

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

Archdiocese of Oklahoma City  
Diocese of Tulsa  
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## PURPOSE

God has revealed himself as the one “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (cf. Ex 34.6). These two terms – love and faithfulness – express summarily the riches of the divine nature. In all his works, God displays not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. He is the Truth, for “God is light and in him there is no darkness;” “God is love,” as the apostle John teaches (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 214).

The Catholic Church offers a message that is not its own but comes from God's self-revelation made perfectly known in the person of Jesus Christ, yet is ever new and renewing as it is received, celebrated, lived and contemplated today. The Church offers to *all people* the possibility of encountering the living God today, and finding in him lasting meaning and hope (U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults, 499).

The Catholic Church teaches that all persons are made in the image of God (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 356f). This truth is predicated upon a human being's capacity to know and love, which is the foundation of his or her inherent dignity. The possession of these divine capacities requires that every person, regardless of age, race, religion, nationality, special needs, sexual orientation, etc., be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. The communication of this doctrine not only prepares the soul for final beatitude, but also educates people for active and responsible citizenry, which is marked by the ability to welcome all legitimate expressions of human personhood with respect (Male and Female He Created Them, 16).

Catholic schools and parish religious formation programs are committed to providing a nourishing and safe environment that allows students to grow in their capacities of knowing and loving. Our parishes and schools exist to provide an education and resources consistent with the Catholic Church's rich understanding of God and his creation. A starting point for all formation is a deeply held understanding that affirms the God-given irrevocable dignity of every human

person being made in the image of God.

Catholic educators must know and love the children placed in their care. To this end, they are called to go beyond all ideological reductionism or materialistic relativism by remaining faithful to natural law, the Gospel and Church teaching. They do this “in order to transform positively the challenges of their times into opportunities by following the path of listening, reasoning and proposing the Christian vision, while giving witness to that vision by their very presence, and by the consistency of their words and deeds. Formators have the attractive educational mission to teach them sensitivity to different expressions of love, mutual concern and care, loving respect and deeply meaningful communication. All of these prepare them for an integral and generous gift of self that will be expressed, following a public commitment, in the gift of their bodies” (Male and Female He Created Them, Congregation for Catholic Education, 54).

A Catholic understanding of the human person (Catholic anthropology) and the person’s relationship with God and others permeates and shapes the ethos of this formation. Informed by Catholic teaching, the “Guiding Principles” enumerated below provide the foundation upon which policies, handbooks, statements, employee agreements and training for employees are based. The “Principles” also provide the foundation for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City’s and the Diocese of Tulsa’s approach to accompaniment of families, Catholic schools and parish communities, thus ensuring that the immeasurable dignity of every child is protected and respected, particularly as it relates to foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church:

- God created each person “in his own image, in the image of God he created them” (Gen. 1:27). The inestimable dignity of each person and the source of his or her most important identity is found in this creation in the image and likeness of God (CCC § 364).
- God created each person either male or female (cf. Gen 1:27; CCC § 369). This “primordial duality” (Letter to Families § 6) reflects “the Creator’s wisdom and goodness” (CCC § 369). Being male or female is a reality that is good and willed by God (CCC § 369). A person’s embrace of his or her sexual identity is an essential part of living a fulfilled relationship with God, with oneself, and with each other (CCC § 2333) (Laudato Si § 155).
- The physical, moral and spiritual differences between men and women are complementary. The flourishing of family life and society depend in part on how this complementarity is lived out (CCC § 2333-2334).
- The harmonious integration of a person’s identity with his or her biological sex is an expression of the inner unity and reality of the human person being made body and soul (CCC § 364-365).
- The perception that a person has the ability to construct and express a gender identity that is separate from their biological sex would not be living in accord with truth, which seeks “to serve man’s true freedom” (Veritatis Splendor § 96).
- All students and families deserve interactions with Catholic communities that are marked by respect, charity and the truth about human dignity and God’s love (Deus Caritas Est § 20).

## APPLICATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The aforementioned “Guiding Principles” are to be applied practically in Catholic schools and parishes. Catholic schools and parishes in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa will relate to each person in a loving and truthful way. To this end, each diocese will be working with pastors, school principals, parish staff and other leaders to produce policies and handbook materials that flesh out the practical application of these “Principles.” Ongoing guidance and collaboration with policy formation will be provided by diocesan staff to ensure consistent and uniform policy definition.

### Catholic Teaching Tradition

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997) (§214, 364, 365, 369, 1907, 2297, 2333, 2334, 2393, 2521, 2522, 2523)

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:  
*U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults* (499)

Pope Francis:

*Laudato Si* (2015) (§155)

*Amoris Laetitia* (2016) (§56, 285, 286)

Audiences (1/16/15; 3/23/15; 4/15/15; 6/8/15; 9/10/15; 7/27/16; 10/1/16; 11/27/16)

Pope Benedict XVI:

*Deus Caritas Est* (2005) (§5, 11, 20)

Address to the Bishops of the United States of America (1/19/12)

Audiences (9/22/11; 12/21/12)

*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986)

Saint John Paul II:

*Letter to Families* (1994) (§6, 19)

*Theology of the Body Wednesday Audiences* (9/5/1979-11/28/1984)

*Veritatis Splendor* (§96)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

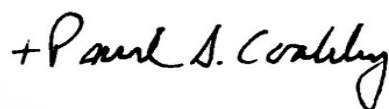
*Persona Humana* (1975)

Congregation for Catholic Education:

*“Male and Female He Created Them:” Toward a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (2019)

Pontifical Council for the Family:

*Family, Marriage and “De Facto” Unions* (2000) (§8)



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