



# ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

*The Church in Central and Southern Indiana*

## **Policy and Complementary Norms on Sexual Identity in School Ministries of the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis**

### **I. Introduction.**

This policy is presented in four sections that follow this Introduction. The first section distinguishes between two different conditions, one being a condition of chromosomal/genetic abnormalities which with other symptoms can sometimes result in varying degrees of apparently sexually ambiguous genitalia and the other being a condition in which a psychological conflict exists between a person's so-called "gender-identity" and his or her biological sexual identity. The next Section offers an explanation on Church teaching and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The third Section outlines the role of Formators – those ministers of the faith responsible for the education and formation of young people. The final Section addresses the "Practice and Policy" to be followed.

### **II. Important Distinctions.**

In addressing questions of sexual identity, it is important to distinguish between two different conditions, one where a child has chromosomal/genetic abnormalities and the other where the "gender<sup>1</sup>-identity" is in conflict with the sexual identity resulting in some form of gender dysphoria.

In the first instance, the sex of the child may be unclear at birth, requiring medical testing and consultation to determine sexual identity. Pastorally, it is the common practice to collaborate with parents as they work with medical professionals to try to determine the best treatment for the child. Any corrective surgery may be in infancy or at a later time. When a person is born sexually ambiguous (formerly called a "hermaphrodite"), operations can be done to correct the condition.

That said, in cases where a person's sex is not clearly defined, it is medical professionals who can make a therapeutic intervention. In such situations, parents cannot make an arbitrary choice on the issue, let alone society. Instead, medical science should act with purely therapeutic ends, and intervene in the least invasive

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<sup>1</sup> "Gender theory" and the contemporary adaptations of the term "gender" and "gender identity" seem increasingly at odds with Church teaching in regards to an authentic Christian anthropology. See: Congregation for Catholic Education, *"Male and Female He Created Them" Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*. Vatican 2019. #2, #11-12.

fashion, on the basis of objective parameters and with a view to establishing the person's constitutive identity.<sup>2</sup>

The second situation is clearly different and is the focus of this policy – when there is a clear biological determination of a child's sexual identity, yet the individual seeks to legally, chemically and/or surgically alter the given biology. This alteration of a child's gender either chemically, surgically or both is understood in Catholic moral terms as “mutilation,” and is not morally justified.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that when an individual decides to partake in such alteration, this does NOT change the fact that he/she is deserving of dignity as a child of God, made in His image and likeness. The person remains a person of God even when the decisions or acts of that person are contrary to Church's teachings.

### **III. Teachings of the Church.**

While the Roman Catholic Church recognizes that in today's world many individuals experience emotional and psychological confusion with their sexual identity,<sup>4</sup> we would fail in charity if we did not encourage those who express such struggle to pursue self-integration in a chaste manner. Our institutions (parishes, schools, and agencies) are therefore called to assist, support, and accompany persons in their individual psychological and emotional struggles in ways consistent with the Church's teachings with charity. This teaching begins with Sacred Scripture:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’” (Genesis 1:27-28).

The truth of human sexuality as “male” and “female” belongs to the very core teaching of Christianity on the human person.<sup>5</sup> It is present throughout the Tradition of the Church. The sexual identity of a person as either male or female is a fundamental principle of Christian anthropology.

Each of *the two sexes* [emphasis added] is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." All human generations proceed from this union.<sup>6</sup>

The dignity inherent in our sexual identities calls us to exercise the virtue of chastity.

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<sup>2</sup> *Male and Female*, #24.

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, #2297.

<sup>4</sup> *Male and Female*, #1.

<sup>5</sup> *Male and Female*, #'s 34-35.

<sup>6</sup> *CCC*, #2335.

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.”<sup>7</sup>

Chastity allows for the charitable giving of self that is essential to the flourishing of the individual human person and the common good.<sup>8</sup>

#### **IV. Roles and Responsibilities of Formators.**<sup>9</sup>

It is the hope of our Church that ministers of the faith (“formators”) may walk in accompaniment with young people and their families as we pastorally address their needs in alignment with the Church’s teachings. If a person being served by an archdiocesan school or other ministry chooses to act contrary to Church teaching in respect to his or her sexual identity, then in consultation with representatives of the Archdiocese, leaders of the respective parish, school, or agency will meet with that individual (if a minor, his or her parents/guardians as well) to determine what the path of accompaniment may include. Such accompaniment may result in the provision of resources, accommodations, and/or other supports. The hope is that the individual can continue to be served by the respective ministry.<sup>10</sup>

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, all ministers of the faith are responsible for the education and formation of young people. “All who work in human formation are called to exercise great responsibility in the work of effectively implementing the pedagogical projects in which they are involved. If they are people of personal maturity and balance who are well-prepared, this can have a strongly positive influence on students. Therefore, it is important that their own formation includes not only professional qualifications but also cultural and spiritual preparedness. The education of the human person, especially developmentally, requires great care and ongoing formation. Simply repeating the standard points of a discipline is not enough. Today’s educators are expected to be able ‘to accompany their students towards lofty and challenging goals, cherish high expectations for them, involve and connect students to each other and the world’.”<sup>11</sup>

“School managers, teaching staff and personnel all share the responsibility of both guaranteeing delivery of a high-quality service coherent with the Christian principles that lie at the heart of their educational project, as well as interpreting the challenges of their time while giving the daily witness of their understanding, objectivity and prudence. It is a commonly accepted fact that “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers,

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<sup>7</sup> CCC, #2337.

<sup>8</sup> CCC, #2346; *Male and Female*, #38.

<sup>9</sup> Section IV has been used in its entirety from *Male and Female He Created Them*” *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, #47-49.

<sup>10</sup> *Male and Female*, #55.

<sup>11</sup> *Male and Female*, #47.

it is because they are witnesses.” The authority of an educator is therefore built upon the concrete combination “of a general formation, founded on a positive and professional constructive concept of life, and of constant effort in realizing it. Such a formation goes beyond the purely necessary professional training and addresses the more intimate aspects of the personality, including the religious and the spiritual.”<sup>12</sup>

“When the ‘formation of formators’ is undertaken on the basis of the Christian principles, it has as its objective not only the formation of individual teachers but the building up and consolidation of an entire educational community through a fruitful exchange between all involved, one that has both didactic and emotional dimensions. Thus, dynamic relationships grow between educators, and professional development is enriched by well-rounded personal growth, so that the work of teaching is carried out at the service of humanization. Therefore, Catholic educators need to be sufficiently prepared regarding the intricacies of the various questions that gender theory brings up and be fully informed about both current and proposed legislation in their respective jurisdictions, aided by persons who are qualified in this area, in a way that is balanced and dialogue-orientated. In addition, university-level institutes and centres of research are called to offer their own specific contribution here, so that adequate, up-to-date and life-long learning on this topic is always made available to educators.”<sup>13</sup>

## V. Practice and Policy.

Reflective of the commitment to a culture of transparency and understanding throughout the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in accordance with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the following norms will guide pastors, catechists, and ministers of the faith as they strive to form and educate young people. Today’s cultural and societal norms stress personal “happiness” above the common good. Additionally, young people today are inundated with hedonistic messaging as well as false influences through imagery and language that idealize tolerance (“live and let live”) over sacrificial love and what we know to be the Truth. A loving community can help counter the myths, misinformation, and societal pressure present in public discourse. It is critically important for ministers of faith to affirm the person and not the behavior while accompanying a person to increased understanding of the Church’s teaching on Catholic anthropology.

Important to the practice and policy herein, the Archdiocesan Consultation Team (ACT) is a group of professionals from a broad range of disciplines who will assist in the accompaniment of young people. ACT desires to help families as they navigate the difficult issues related to sexual identity while obeying God’s will for their lives and living in accordance with Church values. The ultimate goal of the ACT is to ensure protection and respect of the immeasurable dignity of every child while deepening their understanding of our Church’s teachings and their relationship with our loving and grace-filled Holy Trinity.

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<sup>12</sup> *Male and Female*, #48.

<sup>13</sup> *Male and Female*, #49.

## Definition of Terms

- “Sex” or “Sexual Identity”: the biological condition of being male or female as based upon physical differences at birth.<sup>14</sup>
- “Gender” and “Gender Identity”: “It needs to be emphasized that ‘biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.’”<sup>15</sup> The term “gender” is in general to be avoided in official documents, correspondence, et al. as “gender theory” has rendered its meaning ambiguous and confusing in contemporary usage.<sup>16</sup>

## Specific Norms<sup>16</sup>

**ACCOMPANIMENT:** The mission of Catholic schools is to form and educate young people. It requires that ministers of the faith meet these young people where they are and accompany them toward the ideal – a deeper relationship with Christ, a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith, and a clearer understanding of God’s plan for the individual as a male or female. It should always be our hope to “walk beside” young people and their families as they encounter struggles, including uncertainty regarding their sexual identity, in an effort to help them find clarity and peace in the love of Jesus Christ.

The Archdiocese recognizes that occasionally there may be instances in which young people experience dissonance between their biological sex and the roles and norms advocated by society.<sup>17</sup> Some young people might feel drawn to dress, act, and even manipulate their physical bodies in ways contrary to God’s plan. The Archdiocese 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 Church teaching. The school’s pastoral and counseling services are available to all members of the school community to accompany the young person and his/her family.

It is important when accompanying a student and his/her family to refrain from overt speculation about a person’s sexual orientation and/or sexual identity, for such is gossip and damages relationships.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Because each of us is a unique child of God, each student’s situation should be viewed independently in light of the young person’s disposition, needs (spiritual development, emotional stability, intellectual capacity, etc.), experiences, and other circumstances.

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<sup>14</sup> “Physical differences at birth include chromosomal levels. In the unlikely event that a biological sex determination made at birth is uncertain or inaccurate (a situation affecting less than .1% of the human population) chromosomal levels may need be taken into consideration,” The Cardinal Newman Society

<sup>15</sup> *Amoris Laetitia*, #56.

<sup>16</sup> Based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; norms adapted from the The Cardinal Newman Society’s “Human Sexuality Policies.”

<sup>17</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and ‘De Facto’ Unions*, 2000, #8.

When an individual experiences confusion regarding his/her sexual identity, the parish/school leader/administrator is asked to contact the Archdiocesan Consultation Team (ACT) coordinator. All situations are to remain confidential and the privacy of young people is to be protected. The Archdiocesan Consultation Team will provide potential accommodations, resources, and supports that have been properly vetted in alignment with the Church's teachings. Any and all accommodations must be vetted through the ACT and a "success plan" or "accommodations plan" must be implemented and monitored at the parish/school consistently.

**ANTI-BULLYING:** The common good and Christian justice and charity demand a school environment that is safe and affirming of the dignity of all persons. All forms of bullying and discrimination will not be tolerated. Please refer to the existing archdiocesan policy.

**ATHLETICS & OTHER EXTRA CURRICULARS:** Eligibility for athletics, single-sex curricular and extracurricular activities is based upon the biological sex of the child.

**CHASTITY:** All members of this Catholic school community are called to a life of chastity appropriate to their vocation as single, married, ordained, or consecrated religious.

**DANCES:** Student dress and behavior at dances and social activities is to conform to characteristics consistent with their biological sex. Expression of a student's sexual identity that is contrary to their biological sex is unacceptable when the behavior or dress causes disruption or confusion regarding the Church's teaching on Christian anthropology. Advocating for or expressing same-sex attractions, including same-sex couples at dances, is not acceptable. All students are to refrain from sexually suggestive behavior both on and off the dance floor.

**DRESS CODE/UNIFORMS (SCHOOLS):** In order to maintain a sense of equality and community, and to promote a proper display of modesty throughout the school day and at school events, all students, staff, and faculty must follow the dress code expectations of their biological sex while on campus and while representing the school at outside functions.

**FACILITIES USE NORM:** Utilization of facilities, including but not limited to locker rooms, showers, restrooms, and overnight accommodations will align with a person's biological sex. School facilities are dedicated to the mission of Catholic education and may not be used by any member of the school community or any external organization or individual for any purpose/cause that is contrary to Catholic teaching or otherwise opposed to the Catholic Church.

**FORMAL TITLES AND NAMES:** School personnel will address students by the name listed on the official school registration (or its common derivative), and the pronoun correlating to their biological sexual identity. In an effort to reduce the child's psychological distress, the child/family may request a different nickname/name be used. Please consult the guidance of the ACT for approval.

**MISSION INTEGRITY:** Schools are to joyfully exercise their responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church.* As such, pastors, catechists, and ministers of the faith are called to meet people where they are and accompany them to the Truth of the Catholic faith.

Parents/guardians and non-Catholics whose religious practices and beliefs run counter to Church teaching might experience possible conflicts as mission integrity is maintained.<sup>18</sup> Sincere questioning of the practices of the Catholic faith in order to more deeply understand them are welcomed and encouraged; however, openly hostile, public defiance and challenge of Catholic truths or morality are signs that a student, parent, staff or faculty member may not be a fit for the school's primary evangelical mission at this point in time.

**PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION:** In order to maintain a professional atmosphere of learning and ministry, romantic displays of affection between students, such as romantic hugging, kissing, handholding, sitting on laps, etc., are not permitted at Church/school or Church/school-sponsored events. (Please note that it may be difficult to distinguish between "romantic" and "friendly" interactions from time to time. We ask all employees to use their knowledge about students, understanding of developmental appropriateness, common sense, and professional judgment when addressing these encounters.)

**SEXUAL IDENTITY:** School officials, teachers, and students are to interact with students according to their biological sex at birth. To do otherwise, would in fact be uncharitable, as it would be confirming such persons in their mistaken understanding of their identity.

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As mentioned previously, when a young person experiences dissonance between biological sex and the roles and norms advocated by society, the Archdiocese advocates that young people, working with their parents, bring these issues to their pastor as well as other trained professional who might best assist them in clarifying and defining issues of self (and sexual) identity in accord with Catholic teaching. The school's pastoral and counseling services are available to all members of the school community to accompany the young person and his/her family.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis recommends taking a prudent and careful approach on a case-by-case basis. Being of practical help to a person experiencing dysphoria allows for affirmation of the dignity of the human person without endorsing behaviors contrary to Church teaching.

Pastors, catechists, and ministers of the faith are to communicate with parents/guardians any concerns about a child's behavior, particularly when physical, intellectual, emotional, social and/or spiritual health may be compromised. The safety and welfare of each child remains a priority, and therefore guidance provided by law enforcement or the local social service agency should be acted on accordingly.

The services of the Archdiocesan Consultation Team (ACT) are available to assist pastors, catechists, and ministers of the faith. Any and all accommodations being considered must be vetted through the ACT before implementation of a "success plan" or "accommodations plan."

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<sup>18</sup> *Male and Female*, #55.

**VI. Mission Policy in Relation to Admissions.**

Parents of students enrolling their children in a Catholic school, must understand, affirm, and support the school's role as shown in the Archdiocesan Mission Policy. Additionally, each school has its own Admissions policy that is to be in line with the guidance of the Archdiocese.

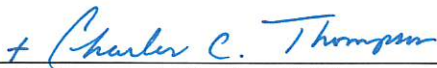
As the Archdiocesan Mission Policy states, parents will sign off to acknowledge they have read and understand the affirmations and expectations. Parents and students who are not able to meet these affirmations and expectations may not be admitted to the Catholic school. Students who are experiencing confusion regarding their sexual identity may be admitted, as long as they are open to accompaniment and the teaching of the Church. Any student whose "gender" has been legally changed from their biological sex, or who has chemically and/or surgically altered their given biology, may not be eligible for enrollment.

**VII. Withdrawal.**

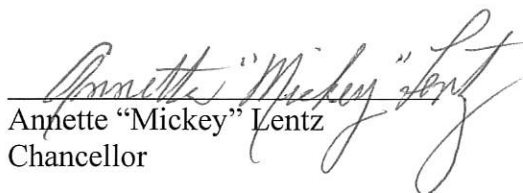
If at any time after admission the student and parents can no longer accept the accompaniment that is offered or are unwilling or unable to meet these affirmations and expectations of admission, withdrawal and/or exclusion may be necessary. If a student or parent acts to legally change the student's "gender" or chemically or surgically alter the student's given biology (to include beginning the process of these acts), the student will be requested to withdraw from the school or be excluded.

**Policy and Complementary Norms on Sexual Identity  
in School Ministries of the Roman Catholic Church  
in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis**

The above policy and complementary norms have been approved as particular law for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and are effective as of this 8<sup>th</sup> day of June 2020.



Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.  
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