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Dear Priests and Seminarians,

Gender ideology is a vast topic. It is also tragically becoming a major problem in many countries. The further a society moves away from common sense and its ancient traditions, the greater the temptation will be to accept the modern concept of “gender”.

Human biology, the Church and society have all until recently agreed that human beings are either male or female. Yes, there is the rare malformation called Hermaphroditism where a person is born with ambiguous sexual organs or those of both men and women, but this is just one of many medical or genetic problems an individual may have. What is new is the ideological position that favors “fluid genders”, that persons can “decide” if they are men or women and continue to change their gender over time. It is closely linked to the normalization of homosexuality and other “alternative sexual lifestyles”.

Pope Francis spoke clearly on this topic in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

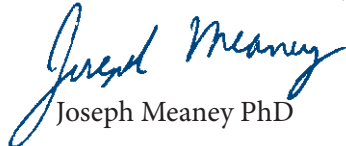


Dr. Joseph Meaney

Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time”. It is a source of concern that some ideologies of this sort, which seek to respond to what are at times understandable aspirations, manage to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised. It needs to be emphasized that “biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated”. (*Amoris Laetitia* #56)

Confusion and coercion mark this new gender approach to humanity. As the Holy Father warns, a most serious aspect of this is the changing of educational materials for children. Another danger is that governments and the United Nations will impose laws and social programs that will promote the view that heterosexual males and females are only two in an ever expanding litany of “genders” that are all equally good. There is only a small step from promoting something untrue to prohibiting other points of view and punishing those who refuse to accept this new ideology. Many persons are being persecuted for refusing to collaborate with same-sex “marriages” or for refusing to let their children be indoctrinated in mandatory hedonistic “sex education” classes. It is vital that the Church continue to speak clearly on the topic of gender and to support individuals and families who have the courage to resist this ideological assault.

Yours in the Lord of Life,


Joseph Meaney PhD

GENDER & TRUTH

By Fr. Francesco Giordano, Director of HLI's Rome Office

Words can be sadly mistreated and misused; but they could not be false unless they could also be true. Language may become a suspicious instrument on the tongues of fools and charlatans, but language as such retains its power to signify and communicate the Truth.

— Thomas Merton, *The Ascent of Truth*

As Christians, we are especially mindful of the place the Word has since *ex nihilo*, the Word, the Logos, created the cosmos, giving it the order that reflected His Being. In the Genesis account we see how the order came about, i.e. through separation and distinction. “God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”¹ A few lines later, we read that God, as a communion of Persons, says: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26) This individuation of man was then accompanied by his participation with another when the Triune God says: “It is not good that the man should be alone.”² Once Eve is created, Adam beholds in wonder the beauty of she who was to rule the earth by his side and, in God’s image, he names her. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that “Reality is born of the word.”³ God uses the word to bring the universe into existence, so human language itself has an analogous creative power. Man, in fact, has the task of naming the animals.⁴

Why begin an article on gender talking about the Word of God, Creation of man, and the naming of the animals? Apart from the explicit teaching on binary sexuality, it shows the power of words and ideas not

only to reflect reality but to make reality. The reflection of reality ought to be the role of our words, whereas the making of reality is the role of God’s Word. If we begin to take on God’s role and make ourselves like God, then we have fallen into the trap our forefathers fell into when the serpent tempted Eve: “...you shall be like gods, knowing good and evil.”⁵ The Fathers teach that here we are appropriating something that is not our own, i.e. to know what God knows and to do what God does. Is this not, after all, the Baconian temptation of modern philosophy, of a knowledge that is power?⁶ In many ways, it is, and this is what we see today with gender ideology.

Why create a new word? In a nominalist world like ours, reality is created by language. Truth is no longer understood as the *adaequatio intellectus et rei dicitur*⁷ in which the intellect of the knower must be “adequate” to the thing known, so it is in this context that the word “gender” is coined so as to allow for more than two sexes. After all, with the word “sex” one can only answer male or female. While we can certainly say that there are variables to be considered among different people, we cannot eliminate the substantial reality of male and female, just like we cannot eliminate day and night. Yes, at 4 pm in the winter in Rome, the sun is not as strong

1 Genesis 1:4-5

2 Genesis 2:18

3 Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* 9.

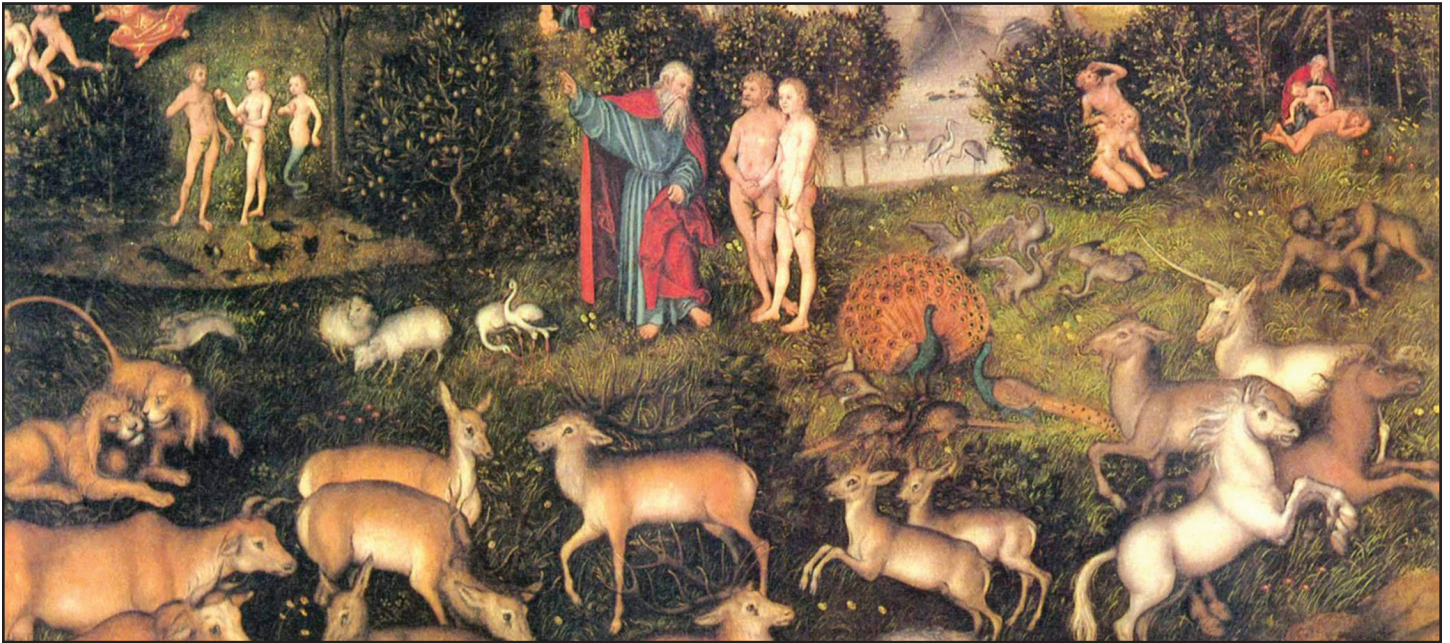
4 Cf. Genesis 2:19

5 Genesis 3:5

6 Cf. Francis Bacon, *Meditationes Sacrae*, A.D. 1597.

7 St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

In the Genesis account we see how the order came about, i.e. through separation and distinction.



as it is at noon, but it is still day. Every hour and every minute cannot get its particular definition. If that were the case, it would make communication itself more difficult. Language is made to simplify our grasp and communication of reality, not to complicate it. So why complicate reality? According to Gabriele Kuby, "...dissolution of sexual identity is really the goal, because not until then will the individual be emancipated from the dictatorship of nature and realize complete freedom of choice, the ability to reinvent oneself at any time."⁸

Notwithstanding the influence of gender ideology, some who identify themselves with same-sex attraction beg to differ with the likes of John Money and Judith Butler who created the word gender in order to eliminate binary sexuality. I am thinking of Camille Paglia who admits that homosexuality, for instance, is in opposition to our true nature.⁹ One's feelings, after all, cannot define one's sexual identity more than one's

body. However, can we simply discard feelings? This is where one needs to focus the issue, not in trying to change nature but in trying to understand why one has the feelings one has, either of same-sex attraction or confusion of one's sex. After all, why is it that according to Simone de Beauvoir one is not born a woman but becomes one while we hear today that one is born gay? Which is it? Neither one. One is born a man or a woman with all this entails genetically, and one cannot change sex with surgery and hormone treatments. In fact, research shows that there are 6,500 genetic differences between men and women, so hormone treatments are potentially very harmful.¹⁰ Nature cannot be ignored, no matter how much our voluntarist society, which takes the exercise of the will as the measure of value, wills it to be ignored. At the root of this problem is liberalism, and Sean Haylock makes a very good connection between liberalism, technology, sexual liberation, and transhumanism.¹¹

⁸ Gabriele Kuby, *The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom*, Angelico Press, Kettering, OH, 2015, p. 46.

⁹ cf. Camille Paglia, "Rebel Love: Homosexuality", in *Vamps and Tramps: New Essays*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰ Cf. Timothy Fortin, *Fatherhood and Perfection of Masculine Identity: A Thomistic Account in Light of Contemporary Science*, PUSC, Rome 2008, chapter 1.

¹¹ Cf. Sean Haylock, "Sexual Liberation and the Emergence of Transhumanism," *Crisis Magazine*, August 8, 2017.

So, what does a priest do when confronted with a person suffering such confusion? Well, first of all, he needs to be aware of the ideology and its philosophical roots. Then, one must be well-versed in Christian anthropology.¹² Finally, one must listen to the one coming for help and try to understand why the person has such feelings. Oftentimes, studies show that there are deep-seated wounds to address and to learn how to integrate more fully into the person's understanding of himself or herself. We must become well-versed in the human condition, presenting people the object of true love, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike the disorder of fixating oneself on particulars, if we cast our eyes on God, we open ourselves to a universal good which includes the particulars. If we cast our eyes on particulars, we become limited to and by them. Virtue, in this way, has a universalizing effect on the faculties and a human being's

12 I recommend, for instance, the following: *Aquinas on the Emotions* by Diana Fritz Cates; *Introduction to the Science of Mental Health* by Fr. Chad Ripperger; *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* by Robert Miner; *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* by Robert Pasnau; or *Aquinas on Friendship* by Daniel Schwartz. While I am a bit biased on works that cover St. Thomas Aquinas, there are certainly other great books to be considered. Specifically, there are some very good books by Aardweg, Nicolosi, and Goldberg on Homosexuality. Recently, an excellent book which I highly recommend is by Daniel Mattson, *Why I don't call myself gay*.

personality. We are perfected by virtue. While vice fixates a person on single things, virtue directs the person to all things as they ought. Magnanimity and true freedom result from this, as witnessed by the saints. So, we must return to teach the virtues, especially as they are explained by recent great philosophers like Josef Pieper, and let us continue to fix our eyes on the particularity of Jesus so as to fix our eyes on the universality of God.

Our Lord has taught us how to offer our suffering in sacrifice, and many salutary fruits have come of it, not least our very salvation. We can think of Caravaggio, for instance. It is said that he suffered same-sex attraction, but his great suffering helped produce some of the best which humanity has to offer. In a gendered and trans-humanist world like our own, let us try to appreciate the value of suffering and distance ourselves from a nihilistic, Nietzschean critique of it, embracing rather the teaching of St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor 12:9-10)