



***CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND***  
***Parish & School Policy on Issues of Sexuality and Gender Identity***

The Church, through divine revelation, has been given the gift of knowing that the human person is a unity of both body and soul and that, body and soul, each person is created in God's image. Our bodies, created male and female, are part of God's intentional design in creation and are, therefore, imbued with meaning and purpose. As stewards of these gifts, we are called to accept, love, and care for our bodies as they were created. Catholic institutions, therefore, are called to act and speak in ways that are consistent with and affirming of this divinely revealed truth.

The Church recognizes that there are and will be persons who experience gender dysphoria and/or gender confusion. Such experiences can be complex and emotional to work through and, for some, incredibly burdensome and painful. Such persons can be led to believe that gender and biological sex are entirely separate. In this view, gender represents one's true, inner self, even if inconsistent with our physical sex. This understanding erases those intentional, embodied distinctions between men and women. As such, this view is contrary to the divinely revealed reality of our true, God-given human nature. Catholic Institutions must accompany people experiencing gender dysphoria and be committed both to providing a loving environment and to upholding the truth of God's created reality. As the Catechism teaches, individuals who experience these perceptions or feelings are to be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity and that every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], para. 2358).

All are welcome, with the understanding that by voluntarily accepting the invitation to be a part of a Catholic community, a person also accepts the responsibility of striving to do good and avoiding what is not, consistent with Catholic moral teachings, as well as of upholding the rules and expectations of the that community, which are designed to reflect the fullness of the Church's teachings. A person experiencing gender dysphoria or confusion will not be denied admission to an institution or be excluded from an institution's life and activities simply because he or she is experiencing gender dysphoria or confusion or same-sex attraction. However, those persons who choose to openly express disagreement with Church teaching on matters of sex, sexuality, and /or gender in an inappropriate or scandalous way, or who act in ways contrary to the teachings of the Church, may be subject to restrictions on his or her participation in the life of the institution or, in appropriate cases, to disciplinary action, both for that person's own good and/or the good of others. In order to be faithful instruments of Christ and His Gospel, Catholic institutions must uphold the truths and principles of Christ as expressed by His Church and seek to accompany those experiencing gender dysphoria and/or gender confusion. Jesus Christ provides the model for walking with those in need, in truth and love, and in every way Catholic institutions must seek to imitate this example.

This policy applies to all offices, parishes, parish schools, and diocesan schools of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland (each an "institution") as well as their employees, personnel, volunteers, students, and youth participating in parish or institutional faith formation. For the purposes of this policy, a "parish

school” is any Catholic school founded or operated by a parish or for which the pastor of a parish holds an *ex officio* appointment in regard to the school, including without limitation any inter-parochial schools that have resulted from the merger of any two or more parochial schools. The term “leadership,” for purposes of this policy, shall mean the bishop or his delegate, in the case of the diocese (including diocesan schools) or the parish pastor, in the case of a parish or parish school, in consultation with the school principal if a parish school.

Consistent with this, the following directives are promulgated as particular law for the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland:

- ***Parental Notification.*** In the case of a person who is a minor, if and when a member of the staff or faculty of an institution becomes aware that such minor is experiencing gender dysphoria or gender confusion, the institution shall, with reasonable promptness, notify such minor’s parents or guardian of that fact. The foregoing notwithstanding, if there is a reasonable concern that so notifying the parents of the minor will result in physical abuse of the minor, an institution should in such cases consult with the Diocese Legal Office and the Bishop’s designated moral theologian prior to determining if such information should be disclosed to parents or guardians. The initial presumption, however, should be that such a disclosure should be made absent a compelling reason not to. Furthermore, the fact that a parent or guardian might refuse to utilize preferred pronouns at odds with their child’s God-given biological sex or to otherwise refuse to treat their child in any manner inconsistent with their God-given biological sex is not abuse and is not a compelling reason to not disclose.
- ***Pronouns and Names.*** Only pronouns that accurately reflect a person’s God-given biological sex shall be used when addressing that person. No person may designate a “preferred pronoun” in speech or in writing, and no institution shall permit such designation by any person on institutional email, correspondence, or other communications. Legal names or abbreviated versions of a legal name (e.g., Dan, instead of Daniel), when requested by a person, should be used when addressing a person. Nicknames may be used when addressing a person experiencing gender dysphoria or gender confusion as a pastoral accommodation, provided such is agreed to by parents in the case of minors, and provided that no such nickname shall be used if the purpose and/or effect is to (i) obscure or contradict the person’s God-given biological sex, (ii) promote the idea that one’s gender is different than one’s God-given biological sex, or (iii) if doing so would cause scandal.
- ***Bathrooms and Facilities.*** When using an institution’s bathrooms or facilities, all persons must use the bathrooms or other facilities that correspond to their God-given biological sex. Upon request, accommodation may be made in the sole discretion of the institution’s leadership for the use of available single-user bathrooms.
- ***Single-Sex Institutions, Programs, and Activities.*** A person may only be admitted to an institution that is designated as single-sex consistent with his or her God-given biological sex. A person may only participate in institutional activities (whether curricular or extracurricular, athletics, ministries, or other programs) that are designated as single-sex consistent with his or her God-given biological sex. A possible exception to this is the allowance of biological females competing on athletic teams designated for biological males when deemed appropriate in the sole discretion of the institution’s leadership. Any other type of exception must be approved by the diocesan bishop.

- **Parish or School Dances.** No person may attend a dance, mixer, or similar event sponsored by an institution with a date of the same God-given biological sex or publically express and/or display sexual attraction to or romantic interest in members of the same-sex at such event. An institution may, in its discretion, allow a person to attend such events without a date or companion, with a companion (whether of the same sex or not) who is a platonic friend, or as part of a group of platonic friends.
- **Personal Appearance & Dress.** Every person is expected to present and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their God-given biological sex. Specifically, this means that every person is expected to refrain from acting in a manner the purpose of which is to hold themselves out as being a sex or gender that is inconsistent with the person's God-given biological sex or which, regardless of intent, has the effect of causing confusion or scandal regarding the person's sex or gender relative to the person's God-given biological sex. This includes, but is not limited to, dressing consistent with their God-given biological sex and complying with any applicable sex-specific dress code.
- **Conduct.** No person may publicly advocate or celebrate sexual orientation or identity in ways that are contrary to the Catholic Church's teaching and that could cause disruption, confusion, or scandal regarding the Catholic Church's teachings. This includes, but is not limited to displaying symbols such as "LGBTQ pride" rainbows or "LGBTQ pride" flags or other symbols that can be construed as being opposed to Church teaching. In the case of students, "publicly advocating or celebrating" means advocating or celebrating as described in the preceding sentence while on the institution's property or at any type of event sponsored by the institution or in which the institution is participating. This section does not prohibit open and respectful discussion or debate of matters of sexuality and gender dysphoria in the appropriate setting or forum, as determined in the sole discretion of the institution's leadership.
- **Sex/Gender Transition.** No person may engage in so-called social transitions, surgeries, or medical treatments that seek to "transition" the person to a sex or gender inconsistent with his or her God-given biological sex. This includes, but is not limited to, puberty blockers prescribed or taken to delay puberty in those diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and hormone and surgical treatments to "feminize" a biological male or "masculinize" a biological female. For clarification, "social transitioning" is the adoption of pronouns, clothing, haircuts, and other social expressions of gender or sex for the purpose of holding out oneself as being a sex or gender different than one's God-given biological sex. This does not prohibit medical treatments consistent with Church teaching related to true genetic or physical anomalies, disorders, or medical conditions.
- **Records.** All institutional records and documents shall reflect a person's God-given biological sex and legal name. In the case of a change of legal name, existing records on file shall be kept and maintained without alteration. It is not permitted for an institution to change existing records to reflect a person's legal name change or to in any way purge such records.

I, in accord with Canons 386, 392, and 806, §1, hereby promulgate the Catholic Diocese of Parish & School Policy on Issues of Sexuality and Gender Identity on this 30th day of August 2023, with an implementation date of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of September 2023.



Vincent Gardiner, Chancellor



Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic