

TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT TOUGH TOPICS



- **Practical Tips for Conversations**2
- **Talking Points**
 - Transgender Issues / Pronouns4
 - Dating7
 - Premarital Sex.....8
 - Abortion10
 - Porn and Masturbation10
 - Homosexuality12
- **Wisdom for Sacred Scripture**.....13
- **The Culture Says / The Truth Is**14
- **THE TRUTH AND MEANING OF HUMAN
SEXUALITY, THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR THE FAMILY**22

Practical Tips for Parents on Discussions of Sensitive Topics

Starting a Conversation: All Ages

- › It may be helpful to talk to your daughter or son separately.
- › If at all possible, have dad talk to your son(s) and mom talk to your daughter(s).
- › You might want to go for a walk or a drive so you can have a private, one-on-one conversation while being able to look at the scenery so it may feel a little more relaxed for you both.
- › Another option is to talk while playing a game, or doing another fun activity so the pressure of all the attention being on the conversation is lessened.
- › Remember that chastity only makes sense within the Church's larger teaching on virtue and holiness. We should not focus on it in isolation. Rather, if we focus on living a virtuous life in general and help our children strive for holiness, chastity will naturally be a part of that.

Tips for Conversations with Teens

- › Be honest with your son or daughter if talking about sexuality is not easy for you, and you understand it may be uncomfortable for them. Being honest will clear the air.
- › Remind your child that the emotions and uncertainties they are experiencing are normal, and you want to love, support and encourage them.
- › Check in with your child regularly on the topics you discuss.
- › Always return the conversation to your unconditional love for your child. Your love for them is like God's love. We all strive throughout our lives to turn away from sin and back towards God. When we fall, Jesus offers us His mercy and the chance to begin anew in Confession.

During your Conversations

- › Read and Reflect on Psalm 139: 13-14 together. God loves us and made us good!
You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!
My very self you know.
- › We are all called to make a gift of self in love. Share the specific ways you and your spouse help each other grow in holiness. Express your appreciation for the fact that marriage is about helping your spouse get to Heaven! If you have a trusted pastor or religious brother or sister, talk about how this person has given their whole life to Jesus and His Church, in the service of His mission.

- › If you are not sure how to answer a question, be honest with your child and tell them you will find the right answer. You could consult a trusted priest, religious, or the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for help.

After Initial Conversations

- › It is good to let your child know that you are always available to them, but telling them you are available is not enough. Initiate regular, on-going conversations; do not wait for your child to come to you.
- › Remind your child that holiness does not mean never making mistakes or never sinning, but it does mean repenting (turning away from sin, resolving not to sin again, and returning to Jesus), receiving forgiveness, and beginning anew.
- › Remember that you, not your school and not your parish, are responsible for your child's education. Communicate with your child's teachers and be aware of what is being taught, especially with respect to sexuality and gender. Get actively involved when needed.
- › Emphasize that nothing they do could ever change your love for them, or God's love for them!

Talking Points for Sensitive Topics

Note: As parents, we may feel “hypocritical” by discouraging/prohibiting our children from things we ourselves have done when we were their age. Do not let this feeling stop you from helping guide and protect your child and form their conscience.

Keep in mind: the true hypocrisy would be to know something is wrong and yet NOT try to protect your child from that harm! Throughout their lives you will help your children grow in holiness and virtue; part of that may come from learning from your own mistakes.

You also many find you disagree with a teaching. In these cases, our perceived disagreement is often because we do not fully understand the teaching. It can take great patience and humility to trust the Church in these cases. But it can be a good opportunity to demonstrate to our children the responsibility all Christians have to form our consciences. Whatever the moral truth is, the Church has been consistently studying and teaching it for 2000 years. That alone could provide the reason to be open to the teaching and investigate further.

Transgenderism and Pronouns

I think I am a girl/boy.

- ▶ You are a boy/girl. You are wonderful in the way you [list special talents and gifts].
- ▶ As a baptized Christian, you are a child of the Most High! God is your loving Father. He wants what’s best for you and so do we as your parents.
- ▶ A boy can like to do things girls usually like, and it doesn’t mean he is a girl. A girl can like to do things that boys usually like, and it doesn’t mean she is a boy.

Can I choose my gender?

- ▶ There are many things about ourselves that we choose. You choose to be kind to your little brother, or you choose to be a soccer player, or a violinist, [use examples specific to your child] and we choose the job we want when we grow up.
- ▶ There are other things about ourselves that God chooses. Some examples are our birthday, whether we have siblings, and whether we are a girl or a boy.
- ▶ Being a girl / being a boy is something very special. It is part of who you are.
- ▶ Even before God made you, He knew who you would be, and He had a plan for you. He loves you, and so do we. We can trust that God chose your gender correctly.
- ▶ Our very bodies tell us something about how God created men and women to complement each other. We were made male and female, and God’s instructions were to “be fertile and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

My friend thinks he/she is a girl/boy.

- › Your friend is a boy/girl who is wonderful in so many ways [mention some of the good qualities of the friend that your child admires].
- › We do not understand fully why sometimes a boy thinks he is a girl/a girl thinks she is a boy.
- › Emphasize our duty to treat every person with respect and dignity.
- › A charitable response emphasizes our love and concern for our friend, including for his/her soul.
- › We do know that we are all wounded and experience the effects of Original Sin. We all need the grace of God.
- › You may need to decide whether this is a friendship that should continue, depending on the circumstances. Keep in mind the friend's parents' approach to gender dysphoria, as well as your child's age and maturity, when discerning whether the friendship is in the best interest of your child's innocence and spiritual growth.

Isn't sex temporarily assigned at birth and later we discover what it really is?

- › Each person is male or female from the moment of their conception.
- › We talked about how there are things we choose about ourselves and things God chooses. [See above]
- › It is true that a tiny minority of people are born with physical abnormalities, but we are all either male or female in our DNA.
- › This includes those who, for some unknown reason, identify themselves a person of the opposite sex. This belief can result in severe psychological confusion and pain for the person, as well as for the person's family and friends.
- › God has a plan for each one of us, and through prayer and discernment we can discover it, and do our best to live it out. We are all in need of God's grace.

Should young people receive “gender affirming therapy” (take puberty blockers and/or have surgery?)

- › No. A person being male or female cannot change, even if someone has surgery, takes hormone therapy, or has other interventions.
- › We should treat those experiencing gender dysphoria with compassion. We should lovingly encourage and help them to accept their body including their identity as male or female.
- › Just as we would not withhold food from someone with a body image disorder, we should not encourage someone to mutilate or poison their body to align with a mistaken belief about gender.
- › Many who have been encouraged to undergo irreversible surgical procedures and sterilization experience deep regret.

My friend says he can't be happy unless his body matches how he feels inside.

- › Acknowledge the person's sadness with charity and compassion, and emphasize our duty to treat every person with dignity.
- › The sad reality is that those who have this kind of surgery do not in fact have better outcomes overall. The surgery is irreversible, while doing nothing to heal the psychological problems that are causing the gender dysphoria.
- › Most who experienced gender dysphoria as children identify as their biological sex by the time they reach adulthood.
- › Oftentimes in life, unhappiness comes from the wrong expectations about what will make us happy. If we convince ourselves that we cannot be happy without one particular thing, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Worse, if/when we do attain the one thing we think we cannot be happy without, we are inevitably disappointed, leading to even greater sadness.
- › It's important to keep the perspective that nothing in this world will truly and completely fulfill us. True happiness is only possible in Jesus Christ.
- › For more information see <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/number-50-fall-2016>, and <https://lc.org/PDFs/Attachments2PRsLAs/2018/061118SexReassignmentSurgery.pdf>

Should boys with gender dysphoria use girls' bathrooms and showers?

- › No. Girls need private spaces of their own.
- › Boys experiencing gender dysphoria deserve to be treated with compassion, and so do girls. They deserve places of privacy where they can be free of the gaze of boys/men while they are showering/changing clothes.

Should I use someone's so-called "preferred pronouns"?

- › God calls us to tell the truth, but we must always tell it with charity.
- › We must find charitable ways to express ourselves that do not require us to break the Eighth Commandment.

What if someone asks me what my pronouns are?

- › You can reference your biological sex and the pronoun that goes with it, e.g. "I am a female, so the pronoun is 'she.'"
- › You could also choose not to acknowledge the question.

Should boys who identify as girls compete in girls' sports?

- › No. The reason we have separate sports for girls and boys is because of the inherent differences between males and females, and the physical advantages most boys have over most girls.
- › It is true that some of the strongest women are stronger than the weakest men. But on average, men are bigger, stronger, and faster than women, making meaningful competition between them unrealistic and even dangerous for girls in most sports.
- › Girls deserve teams of their own to fairly compete.

Isn't it bigoted not to affirm someone's gender identity?

- › It is not bigoted. Manhood and womanhood are realities. They are not feelings, no matter how sincerely those feelings are experienced.
- › Those who struggle with a confused sense of sexual identity must be lovingly accepted as persons created in God's image with the same dignity as any other person.
- › Further, as Christians, we must pray for peace in their unique struggles and support them with Christian charity, all the while upholding the truth of God's plan for life and love.

With respect to all of these issues, communicate with your child's teachers and be aware of what is being taught, especially with respect to sexuality and gender. Get actively involved when needed.

For more ideas, see "Explaining Transgender to Kids — Without Puppets" from Catholic Answers, available at:

SophiaOnline.org/ExplainingTransgender

Dating

When can I begin dating?

- › Explain that feelings of attraction to the opposite sex are normal. They indicate that we are called to love others, and one day, if God calls us to marriage, we may choose a spouse and share our affection spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
- › Our attractions can help us understand the kind of person God is calling us to marry. Will they be especially funny, kind, hardworking?

- › Emphasize here too that while feelings of attraction are normal, an integral part of maturing is that we don't act on every feeling we have.
 - When you feel attracted to someone, you can ask, is this someone I'd like to raise a family with? Do I enjoy being with this person? Do we share the same goals and values in life?
- › Help your child understand the true purpose of dating – to find a spouse. Your readiness to marry is a good indicator of your readiness to date.
- › Discuss with older children how the culture says that dating is to have fun and “hook up” and have casual sex. But this behavior inevitably leads to unhappiness. (See the question below on waiting for marriage to have sex for more information.)
- › Conclude by explaining what boundaries you are comfortable with. For example, going out on a date alone with someone may have to wait, but you may be comfortable with your son/daughter socializing in mixed-sex groups. Chaperoned school dances might be okay, whereas unchaperoned “after parties” may not be. And so forth.

How far is “too far”?

- › A response to this question could be: “Would you go to the edge of a cliff and see just how far you could hang off without falling down into the abyss below? No! Of course not.”
- › We shouldn't try to “go as far as we can” without actually having sex. Instead, we should see the other person as worthy of affection that does not put their soul in danger of sin.
- › Remember that we strive to avoid the near occasion of sin (or situations in which we may be especially tempted to sin). We should not put ourselves in a tempting situation where we are acting in a sexual way with the person we are interested in or dating.
- › Some suggestions for showing affection to the opposite sex that would not be compromising yourself would be hugging or holding hands. Try to find other ways to show your love by planning a fun day at the park or going for a bike ride together.

Premarital Sex

Do I really have to wait to get married to have sex?

- › Answer this question with clarity: Yes, you should wait till you are married to have sex.
- › God's plan for marriage is not meant as a burdensome rule or because the Church thinks sex is bad, or dirty. The reason we should wait for marriage is because life will be better for us and for our future spouse, in every possible way: spiritually, physically, psychologically, and emotionally.
- › Like many sins, sex outside of marriage can seem like harmless fun. But pretending sex can be “causal” or that we can have “friends with benefits” does not make it so. Sexual

intercourse is the most intimate act two people can share, and abusing it inevitably leads to anxiety, loneliness, feelings of regret, abandonment, and other emotional harms, and to at least one person feeling used.

- Sex within marriage has two purposes, and those purposes cannot be separated. Those purposes are the procreation of children, and the uniting of the spouses.
 - A husband and wife's marriage vows in which they promise to give themselves to each other freely, faithfully, totally and forever are expressed physically in an act of intercourse. When we have sex outside of marriage, we are using our bodies to express a covenant that has not been made, so we are not being true to the person we are having sex with. We make empty promises. No one wants this for someone they love.
 - A husband and a wife's union is also creative. A new human person can come forth from their love. This is no small responsibility and God wants each child to have a mother and father who are committed to each other through the Sacrament of Marriage! The procreative aspect of intercourse reminds us that in marriage we are a living sign of God's love in the world.
- What if I made a mistake/went too far/lost my virginity?
 - Emphasize above all that God loves them, and that you love them.
 - Making mistakes can lead us to become stronger in our will to follow God's plan for our lives. With God's grace and the Sacrament of Confession, we can begin again and pursue a life of purity.
 - No matter what has happened in the past, you are still loved and cherished by God, and He will help you heal and renew your commitment to chastity. Find consolation in a good Confession, and the Eucharist: God gives us His Body and Blood to strengthen us in living out our Faith!

What if I get pregnant/got someone pregnant?

- Emphasize your love for your child and the growing baby.
- We rejoice with you about this new life but know that you are uncertain and scared.
- We love you and will do everything to take care of you and your new baby.
- If your daughter is pregnant, let her know you will do all you can to encourage the baby's father to take responsibility as well.
- Without implying the baby should be put up for adoption, express your support for the possible decision.

Abortion

Should I have an abortion?

- ▶ No. We do not want you to have an abortion. Abortion is not the answer to the fear you're feeling. Every single mother who has an abortion is terribly wounded, even if they may not realize it for a long time.
- ▶ Your child's life is precious: he or she is a unique and unrepeatable human being who is growing inside of you/their mother's womb.
- ▶ It is a lie society tells women that having a baby is a punishment, means having to give up their dreams, or will ruin their life.
- ▶ A lot of women openly regret their abortions but no mother ever regrets having her baby.

I had abortion/my partner had an abortion.

- ▶ I love you. God loves you, and nothing can ever change that. There is forgiveness and healing waiting for you in Jesus.
- ▶ Post-abortive men and women have experienced trauma and need special support. Rachel's Vineyard (www.rachelsvineyard.org) is a Catholic apostolate that offers a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion. Retreats are held in over 375 locations. They offer a supportive, confidential and non-judgmental environment where women and men can express, release and reconcile painful post-abortive emotions to begin the process of restoration, renewal and healing.

Porn and Masturbation

Can I watch pornography?

- ▶ Answer this question with clarity: no, you should not use pornography.
- ▶ If at all possible, have dad talk to your son(s) and mom talk to your daughter(s).
- ▶ When we view pornography, we observe lust, the use of another person for pleasure, and a distortion of what an intimate, loving embrace should be between a husband and wife. It demeans the persons who are engaged in it. This is far from God's plan! We do not watch pornography because it will distort our ideas about God's design for our lives. It will become addictive and has the serious potential to get in the way of a happy marriage one day.
- ▶ Pornography destroys innocence; it is especially harmful for boys, who have a natural inclination towards visual stimulus. Through depictions of women as disposable sexual objects, it encourages fantasies of male supremacy.

- › As a parent, be aware that pornography can be strongly addictive. (See the section on masturbation below for more information.)
- › Pornography is an especially difficult challenge today because it is accessible in unprecedented ways.
 - Consider removing unfiltered access to Internet, cable TV, streaming services, and other media in your home.
 - Consider disallowing social media apps which are designed to facilitate sexting.
 - Monitor your child’s social media use.
 - You may want to look into services that allow you to set up accountability partners to support your efforts to avoid it on the Internet.
- › Especially encourage your sons to protect the privacy of the girls and women in their life. Not only should they guard their eyes for the sake of their own purity, they can also be proactive and give privacy to a person who needs it by averting their eyes if they see an indecent image, or if someone is dressed in a way that will lead them into temptation.

What about masturbation?

- › If at all possible, have dad talk to your son(s) and mom talk to your daughter(s).
- › Masturbation is the stimulating of one’s own sexual organs for pleasure. Masturbation is not ordered toward God’s two purposes for human sexuality: uniting with your spouse and procreation of children.
- › As with all topics, emphasize God’s love and mercy, and take into account your child’s age, maturity, and mental well-being when discussing masturbation as a sin. The *Catechism* explains that a person’s “affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors [can] lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability” (2352).
- › Masturbation, at its root, is selfish. It does not take into account that our sexual organs were made to be shared only with our spouse within the sexual act in marriage.
- › Like pornography which often fuels it, masturbation has the potential to become addictive. Like a drug addict who requires greater and greater doses to achieve the same “high,” pornography and masturbation can lead to sexual dysfunction, potentially hurting a man’s ability to be truly intimate with his spouse.
- › We can and should pray that God would give us the grace we need to conquer temptations which would cause us to fall into sin and lead us from the plan He has for our life.

Homosexuality

One of my friends says they are gay. How do I respond?

- ▶ Emphasize our duty to treat every person with respect and dignity. A charitable response emphasizes our love and concern for our friend, including for his/her soul.
- ▶ While we do not understand fully why some people are attracted to a person of the same sex, we do know that we are all wounded and experience the effects of Original Sin.
- ▶ Our very bodies tell us something about how God created men and women to complement each other. We were made male and female, and God's instructions were to "be fertile and multiply" (Gen 1:28). It is clear that two men or two women cannot do this.
- ▶ Homosexual activities are disordered because they do not uphold the plan of God which is laid out clearly in Scripture. Although it is not sinful to have homosexual temptations, it is a sin to act on them. No matter what, all of us are called to live chastely.
- ▶ Our identity should not be found in who we are attracted to, but instead in the way we are made in God's image and likeness. We should be loving and kind to each and every person we meet, but we cannot encourage anyone to act on their homosexual feelings, the same way we would not encourage anyone to engage in sexual activity outside of marriage.

What if I think I'm gay?

- ▶ I love you and nothing can ever change that.
- ▶ God loves you and wants you to be who you were created to be.
- ▶ You are much more than your feelings of attraction. You are a creature of God, made in His image and likeness.
- ▶ As a baptized Christian, you are a child of the Most High! God is your loving Father. He wants what's best for you and so do we as your parents.
- ▶ Homosexual activity, like any sexual activity outside of sacramental marriage, is not what is best for you; it will harm you physically, spiritually, and psychologically.
- ▶ Homosexual activities are disordered because they do not uphold the plan of God which is laid out clearly in Scripture. Although it is not sinful to have homosexual temptations, it is a sin to act on them. No matter what, all of us are called to live chastely.
- ▶ Refraining from acting on same-sex attraction is not "denying who you are" or "not being true to yourself." Who we feel attracted to is NOT the total of our identity.
- ▶ Homosexual attraction is not in and of itself sinful, but homosexual actions are. These acts cannot fulfill our human nature, and do not allow us to flourish as God created us to.

Wisdom from Sacred Scripture

Use the selection of quotes below to reflect and inspire you in these important discussions.

Rejoice, O youth, while you are young
and let your heart be glad in the days of your
youth.

Follow the ways of your heart,
the vision of your eyes;
Yet understand regarding all this
that God will bring you to judgment.

— ECCLESIASTES 11:9

No trial has come to you but what is human.
God is faithful and will not let you be tried
beyond your strength; but with the trial he
will also provide a way out, so that you may
be able to bear it.

— 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

Let no one have contempt for your youth,
but set an example for those who believe, in
speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

— 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are
earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil
desire, and the greed that is idolatry....Put on
then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gen-
tleness, and patience, bearing with one another
and forgiving one another, if one has a griev-
ance against another; as the Lord has forgiven
you, so must you also do. And over all these put
on love, that is, the bond of perfection.

— COLOSSIANS 3:5, 12-14

The Culture Says / The Truth Is

To help guide conversations, this section presents ideas or statements popular in the current culture, alongside true statements that flow from Catholic teaching. The first section on definitions and first principles is important to understand before beginning any conversations on Section II.

Often, the reasons for disagreements in the specific topics in Section II are based on disagreement over the principles in Section I. For example, Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger argued that abortion and eugenics were good for human flourishing, while the Church teaches that abortion and eugenics are morally wrong. How can there be such disagreement? The difference is based on unspoken assumptions about human nature and the meaning of life. If you are beginning with the assumption that individuals exist to serve society, it makes sense that the less capable, less intelligent, or otherwise “unfit” should be removed. In this distorted world view, removing less “desirable” traits will lead to “human flourishing.” It is clear, however, when you begin with the true principles, that every human life is precious, specifically willed and cherished by God.

When seeking to understand Church teaching about sex, gender, or any other topic that might present a challenge, it’s often helpful to look over these basic definitions as a starting point, in order to see if it might be the root of the difficulty.

Section I: DEFINITIONS AND FIRST PRINCIPLES

	The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Human Nature	The meaning of life is to maximize happiness.	The meaning of life is to get to Heaven.	
	Our value comes from our talents or achievements.	Our value is infinite as persons made in the image and likeness of God.	
	The individual exists to serve the economy.	The economy exists to serve individuals.	
	People are naturally good.	People are inclined to sin but capable of virtue, and need God's grace to live as we should.	

	The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
The Role of Feelings	Our feelings should guide our choices.	Our intellect should guide our choices; feelings are subordinate to our intellect and will.	
	Love is a feeling.	Love is an act of the will. It is the free choice to will the good of another.	
	Good things are those which feel pleasant, or bring feelings of happiness.	Good things are those which help us be what God created us to be.	
	If it feels good, it must be right.	Our feelings can lead us in the wrong direction, and to sin. It's important to keep our feelings in check, under our intellect and will.	
The Meaning of the Body	Our physical body isn't really who we are. It's more like a "shell" for our true self, which is who we are "inside."	Every human being is a unity of body and soul. Our body, male or female, is a fundamental part of who we are.	
	Our bodies are ours to do with whatever we want.	We should care for our bodies in light of the reality that they are gifts from God, and Temples of the Holy Spirit.	
	We should use whatever medical technology is available to make our body do what we want.	We should use medicine and medical technology to restore the body to how it was designed to function.	
	If something occurs in a lot of people, it is natural and therefore good.	The fact that something is common does not make it natural or good. Natural things are those which help us achieve our purpose: bodies to function as designed, and souls growing closer to God.	

Section II: SEX, GENDER, AND MARRIAGE

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Sexual differences are just social constructs. Our culture expects and so produces different things from girls and boys.	Girls and boys are equal in dignity, but inherently different.	
Gender is fluid, it can change.	A person being male or female cannot change, even if someone has surgery, takes hormone therapy, or has other interventions.	
We choose our gender. Sex is “assigned” at birth but later, as we get older, we decide whether we are truly male or female.	Although a tiny minority of people are born with physical abnormalities, we are all either male or female in our DNA. This includes those who, for some unknown reason, identify themselves a person of the opposite sex. This belief can result in severe psychological confusion and pain for the person, as well as for the person’s family and friends.	
It’s a sign that a boy is trans if he wants to do traditionally feminine things, or vice versa.	Boys can have interests that are considered “feminine” and girls can have interests that are considered “masculine.” It does not make the boys into girls, or the girls into boys.	
The purpose of marriage is the happiness of the spouses.	The purpose of marriage is for the spouses to help each other and their children get to Heaven.	
Marriage can be ended through divorce.	Marriage is a life-long, indissoluble bond.	
Love is a feeling.	Love is an act of the will. It is the free choice to will the good of another.	

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
You shouldn't marry unless you feel you've found your soulmate.	You do not have a single soulmate you must find for your marriage to be happy. All spouses will have conflicts. In marriage, you promise to love your spouse in good times and in bad, for as long as you both live.	
No one should stay in a marriage where they are unhappy.	Marriage can be a cross, but Jesus offers the spouses the graces they need to endure in their marriage.	
The Church says married couples should stay together even in abusive situations.	This is false. The Church does not teach that a wife should live with an abusive husband or vice versa. When needed for the sake of safety and to seek healing, couples should separate. The Church prays for their healthy reunion.	
Children are resilient and not harmed by their parents' divorce.	Removing a mother or a father from a family destabilizes the home and puts children at higher risk of poverty, incarceration, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and suicide. Children raised by their married parents are more likely to thrive physically, achieve more education, and enjoy a higher socio-economic status.	
Everyone has the right to be a parent.	The tragedy of infertility causes despair, grief, and tension for many couples, and the Church extends them special concern in this cross they bear. But the truth is that a child is not a right.	
IVF is a good approach for couples to take to infertility.	IVF takes a consumeristic, scientifically-controlled approach to reproduction, and always involves the intrusion of a third party into the sacred bonds of married love. Also, IVF creates many embryos that will be destroyed or otherwise denied a chance to live their lives. IVF is completely opposed to the way God has given us to bring a baby into the world, and does not respect the sacred quality of human life.	

Section III: TRANSGENDERISM

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Those who identify as the opposite sex should be affirmed in that decision.	Manhood and womanhood are realities. They are not feelings, no matter how sincerely those feelings are experienced.	
Trans people should be celebrated in a special way.	Those who struggle with a confused sense of sexual identity must be lovingly accepted as persons created in God's image with the same dignity as any other person. Further, as Christians, we must pray for peace in their unique struggles and support them with Christian charity, all the while upholding the truth of God's plan for life and love.	
Someone who believes they are the opposite sex should be encouraged to have surgery or take hormones to change their body.	We should treat those experiencing gender dysphoria with compassion, and it is never compassionate to lie to someone. Just as we would not withhold food from someone with a body image disorder, we should not encourage someone to mutilate or poison their body to align with a mistaken belief about gender. We should lovingly encourage and help them to accept their body including their identity as male or female.	
Men who identify as women should be able to compete in women's sports (and vice-versa).	The reason we have separate sports for girls and boys is because of the inherent differences between males and females, and the physical advantages most boys have over most girls. It is true that some of the strongest women are stronger than the weakest men. But on average, men are bigger, stronger, and faster than women, making meaningful competition between them unrealistic in most sports. Girls deserve teams of their own to fairly compete.	

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Boys who identify as girls should be able to use girls' bathrooms and showers (and vice-versa).	Girls need private spaces of their own. Boys experiencing gender dysphoria deserve to be treated with compassion, and so do girls. They deserve places of privacy where they can be free of the gaze of boys/men while they are showering/changing clothes.	
We should use peoples' preferred pronouns, even if it requires us to call a biological female a male and vice-versa.	Saying a male is female or vice versa is a lie. God calls us to tell the truth, but we must always tell it with charity. We must find charitable ways to express ourselves that do not require us to break the Eighth Commandment.	

Section IV: HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Love is love.	Love is the choice to will the good of another. This love was modeled for us by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. Through Him, we have life. Human beings image God not only as individual persons, but most perfectly as male and female in a common union (communion) of life-giving love.	
Our feelings of attraction define who we are.	We are not defined by our feelings. The identity and dignity of all human beings come from being made in God's image and likeness. As baptized Christians, we are adopted children of God. This is our identity.	
Homosexual acts are an intimate expression of affection that are no different from heterosexual activity.	Homosexual acts are always closed to the possibility of generation of children. They do not originate from the complementarity of the male and female bodies and sexuality. Therefore, homosexual acts can never be full expressions of the total self-giving love found in marriage.	
The Church unjustly singles out gay people and calls their experience sinful.	Every person is called to chastity. Homosexual inclinations are not sinful, but homosexual acts are. Just as heterosexual attractions can pose certain challenges at various stages in life, homosexual attraction can present a burden to those who experience it. Those who experience homosexual attraction are called to uphold the same standard of love and chastity in their particular state in life as all Christians are. They are assisted in this through prayer, friendship, and sacramental grace.	
People who feel attracted to others of the same sex should not be told they should suppress their desires. It's too much to ask anyone to live without sexual expression.	There is no such thing as a situation that requires us to act immorally. There is always a virtuous choice to be made, even if it is a very difficult one. We will often find that the virtuous choice is the hardest choice and we need God's grace to do the right thing. But with God's grace, nothing is impossible.	

Section IV: GAY MARRIAGE

The Culture Says:	The Truth Is:	Notes
Love makes a family.	A nuclear family, which was chosen by Jesus to be born into, is a biological reality.	
Government should define who is a family.	Government recognizes the family, a pre-existing reality. The family should be protected from, rather than defined by, government intervention. Except in cases of crisis such as death or abandonment, children should be raised by their parents because of the biological reality of parenthood.	
The government should recognize gay marriage.	The purpose of government is to promote the common good. Traditional marriage promotes the common good because it is best for human flourishing. Marriage results from the intention of the couple to form a unitive covenant which, by definition, is ordered to procreation. By contrast, the government has no interest in romantic relationships between same-sex couples who cannot procreate. At its root, marriage involves the rearing of children: "By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory" (CCC 1652).	
Everyone has the right to be a parent.	Parenthood is not a right. Within a family, parents are more rightly said to have duties than rights. It is the child who has a right to his or her natural parents. When tragic circumstances such as death or abandonment occur, adoption is a loving response.	

A Dialogue of Trust and Openness

In giving life, parents cooperate with the creative power of God and receive the gift of a new responsibility – not only to feed their children and satisfy their material and cultural needs, but above all to pass on to them the lived truth of the faith and to educate them in love of God and neighbor. This is the parents' first duty in the heart of the “domestic church”.

The Church has always affirmed that parents have the duty and the right to be the first and the principal educators of their children...

Having given and welcomed life in an atmosphere of love, parents are rich in an educative potential which no one else possesses. In a unique way they know their own children;

they know them in their unrepeatable identity and by experience they possess the secrets and the resources of true love.

The normal and fundamental method...is *personal dialogue between parents and their children, that is, individual formation within the family circle*. In fact there is no substitute for a dialogue of trust and openness between parents and their children, a dialogue which respects not only their stages of development but also the young persons as individuals...

THE TRUTH AND MEANING
OF HUMAN SEXUALITY,
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR THE FAMILY

Read the full document at:

SophiaOnline.org/TruthandMeaningofHumanSexuality



Additional Resources

For more authentically Catholic resources on
Christian anthropology, please visit

SophiaOnline.org/Transgender