

## Pastoral Letter to Parents Regarding Gender Theory

In light of recent concerns that have come to me regarding the issue of modern gender theory, I write this letter as a means of helping you form and guide your children as you navigate changing cultural attitudes and norms pertaining to gender identity. This new gender theory denies the nature of God's created order inasmuch as it denies that God has created us male and female. Instead, it proposes that gender is fluid and changeable and is determined by the choice of the individual rather than by biology. In other words, if, for example, your child was born as a biological male, it may be that he is actually a girl who is only physically male. As such, you won't know his true gender until he is old enough to psychologically identify as a male or female. This theory will further tell you that your role as a parent is not to impose a gender on your child, but to allow him the freedom to explore either gender and choose for himself which is his true self. The same goes in the case of a child who is biologically female; should she choose a different gender than her biological sex, you, the parent are told that you ought to support her choice of a new identity as a boy. This new way of looking at gender can present itself to your family in many forms, from tv shows, to children's clothing lines, to public school curricula, and so forth. This has caused confusion for some and questions for many regarding the legitimate role of parents and what they should teach their kids about their sexual and gender identity. I wish to reaffirm to you the eternal truth that God has intentionally created each child; each of us are a gift from God. This is true also of sexuality: *"Male and female He created them"* (Genesis 1:27). God has entrusted you with a sacred task of affirming, nurturing, protecting and educating your child in his or her sexual identity as God has created them.

The Vatican has recently released a document, entitled, "Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education,"<sup>i</sup> addressing the issues stemming from the new gender theory. It was released to assist those involved in the education and formation of young people, especially parents and teachers. This document states that the new gender theory attempts to *"cancel out the differences between men and women, presenting them instead as merely the product of historical and cultural conditioning."*<sup>ii</sup> The text then quotes Pope Francis, who states that modern gender theory directly opposes God's design for our sexuality:

*[Modern gender theory] denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.*<sup>iii</sup>

The Vatican has called this an "educational crisis," in that curricula are being developed that supposedly present a "neutral conception of the person and of life,"<sup>iv</sup> devoid of sexual difference. Gender theory, rather than portraying a neutral conception of the person, has put forth an "anthropology which is opposed to faith and right reason."<sup>v</sup>

One way that the proponents of gender theory propose this "neutral conception of the person" is by telling parents that they should not affirm the sexual identity of their children. To do so, the thinking goes, would be to impose upon them a sexual identity that they ought to be free to determine for themselves. One instance of this thinking comes to us from Celine Dion, who has launched a new gender-neutral clothing line for infants and children by the name of Celinununu. The commercial

launching this line of clothing depicts Dion breaking into a hospital nursery where babies are dressed by gender in pink or blue; Dion then sprinkles black glitter onto the children and the babies suddenly appear in gender-neutral black and white clothing. If you haven't seen it, yet, you can watch it here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSdSFKj-hOc> The clothing line touts that "fashion has the power to shape people's minds."<sup>vi</sup> Their company's mission is to "inspire your children to be free and find their own individuality through clothes." According to their website, they have created a "clothing brand that breeds equality and freedom of spirit, serving as a platform for a new humanistic education. Celinununu liberates children from the traditional roles of boy/girl."<sup>vii</sup>

The efforts of Celine Dion and those at Celinununu are by no means arising out of a vacuum; the overnight cultural acceptance of gender theory has become somewhat of a movement, with many facets and many different incarnations. There is the American Library Association's embracing of "Drag Queen Story Hours" for children. There is the option, in Ontario at least, to choose a non-binary option on birth certificates. There is the emergence of pediatric gender clinics, which often encourage patients to "transition" after a single visit.<sup>viii</sup> One local incarnation of this movement is the reading of "I Am Jazz" in the classroom. For those who don't know, "I Am Jazz" is a TLC show about a girl that was born inside a boy's body. The program was recently turned into a children's book and has been read in the classroom to area kids as young as pre-K. While some have not opposed this being read to children in the name of teaching kids how to love and respect others, it is becoming clear that this is not simply about teaching tolerance. This is not only about the loving acceptance of someone who is experiencing gender dysphoria; it is also a concerted effort to undermine the sexual identity of children and popularize transgenderism. Should your children lovingly accept everyone in their school and learn how to honor and respect them? Yes. Is that what is really going on here? No. At least not entirely.

The problematic nature of gender theory is also seen in the medical practices that arise from it. Doctors are prescribing powerful hormone blocking drugs for 12-year-olds in order to prevent puberty from occurring naturally.<sup>ix</sup> This is being done despite the fact that most children who express gender dysphoria will grow out of it. Ryan T. Anderson points out the incredible dissonance here:

*There is no acknowledgement that the vast majority of children with gender dysphoria- 80 to 95 percent- naturally grow out of it, if they aren't encouraged to transition... blocking puberty may interfere with the developmental mechanisms that help children accept their bodies, or that virtually none of the children put on puberty blockers grow out of their gender dysphoria.<sup>x</sup>*

Considering this fact, it would seem highly irresponsible to begin interventions involving hormones. Yet this is pushed as a solution, often with the claim that it will reduce the risk of suicide for the young person who is experiencing gender dysphoria. This does not really seem to address the risk of suicide, since the suicide rate for those who have undergone gender reassignment surgery is 19 times higher than the general population.<sup>xi</sup> This doesn't mean that the reassignment surgery is the cause of such a high rate, but simply that the surgery does not seem to lower the risk.

This is very sad in itself, and it ought to give us pause when we think about the way that we treat those of our friends, family, co-workers, or anyone in our lives who is experiencing that identity struggle. It ought to move us to a deep compassion for them and reflect on the way in which Jesus desires to love them through us. Just because someone has gone through a reassignment surgery, does that mean that they are less precious in God's eyes? Does that mean that they are no longer made in His image and likeness? Does that mean that they are somehow unlovable? No. I hope you know those are

lies. And while you may agree with my point here on a surface level, have you allowed the truth of their goodness to change your heart and actions to be those of love and compassion? Words don't bring healing if they are only virtue signaling or lip service, and sooner or later people know whether they are truly loved as they are. It is true that this authentic love does not amount to a mindless approval of someone's wrong course of action. You've heard me say many times that real love desires to be rooted in the truth, because real love always desires what is truly good for the beloved. We must also remember that to authentically love someone always involves a genuine delight in them, and a very basic acknowledgement of their goodness in the eyes of God; this is still true even if someone is embracing something they shouldn't. These heartbreaking statistics regarding suicide should stir up in us a desire to love and protect those who experience gender dysphoria; to affirm their goodness, and to encourage them in the truth of their identity.

We should also be moved with a desire to protect our children from confusion about their own identities. Given the fact that the vast majority of children who express interest in a cross-gender identity will eventually come to embrace their biological identity, we should not be seeking to undermine their biological identity. Most children who experience confusion in this regard can be spared a great deal of confusion and pain if we simply affirm the God-given goodness of their sexual identity. I believe that if we thoughtfully consider what is going on with gender theory, we will reject it, and rightfully so.

There are many problems with the gender theory. In the first place, we don't simply determine our own identity by choice. Each one of us was born either as a biological male or a biological female. This is true also of those termed "intersexed", who all still possess either xx or xy chromosomes. Each one of us were created by God as a male or a female, and our bodies are a gift from Him. We should receive the body as such; we should accept ourselves the way we were created. We also ought to be loved and affirmed by others as we have been created.

This affirmation is particularly important, because a human being is a body-soul composite. As a body-soul composite, it is impossible to separate my body from my self. It is wrong to suggest that my body is not me. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states the following concerning the matter:

*The human body shares in the dignity of the image of God: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, and, as such, we may not despise (our) bodily life. Rather (we) are obliged to regard (the) body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it on the last day.<sup>xii</sup>*

In short, this means that 1) God made you very good, and 2) you includes your body. You, the parent, have a right and a responsibility to teach your children how to love, honor and respect others, including those who are experiencing gender dysphoria. You also have the job of teaching your child the truth of who they are.

But the statement that we don't simply determine our own identity by choice applies beyond the biological level. Each one of us receives our own identity through the love and affirmation of others. A child discovers that she is lovable because her parents lavish loving attention upon her. A child knows that God has created him "very good" because his parents delight in him. The affirmation of what God has created is essential to childhood development.

*Affirmation is not something we do but something we are. The root of the word 'affirmation' is 'firm'... We cannot become our true selves until another person affirms us... We become our true selves when we see our goodness reflected back to us in the eyes of another person who loves us.*<sup>xiii</sup>

This affirmation is important to the arena of a child's psychosexual development, without which, a child could face a lot of confusion.

For Walt Heyer, a former self-identified transgender woman, it is important for parents to know the role that affirmation plays in their development. Walt, born a male, struggled with the gender issue for 40 years, and spent eight as a self-described "woman" before de-transitioning. As Walt speaks about the moment his gender struggle began at the age of four, he mentions that his grandmother would encourage him in wearing dresses and affirm him in being a girl. Walt states, without qualification, that affirming a boy as being a girl is not truly affirmation; "In the very same moment that you are affirming that person, you are telling them there is something wrong with them. It's not affirming a child. It's causing them to be depressed and anxious about who they are." After 40 years of dealing personally with the transgender issue, Walt understands that, "there is absolutely nothing good with affirming someone in a cross-gender identity, because it will destroy their life." I encourage you to learn more by hearing about his story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIRkLtKqSrY>

Healthy affirmation is an important aspect of your role as a parent. The way in which a girl is delighted in as a daughter helps to establish her identity as such. The way in which a young man is affirmed as a son helps to establish him as such. This affirmation of the sexual identity of your child is a blessing to them. This blessing is very important for them to receive both from their same-sex parent and their opposite-sex parent. The affirmation of a child in their sexual identity helps them to establish a secure identity as a young man or a young woman, and it allows them to experience the joy of being delighted in as they were created. This is what our children truly desire; boys want to know that they have what it takes to become men. We should affirm them in their ability to do so. Girls want to know that their strength, compassion and beauty blesses those around them. We should affirm this blessing of their femininity. This need not lead us to shallow stereotypes unless we desire to impose them ourselves. In fact, over-restrictive stereotypes can undermine affirmation and cause confusion. When we offer healthy affirmation to children and young people, it is an affirmation of what God has done:

*You formed my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you. -Psalm 139*

God the Father has declared that He has created you and me and each person "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We are invited to receive our own selves as sacred gift. It should be obvious that absolute self-determination of the new gender theory stands in opposition to all that God has revealed to us in His Word. As such, gender theory must be rejected by all Catholics, and especially by parents.

At the same time, we must acknowledge there are also many adults who experience gender dysphoria, and we ought to strive to know how to love them well and affirm them in the truth of how God created them, just as we would for any other person. It is true that we should not affirm anyone in a cross-gender identity, but we can still be present to them in love as to a friend. It is also true that someone experiencing gender dysphoria should not be blamed for their identity struggle. Bear in mind

as well, that those who are struggling with this issue are not necessarily the ones who want this to be in the forefront of the minds of children. To forget this simple fact could lead to the scapegoating that has plagued our culture relentlessly. Each person who has experienced gender dysphoria is infinitely loved and desired by the God of the universe, who created them "very good". We must participate with Him in affirming their goodness as being made in His image and likeness. They have an equal human dignity to you and me. Lest this be forgotten, I ask that we all spend some time praying with Matthew 25:31-46 with a special attention to whether we are treating everyone as we would treat Jesus.

Jesus also warns us not to be a stumbling block for children. He tells us that if we bring confusion to children and cause them to sin, it would be better for us if a millstone were hung around our neck and we were thrown into the sea. This is found in Matthew 18:6-7. We should spend some time praying through this with a special attention to whether we are acting out of a desire for the true good of children or whether we are acting out of a desire to win the approval of the world. If we desire the approval of the world, we will become a stumbling block for some of Jesus' little ones.

To close, I would like to share with you a few resources on this topic. First, I highly encourage you to read and reflect on the Vatican document, "Male and Female He Created Them". [http://www.educatio.va/content/dam/cec/Documenti/19\\_0997\\_INGLESE.pdf](http://www.educatio.va/content/dam/cec/Documenti/19_0997_INGLESE.pdf) This ought to form our understanding of the human person and help to root us in the truth of who we are as God's children. If you wish to delve more fully into the topic of gender dysphoria as a whole, I recommend Ryan T. Anderson's book, "When Harry Became Sally". This book touches on many things that I cannot address in this brief letter. One of the most important resources that I have come across in recent years, though, is not something that deals directly with gender dysphoria or struggles with sexual identity in particular, but something that deals with inner healing in general. Even if we do not struggle profoundly with our sexual identity, we all, in some form, struggle with identity wounds that can affect any arena of life. It is important for us to remember that we believe in a God who is a Healer. We believe in a God who restores the broken chapters of our lives. Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, desires permission to heal these broken places. It is for this reason that I am continually telling you about the ministry of Dr. Bob Schuchts and the John Paul II Healing Center <https://jpiihealingcenter.org/> as well as his book, "Be Healed". This book and his ministry have blessed many people with an array of different interior wounds, enabling them to experience the loving gaze of God the Father.

You who are parents are given the sacred task of caring for God's children, of revealing Him to them, and of revealing to them their own blessedness as sons and daughters. Know of my constant prayers for you in this task. Do not be afraid to speak the truth of your child's blessedness as your son or your daughter and that their masculinity and femininity are beautiful God-given gifts.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. J. Kogut". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Fr. Dan Kogut

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<sup>i</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education (2019, February 2). "Male and Female He Created Them": Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education. Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20190202\\_maschio-e-femmina\\_en.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_en.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid

<sup>v</sup> Ibid

<sup>vi</sup> Celinununu.com

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid

<sup>viii</sup> Ryan T. Anderson, "When Harry Became Sally", (Encounter Books, New York, 2019), p. 132-133

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid, 121

<sup>x</sup> Ibid, 119

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid, 103

<sup>xii</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 363

<sup>xiii</sup> Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Matthew Linn, S.J., "Belonging: Bonds of Healing and Recovery", (Paulist Press, NY, 1992), p. 89-90