

**TO THE PRIESTS, DEACONS,
DIOCESAN DIRECTORS, PRINCIPALS,
OTHER ADMINISTRATORS, AND ALL THE FAITHFUL
WITHIN THE
DIOCESE OF BILOXI
REGARDING OUR APPROACH
TO MATTERS OF GENDER INCONGRUENCE
AND GENDER IDENTITY**

This document is not a comprehensive explanation of the Catholic Church's teaching on sex and gender. Other Catholic sources, the Church universal, Bishops, and Dioceses, have provided resources that are more thorough and quite useful. In addition to several specific directives, below are principles that may serve as a launching pad for pastoral guidance and policy decisions.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (*gender*) can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated (*cf.* Final Report, 2015 Synod of Bishops on the Family, 58).

God loves each of us, and Christ came that all may have life and have it abundantly (*Jn.* 10:10). Some persons experience in themselves a difficulty accepting the alignment or congruence of their God-given, or biological, sex with their perception of their gender. While current ideologies and cultural trends have lent a certain credence and cachet to such perceptions, the Church is bound to speak the truth in love (*Eph.* 4:15); thus, while the expression of one's masculinity and femininity admits of a legitimate range, the Church rejects the notion that a biological male/man/boy can, in fact, *be* or *become* a female/woman/girl or vice-versa.

Some trending philosophies and those influencers who promote them, often via the internet, are dangerous to young minds struggling with insecurities, anxiety, acceptance by peers, questions of attraction, and self-esteem issues.

From the womb of one's mother, each human person is formed in the image and likeness of God, who creates us male and female (*cf.* *Ps.* 139:13, *Gen.* 1:27). We recognize the rare circumstance of those who are born *intersex*, who also bear God's image and likeness. "By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 2393).

"Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage

and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out” (CCC 2333).

Human persons are body-soul unions, and the body—created male or female—is constitutive of the person. “The human body shares in the dignity of ‘the image of God’: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit: Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity.... For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day” (CCC 364).

“Except when performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended amputations, mutilations, and sterilizations performed on innocent persons are against the moral law” (CCC 2297).

The removal or destruction of healthy sexual/reproductive organs as well as all therapies (including hormonal treatments or blockers), procedures, or surgeries intended to “transition” one’s biological sex and sexual identity or, for the same reason, to delay the onset of one’s natural sexual development, are considered immoral.

- Individuals who experience a sex-gender incongruence must not be the targets of harassment, bullying, rejection of their worth, or violence. To those struggling with feelings that they have a gender identity at odds with their biological sex, the first response of disciples of Jesus Christ, the Church, is to love them and strive to accompany them. “When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth” (*cf. Jn. 16:13*).
- It is the policy and praxis of the Diocese of Biloxi that all Catholic parishes, schools, charitable institutions, and other diocesan-related entities and their subdivisions shall respect the biological sex of the human person as given by God and shall apply all policies and procedures in relation to each person according to his or her biological sex.
- All clergy, employees, and volunteers, including those with any ministerial role in Holy Mass or other liturgies, shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex, publicly and on social media.
- In the Church’s liturgies, usage of pronouns is to conform to the biological sex of the one referenced.
- Those who teach, make presentations, counsel, or facilitate discussions on Church property or on behalf of the Church shall conduct themselves in accord with their biological sex and conform their lessons, materials, guidance, and discussions to Church teaching.
- Except in danger of death, reception of or participation in the Sacraments may be delayed or limited for those who publicly and obstinately persist in the belief, contrary to a Christian anthropology, that a biological male/man/boy can *be* or *become* a female/woman/girl or vice-versa.
- Only a baptized biological male validly receives sacred ordination (*cf. c. 1024*). The male sex and expressed gender of a candidate for Holy Orders may not be incongruous.

- Only one biological male and one biological female, otherwise free to marry and qualified by canon law and whose sex and gender are not incongruous, may be married on Church-owned property or before a member of the Catholic clergy. Clergy may not condone, attend, or bless any attempt at “marriage” by persons of the same biological sex, however they may present themselves.
- If there are to be two godparents/sponsors at a Baptism or Confirmation (or one godparent/sponsor and one Christian witness of the Sacrament), one is to be a biological male and one is to be a biological female, and the sex and gender of each is not to be incongruous with their respective roles.
- Legal names are to be used on official documents.
- Entries in the parish register for children whose parents’ lives do not conform to Church teaching (but who, by reason of godparents, etc., have provided a founded hope the child will be formed in the Catholic faith) or for adopted children are to be completed according to the provisions of the Bishops Conference.
- Pronouns used at Church functions or in Church documents/media are to be those that align with a person’s biological sex.
- Our schools partner with families to educate and form students consistent with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, and so families are expected to live in accord with Gospel values, particularly regarding actions and behaviors that are public. Students in our schools and their parents/legal guardians shall conduct themselves according to their biological sex.
- Athletic teams and competitions, where not deliberately open to both sexes, are to select their members and competitors based upon the relevant biological sex. Admittance to bathrooms and locker rooms is to be according to one’s biological sex; where possible, individual bathrooms or individual changing areas may be provided.
- Organizations and groups renting or otherwise meeting on Church-owned properties are to conform to Catholic teaching.
- Nothing in our medical insurance plan is to be construed as allowing for medications, treatments, or surgeries inconsistent with the Catholic faith.

Effective immediately. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding. Given at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Biloxi this 30th day of June, A.D. 2022.



Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi

In witness whereof:



Chancellor