

WHAT IS THE HUMAN PERSON?

Based on Divine Revelation, the Catholic Church teaches that each human being is most fundamentally a beloved daughter or son of God, created in God’s own image and likeness. Unlike angelic persons, who are spirits without bodies, God creates the human person to be a unity of body and soul. **The integral unity of the body and soul is fundamental to identity of the human person.** The Church teaches that “the human body shares in the dignity of ‘the image of God’” (CCC, 364). The body cannot exist separately from the soul and the soul and body together constitute the self. A human person does not just *have* a body — he or she *is* that body. We express this idea when we ask a child, “Did you hurt yourself?” or when someone says, “Don’t touch me!” What happens to our *bodies* happens to *us*. Catholic teaching on the human person and the importance of the human body is very different from the dominant view in popular culture, which reduces the person to “will” or desire and treats the body as a thing to be used.

Competing Views of the Human Person

<h3>Dominant Secular View</h3> <p><i>Frequently, but mistakenly, presumed to be true. Often taught as if “proven.”</i></p>	<h3>Catholic Christian View</h3> <p><i>Explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Rooted in Scripture, Tradition, and Church Teaching.</i></p>
I am my mind.	I am my soul and my body.
I am a self-defining being. I must decide what it means to be me. I have no given “nature” to direct or limit my free choices.	I am a creature: My nature as a human person is the intentional gift of God, who is good and who has loved me into existence as the person I am.
The natural world is a vast organic reality with its own natural order. Humans increasingly respect this natural order and reject its exploitation.	I am part of creation. I view the natural world, including myself, as having an order that must be respected.
My body is an amazing machine which I am entitled to use as I please. There is no plan for my life other than the one I make.	My body is designed by God and helps me to understand God’s plan for my life.
I am free to determine my own identity. Receiving my identity from another threatens my autonomy.	My primary identity is that of a son or daughter of God. That is who I am.

WHAT IS GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology is a false system of beliefs about the human person, premised on the idea that “human identity becomes the choice of the individual.”¹ According to gender ideology, the person self-determines a “gender identity,” based on feelings or the person’s “sense of self” as male, female, both, neither, or something else—regardless of the person’s actual male or female sex. Gender ideology asserts an individual’s “right” to “transition” to a desired identity, using social, medical or surgical interventions to “feminize” or “masculinize” the body’s appearance.²

Psychological and medical interventions to “affirm” an individual’s desired gender identity in opposition to bodily reality cause serious, irreversible harm. Children, adolescents, and persons with depression, anxiety, autism spectrum disorder, or histories of trauma or abuse are particularly vulnerable (See FAQ on “gender affirmative care”). Gender ideology claims to support individual rights but results in social and legal coercion: activists seek to compel *others* to validate the individual’s desired “gender identity” and force them to accept transgender-identified persons in opposite-sex activities or private spaces (e.g., permitting a male identifying as a girl to compete in girls’ track and to undress in the girls’ locker room).

Catholics cannot affirm or validate a “transgender” or other identity that rejects the person’s innate sexual identity (male or female). Christian anthropology “sees sexuality as a fundamental component of one’s personhood.”³ Authentic compassion affirms the person’s dignity as a son (male) or daughter (female) of God and helps the person “accept his [or her] sexual identity” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2333). Gender ideology denies God as Creator and, by rejecting the significance of sexual difference and the person as a unity of body and soul, “reflects[s] an anthropology opposed to faith and reason.”⁴

Images like the genderbread person (see: personandidentity.com) or the gender elephant convey the false anthropology of gender ideology: the person is represented as fractured—a jumble of disconnected dimensions that need not align and may change. These dimensions include gender identity (an inner feeling), gender expression (external), sex assigned at birth (as if sex were an arbitrary label), and physical (sexual) or emotional (romantic) attraction. The image erroneously presents sex as a spectrum of female, “intersex,” and male. Biology, however, defines “sex” as the classification of an organism according to its reproductive role; human reproduction is binary, always requiring sperm (male) and an ovum (female). An intersex condition is actually a disorder of sexual development that occurs in utero, not a third sex.

In brief, gender ideology is fundamentally opposed to Catholic teaching because:

- Gender Ideology redefines the person. It reflects a “dualistic anthropology, separating body...from human will”⁵ and “enforce[s] the false idea—that a man can be or become a woman or vice versa...”⁶
- Gender ideology redefines human nature. It denies that the body is a gift from our Creator, and that our sexual identity as male or female has an intrinsic, objective meaning that reveals “who we are.”
- Gender ideology redefines the family. It denies sexual difference, which is essential to marriage and to the nature of sexual union as life-giving and love-giving, and thus denies the anthropological basis for the family (mother, father, children). Gender ideology seeks to dismantle the natural family, replacing it by “chosen” families of any sex or identity, centered on adult desires and created through artificial reproductive technologies (surrogacy or IVF) that intentionally deprive the child of either a mother or father.
- Gender ideology redefines the relationship of the person to the state by claiming that the state has the power to define or redefine personal identity, marriage, and parenthood, and usurping parents’ rights to direct the upbringing of their children.
- Gender ideology redefines the relationship of the person to God by rejecting God as Creator. Gender ideology is essentially atheistic, elevating individual autonomy and self-determination over God’s authority. (Not all who accept gender ideology are atheist or rejecting God; they may be unaware that gender ideology contradicts essential Christian teachings.)