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## Making Sense of the Gender Debate

There are two things that really frustrate me: being confused and not being told the truth. That is why the culture's campaign on gender is difficult for me to understand. Can you relate?

The term *gender* confuses many people because it *used to mean* the same thing as “male” or “female” (a biological reality). However, today's culture defines gender as a belief rather than a physical reality. Gender today is defined as how you feel about yourself as either a male or a female. This means that one's bodily sex (being born either male or female) is irrelevant because a male on the outside can be a female on the inside or vice versa.

Changing the meaning of the word gender makes it difficult to know what is truthfully foundational and what isn't. Because these two definitions are oppositional, our thinking can be challenged. How can we figure out what is the truth? Let me suggest that we tackle this issue by going back to the first stories of mankind that are found in the Bible.

The very first chapter of the Bible clearly tells us that God created human persons in only two forms: male and female. It explains that the sexual difference is a gift to us from our Creator. The Bible also reveals that being male or female is very good because it makes it possible to create new life and form bonds of deep love.

The Bible also shares that the human body has great meaning and dignity. It is not a “thing” we possess, like a car or a laptop. It is much more than a container for our soul. The body allows us to make visible that which is invisible inside us. It speaks a “language” that should express the truth of who we are created by God as either a male or female.

In God's plan, each person is designed to be matched biologically inside and out. In fact, science confirms that it is scientifically impossible to be born in the wrong body because there are just two sex chromosomes: X and Y. Females have two X chromosomes and males have one X and one Y. Evidence of being female or male is found throughout the body.

It becomes easier to wade through the puzzling gender debates when you begin with this information. Yet, some of you may ask, “What about the child who is born with ambiguous genitalia? Isn't this proof that there could be another option beyond male or female?” When this happens on rare occasions, medical and genetic tests can discover the biological sex (XX or XY) and the nature of the defect involved.

If these facts are true, why are we hearing so much about LGBTQ and being told that we need to let everyone – especially our children – identify themselves as they prefer? That is a great question that I can't fully answer in this newsletter. But I can share with you a few quick facts from research that might dispel the confusion.

- The gender debate began in the 1960s when psychologist named John Money decided that people should identify themselves by their social preferences and behavior rather than their biology. This opened the door for boys who liked dance to think of themselves as girls or for girls who prefer trucks to think of themselves as boys.
- In the last 10 years, the trend to identify as transgender has dramatically increased after exposure to the concept by peers or social media. This 'social contagion' is called Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria. Simply, youth who say that they question their gender identity receive extra attention and support and that often encourages them to continue the questioning.
- Youth who are allowed to explore the concept of transgender, rarely find that they are more mentally stable and happy in the long run.
- Up to 98% of youth who struggle with their sex as a boy or a girl, outgrow this condition by adulthood.

## Preparing Yourself for Necessary Conversations about Gender

Clearly, gender ideology is a hot topic in society today; one that must be dealt with respectfully and intelligently. Here are several suggestions to help you become more informed and equipped to faithfully translate God's plan to your children.

- Teach your children about the Theology of the Body which beautifully describes God's plan for us. Check in with your parish to see what resources they have.
- Check out the resources at the [Person and Identity](http://personandidentity.com/) website at [personandidentity.com/](http://personandidentity.com/). This site offers substantial and practical resources and guidance for parents and those working with youth.
- Remember, all persons deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. All youth, even those who suffer with gender confusion, deserve the same educational opportunities and resources. They also deserve to know the truth about God's plan. This means that we need to share the truth in clearly and with charity.



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