in me for, as far back as I can remember, I felt that I ought to have been a girl, or that in some strange way, I really was a girl, even though everyone treated me as a boy.

Adults policed my gender expression conscientiously, and I inferred that my feelings were unnatural and shameful. Still, I would sit in the pew at church as my parents took communion—we were Catholic—and silently rank which of the women who passed me I would most like to grow up to be. As a small, less-than-masculine child who hated sports, I became the target of bullying once I went to school. But I would lie awake every night, imagining myself becoming a girl—my only refuge from my strange alien existence.

Survey the [research](#): It shows, overwhelmingly, that attempts to “[convert](#)” gender nonconforming people into traditional gender identities and other forms of [rejection](#) are [ineffective and traumatizing](#)—in fact, the scientific consensus is that all forms of conversion therapy aimed at altering a person's sexual orientation or gender identity result in long-term harm—while care that affirms gender identity results almost universally in [positive outcomes](#). It's also clear that what negative outcomes do occur owe largely to hostile environments.

By the time I graduated, my mounting dysphoria and social problems—I also had an undiagnosed autism disorder—led me to begin planning suicide. In secret, I painted a picture of a girl cutting her wrists. I was the girl, you see. In recurring dreams, I was a young mother. Despair held sway over my waking life.

It was either leave home or die, so I moved across the state for college. My plan was to wait a few weeks and, if nothing changed, to kill myself in a shower stall. Something *did* change: I found love and acceptance in the woman who became my best friend and then my wife. Several years later, I was still alive, presenting as female in the privacy of our home and as male when I went out. This made me happy. For the first time in my life, I began to approach peace.

My attempts to cope with gender dissonance have consumed much of my life, taking hours away from each day, isolating me from loved ones, alienating me from my body, leading to bouts of depression, ideations of suicide, and alcohol abuse. *It doesn't go away*. In middle age, I'm forced to recognize that nothing short of being who I am will resolve my profound inner conflict. The word “transition” is terrifying but, however catastrophic the process of coming out may be, I'll not be much good to those I love if I'm burned out, incapacitated, or dead.

A growing body of research supports the thesis that gender incongruence has a biological basis, though the causes are a matter of dispute in the scientific community. Studies also indicate that the only effective treatment is gender-affirming care. Opponents of gender-affirming care often call it “[experimental](#).” But the first gender reassignment

surgeries were performed over a century ago. The use of hormones in gender-affirming care began as early as 1918. To put that in perspective, recall that the first heart transplant was performed in 1967.

Parker, Julie Faith. “In the Bible, gender is not binary.” *Christian Century* (June 2025)

https://www.christiancentury.org/features/bible-gender-not-binary?utm_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4a39c6c187-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_EdPicks_2025-06-17&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b00cd618da-4a39c6c187-224056012 **Also**

found at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V77u-d4znDCrx54ypDHRIKIQ4DJ_quq6/view?usp=drive_link

Any biblical text can be understood on various levels and in multiple ways. An anti-queer biblical interpretation, like any other, stems from the reader’s own presuppositions and biases interacting with a specific passage. Interpretations take root and have life when there is a community to adopt and share them. In this way, damaging interpretations of the Bible have been wielded against queer people through churches, often without any recognition that there are other ways to read these same texts.

Instead of attempting an exhaustive catalog of everything in the universe, the writers instead offer a series of merisms. This literary device names two ends of a spectrum and implicitly includes all that lies in between. An example of a merism can be found today in traditional wedding vows when people pledge to stand by each other “for richer or for poorer.” No one assumes the marriage should break up if their financial situation stays the same! Rather, the merism conveys totality by mentioning opposite parts to signal expansive inclusion.

The Bible employs merisms repeatedly. ...

The creation of male and female (Gen. 1:26–27) can also be read as a merism, consistent with the rest of this account. On day six, God makes these distinct humans as ends of the gender spectrum. In between are the people with other identities: transgender, intersex, nonbinary, and all gender-expansive people. Recognition of this fullness may be why God speaks of creating humans “in our image” (Gen. 1:26, emphasis added), underscoring inclusion. The binary language of male and female doesn’t happen until the following verse, establishing the polarity as another merism. God then pronounces this spectrum of human genders, along with the rest of this day’s creation, as “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

This essay is an expansion of a section of Parker’s book *Eve Isn’t Evil: Feminist Readings of the Bible to Upend Our Assumptions*, published in 2023 by Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group. Used by permission.

Parks, Casey, Emily Guskin and Scott Clement. “Most trans adults say transitioning made them more satisfied with their lives.” *Washington Post* (March 23, 2023)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/23/transgender-adults-transitioning-poll/?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere&location=alert **Also found at** https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jn_KRAIzfN8gEoHjOo_EFNXDs0uy9XMu/view?usp=share_link

The Washington Post and KFF surveyed one of the largest randomized samples of U.S. transgender adults to date about their childhoods, feelings and lives. This article does a good in-depth look at a cross-section on the reporting the various issues and responses individuals have encountered in their own lives.

Transgender Americans experience stigma and systemic inequality in many aspects of their lives, including education, work and health-care access, a wide-ranging Washington Post-KFF poll finds.

Many have been harassed or verbally abused. They've been kicked out of their homes, denied health care and accosted in bathrooms. A quarter have been physically attacked, and about 1 in 5 have been fired or lost out on a promotion because of their gender identity. They are more than twice as likely as the population at large to have experienced serious mental health struggles such as depression.

Yet most trans adults say transitioning has made them more satisfied with their lives.

The Post-KFF survey finds that trans adults hold widely different ideas about what it means to transition. While most trans people have socially transitioned, meaning they've changed their clothing, names or pronouns, far fewer have medically transitioned. Less than a third have used hormone treatments or puberty blockers, and about 1 in 6 have undergone gender-affirming surgery or other surgical treatment to change their physical appearance.

Paul, Pamela. "As Kids, They Thought They Were Trans. They No Longer Do." *New York Times* (February 2, 2024)

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/02/opinion/transgender-children-gender-dysphoria.html?algo=clicks_decay_96&block=5&campaign_id=142&emc=edit_fory_20240205&fellback=true&imp_id=7720183637728241&instance_id=114409&nl=for-you&nid=87222459&pool=fye-rotating-opinion-ls&rank=1®i_id=87222459&req_id=3282843398819213&segment_id=157378&surface=for-you-email-rotating-X&user_id=8ea4fc421d34b15860d74fb3fd4c8a5a&variant=0_best_algo **Also found at** https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yKHPb79oQ3gzkcVQ4CWkKQj-VoZjUZDo/view?usp=drive_link

Thoughtfully done look at the transgender debate, considering those who may have gone into transition too early, or to treat other psychological issues. The study may support going more slowly in moving towards transgender treatment for gender dysphoria.

"Transgender activists have pushed their own ideological extremism, especially by pressing for a treatment orthodoxy that has faced [increased scrutiny](#) in recent years. Under that model of care, clinicians are expected to affirm a young person's assertion of gender identity and even provide medical treatment before, or even without, exploring other possible sources of distress.

Many who think there needs to be a more cautious approach — including well-meaning liberal parents, doctors and people who have undergone gender transition and subsequently regretted their procedures — have been attacked as anti-trans and intimidated into silencing their concerns. ...

Gay men and women often told me they fear that same-sex-attracted kids, especially effeminate boys and tomboy girls who are gender nonconforming, will be transitioned during a normal phase of childhood and before sexual maturation — and that gender ideology [can mask](#) and even [abet homophobia](#). ...

To the trans activist dictum that [children know](#) their gender best, it is important to add something all parents know from experience: Children change their minds all the time. One mother told me that after her teenage son desisted — pulled back from a trans identity before any irreversible medical procedures — he explained, “I was just rebelling. I look at it like a subculture, like being goth.” ...

Studies show that around eight in 10 cases of [childhood gender dysphoria](#) [resolve](#) themselves by puberty and 30 percent of people on hormone therapy [discontinue its use](#) within four years, though the effects, including [infertility](#), are often [irreversible](#). ...

Nobody knows how many young people desist after social, medical or surgical transitions. Trans activists often cite low [regret rates](#) for gender transition, along with [low figures](#) for detransition. But those studies, which often rely on self-reported cases to gender clinics, likely understate the actual numbers. None of the seven detransitioners I interviewed, for instance, even considered reporting back to the gender clinics that prescribed them medication they now consider to have been a mistake. Nor did they know any other detransitioners who had done so. ...

Garcia-Ryan is gay, but as a boy, he said, “it was much less threatening to my psyche to think that I was a straight girl born into the wrong body — that I had a medical condition that could be tended to.” When he visited a clinic at 15, the clinician immediately affirmed he was female, and rather than explore the reasons for his mental distress, simply confirmed Garcia-Ryan’s belief that he was not meant to be a man.

Once in college, he began medically transitioning and eventually had surgery on his genitals. Severe medical complications from both the surgery and hormone medication led him to reconsider what he had done, and to detransition. He also reconsidered the basis of gender affirmation, which, as a licensed clinical social worker at a gender clinic, he had been trained in and provided to clients. ...

Garcia-Ryan, 32, is now the board president of [Therapy First](#), an organization that supports therapists who do not agree with the gender affirmation model. He thinks transition can help some people manage the symptoms of gender dysphoria but no longer believes anyone under 25 should socially, medically or surgically transition without exploratory psychotherapy first.”

PBS News Hour. “Parents share why gender-affirming care is vital for their trans kids.” (March 7, 2023) <https://youtu.be/x5u4cBaZpdM> (9:52)

Across the country, at least 150 bills have been filed by Republican legislators targeting transgender Americans. Roughly 100 of those bills specifically restrict doctors and other providers from offering transition-related health care for minors. The PBS NewsHour spoke with concerned parents whose children are most impacted.

Reid, Sr. Barbara, O.P. “Does God have a gender?” *U.S. Catholic* (March 14, 2023)

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/202303/does-god-have-a-gender/>

The short answer to this question is no. Gender is something that belongs to humans; God is beyond gender. But because we believe in a personal God, and people are gendered, some of us can't help but envision God as having a gender.

Throughout Christian tradition, believers have leaned heavily toward depicting God as male. Lord (Ps. 6:2; 23:1), King (Ps. 10:16; 24:8), and Father (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2) are among the most dominant images. However, while there is biblical support for these images, there are also many biblical texts that envision God as female. For example, Moses warns the Israelites not to forget “the God who gave you birth” (Deut. 32:18). When Israel is being rebirthed after the Babylonian exile, the prophet Isaiah speaks of God as being like “a woman in labor” bringing the Israelites to new life (Isa. 42:14). Further, Isaiah speaks of God's tenderness toward Israel like that of a mother consoling her child (Isa. 49:15; 66:13). Both Isaiah and the psalmist portray God as a midwife, helping the renewed Israel come forth from the womb (Isa. 66:9; Ps. 22:10–11). In several gospel parables, Jesus speaks of God and himself as being like a woman who hides yeast in bread dough (Luke 13:20–21), who searches for a lost coin (Luke 15:8–10), or who confronts an unjust judge and demands justice (Luke 18:1–8). ...

Moreover, when we affirm that God is beyond gender, it opens the way for acceptance of all people, whatever their gender identity—be it cisgender, transgender, or anywhere on the gender spectrum—as equally made in God's image and likeness. God is not confined to any gender, and God's loving being encompasses all.

A short report on this article is presented by Angela Howard-McParland “Affirming God Is Beyond Gender Opens Pathways to LGBTQ+ Inclusion, Writes Theologian.” *New Ways Ministry* (May 2, 2023)

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/05/02/affirming-god-is-beyond-gender-opens-pathways-to-lgbtq-inclusion-writes-theologian/>

Ruiz, Ish. “Synodality in the Catholic Church: Toward a New Ecclesiology of Inclusion for LGBTQ+ Persons.” *Journal of Moral Theology* 12/2 (July 18, 2023): 55-77.

<https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.84391> Also found at

<https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/article/84391-synodality-in-the-catholic-church-toward-a-new-ecclesiology-of-inclusion-for-lgbtq-persons>

Scott, Katie Collins. “2 conservative groups influence US Catholic transgender policies.”

National Catholic Reporter (May 21, 2024)

https://www.ncronline.org/news/2-conservative-groups-influence-us-catholic-transgender-policies?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=bd6474389b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_05_21_10_37&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-bd6474389b-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Over the past several years, as debates about transgender rights and [medical treatments](#) intensified both in the [U.S. political sphere](#) and the [Catholic Church](#), two conservative Catholic groups have played a consequential but often undisclosed role as they attempt to shape policies and perspectives about trans individuals, especially young people.

Staff of the [Person and Identity Project](#), an initiative of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., provide legal firepower to transgender-related court cases, have the ear of U.S. bishops, offer talks and resources to thousands of Catholics, and have served as consultants for an undisclosed number of controversial diocesan [LGBTQ policies](#).

An NCR analysis additionally found a quarter of those diocesan guidelines contain at least some language that appears on a policy template created by [The Cardinal Newman Society](#), a nonprofit based in a D.C. suburb and best known as a [self-appointed watchdog](#) for [Catholic colleges](#).

Tushnet, Eve. “Young LGBT Catholics need to know they belong in the church. I’m creating a curriculum to tell them that.” *America* (June 26, 2023)
https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2023/06/26/lgbt-catholic-resources-245546?pnid=7758U3wbL.oL2.jfvyWwSo_FphpRYZzc.Oy0_Rpo0Jm5EQgMACCmAEC45.EtclmZ31XybE_&utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928



Some of our resources will be aimed at educators who hope to serve non-straight young people better; some speak directly to high schoolers, like worksheets telling the stories of orthodox, queer, Catholic lives in ways that are relevant to students of all sexual orientations. Some resources will help parents navigate complex cultural changes in ways that will help them create a faithful and welcoming Catholic home, regardless of whether their own kids come out or not. I expect that some places will use our materials piecemeal, while other parishes or dioceses will become almost like partners. We hope to offer larger events that might include public panel discussions, workshops for priests, mentorship training and devotional events for the local L.G.B.T. community. Our hope is to help everyone envision a church in which queer Catholics are present.

Our Founding Principles

Together, we developed three principles to anchor our materials. First, start the conversation. By this we mean the materials should not just be a reaction to the status quo, but should also propose Catholic visions for gay people’s flourishing. Second, tell real people’s stories in ways that are relevant to Catholics of all sexual orientations. And third, focus on vocation before chastity. In doing so we remember that ordered sexuality is only one part of ordering our hearts to respond to God’s infinite love.

Eve Tushnet is the author of several books, most recently *Tenderness: A Gay Christian's Guide to Unlearning Rejection and Experiencing God's Extravagant Love* (Ave Maria Press).

Vinney, Cynthia, Ph.D. "Gender vs. Sexuality: What's the Difference?" *verywellmind* (April 14, 2023)
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-difference-between-gender-and-sexuality-5207899> Also found at
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sTarNXu_oakJsuB1LyFn46o_AZSxCJQp/view?usp=sharing



Gender and sexuality are often assumed to be related concepts but, in reality, they are separate and distinct. Understanding the difference between gender vs. sexuality is important because, while both are important parts of an individual's sense of self, if you don't know what each one is, you may make incorrect assumptions.

This article begins by defining gender identity and describing the differences between gender identity, gender expression, and sex. It then defines sexual orientation and discusses sexual fluidity. Finally, it details the impact of discrimination against gender diverse and sexual minority individuals and the factors that can help mediate the negative effects of stigma and prejudice.

- **Gender** is socially constructed and one's innermost concept of themselves as a man, woman, and/or nonbinary person. People define their gender identity in a variety of deeply personal ways that can include man or woman, but can also extend to identities such as agender, [genderfluid](#), [gender nonconforming](#), and a [variety of others](#).²
- **Sexuality** refers to who a person is attracted to and can include a plethora of orientations. While being gay, heterosexual, and bisexual are perhaps the most well-known sexual orientations, there are [many others](#), such as [asexual](#) and [pansexual](#).

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines gender identity as "a person's deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male; a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender, which may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth."¹

Gender identity is personal and an inherent part of an individual's sense of self. While gender is often presented as a binary that only includes men and women, in reality, gender is a spectrum and people can define their gender in a variety of ways, including as a combination of woman and man, a completely separate gender, or as no gender at all.

Cynthia Vinney, PhD is an expert in media psychology and a published scholar whose work has been published in peer-reviewed psychology journals

Wan, William. “She lost her trans son to suicide. Can a Kentucky lawmaker make her colleagues care?” *Washington Post* (March 26, 2023)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/25/transgender-suicide-karen-berg-henry-brousseau-kentucky/?utm_campaign=wp_news_alert_revere_trending_now&utm_medium=email&utm_source=alert&location=alert **Also found at**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oyYJMDZB9JpTnlJd8CNvwFfFne0lzHXy/view?usp=share_link

“If they’re going to pass these bills,” she said, “I want them to see me and my dead child and know that they are killing other Henrys out there.”

As a doctor, Karen had pored over research about transgender teens. She’d read about the terrifying rates of anxiety, depression and PTSD because of the hostility they encountered. She knew that almost half of trans teens experienced suicidal thoughts, that more than a third try to kill themselves.

With Henry’s help, Karen won. In 2020, she entered the Kentucky legislature as its first Jewish female physician — and the only state senator with a transgender son.

State legislatures were being inundated with anti-LGBTQ bills — 315 in 2022 alone, according to the Human Rights Campaign. Transgender teens, in particular, had become a favorite conservative target. In Texas, state leaders ordered child protective services to [investigate parents](#) of transgender kids. Florida [passed legislation](#) restricting what elementary school teachers could say about gender identity and sexual orientation. Arkansas made it illegal for doctors to [provide gender-affirming](#) care to kids.

Gay teachers were being portrayed as pedophiles trying to groom kids. Schools acknowledging the existence of trans people were accused of encouraging kids to have sex-reassignment surgery.

Henry spent weeks knocking down a [bizarre false claim](#) that schools were installing litter boxes for students to pee in because they wanted to be identified as cats.

In spring of 2022, he went to the hospital after his body began convulsing. The doctors ran neurological tests and told him he was experiencing psychogenic seizures — convulsions that looked like epilepsy but were caused by distress and trauma.

In December, he told his mom about the mounting number of anti-trans bills he was fighting at work. He was dreading the approaching legislative season.

“He could see how many more bills would be coming this year,” she said. “He said, ‘Mom, I’m tired and scared.’”

On Dec. 15, Henry went out with his kickball friends for a night of karaoke. Like everyone else, Henry had a lot to drink, so he went to Creason’s apartment to sober up.

There, Henry told his friend that he’d recently been struggling with suicidal thoughts again.

Creason persuaded Henry to check himself into the hospital and called an Uber to take him. A few hours later, at 5:30 a.m., Henry sent a text: “You’re going to hate me, but I’m going home. Sorry.”

Concerned, Creason wrote back, “Hit me up tomorrow.”

“I won’t be able to...I’m about to do something really stupid,” Henry replied. Then came a photo of empty pill bottles.

Creason called 911 and rushed over to Henry’s apartment. But by the time he and the police got inside, Henry was dead. ...

When one lawmaker asked why trans children were suddenly popping up everywhere, Karen compared it to left-handed kids.

“You look at the data in the 1950s and ’60s when we stopped forcing kids to be right-handed. The number of left-handed children exploded exponentially, then plateaued,” she said. “They were always there but never were allowed to exist.”

In 2015, Wise had been one of the Republicans praising Henry’s testimony. Now, as a GOP candidate for lieutenant governor, he wanted to allow teachers to call trans teens by their birth names and pronouns even if they were asked not to. His measure would become known as the pronoun bill.

Wise, who declined requests for an interview, attacked state education materials suggesting teachers use trans students’ declared pronouns.

“This is absolute nonsense that has no place within our educational system,” he said, deriding “the new pronouns that seem to land in Webster’s Dictionary daily” and “woke ideologies” emanating from Washington.

Wise invoked the “litter box” myth that Henry had spent weeks debunking. He warned of teachers being fired for not calling supposed “furry” students by their “pet names.”

From three seats away, Karen sat in shock as the chamber erupted in applause.

She rose to give a short response: “I’m going to make an open plea to the members of this body that we avoid politicizing issues that are literally killing our children, that are literally putting them into the grave.”

No one clapped. ...

“I’m no longer speaking for my child,” she said when it was her turn to talk. “You know my child is dead. I am speaking for every mother and father who has held my hand with tears running down their face, saying, ‘What do we do?’”

She pointed out the ramps schools build for children in wheelchairs and the peanut bans for children allergic to nuts. So why not call trans kids by their rightful pronouns, she demanded, “an accommodation that costs you nothing? Zero!”

“Your vote ‘yes’ on this bill means one of two things. Either you believe that trans children do not exist or you believe that trans children do not deserve to exist.”

The chamber was quiet as the clerk called out the senators' names to vote. Some almost whispered their response, but Karen could see their names turning green as yes votes were recorded on a screen above.

Then it was over, 29 to 6. Not a single Republican vote against the pronoun bill.

In the coming days, senators would add more provisions banning gender-affirming care and prohibiting schools from discussing sexual orientation or gender identity — measures that would prompt a veto by the governor and the prospect of a vote to override him.



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