



598/2030
30 August 2023

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are experiencing a polarizing and tense time in our culture. Many feel lost and troubled about who they are and their purpose in the world. This search for life's meaning and purpose touches the core of who we are as human beings. As Catholic Christians, we know that "God has formed us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until we rest in Him."¹ Ultimately, we long to be united with our Creator.

As Christ loved us, so we are called to love one another. In the Incarnation, Jesus took on human flesh, thus revealing to us what it means to be embodied and live in service to others. The human person is a unity of body and soul; we experience the world through our bodies, and it is through the virtuous expression of our bodies that we reveal God. From the beginning, God created man and woman to be complementary to one another, to live in relationship with one another. Thus, our given biological sex is integral to His divine plan.²

In recent times, there is an awareness that, within our parishes and schools, some of our brothers and sisters in Christ experience challenges with their sexuality and confusion with their gender. The Church teaches that sexual identity is "a reality deeply inscribed in man and woman."³ One's maleness or femaleness is pivotal to how one sees himself or herself and lives his or her life. As the CDF wrote in *Persona Humana*, "it is from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological, and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society."⁴ Through times of questioning and confusion, we must accompany our brothers and sisters in Christ with compassion, mercy, and dignity so that we might lovingly help them navigate the confusion and arrive at the truth.

Efforts in parish ministry and our schools should include holistic formation and moral development of the integrity of body and spirit. As Catholic institutions, we believe that the human

¹ St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 1,1.5

https://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20020821_agostino_en.html

² Gen. 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6: "Male and female he created them", par. 32.

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Woman in the Church and the World, 2004, #8.

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Persona Humana*, 1.

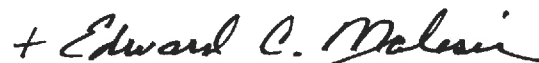
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html

body is a gift from God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Each and every person is unique, unrepeatable, willed by God, and called to love. Our communities should foster discernment and friendship, as each person seeks to know and appreciate God's gift of his or her body and authentic sexuality. These opportunities should draw one closer and deeper in relationship with Christ, so that all may freely respond to the universal call to holiness.

In closing, I share the following document, which outlines the diocesan policy on issues of human sexuality and gender, as well as the theological and pastoral resources related to these matters, including information on support groups and counselors, which can be found at dioceseofcleveland.org/humansexuality. In the spirit of truth and charity, I hope that you will find these guidelines and resources upholding the teachings of the Church. For further assistance and guidance, I have formed a team of individuals who have background and understanding in the theological, moral, legal, pastoral, and educational facets of these matters. I strongly encourage you to connect with this team if you are faced with any questions related to these matters; they can be reached through the Marriage and Family Office. Finally, please periodically refer back to dioceseofcleveland.org/humansexuality, as over time we will be updating it with more information and resources.

The human person, created in the image and likeness of God, deserves the utmost respect, for each person's dignity is inherent and inviolable. Let's keep this fundamental principle at heart, as we move forward and engage in our various ministries. May God bless you and those you love. I remain

Your brother in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward C. Malesic". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL
Bishop of Cleveland