

## Lex Cordis Caritas - The law of the heart is Love

By Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, May 31, 2016

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Once again common sense has been turned on its head in our culture, this time by transgender activists agitating for people to be able to use the bathroom that they feel corresponds emotionally to their self-identified gender rather than the anatomical gender of their biological sex. The issue has emerged prominently in recent national and local news.

In North Carolina, in response to an ordinance adopted in Charlotte that would have allowed transgender people to use whatever bathroom they wanted, the state legislature passed a law in March blocking local governments from enacting rules that grant such privileges to transgender people. A similar law recently passed in Mississippi allows people to withhold services from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals on religious grounds. In response, President Barack Obama has said that these laws in North Carolina and Mississippi are "wrong" and "should be overturned." The Obama administration used the Department of Justice to warn the state of North Carolina that its new law limiting bathroom access violated the civil rights of transgender people.

Here in Illinois, in response to a federal complaint, the Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 in suburban Chicago earlier this year granted a transgender student, who was born male but identifies as female, limited access to the girls locker room at Fremd High School. Similarly, a transgender student at a Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200 school has been granted access to a locker room designated for the opposite sex. The Chicago Public Schools have announced that their students, teachers and staff could use whichever restroom matches their self-selected gender identity.

Nearby in central Illinois, a transgender student at Williamsville High School who was born with female anatomy but identifies as a male recently resolved a complaint filed in October with the Illinois Department of Human Rights. The school had previously provided a private bathroom for the transgender student, who complained that this was unacceptable, saying, "It made me feel like I was being treated differently and ostracized." So now all transgender students at Williamsville High School will have access to the restroom and locker room facilities of the gender they identify with emotionally, not the biological gender that they were born with.

Earlier this month, a group of Illinois students and parents sued the Obama administration over its stance on transgender students' access to school bathrooms and locker rooms, arguing that the U.S. Department of Education is illegally forcing local authorities to let children use facilities that correspond to their subjectively chosen gender identity. The complaint alleges that the federal government has violated students' fundamental right to privacy and parents' constitutional right to instill moral standards and values in their children.



The transgender activists would have you believe that their politically correct ideology is based on science; however, the American College of Pediatricians has pointed out that transgenderism is classified as a mental illness and therefore has warned legislators and educators that conditioning children to accept transgenderism as normal is child abuse. They advised, "When an otherwise healthy biological boy believes he is a girl, or an otherwise healthy biological girl believes she is a boy, an objective psychological problem exists that lies in the mind, not the body, and it should be treated as such."

Dr. Paul McHugh, psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital, was so concerned about the psychological origins of gender-identity disorder that he halted the practice of sex-reassignment surgery at his institution. He concluded that the research demonstrated that Johns Hopkins should no longer participate in what he called "unusual and radical treatment" for "mental disorders."

The Catholic Church has some clear teachings on transgender issues. Catholics are called to treat everyone with compassion. Yet the church maintains that people may not change what Pope Benedict XVI called "their very essence." In a speech at the Vatican on Dec. 23, 2008, Benedict directly addressed transgender issues by cautioning Catholics about "destroying the very essence of the human creature through manipulating their God-given gender to suit their sexual choices."

Similarly, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, issued last year on the environment, Pope Francis called for men and women to acknowledge their bodies as a gift from God which should not be manipulated. "The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home," the pope wrote, "whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation" (no. 155).

In his recent apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Pope Francis warns that gender ideology "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences ... It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created" (no. 56).

Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, we ask that people respect these teachings of the Catholic Church in their use of facilities in our churches and schools. People who are confused about their gender identity—especially children and adolescents—should be treated with compassion and provided counseling rather than being further confused by activists promoting their political ideology.

May God give us this grace. Amen.