



General Minutes from Lake/Geauga District Meeting November 13, 2023

Prayer/Lunch/Welcome from Fr. Scott Goodfellow (We had 41 members attend)

Mary Pat Frey from Divine Word introduced speaker for the meeting: Fr. Joe Koopman, Professor of Moral Theology from St. Mary Seminary as well as Maria Wancata, Marriage and Family Specialist from the Diocese of Cleveland. Their presentation was on the Issues of Sexuality and Gender Identity.

Gave an overview of the *WHY* behind the Gender Identity Policy and the basics of our belief in sexuality as a basis for the policy on gender identity. Fr. Koopman gave this presentation to all 5 Diocesan High School teachers/staff as a way to prepare the schools for the unrolling of the policy.

See attached slides that Fr. Koopman presented.

Seven or eight years ago the question on gender identity was brought up and principals and camp staff were contacting the diocese looking for direction. Modern challenges include morality of obligation vs. duty. There is often a negative view of moral law and we lack a narrative for the Church's teachings.

Christian Sexuality and the Meaning of the Body

Challenges of ancient view vs. new

- a) Dualistic Gnosticism: Myths that the world is full of opposing forces (good vs bad). Body was perceived as bad (Descartes: I am a thinking being and not a body). Christian response was 1) "And God saw what He made and it was very good." 2) Incarnation- word made flesh. 3) I believe in the Resurrection of the Body. Church stresses the goodness of the body.
- b) The body is not only good but it has meaning. Adam was embodied in an incomplete way and needed Eve. God is a communion of love and communion of persons. This unity is reflected in the trinity. "Man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." Without giving ourselves away we are not fully ourselves. Male and female, he created them. We are not meant to be alone.
- c) The "Nuptial Language of the Body" and 4 characteristics of the gift of self- 1) Free 2) Total 3) Faithful 4) Fruitful. If you remove one of these characteristics, you're lying to your body. Judas' kiss of Jesus is so disturbing because Judas was lying with this act.

Problems of Transgenderism

- 1) Theological Concerns
- 2) Scientific/Medical Concerns
- 3) Pastoral Concerns

Theological Concerns:

- A) Denial of the Meaning of the Body - transgenders impose their own meaning on their body vs respecting the meaning God gave to their body.

- B) Thwarting of the ability of the authentic self-gift (sterilization). Concern for our children and losing their ability to become a biological parent in the future. Pope Francis: “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will.”
- C) The “language” of conjugal love is NOT present

Scientific/Medical Concerns:

Two resources to pursue: Dr. Paul McHugh “Sexuality and Gender” in New Atlantis; The Genesis of Gender by Abigail Favale

McHugh’s study shows that cross-gender identification is poorly understood. “Little scientific evidence for the therapeutic value of puberty-delaying treatments.” There is a current study out of Finland showing that gender changing programs are back tracking and not beneficial. Hormone therapy treatment is hurting children and not helping them. There is an avalanche of folks “de-transitioning.” Some hormone suppressors were actually developed as cancer treatments. The rapid onset of Gender Dysphoria has been encouraged by social media. Girls will be immediately supported (“liked”) on social media.

Some Pastoral Considerations: “Speaking the truth in love;” upholding the dignity of all people; the power of ideological current; protecting the vulnerable. Fr. Koopman encourages us to read the policy **and** the accompanying Pastoral Letter written by Bishop Malesic.

- <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/files/assets/gender-policy-cover-letter.pdf>
- <https://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/files/assets/parish-and-school-policy-on-issues-of-sexuality-and-gender-identity.pdf>

Maria Wancata from the Office of Marriage and Family presented on what diocese has been doing with respect to gender identity issue and education on the topic. Working to re-envision the ministry of LGBT issue and all human sexuality (NFP, etc).

Recently hosted the Genesis of Gender book study at St. Mary, Chardon. Hosts NFP Cycle Prep Workshops for young girls to teach them what changes are coming and how it is beautiful. They are helping school with language and how to address parents. The diocesan policy offers standards of care but stresses that each family must be addressed individually.

Fr. Ian Kelly asked: How do we pastorally walk with schools that are presenting Prism with poor theology?

Answer: Want to offer training and ask schools what they need. Maria wants her office to build relationships with the schools. Pursuing resources with Drew Porter. She is working with Campus Ministry departments at non-diocesan high schools. Non-diocesan high schools have their own orders and were not initially included as they were given space to develop their own policies.

Fr. Alex Clark asked: How do we respond to parents?

Answer: **Encourage** support groups cover same sex attraction and gender dysphoria. Diocesan office also has a list of counselors associated with the Catholic Medical Association to assist with

gender dysphoria. This list is not published to protect the counselors, but the list will be provided if you call Office of Marriage and Family and ask for it.

Mary Pat Frey asked: Has there been any input or push back from the public schools?

Answer: No public schools have reached out to the diocese regarding this policy but other Christian churches and public officials have reached out.

Fr. Dave Woost asked: What is the most common question your office receives?

Answer: People often say “Jesus would never do this” and parents will say “the Church hates my child.” Our response is not the time to clobber someone over the head with policy; it’s the time to listen. How do you react to “you’re not being compassionate enough”? Just listening to their concerns.

Terry Spielberg: Why is the church blessing same sex unions and allowing transgenders to be God parents?

Answer: Make sure you read the whole presentation coming directly out of the Vatican and not just the media’s interpretation of the policy. Pope’s words: accompany to a certain direction... There are lots of caveats (“If there is no one else available to be a God-parent.”) Fr. Koopman is waiting for the policy to be published in English for a clearer understanding on this issue. Currently he can only find the policy in Italian and is waiting to read the primary source material.

Fr. Greg Schaut: According to the Vatican News source we can baptize a transgendered child. Is this true?

Answer: The policy does not touch sacramental issues. It will be dealt with in the future. Bishops of Ohio say if there is a “founded hope” that the person will be raised in the faith, Baptism is allowed. Answer is on a case-by-case basis. Fr. Koopman encourages priests to contact him if a case comes up.

Fr. Scott Goodfellow: What can we do at our parishes?

Answer: Make sure that the Theology of the Body curriculum is available and invite Maria to offer Cycle Prep workshops. Reach out to the Office of Marriage and Family for resources.

Deacon Tim Shell: Where are the current support groups of **Courage** for adults and **Encourage** for Parents?

Answer: Three chaplains for **Courage**: Fr. Matt Byrne, Fr. Kevin Estabrook, Fr. Michael Matusz. Reach out to one of them to see where they are meeting. **Encourage** is meeting virtually. Fr. Kevin Estabrook has switched to **Encourage**. More resources to come.

Charlie Hunt: What are common themes that you hear during the listening sessions?

Answer: Parental notification policy: the school works with the whole family and doesn’t “out” the child. Parent is primary educator of the child so parent should be made aware.

Debbie Kacsala: At what age do people usually “know” who they are?

Answer: full brain development happens in your 20's. McHugh study Child dysphoria- if you let it go 93% of it will go away. If you affirm that, there is a high 80% that they will transition. European studies show the outcome of affirming dysphoria.

Saturday, December 9th there is a Person and Identity Project at Holy Family in Stow. This is a full-day conference on gender identity and will end with ideas for a pastoral approach.

How big a problem is this? More and more youth ministers are asking for information and resources. Also, these issues are coming up with sacramentals. Deacon Tim Shell offers that 1 in 5 very young people are identifying with the LGBT narrative.

Christy Cabaniss, Director of the Office of Ministry Discipleship, gave update on 2024 Eucharistic Congress (July 17-21) in Indianapolis. **See attached slides for all the details.** Each district should nominate 15 candidates to be Diocesan-sponsored Eucharistic Missionary Disciples. Also presented art contest, Synod Listening Sessions for the Eucharistic Revival, make sure you have a point person at each parish for Revival Resources. All are welcome to attend the Congress, you don't have to be a part of the diocesan delegation.

Announcements:

- 1) Fr. Alex Clark announced there is a new Fraternity of Spiritual Fathers starting based on Seven Sisters Apostolate. Men praying a Holy Hour each day for an "adopted" Religious Sister. No cost and a one-year commitment. Hope to begin ministry on January 1st. Contact Fr. Clark at St. John Vianney for more information.
- 2) Michelle Nowak, Director of the Office of Lay Ecclesial Ministry- handed out posters for those in Formation. Shared information on Bereavement Ministry workshop on Saturday, December 2nd from 10am until noon. Workshop is free to attend and entitled "Finding Meaning & Accompaniment in Suffering" at the CPL. Kara Yoder is the presenter.
- 3) Fr. Greg Schaut- will be collecting Christmas cards for staff at Lake Hospitals as in years' past. Averaging about 500 cards per year.
- 4) Greg Coogan- shared information about student art contest for the Eucharistic Revival Year.
- 5) Please look over Reconciliation sign ups on the District website for current needs.

Closing Prayer offered by Fr. Fabian Han.

Next Lake/Geauga District Meeting is Monday, January 8, 2024 11:45 am – St. Gabriel