

## **Gender Ideology**

There are now many questions arising in the world of education concerning the ideology of gender which underlies transgenderism. I am not thinking of individuals who, for a variety of complex reasons, experience difficulty identifying with their biological sex, be that of male or female. Our Christian approach to persons in any kind of confusion and suffering must always be one of respect, compassion and understanding, together with a commitment to seeking appropriate help.

However, today we are being encouraged – sometimes forcefully – not only to accept but to embrace an ideology of gender which is beginning to permeate social consciousness with far-reaching consequences. I have often warned that, in that vacuum left by the loss of Christian faith among many of our contemporaries, new ideologies would emerge. For decades the Popes, from Saint John Paul II to Pope Francis, have warned that the radical ideology of gender would defy the truth about the human person. When Pope Francis spoke to Bishops at World Youth Day 2016, his comments gained widespread attention in the secular media.

'We are living a moment of the annihilation of man as image of God," the Holy Father observed. Today children are being taught in school that one can choose one's sex without regard for the harmful consequences it leaves in its wake'.

Echoing Pope Benedict's words, Pope Francis warned us that we are living in "the time of rebellion against God the Creator" At Christmas 2012, Pope Benedict wrote: 'According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature - it is a social role that we choose for ourselves. The profound falsehood of this theory is obvious. People dispute that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity as male and female which defines who they are as persons'.

We are thus faced with claims that our physical characteristics do not determine who we are as a man or as a woman, and that gender is no more than a 'social construct'. And yet we know that sex is determined by physical characteristics which start to develop from conception. The Scriptures speak of these sexual differences being willed by God from the beginning (Genesis 1:26-

27); they come into existence when we are conceived, as science universally affirms; and this complementarity of man and woman is ordered to the procreation of children in which father and mother collaborate with God in the coming to be of a new person.

Saint John Paul II's teaching in the 'Theology of the Body' speaks powerfully of this unity between the self and the body, writing:

'The body reveals the person. Science can examine our flesh in minute detail, down to the cells and even the DNA. But no amount of scientific exploration can replace the truth that our bodies reveal us, giving form to our innermost being and unique personality. Our bodies are sacramental – they make the invisible visible'. (Theology of the Body 9:4)

In his letter to the Church, 'The Joy of Love,' Pope Francis speaking again of how the ideology of gender has profound social implications. This is because it denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of man and woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the true basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes that promote a personal identity radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently sexual identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which the person can change at will'. (Amoris Laetitia n. 56).

Already in 1994, in his 'Letter to Families,' Saint John Paul II observed: 'Modern rationalism does not tolerate mystery. It does not accept the mystery of man as male and female, nor is it willing to admit that the full truth about man has been revealed in Jesus Christ'. (n. 19).

In 2016 the American College of Paediatricians gave their professional judgment on the harmful effects which gender mainstreaming is doing to our children. It is contained in the August 2016 edition of the Catholic Medical Quarterly. As catholic Christians we need to be particularly concerned about what going on.