CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

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President's Column

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them…God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply…and God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1:27-28, 31)

Dear Friends in Christ,

In these three verses, from the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, God reveals the true anthropology of man, his inherent and inviolable dignity as the Imago Dei, and the complementarity of our sexed bodies as male and female, created for the purpose of nuptial communion and procreation.

It is due in large part to either a misunderstanding or a refusal to accept this truth regarding the natural order of mankind created by God that we see such widespread confusion and disagreement in our understanding of the sanctity of life, marriage and family, human sexuality and even the reality of our existence as human persons – an inseparable union of body and soul.

To understand the origin of this incoherence, we have to go no further than the third chapter of Genesis. Pride and disobedience (original sin) led to the Fall, shattering the harmony between God and man, male and female, man and nature. As a result, our knowledge of truth may be clouded by pride and our actions disordered by disobedience.

A particularly serious consequence of disordered thinking today is transgenderism or gender ideology. It is the refusal to acknowledge the binary reality of bodily sex and its corollary – the belief that one's biological sex and gender identity, the psychological and cultural characteristics of masculinity and femininity, can be misaligned. This has led to an epidemic of what is commonly referred to as "gender incongruence," a psychological condition characterized by a subjective awareness of one's gender as incompatible with his or her biological sex. The result is a variable degree of emotional/psychological distress or dysphoria experienced by those who come to believe they are trapped in the body of the opposite sex.

There has been an alarming increase in gender dysphoria in children and adolescents recently. As an example, between 2009 and 2019 in the UK, annual referrals for transgender care increased 3,000 percent! Similar trends have been seen in the United States, creating a significant threat to the health of these young people and challenges in providing appropriate care.

Historically, it is well known that up to 90 percent of children with gender dysphoria will eventually desist, i.e., realign their gender identity with their actual biological sex without specific medical intervention. However, in the early 2000's, a change in the approach to gender incongruence in children occurred in response to a single study in the Netherlands which suggested an improvement in the emotional health of young patients with a "gender affirming" therapeutic approach. This new "Dutch protocol" included social affirmation of the preferred gender, puberty blockers, cross sex hormones and surgical procedures performed in an attempt to realign the sex of the patient with their perceived gender.

Two decades later, after thousands of children and adolescents in Europe and the United States have undergone gender affirming interventions including surgical procedures permanently altering their physical sexual characteristics to simulate the opposite sex resulting in permanent sterility, there is nearly uniform agreement in Europe that this approach is not only ineffective, but harmful.

Unfortunately, at present in the United States several major medical associations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society and the American Medical Association, remain supportive of the gender affirming approach.

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Therefore, it is vitally important that we bring knowledge of the truth on this issue into the public sphere to protect the health and welfare of children, adolescents and, yes, adults as well who suffer emotionally from this psychological disorder. We have a responsibility to learn the truth about gender ideology and harmful gender affirming procedures. Fortunately, there are many resources available to help.

First we need a clear declaration of the Christian anthropology of man. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Doctrine has provided this in a document published in March of this year.

In it you will find a thorough explanation of the truth about our nature as human persons created by God, as well as the natural order and purpose of our sexual differentiation as male and female. Based on this, the Bishops outline the therapeutic and technological interventions that are morally permissible "respecting the integrity of the fundamental order and finality of the human person."

Next it is necessary to understand the available evidence regarding the best approach to this disorder which causes significant emotional and psychological distress to those persons afflicted. The Catholic Medical Association recently released an excellent summary of the current evidence in this regard.

Another valuable resource is the Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine (SEGM). Here you will find an unbiased presentation of information from an international group from various clinical disciplines with expertise and decades of experience in the management of gender dysphoria. SEGM's mission is "to promote safe, compassionate, ethical and evidence-informed healthcare for children, adolescents and young adults with gender dysphoria."

In addition, there are vast social ramifications of gender ideology affecting parents, families, schools, churches, legislative bodies and the medical profession itself. A wealth of information and resources concerning these issues can be found at the Person and Identity Project.

As you familiarize yourself with this topic and begin to engage in conversations with others, be aware of the prevailing medical narrative in the United States. As noted above, many highly influential organizations continue to insist on the benefit of the gender affirming approach to gender dysphoria in children and adults. Generally speaking what you will hear is summarized in this quote from the Columbia University Irving Medical Center/Gender Identity Program: "Research demonstrates that

gender-affirming care – a medical and psychosocial health care designed to affirm individuals' gender identities – greatly improves the mental health and overall well-being of gender diverse, transgender, and nonbinary children and adolescents."

Do not be deceived and be prepared for criticism if you question the validity of this prevailing narrative. The transgender misinformation machine is well financed and highly effective in the promotion of its transgender agenda.

Finally, in his magnum opus, "Theology of the Body," Pope St. John Paul II presents a profound theological reflection not only on the meaning and beauty of human sexuality, but a treatise on the Christian anthropology of man essential for our understanding of this problem. I can think of no better example of the merciful providence of God providing the information necessary to effectively counter an assault by the spirit of the world intent upon, in the words of C.S. Lewis, the abolition of man.

"Be not afraid," said St. John Paul II. Trust in God's gifts of wisdom and grace available through the Church established by Christ and respond to His call at this time, our time in history, to uphold the Truth in Charity in the ministry of health care.

Please join us and support our mission to protect and promote the vocation of medicine in harmony with the mind and heart of Christ.

God Bless,
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President, CHCLA