**Title**: **5011 Gender Ideology**

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|  | **5011 Gender Ideology Policy**  **Introduction**  In recent years, our culture has seen the rise of Gender Ideology, the idea that one’s own identity and biological sex are not necessarily connected, and sometimes contradictory. This Ideology claims that a person has the absolute right to determine his or her own identity, and gender, regardless of biology. As Gender Ideology has taken root, it has become more common for people, including children, to doubt their biological sex and to explore alternative identities.  At this time of overall division in our society, our institutions, including law, medicine, education, and more, are compelled to consider Gender Ideology and their response.  Our approach is one that combines the *clarity* of what the Church teaches, with the *charity* due to all people, as made in God’s image and likeness, but particularly important in such contentious, sensitive, and important matters. The words of Pope Saint Paul VI are important to keep in mind as well: “[I]t is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ.” (*Humane Vitae* no. 29)  **Church teaching**  The Catholic Church is very clear and consistent in its teachings on human sexuality. Particularly germane to this policy are Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 362-365: 372: and 2332-2333. The Church states in No. 2333: “Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.”  Moreover, Pope Francis has repeatedly affirmed the Church’s teachings on gender. He wrote in *Laudato Si* no. 155: “The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.”  In recent times, a number of American dioceses have published “reflections” (or, “policy,” or “catechesis,” with the terms varying). Particularly helpful to us was “A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology,” published in August 2021 by the Diocese of Arlington.  **An abundance of charity**  “It needs to be emphasized,” wrote Pope Francis, that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated… It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality.” (*Amoris Laetitia* no.56)  As we work on such matters with our Catholic School communities across our diocese, we know that we are entering very personal waters and “the complexities of life” the Holy Father references. And so we urge that our schools, while embracing the fullness of truth found in Church teaching, also assemble the appropriate resources to support students who may be confused or impacted in some manner by Gender Ideology. Those resources can include: Christian Counselors (employees of the schools, not of the Intermediate Units); social workers; resources for families; a strong discipline program and accompanying handbook language that prevents bullying and harassment of any student; and programs such as Courage and EnCourage. We will need to be ready as communities to *accompany* (to borrow Pope Francis’s term) those struggling with “gender dysphoria” and those impacted by Gender Ideology, and be certain that they are treated with compassion and respect.  Additionally, we require that the Catholic schools of our diocese adopt a Theology of the Body program for all grades. Theology of the Body is a complete Catholic narrative of human sexuality, and it presents a yes, an affirmative approach, to God’s plan for humanity. It will prove indispensable in discussions that include Gender Ideology.  **Guidance:**  To provide guidance in applying the Church’s moral teachings regarding the challenges presents by Gender Ideology.  In all interactions and policies, our schools are to recognize *only* a person’s biological sex. Schools are to use only the terms “biological sex,” “gender at birth,” or “God-given Gender” when referencing or requesting a person’s sex. This policy applies to all members of our school communities.  Designations and Pronouns. No person may designate a “preferred pronoun” in speech or in writing. Permitting the designation of a preferred pronoun, while often intended as an act of charity, instead promotes acceptance of the separability of biological sex and “gender,” and thus opposes the truth of our sexual unity. Nicknames may be used (e.g., “Sam” for “Samantha”), as long as they do not indicator or anticipate a gender transition.  Admissions and retention at a school. Students experiences “gender dysphoria” may be admitted to our Catholic schools, provided the student and the student’s parents/guardians sign a memorandum of understanding, or the like, as part of the admissions process, that clearly indicates that we will teach the Catholic faith, and that we will expect the student to follow all policies and directives pertinent to that child’s biological sex. A student may be ineligible for continued enrollment if the student’s gender expression causes confusion or disruption at the school, misleads others, or causes scandal.  Bathrooms and Locker Rooms. All persons must use the bathroom or locker room that matches that person’s biological sex. Schools are permitted to have individual-use bathrooms that are available for all members of the community.  Attire. All persons are to present themselves in a manner consistent with their God-given dignity. Where a dress code or uniform exists, all persons are to follow the dress code or uniform that accords with biological sex.  Athletics and Extra-Curriculars. Participation in school and CYO activities and athletics must conform to the biological sex of the participant. Some sports and activities may be open to the participation of individual of both sexes.  Single-Sex Schools, Buildings, and other Programs and Institutions. Admissions to single-sex programs, including but not limited to single-sex schools, camps, and retreats, is restricted to persons of that designated biological sex. Dormitories or other single-sex buildings are restricts to persons of that designated biological sex.  Medication, Medical Procedures. No person is permitted to have on-site, or to distribute, any medications for the purpose of gender reassignment. Also, students and those entrusted to the care of the Church are not permitted to take “puberty blockers,” even if self-administered, on parish or school property, with the purpose of potential or actual “gender reassignment.” Additionally, efforts should not be made to accommodate a student that seeks to have a gender reassignment medical procedure.  School personnel. It must be made explicitly clear to all school personnel, in all grades, all sports and activities, and all subject matters, that they are to adhere to the above stated policies as ministers of the church.  -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------  NOTE:  Catholic schools are not "places of public accommodation" under the PA Human Relations Act and therefore would not be vulnerable to discrimination complaints on the basis of sexual orientation under that Act. If there is a local anti-discrimination ordinance in the municipality in which the school is located, that would have to be examined.  Catholic schools are likewise not "state actors" for purposes of student claims that their 1st Amendment free speech rights cannot be violated by the school. Catholic schools thus do not have to allow the same kinds of protests that a public school might contend with. |