



Gender/Transgender Pastoral Guidelines and Policy

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PASTORAL GUIDELINES

The guidelines and policies promulgated by this document are intended to assist in the evaluation of gender identity and inform our pastoral practice so we might support people who come to us with gender related questions in a way that effectively supports the Church's mission of evangelization. As we are reminded in the United States Catholic Bishops' Conference Document *Go and Make Disciples* "...evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation" (United States Catholic Bishops Conference *Go and Make Disciples* (GMD) no. 100).

Throughout the remainder of this document the phrase "transgender persons" refers to those who are exploring their gender identity or who identify as transgender or non-binary. Though the primary focus of this document is transgender persons, it is in part applicable to all individuals.

The Catholic Church proclaims the dignity of every human person and the sacredness of human life. Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. In love and mercy, God embraces each of us in the fullness of our humanity. As a Church, we are called to embrace one another with the same love and kindness in every aspect of our human condition.

In God's Image and Likeness

"God created mankind in his image; in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). God intentionally created human beings as male and female to be complementary to each other in reflection of God's image. It is the complementarity of our sexuality as male and female that calls us to participate with God in cocreating new human life. The Vatican's CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION Document *Male and Female He Created Them* exhorts: "We acknowledge and affirm that all human beings are created by God and thereby have an inherent dignity. We also believe that God created each person male or female; therefore, sexual difference is not an accident or a flaw—it is a gift from God that helps draw us closer to each other and to God. What God has created is good."

We, therefore, must compassionately accompany transgender persons, regardless of age or stage of life.

Foundations of Ministry

Our ministry to transgender persons must be informed and guided by the following:

I. All persons have an inherent dignity because they are created in God's image

A deep respect for the total person leads the Church to hold and teach that sexuality is a gift from God.

Being created a male or female person is an essential part of the divine plan, for it is their sexuality—a mysterious blend of spirit and body—that allows human beings to share in God's own creative love and life.

II. Like all gifts from God, the power and freedom of sexuality can be channeled toward good or evil

Everyone, with the help of God's grace, is called to practice the virtue of chastity. Chastity means integrating one's thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding human sexuality, in a way that values and respects one's own dignity and that of others. It is "the spiritual power which frees love from selfishness and aggression" (Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1996, no. 16).

III. The need for accompaniment is our call to minister

Transgender persons may suffer greatly and must be treated with great compassion and sympathy.

It is important to acknowledge that femininity and masculinity as expressions of sexual identity vary from culture to culture, have a range of expression within communities, and may evolve as part of the natural development of individual persons.

“A person's discomfort with his or her sex, or the desire to be identified as the other sex, is a complicated reality that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and truth. Each person deserves to be heard and treated with respect; it is our responsibility to respond to their concerns with compassion, mercy, and honesty. As religious leaders, we express our commitment to urge the members of our communities to respond to those wrestling with this challenge with patience and love” (Vatican’s CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION. *Male and Female He Created Them*).

However, as Pope Francis cautions, “It needs to be emphasized that biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated (Pope Francis. *Amoris Laetitia* 56).”¹

In our accompaniment of transgender persons, we have the responsibility to be forthright about the physical, emotional, and spiritual dangers of transitioning.

“The attempt must be made to dissuade them from actions that ultimately will not contribute to their individual flourishing and may cause irreversible harm. We must always be with them in their difficulties and help them make truly therapeutic choices. Even when they have engaged in actions that have done irreparable harm, we must continue to accompany them and show them the love and compassion of Christ.”²

¹ See *Amoris Laetitia* (https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf) no. 56 for the context of this quote.

² Final Paragraph, THE NEED FOR ACCOMPANIEMENT from Brief Statement on Transgenderism from The National Catholic Bioethics Center (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3ada1a6a2e8d6a131d1dcd/t/5eb96ca6784e2246467b42b1/1589210278798/Q16.4_05_TransgenderStatement_REV.pdf)

POLICY

This policy is applicable to all ministries within the Diocese of Stockton; including, but not limited to: Catholic Schools; Religious Education and Formation Programs; RCIA; Liturgical Ministries; Pastoral Ministries; Lay Movements. Each entity will determine the arbitrator/decision maker for what violates the following policies.

All persons are to be treated with sensitivity, respect, and compassion All persons are to be honored as created in the image of God. As such they are to be treated with sensitivity, respect, and compassion.

Athletic Participation Youth are eligible to participate on sport teams consistent with their biological sex whether consistent or inconsistent with the record of the school, parish or other diocesan entity due to court ordered change of gender. Some sports and activities may be open to the participation of individuals of both sexes. This policy will remain active, even if the local sporting authority (e.g., CIF) says or allows otherwise.

Bullying/Harassment/Violence All persons have inherent human dignity and are thus deserving of innate respect as persons. Bullying, harassment, threats, or acts of violence against any person based on that person's perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity will not be tolerated.

Chastity All persons are called to chastity in accordance with their state in life. Chastity also encompasses modesty in language, appearance, dress, and behavior. Accordingly, romantic, or sexual displays of affection are not permitted at any school and youth program activities.

Clubs and Students Organizations Students are encouraged to form groups which support one another with the same love and kindness in every aspect of our human condition. All clubs and organizations are required to have administrative approval and to be in alignment with Catholic doctrinal and moral principles. Clubs and organizations that are opposed to Catholic teaching, or who's sponsoring organizations outside school are opposed Catholic teaching, are prohibited from forming or continuing.

Dances Participants must follow the dress code expectations of their biological sex while on campus or on church grounds and while representing the parish/ school at outside functions. Modesty is expected at all times. Consistent with these expectations, students are to refrain from any sexually suggestive behavior both on and off the dance floor.

Dress and Uniform Participants must follow the dress code expectations of their biological sex while on campus or on church grounds and while representing the parish/ school at outside functions. Modesty is expected at all times.

Facilities Use Participants are to use the facilities that conform with the individual's biological sex and to observe modesty when using bathrooms, changing facilities, locker rooms, and showers. Diocesan parishes, organizations, and institutions may have individual-use bathrooms which are available for all members of the respective community.

Field Trips/ Travel Diocesan policies and procedures will be followed for all parish/school related excursions, particularly regarding the appropriate number and type of chaperones. When overnight stays are required for academic, athletic, artistic, spiritual, or other interscholastic events/activities, youth will be placed in sleeping accommodations in which they room with other youth of the same biological sex. Parishes/Schools reserve the right to require families to provide, at their own expense, accommodations for youth who are uncomfortable with these overnight accommodation policies.

Formal Titles and Pronouns All persons will be addressed and referred to with titles and pronouns in accord with their biological sex.

Medication No person is permitted to have on parish or school property or to dispense any medications for the purpose of gender reassignment.

Mission Integrity Catholic education joyfully exercises its responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Parents or guardians whose religious practices and beliefs run counter to Church teaching might experience possible conflicts as we maintain mission integrity. Sincere questioning of the practices of the Catholic faith to more deeply understand them are welcome, but openly hostile, public defiance and challenge of Catholic truths or morality, are signs that a youth, parent, staff or faculty member may not be a fit for our primary evangelical mission and, thus, may be denied admission and/or participation. In Catholic schools, youth and parent may be asked to leave the school.

Official Documents Diplomas, transcripts, school records, and any other official documents of the school, parish, or diocese (official documents) shall be issued in conformity with the youth's biological sex, unless otherwise ordered by court documents. If after graduation an alumnus/alumna legally changes his/her name, for whatever reason, and requests new versions of his/her official school documents, the official school documents may be issued in the following format: "Original Name, n.k.a. New Legal Name."

Sacramental Registers may not be changed. Legally changed names should be notated in the register. Sacramental Certificates may be issued in accordance with legally changed names.

RESOURCES

It is outside the scope of this document to provide concrete and detailed training on the skills required for counseling transgender persons. However, there are many good resources available to assist in understanding issues related to gender, a few of which are included on the Gender webpage on our website.

GLOSSARY

Biological Sex: is a medical classification, as male or female, according to the reproductive organs (internal and genitalia), hormones and functions that derive from the chromosomal complement [generally XX for female and XY for male in Human Beings].

Chastity: The moral virtue which, under the cardinal virtue of temperance, provides for the successful integration of sexuality within the person leading to the inner unity of the bodily and spiritual being. Chastity is called one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Gender: Either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.

Non-Binary: A gender identity for individuals whose gender is outside of or beyond the binary of man and woman; can also be used as an umbrella term for various gender identities.

Modesty: An attitude of humility and decency in dress, grooming, language, and behavior that does not draw undue attention to oneself. Instead, one ought to seek to "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:20; see also verse 19).

Same Sex Attraction and Sexual Orientation: When discussing homosexuality or homosexual inclinations, the use of the term “same-sex attraction” is preferred, as it is a more appropriate description in accordance with the truths of Catholic faith and morals.

Transgender Person: An individual who identifies with a gender different from their biological sex.

This policy becomes effective on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14, 2022.

+ Myron J. Cotta
Bishop of Stockton

Dyan Hollenhorst
Chancellor

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of the Diocese of Stockton
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