

Fr. Perozich comments –

It is not an uncommon experience for us priests to be asked by curious lay people the specifics of what we have heard in confession.

By revealing even a trivial fact I might be breaking the seal of confession. Priests never even talk to each other about confessions we hear.

My usual response to the curious as they continue to press for specific sins is to repeat as often as needed, until they finally give up, “I don’t think I have heard anything new in confession since the first five months of my ordination.”

Priests hear it all because people want to be right with God. Sometimes they want a justification for what they feel or do even when it cannot be given to them.

Frequently they are not ready to change their thinking or behavior just yet, so priests hear the same things over again from many of the same people.

Freedom from sin is a process, whether it be the actual commission of sinful acts or of being oppressed by sinful thoughts without acting on them.

Gender dysphoria, the feeling that a person is of a sex different from the biological one God gave them, is presented to us priests in counseling.

Some bishops and priests have just written off people who suffer gender dysphoria telling the Catholic faithful that we just need to accompany them as they describe themselves to be. I can think of no greater lack of compassion than to deny the truth that sets one free; yet no one corrects these clerics in their errors.

Below is an article by the very articulate Fr. Roger Landry who draws out the truth from Pope Francis and Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia.

This is helpful to me, who even in retirement, am approached with the very difficult situations that the human condition, wounded by original sin, confronts, and how to bring a patient, loving response that will set a person free in Christ when the sufferer embraces the Savior.

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Two Bold and True Responses to the Dangers of Gender Ideology

COMMENTARY: Pope Francis has repeatedly and emphatically spoken out against gender ideology. And Virginia Bishop Michael Burbidge's Aug. 12 pastoral letter on gender dysphoria models truth in charity and authentic mercy.



The push to substitute “gender identity” or “gender expression” for biological sex has enormous ramifications in terms of law, education, economy, health, medicine, safety, sports, language and culture, as well as in terms of basic anthropology, human dignity, human rights, marriage and family, motherhood and fatherhood, and the cause of women, men, and especially children.

For that reason, Pope Francis has repeatedly, courageously and emphatically spoken out. He has done so not just out of love for the truth, but consistent with his pastoral prioritization for those on the peripheries of existence, **especially those who bear the difficult cross of feeling trapped in the biological reality of a body discordant with their psychological self-identification.**

While emphatically encouraging Catholics and all people of good will to support, welcome, accompany and love all those whose gender identity does not match their biological sex, to affirm their human dignity and defend their fundamental human rights to be free of violence and unjust discrimination, **Pope Francis has simultaneously been very clear about the dangers to those with gender dysphoria and to all of society from gender ideology.**

In his 2016 exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), the Pope wrote that, by denying the “difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman” and promoting a “personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female,” **gender ideology ultimately makes**

human identity “the choice of the individual” and undermines the “anthropological basis for the family.”

It is “one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life,” he continued, “and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality.” We must, he emphasized, “protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.”

Our sex — just like our genes, race, age and other natural characteristics — are objective givens, not subjective choices.

In his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si* (Care for Our Common Home), Pope Francis wrote at length on why the protection of our humanity is at stake:

“Acceptance of our bodies ... is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift, ... 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.** Moreover, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different.”

____He described the consequences of questioning the complementarity between man and woman further in a 2015 General Audience. “The differences between man and woman are not for opposition or subordination, but for communion and generation,” he said. Rather than leading to a more free and just society, **gender ideology in fact hinders communion and generation between men and women. It’s a “step backwards,”** he underlined, **“a problem, not a solution.”**

When the natural, complementary duality of man and woman is called into question, the very notion of being — what it means to be human — is undermined. The body becomes no longer a defining element of humanity. The person becomes reduced to spirit and will and the human person almost becomes an abstraction until one discerns what nature one is or selects which of the four, or 58, or 64, or 100 possible genders or more one wants to be.

Pope Francis is particularly concerned about gender ideology being taught to children, so that boys and girls are encouraged to question, at the earliest ages of existence, whether they are a boy or girl, and told that gender is something one can choose.

That’s one of the reasons why the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education published a lengthy document in 2019 entitled, [“Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education,”](#) to give clear principles to

Catholic educational institutions throughout the world and equip parents and educators in non-Catholic institutions with arguments as to why gender ideology not only exacerbates the confusion of children who might be experiencing gender dysphoria but confuses all children, undermining basic common sense and their security in knowing their nature and identity.

Pope Francis has also boldly pushed back against cultural pressure — what he terms “ideological colonization” — being placed on individuals, families, schools, churches, cultures and countries, who resist this redefinition of what it means to be a human person. Gender ideologists want to permit no discussion, debate or divergent opinion, first shaming as “bigoted” and then “canceling” those who oppose their radical ideas and their implementation. Parents who seek to get their children psychological help to address the underlying issues causing the gender confusion are, in some places, treated as child abusers.

Various governmental institutions and professional societies have sought to ban mental health professionals from even offering such care, despite the well-documented harm that comes from the malpractice of giving young children puberty blockers, then cross-sex hormones, and finally gender-reassignment surgery.

That’s why Pope Francis’ moral leadership and clarity on this issue is so important. It’s also why his courage must literally encourage others in the Church to follow him in speaking out and working to oppose gender

ideology and trying to help those with gender confusion get the true help they need.

One prelate who has certainly risen to occasion is Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, who on Aug. 12 published a [pastoral letter](#), “*A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology*,” which is probably the finest articulation of the Church’s pastoral approach to gender ideology written anywhere until now.

Bishop Burbidge provides the principles of Catholic teaching to guide the faithful how to respond to the “tremendous upheavals” provoked by gender ideology and the challenge it presents to all members of the Church by its “view of the human person contrary to the truth.” He shows how gender ideology denies three essential principles of anthropology obvious to human reason: The human person is created with a body and soul; male or female; and ordered in complementarity toward marriage.

“These truths about the human person, accessible to natural reason, attain an extraordinary dignity and calling in the Christian view of the world,” he writes. “The body is not a limitation or confinement but one with the soul in the life of grace and glory to which the human person is called.”

He then discusses gender dysphoria, underlining that **“the experience of this interior conflict is not sinful in itself but must be understood as a disorder reflecting the broader disharmony caused by original sin,”** while clarifying that “the claim to ‘be transgender’ or the desire to seek ‘transition’ rests on a mistaken view of the human person, rejects the body

as a gift from God, and leads to grave harm. **To affirm someone in an identity at odds with biological sex ... is to mislead that person.**”

Only what is true, he writes, can be genuinely pastoral, and we must be aware of the “great danger of a misguided charity and false compassion,” which not only “does not resolve a person’s struggles, but also can in fact exacerbate them.”

Later he forthrightly discusses the question of higher rates of suicide among those struggling with gender dysphoria, what pronouns and names to use in referring to them, and how to care for, love and value them. He gives advice to parents. And he movingly speaks to **those who believe themselves to be transgender, reminding them of “God’s unrelenting love” and urging them to “be on guard against simplistic solutions that promise relief from your struggles by the change of name, pronouns, or even the appearance of your body.”**

He sketches for them the **“difficult but more promising path to joy and peace,”** provides links for further help and assures them that “the Church is here to assist and accompany you on this journey.”

In response to the great danger of a misguided charity and false compassion to those with gender dysphoria, the pastoral letter models truth in charity and authentic mercy. It deserves not just to be read, but studied and shared.



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