



PURPOSE: To promote a life of virtue guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church.

## Human Sexuality Policies for the Diocese of Knoxville Catholic Schools

“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer “fully reveals man to himself.” If we may use the expression, this is the human dimension of the mystery of the Redemption. In this dimension, man finds again the greatness, dignity, and value that belong to his humanity.”

Pope Saint John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 10 March 4, 1979

### The foundation in our Catholic tradition

All members of the diocesan school community are expected to strive to live a life of virtue guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church in all aspects of their lives. Our diocesan pastoral and policy practices are written in fidelity to the moral guidance and teachings of the Catholic Church in all areas that touch on human flourishing. The diocesan school establishes an environment of encouragement, mercy, healing, and love to accompany its members as we journey on the path toward holiness.

At the heart of a Catholic diocesan school’s unique educational charism is integral formation of the whole human person. The Church instructs us,

*Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.<sup>1</sup>*

Our efforts at integral formation include the integrity of body, spirit, and moral development, therefore, our diocesan schools have a proper concern for each student’s behavior and development in the complex area of human sexuality. As Catholic institutions, we believe that human bodies are gifts from God and temples of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> All men and women are called to a life of chastity appropriate to their vocation as single, married, or consecrated religious. The

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<sup>1</sup>Libreria Editrice Vaticana, [Code of Canon Law](#), Canon 795.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 6:19.



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Church defines chastity as “the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being”.<sup>3</sup>

The Church also teaches that “sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman”.<sup>4</sup> We believe that human sexual behavior is only properly oriented to the ends of love and life in the context of Holy Matrimony.<sup>5</sup>

The proper understanding of human sexuality requires personal integrity and full integration of body and soul as created by God. According to the Church, “the chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.”<sup>6</sup>

Adolescents and young adults need to be taught by word and example that the virtue of chastity means “the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.” Through a Christ-centered love Christians can be fulfilled in all aspects of life, including the gradual integration of their sexuality. On this challenging journey, only a greater love can heal a lesser love.

We believe that the body and soul are intimately united: the body does not contain the soul like water in a glass, but the two are intimately dependent upon each other to express man as the highest order of creation.<sup>7</sup> We believe that the sexes are complementary and that as “male and female he made them”.<sup>8</sup> Our given biological sex is part of the divine plan.<sup>9</sup>

The Church teaches that sexual identity is “a reality deeply inscribed in man and woman,”<sup>10</sup> it constitutes but is more than one’s biological identity,<sup>11</sup> and a person “should acknowledge and

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<sup>3</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2337.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2360.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #358, 365; [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2332.

<sup>8</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #369-373; [Gen 1:27](#).

<sup>9</sup> [Gen. 1:27](#); [Matthew 19:4](#); [Mark 10:6](#).

<sup>10</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, [Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Woman in the Church and the World](#), 2004, #8.

<sup>11</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2332-2333; [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2361; Pontifical Council for the Family, [Family, Marriage and ‘De Facto’ Unions](#), 2000, #8.



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accept his sexual identity”.<sup>12</sup> One’s biological sex and gender expression are not to be disaggregated,<sup>13</sup> but should be seen in harmony, according to God’s plan.

We believe that man and woman share the same humanity<sup>14</sup> and “inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator.”<sup>15</sup> We believe “they are equal as persons (“bone of my bones...”) and complementary as masculine and feminine.” Therefore they are deserving of respect, and no harassment, violence, or discrimination because of one’s sex will be tolerated.

Our diocesan schools “play a vital role in assisting parents in their duty to raise their children... Catholic schools should be encouraged in their mission to help students grow into mature adults who can view the world with the love of Jesus and who can understand life as a call to serve God”. For this reason, “the Church strongly affirms her freedom to set forth her teaching and the right of conscientious objection on the part of educators”. (Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*)

Particular attention must be given to guiding adolescents and young adults with same-sex attraction away from two specific dangers. First, help them see themselves as persons with a God-given dignity and not merely as individuals with sexual inclinations and desires. Second, help them avoid involvement in a “gay culture” opposed to the Church’s teaching, with its often aggressive and immoral lifestyle.<sup>16</sup>

## Specific Policies Related to Human Sexuality

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### Definition of Terms

“Sex” means the biological condition of being male or female as based upon physical differences at birth.<sup>17</sup> “Gender” is a person’s identity as male or female, harmonious with one’s biological sex upon birth.<sup>18</sup> “Chastity” is the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus

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<sup>12</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2393.

<sup>13</sup> [Family, Marriage and ‘De Facto’ Unions](#), #8.

<sup>14</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #371.

<sup>15</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #369.

<sup>16</sup> *Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction*, 16. Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Physical differences at birth include chromosomal levels. In the unlikely event that a biological sex determination made at birth is uncertain or inaccurate (a situation affecting less than .1% of the human population) chromosomal levels may need be taken into consideration.

<sup>18</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), #2333.



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the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.<sup>19</sup> “Marriage” is the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, by which one man and one woman unite in a lifelong partnership for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.<sup>20</sup>

The expression “person with same-sex attraction” refers to one who feels an erotic and emotional attraction, which is predominant and not merely episodic, towards persons of the same sex, whether with or without sexual relations. The terms “gay” and “lesbian” are not used to define people in the Church’s official teachings and documents. Although these words are common terms in current speech, and many people use them to describe themselves, they do not describe persons with the fullness and richness that the Church recognizes and respects in every man or woman. Instead, “gay” and “lesbian” are often cultural definitions for people and movements that have accepted homosexual acts and behaviors as morally good.

## Gender Identity

The diocesan school will interact with students according to their biological sex as based upon physical differences at birth. A member of the diocesan school community who wishes to express a gender other than his or her biological sex is understood as operating outside of the “reality deeply inscribed”<sup>21</sup> within. Assisting the person in his or her disconnection with this reality, however sincerely experienced, by agreeing to participate in any efforts to change natural gender expression is contrary to the pursuit of the truth. Authentic love, a gift of the self for the good of the other, requires that we compassionately dwell in the truth and assist those we love to do the same.

The diocesan Catholic school recognizes that occasionally there may be instances where young people experience dissonance between their biological sex and the roles and norms advocated by society.<sup>22</sup> Some young people might feel drawn to dress, act, and even manipulate their physical bodies in ways contrary to God’s plan.

The diocesan Catholic school advocates that young people, working with their parents, bring these types of issues to their pastor as well as to other trained professionals who might best assist them in clarifying and defining issues of self (and sexual) identity in accord with Catholic teaching and God’s natural plan. The diocesan school’s pastoral and counseling services are available to all members of the school community.

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<sup>19</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2337.

<sup>20</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1601.

<sup>21</sup> *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Woman in the Church and the World*, #8.

<sup>22</sup> Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage and ‘De Facto’ Unions*, 2000, #8.



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“By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.”  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, No 2393)

### Body and

From *Amoris Laetitia*.<sup>23</sup>

[T]he young need to be helped to accept their own body as it was created, for “thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation... An appreciation of our body as male or female is also necessary for our own self-awareness in an encounter with others different from ourselves. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment”.<sup>24</sup> Only by losing the fear of being different, can we be freed of self-centeredness and self-absorption. Sex education should help young people to accept their own bodies and to avoid the pretension “to cancel out sexual difference because one no longer knows how to deal with it”.<sup>25</sup>

### Mission Integrity

The diocesan Catholic school joyfully exercises its responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness and especially as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Parents or guardians and non-Catholics whose religious practices and beliefs run counter to Church teaching might experience possible conflicts as we maintain mission integrity.

Sincere questioning of the practices of the Catholic faith in order to more deeply understand them are welcome, but openly hostile, public defiance and challenge of Catholic truths or morality, are signs that a student, parent, staff or faculty member may not be a fit for our school’s primary evangelical mission and, thus, may be denied admission or may be asked to leave the school.

### Same-Sex Attraction

In her teaching, the Church never condemns persons with same-sex attraction. She carefully distinguishes between an individual’s inclinations or feelings – some of which are transitory

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<sup>23</sup> Francis, Pope [Amoris laetitia](#) (PDF). Vatican Press (19 March 2016), 285.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, Pope [Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'](#) (24 May 2015), 155.

<sup>25</sup> Francis, Pope [Catechesis](#) (15 April 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 April 2015, p. 8.



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and/or situational and others which are deep-seated or permanent – and one’s actions. While homosexual acts are always objectively wrong, same-sex inclinations are not in themselves sinful or a moral failing.<sup>26</sup>

To the extent that a same-sex attraction is not freely chosen, there is no personal culpability in having such an inclination. Nonetheless, when oriented toward genital activity, this inclination is “objectively disordered.” This does not mean that the person as a whole is somehow defective or “badly made,” or that he or she has in some way been rejected by God. Inclinations to homosexual acts in no way diminish the full human dignity or intrinsic worth of the person. For many people, same-sex attraction constitutes a trial. They therefore deserve to be approached by pastors with charity and prudence.<sup>27</sup>

Labels can falsely promote a lasting identification or enduring notion of self, therefore, the diocesan Catholic school avoids labeling individuals with such terms as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” “queer,” or “transgender,” even when the individual might desire such identification.

The Church encourages individuals experiencing same-sex attraction to pursue the virtues of chastity, self-mastery, and friendship instead of acting upon those inclinations romantically or sexually.<sup>28</sup> The school offers its pastoral and counseling services as sources of comfort and direction for any member of the school community.

## Modesty

In her teaching the Church teaches that modesty protects the inner sanctity of a person. “Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2521)

“Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love... Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet.” (CCC No. 2522).

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<sup>26</sup> *Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction*, 6. Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2011.

<sup>27</sup> *Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction*, 6. Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana*, 1975, #8; Synod of Bishops, *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization: Instrumentum Laboris*, 2014, #110-112.



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“There is a modesty of the feelings as well as of the body. It protests, for example, against the voyeuristic explorations of the human body in certain advertisements, or against the solicitations of certain media that go too far in the exhibition of intimate things. Modesty inspires a way of life which makes it possible to resist the allurements of fashion and the pressures of prevailing ideologies.” (CCC 2523)

### **Dress Codes and Attire at School Events**

Catholic school dress code and attire at school-sponsored events should always reflect the decorum and modesty that promotes purity. Students in our Catholic schools wear uniforms as a visible sign of our Catholic identity. It is our belief that Catholic school uniforms help our students grow intellectually in habits of ordered, logical thinking, ensure a look of unity and equality within our school community, and promote the search for deeper qualities on which to build self-confidence and Christian identity.

### **Attire for Prom and Special School Events**

For special events such as prom, the following attire expectations are stipulated.

**Gentlemen:** Young men are expected to wear formal evening attire that would include a tuxedo, suit with a tie, or sport coat and slacks with a tie, and dress shoes.

**Ladies:** Young ladies are expected to wear formal evening attire that would include a formal evening gown, other similar dresses or female jumpsuits. Formal evening attire may not expose a bare midriff or have a side slit higher than the tips of the wearer’s fingers when the wearer’s hands are at the sides. The bodice must be appropriately modest covering that which should be covered.