

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity for me to address you on behalf of the delegates that are in the room with us and the ones standing outside to show their support for the contents of this presentation. When I am making my remarks, I will be referring to the presentation document that was distributed prior to this meeting. Please note that all bolded sections within quotations were bolded by me for emphasis.

Most of you already know me. I was privileged to teach at Bishop Smith and St Joseph's for most of my career and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to teach in an environment that allowed me to be authentically Catholic in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities.

During the last few months, starting in November, I became aware of the events at St. Joseph's related to transgender washroom access. As the media coverage of the ensuing events went from local, to national and then international, I felt compelled to look at the Ontario Human Rights Code and then the RCCDSB policies related to gender issues. I also consulted the teachings related to these issues in the Catholic Catechism, which haven't changed since the time of the apostles, and in some cases, the Old Testament. More recent publications by the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) and the Education Commission of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario aligned perfectly with the teachings in the Catechism.

The mission statement on the Board website is praiseworthy: "We are an inclusive Catholic learning community called to love unconditionally and educate hearts and minds in **the way of Christ.**" This requires careful and thoughtful implementation. On matters of sexual identity, the Ontario Bishops say "... the Catholic faith always offers a welcome acceptance to persons - an unconditional "yes" - even as the vision and promise says "no" to certain actions and behaviours. This is the **way of Jesus Christ.**"

Because of our limited time together, I am not going to discuss the **Sources** section of the presentation document. Each bullet is straightforward, and most of them are quotations for your future reference. Instead, I would like to focus on the items in the **Current Situation** section of the document.

In the first bullet of this section, I point out the contradiction between the Board's statement that "A person's self-identification is the sole measure of gender" and the Catholic Catechism. I would like to add a statement from ICE: "In the Church's understanding, each person is made in God's image as male or female. Life begins at the moment of conception, and gender identity is determined genetically, anatomically and chromosomally. A person may feel a strong desire to be a person of the opposite gender, and may begin to express themselves as a person of the opposite gender. However, in the Church's view, **those persons should be supported to accept their birth gender.**" (Supporting Students who identify as Transgender in Our Catholic Schools) **Note that the support is not to affirm the student's choice of gender, but to accept their birth gender.**

The second bullet in this **Current Situation** section refers to **the pastoral care approach** for LGBTQ2S+ members of the community. Another quote from ICE: "Authentic pastoral care must always be guided by the vision of the human person passed on by the Catholic faith." It is important to clearly indicate that LGBTQ2S+ lifestyles are intrinsically disordered and contrary to the natural law. These teachings go back to St. Paul and even the Old Testament.

The third bullet involves the washroom issue. I would like to mention three points related to this:

1. Allowing biological males to use a female washroom or change room contradicts the trans student's dignity, because it contradicts the truth of his masculine identity, and the dignity of the females using those washrooms, because it denies their unique identity as females.
2. This is a failure in both charity and fraternal correction because it is affirming an erroneous view of sexuality that is harmful to them.

*Note that these two points are sufficient to inform a moral decision on this issue. However, there is a third point...

3. Some, perhaps many, females feel unsafe using the same washroom/change room as a biologically male trans student. This contradicts the following statements from the Board website:
 - a. "We want every student to feel secure and safe at school."
 - b. "All students have a right to a safe accessible washroom and change room"

It is unreasonable that females should need to use a universal single-stall washroom in order to secure their privacy from males using the female washroom.

The fourth bullet illustrates how much secular culture has disengaged from Catholic teaching. Laws are being passed, provincially and federally, that make the implementation of policies that reflect Catholic teaching a legal challenge. (ex. OHRC and Federal Bill C-4) The words of former RCCDSB director John Stunt ring true – authentic Catholic Schools are counter-cultural.

There isn't time to look at all of the **Suggestions** individually, but I would like to emphasize four of them:

1. If you have not already done so, please consult with our bishop on the alignment of RCCDSB policies with Catholic teaching.
2. Proclaim the unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church with regard to LGBTQ2S+ issues and employ authentic pastoral care that is guided by the vision of the human person passed on by the Catholic faith.
3. The current RCCDSB washroom trans policy is not based on Catholic teaching. It is just following the OHRC regulations. This afternoon, I was made aware that in 2020, the Archdiocese of Toronto already looked at the legal protections for Separate schools and concluded "Catholic schools therefore have the constitutional right to teach about gender from a Catholic perspective and otherwise govern their schools in accordance with the Catholic world-view." They recommend a simple solution, which we are requesting that you implement: **Create a written policy stating that washrooms are single sex, with the provision of single stall universal washrooms for the use of transgender students.** The document is called "Speaking the truth in love": Pastoral Guidelines for Educators Concerning Students Experiencing Gender Incongruence
4. Continue to attempt to negotiate a settlement with the excluded student from St. Joseph's HS. The current situation is not benefiting either of you and seems inappropriate for two parties that embrace Christian values.

In conclusion, we are aware that LGBTQ2S+ individuals experience deep-seated tendencies that do not align with natural law and Catholic teaching. It is challenging for them to overcome these tendencies, **but their trials only worsen if the lifestyle is embraced.** They must be treated with respect, understanding and dignity AND Catholic institutions must provide supports, education, policies and procedures that guide them in **the way of Jesus Christ.**

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns with you regarding these issues AND to offer our prayerful support to review your policies and procedures related to these issues, to ensure they reflect authentic Catholic teaching.