

Transgenderism: Faith Formation Guidelines for Gender Identity

Rationale:

At the heart of a Catholic Faith Formation, a unique educational charism is the integral formation of the whole human person. The Church instructs us:

Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.¹

Because a child's formation includes the integrity of body, spirit, and moral development, our faith formation programs have a proper concern for each student's behavior and development in the complex area of human sexuality. The Catholic Church strongly holds that human bodies are gifts from God and temples of the Holy Spirit.² All men and women are called to a life of chastity appropriate to their vocation as single, married, or consecrated religious. The Church defines chastity as "the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being."³

Any student who participates in any level of Faith Formation is expected to strive to live a life of virtue guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church in accord with God's plan for us in all aspects of their lives as they prepare to receive the Sacraments. Our diocesan pastoral and policy practices are written in fidelity to the moral guidance and teachings of the Catholic Church in all areas that touch on human life and dignity. Our parish establishes an environment of encouragement, mercy, healing, and love to accompany its members as we journey on the path toward holiness.

As such, the proper understanding of human sexuality requires personal integrity and full integration of body and soul as created male and female by God. According to the Church, "the chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it."⁴

1. Guidelines

Behaviors that are contradictory to Catholic morality and the expectations of our faith formation program includes expressing a gender that is discordant with one's biological sex. Our faith formation program will interact with students, catechists, and catechetical staff according to their biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth. A member of the faith formation community who wishes to express a gender other than his or her biological sex is understood as

¹ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Code of Canon Law*, §795.

² Cor. 6:19

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2337

⁴ Ibid.

operating outside of the “reality deeply inscribed within.”⁵ Assisting the person in his or her disconnect with this reality, however sincerely experienced, by agreeing to participate in any efforts to change natural gender expression is contrary to the pursuit of truth. Authentic love, a gift of the self for the good of the other, requires that we compassionately dwell in the truth and assist those we love to do the same.

Our parish recognizes that occasionally there may be instances where young people experience dissonance between their biological sex and the roles and norms advocated by society.⁶ Some young people might feel drawn to dress, act, and even manipulate their physical bodies in ways contrary to God's plan. Our parish advocates that young people, working with their parents, bring these types of issues to their pastor as well as to other trained professionals who might best assist them in clarifying and defining issues of self (and sexual) identity in accord with Catholic teaching and God's natural plan. The parish's pastoral and counseling services are available to all members of the parish communities. All parish administrators, staff, counselors, and volunteers will, as ministers of the Church, pastorally and appropriately represent the teachings of the Catholic Church in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Code of Canon Law as interpreted by the Diocesan Bishop.

2. A Pastoral Response

We encourage a pastoral approach that seeks to find a balance between recognizing the person and staying true to the mission of the Church. This calls us to learn how to communicate with parents, students, and the public in a way that is respectful while at the same time being clear about our teachings about human sexuality, creation, and the human person. Therefore:

- We acknowledge the need to address both the Church's embrace of those who struggle with gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction while at the same time articulating ever more clearly a Christian anthropology of the human person. Our program should be a place where people are "accompanied" in difficult situations while being led to live their lives in complete union with Christ.
- Our faith formation programs have identified where reasonable accommodations can or should be made as well as where they cannot for non-conforming persons. These accommodations are as follows:
 - Parishes will assist in providing spiritual counseling and referrals to supportive pastoral counseling that is in conformity with Catholic anthropology and Church teaching to those who exhibit such behavior.
 - Parishes may accept a new name only if the individual's name is legally changed. However, parishes will not refer to said individual by any pronoun that does not conform with his or her biological sex.

⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, §8.

⁶ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and 'De Facto' Unions*, 2000, §8.

- If possible, parishes may allow the individual to use a private bathroom, such as a nurse's bathroom if necessary. However, said individual may not use a bathroom that does not conform with his or her biological sex.

3. Attire

Please note the appropriate attire for boys/men and the appropriate attire for girls/women when participating in Faith Formation programs at the parish:

- Boys/Men:
 - Slacks, non-ripped jeans, and shorts are appropriate bottoms for boys/men. Sleepwear is not permitted. No undergarments can be visible.
 - Button-down shirts (long and short sleeved), polo shirts, and neat t-shirts (long and short sleeved) are appropriate tops for boys/men. In the colder weather, a fleece, quarter-zip, sweater, or neat sweatshirt may also be worn. No piece of clothing should have any words or graphics that are distracting, defamatory, or stand contrary to the Catholic faith. Sleeveless shirts are not permitted. Cropped shirts are not permitted.
 - Closed shoes, sneakers, or boots should be worn. Sandals, sliders, or flip flops are not permitted.
 - Any facial hair is required to be neatly kempt.
 - No headwear of any kind is permitted. This includes, but is not limited to hats, beanies, and hoods.
 - Fingernails may not be longer than 1/4 inch from the end of the fingers. Nail polish is not permitted.
 - No makeup is permitted.
- Girls/Women:
 - Dresses, skirts, pants, non-ripped jeans, and appropriate shorts that end no higher than two inches above the knee are appropriate bottoms for girls/women. Sleepwear is not permitted. No undergarments can be visible.
 - Blouses (long and short sleeved), polo shirts, and neat t-shirts (long and short sleeved) are appropriate tops for girls/women. In the colder weather, a fleece, quarter-zip, sweater, or neat sweatshirt may also be worn. No piece of clothing should have any words or graphics that are distracting, defamatory, or stand contrary to the Catholic faith. Shoulders should always be covered. Sleeveless shirts are not permitted. Cropped shirts are not permitted. Low cut shirts are not permitted.
 - Closed shoes, sneakers, or boots should be worn. Sandals, sliders, or flip flops are not permitted.
 - No headwear is permitted. This includes, but is not limited to hats, beanies, and hoods.
 - Make-up must be natural looking.
 - No facial hair is permitted.

4. Conclusion

Our parish recognizes the inherent value and dignity of all members of the human family and value equal opportunity for all members of all races, cultures, and ethnicities.

While our parish prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or status as a veteran or disabled veteran, we reserve the rights and protections granted in the areas of admissions and employment practices by applicable laws and constitutional provisions to act in furtherance of its religious objectives.

Should any issues regarding transgenderism arise, the Pastor and Office of Faith Formation should be contacted immediately.