



## A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**24 October 2022**

### **Gender: Bend but Don't Break**

#### The discussion

There are some children, youth and adults who suffer from the feeling that their body doesn't match where they see themselves internally along a broad, non-binary sexual spectrum.

Who knows why people experience that, but the suffering they experience is real, and they deserve to be met with respect and compassion, and helped to find relief.

Advocates of gender theory say they can find relief by choosing their gender, and how they express that choice, even to the point of changing their bodies to correspond to that choice.

People who identify themselves as transgender sometimes express themselves with a new name, preferred pronouns or wardrobe, and anticipate that others will respect that choice.

That is a challenge for those who embrace the Catholic worldview, especially in terms of understanding the human person and human sexuality.

#### The Catholic worldview

Catholics are guided by the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised will lead us into all truth (John 16:13). That guidance is given through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

We believe that God created humans in the Divine Image, as male or female, which is both a given and a gift, and having an inherent dignity (Genesis 1:27).

The sexual difference between male and female speaks to their responsible cooperation with the Creator to increase the number of the human race (Genesis 1:28).

The sexual difference also speaks to the complementarity between woman and man, finding in each other an equal and a suitable partner in marriage (Genesis 2:20-24).

In our human nature we enjoy free-will, which isn't a limitless autonomy, but circumscribed by the sovereign will of God (Genesis 2:17).

Our first parents violated those boundaries by trying to commandeer the sovereignty of God, resulting in our soul and body feeling divided (Genesis 3:5).

One form of that divide is feeling shame when naked (Genesis 3:7). Others may feel it as a disconnect between their chosen gender and their body.

#### Conclusion

Catholics must respect the dignity that every person enjoys, assure them that they are loved by God and us, and protect them from harm, and certainly not be the cause of it.

But at this point in the gender discussion, we aren't able to go along with the idea that people can choose and change their gender, rather than see it as a fact of nature.

We aren't sticks-in-the-mud. We're open to other perspectives, to see if we might find truth there, or to seek common ground, or to promote acceptance, even if we don't agree.

Others may consider Catholics unenlightened, but we too deserve respect when in our various ministries we aren't able to accommodate someone's preferred gender expressions.

What we can do though is imitate Jesus: accompany transgender people, feel their pain, listen to their story, tell them another side of the story, share life and love with them (Luke 24:13).

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