



# Catholic Diocese of Arlington

## POLICY FOR SCHOOLS & MINISTRIES RELATED TO THE HUMAN PERSON & GENDER IDEOLOGY

August 17, 2021

### **Introduction**

In order to assist those entrusted to her care, the Catholic Church seeks to help young people and their families deepen their relationships with Jesus Christ and embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church as a sure guide to virtue and a life of faith. On a pastoral level, this includes setting forth practical expectations to guide our faith community in the face of challenging cultural and political trends.

The Diocese of Arlington recognizes that, in today's society, an increasing number of individuals—particularly young people—are experiencing difficulty in understanding their sexuality or in integrating personal experience with the truth of the body. In addition, some persons may experience difficulties that result in a diagnosis of “gender dysphoria,”<sup>1</sup> which is understood as the distress experienced because of incongruence between a person's biological sex and self-perceived identity. All of these situations need to be handled with gentle and compassionate pastoral skill and concern, with the utmost sensitivity and charity, while avoiding all unjust discrimination. It is also important to recognize that questions of sexual identity or issues relating to a diagnosis of gender dysphoria often cause significant stress for parents and siblings as well as for the particular child.

These situations raise questions of policy for our Catholic schools, faith formation programs, and other ministries to young people. To address these questions, the Diocese of Arlington provides the following principles and policies.

### **Brief Summary of Catholic Principles on the Nature of Human Sexuality:**

The Catholic Church's teaching on these topics was presented in the Diocese of Arlington's recent *A Catechesis on the Human Person & Gender Ideology* document. As noted therein, the Catholic Church affirms the dignity of each person as a son or daughter of God and upholds the obligation to treat every individual with love and respect. Such love and respect require acknowledging the truth that a person is a unity of body and soul. “From the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’” (Mt 19:4; cf. Mk 10:6). A person's sex—male or female—is determined at conception and cannot change. Sex is immutable.

All creation, including the body, should be received as a gift.<sup>2</sup> As such, the Catholic Church teaches that each person should accept and seek to live in conformity with his or her biological sex.<sup>3</sup>

Men and women, made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 5:1-2), have equal personal dignity. “Valuing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary”<sup>4</sup> in order to encounter others with authenticity. In contrast, to deny “the difference and reciprocity in [the] nature of a man and a woman” results in “a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.”<sup>5</sup>

The Catholic Church rejects every form of unjust discrimination with respect to fundamental human rights, in access to educational opportunities, or in other matters.<sup>6</sup>

With those principles and guidance in mind, these policies are to be followed in situations relating to young people in our Catholic schools or to those participating in faith formation and youth ministry programs.

### **Names/Pronouns:**

All young people and their family members will be addressed and referred to with pronouns and names or nicknames consistent with their God-given biological sex. If a young person or family member proposes the use of any different name or nickname (male, female or neutral) in connection with the assertion of an identity at odds with biological sex, that request will be denied. Any effort to affirm something that is not true does harm to the individual.

### **Restrooms/Sleeping Facilities:**

Locker rooms and multi-stall bathrooms will be for single-sex use only. All young people and adults will use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their biological sex. On a case-by-case basis, young people diagnosed with anxiety disorders or similarly debilitating health issues may be given approval to use a single-person, unisex facility.

For overnight events, participants will be grouped by biological sex in assigning any single-sex rooms, dormitory space, camping areas, etc. Family members may share a space with the permission of a parent or guardian if the arrangement of the facility permits.

### **Uniforms/Clothing/Grooming Standards:**

Schools will select distinct school uniforms for males and females and set dress codes and grooming standards for each sex. All students will wear the designated school uniform consistent with their biological sex while on school premises and for all school-related activities. Schools are encouraged to work with uniform vendors to provide a female uniform option with pants.

Students attending field trips, extracurricular, or other school events where school uniforms are not required should wear attire appropriate to the occasion and consistent with the school's dress code standards for each sex. Students must adhere to school grooming standards on school premises and at any school-related events held outside of school hours or at other locations. Exceptions to dress code policies may be made on a limited, case-by-case basis (e.g., when required for theatrical performances or similar reasons).

Young people participating in faith formation or youth ministry activities will wear attire appropriate to the occasion and consistent with their biological sex and with Christian modesty.

In all circumstances, clothing with inappropriate symbols, pictures, or words is not acceptable.

### **Athletic Teams and Events:**

When possible, separate athletic teams will be offered for each sex. Young people will participate on teams consistent with their biological sex and may not participate on teams offered for the other sex. When (for example, in swimming or track) a team may include both sexes, individuals will participate in events consistent with their biological sex. In the case of golf, if separate male and female teams are not offered, members of both sexes may participate together on a single team in the same events.

### **Single-Sex Events:**

Whenever a ministry or event is divided according to sex (e.g., retreats, small groups, etc.), young people will participate consistent with their biological sex.

### **Counseling and Medical Issues:**

When a young person experiences distress, confusion about sexuality, or is diagnosed with “gender dysphoria,” “body dysmorphia,” or similar issues, the individual and the individual’s family may wish to seek psychological counseling to address the causes of the distress or to resolve other issues. In such cases, the Diocese of Arlington supports the family’s efforts to resolve the individual’s distress and advises parents to seek counseling from professionals whose practice reflects a Christian view of the human person (Christian anthropology) and adheres to Catholic teaching. Clinics or physicians that offer “gender-affirming care” do not align with Catholic teaching and have the potential to harm both the child and the parent-child relationship.

Catholic teaching emphasizes the personal unity of body and soul, and the importance of accepting one’s sexed body as a gift from our Creator. Consequently, the Catholic Church opposes all interventions intended to facilitate the individual’s rejection of his or her biological sex, or to facilitate the individual’s assertion of an identity at odds with biological sex. The Diocese of Arlington cannot support or accommodate any aspect of what is commonly known as a “gender transition,” including social transition, medical transition (puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones), and surgical transition. (Note: This does not apply to necessary medical care to address rare cases of true genetic or physical anomalies.)

### **Other Situations/Additional Support:**

For situations that are not specifically discussed in this document, the general policy of the Diocese of Arlington is to respect the immutable reality of each individual’s biological sex and treat each person in a manner consistent with that reality.

School or program leaders, teachers, counselors or staff who have questions or need guidance regarding specific issues should call (703) 841-2500 and ask for the appropriate diocesan office for their area of ministry:

- *Superintendent of Schools*
- *Episcopal Vicar for Faith Formation*
- *Exec. Dir. of the Office of Youth, Campus, & Young Adult Ministries*

### **Endnotes:**

1. American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM–5).
2. Pope Francis. (2016). Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*AL*), no. 56.
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (*CCC*), no. 2333.
4. Pope Francis. (2015). Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*, no. 155.
5. *AL*, no. 56.
6. *CCC*, nos. 1935, 2433.

