



PASTORAL LETTER ON SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITY

A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference

*“What is man that You are mindful of him?”
— Psalm 8:4*

Truth • Dignity • Compassion • Hope

A PASTORAL REFLECTION FOR THE CARIBBEAN



Introduction

1. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As Bishops of the English, French, and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, we write with a sense of deep pastoral responsibility and moral urgency. We are shepherds of a region that is as vibrant in culture as it is vulnerable to the tides of ideologies that seek to redefine the human person, love, and sexuality. The Caribbean has long been a crucible of resilience and creativity. Yet, today, we stand at a crossroads. In a world saturated by hyper-sexualisation and rapid cultural shifts, where human identity is increasingly understood as fluid and self-constructed, the foundational truths about the human person are being obscured or even denied.

2. Historically, the perception and treatment of Caribbean people have been significantly shaped by global forces, starting with the European conquest and colonisation of the Americas. This resulted in the mistreatment and near annihilation of indigenous peoples and their cultures, the enslavement of Africans, the dehumanisation of indentured labourers, and the view of colonial territories as inferior. Human sexuality and interpersonal relations were not priorities for the colonisers. Instead, they exploited human sexuality to fuel Europe's industrialisation which distorted the understanding of sexuality and personhood for the Caribbean people. These historical influences must be considered in reshaping and redefining our identities as sexual beings.

3. We address this message specifically to you, parents, educators, catechists, and policymakers, who hold a privileged role in shaping the hearts and minds of our people. Yours is a noble and sacred task. What is nurtured in our families, taught in our schools and religious programmes, written into our laws, and passed down through our institutions will either safeguard human dignity or expose it to further manipulation and harm. It is, therefore, essential that Catholic teaching, rooted in divine revelation, affirmed by natural reason, and illuminated by contemporary science, be clearly understood, wisely communicated, and compassionately applied.

4. This pastoral reflection offers a comprehensive treatment of **Sexual and Gender Identity** informed by the Catholic Church's theological tradition, the scientific understanding of human biology, and an honest engagement with contemporary definitions of gender and identity. Drawing on Scripture, Christian anthropology, and the insights of thinkers such as St. John Paul II and Abigail Favale, we reaffirm the Church's unwavering belief in the intrinsic dignity of every human person as a body-soul unity, created male or female in the image of God.

5. In a context where language has been redefined and ideologies are presented as compassion, we must proclaim a truth that liberates rather than constrains. We must resist narratives that



suggest the human person is a self-made project, detached from biological reality or moral order. Instead, we uphold the vision of the human being as a gift, whose identity is received, not invented, whose body is meaningful, not malleable, and whose vocation is love, not self-assertion.

6. We are keenly aware that these topics are sensitive. We speak not to condemn but to illuminate, not to judge hearts but to form consciences. Our duty is to walk with all people, especially the young, the confused, the hurting, offering them accompaniment and clarity rooted in love and ordered towards truth. Our call is to defend the vulnerable, protect the integrity of childhood, and uphold the sanctity of the body against ideologies that fragment the person and commodify desire. As Caribbean Bishops, we affirm that **the human body is not an accessory to identity, but a sacrament of the person**. We invite all our collaborators—parents, teachers, religious, civil leaders—to stand with us in promoting a vision of human flourishing that is fully human, fully Christian, and deeply Caribbean.

7. Let us renew our commitment to faithful formation, liberating education, and principled policy. The dignity of the human person is too sacred and the stakes for our children too high for silence or ambiguity. In the face of confusion, we speak with conviction. In the face of false compassion, we offer real hope.



Chapter 1

Christian Anthropology and Human Relationships in a Hyper-Sexualised Society

8. We write as bishops called to shepherd our peoples in an age of great moral confusion and cultural transition. Across our Caribbean societies—whether English, French, or Dutch-speaking—we see a troubling erosion of clarity about the human person, about love, and about the sacred dignity of our bodies. In this hyper-sexualised age, it is urgent that we, together with educators, catechists, and policy makers, reaffirm the truth about human sexuality and relationships in a manner that is compassionate, coherent, and rooted in faith and reason.

9. The confusion of our times—driven by ideologies that detach the body from identity, treat desire as destiny, and blur sexual difference—compels us to offer the light of the Gospel and the wisdom of Christian anthropology. We do not speak merely to refute, but to illuminate, not to condemn but to form consciences and safeguard the dignity of the human person.



Theological foundation: Created in the image of God

10. The foundational truth of the human person is given in Genesis 1:27: **“God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them.”** This biblical witness affirms that each human being is created, loved, and endowed with a purpose—to live in communion with God and with others. As body-soul unities, men and women bear the divine image not only in their intellect and will, but in their embodied existence. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: “Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. ... He is intellect and will, but he is also nature...” (*Listening*)[1].

Sexual difference as gift, not as obstacle

11. Sexual difference is not an arbitrary or accidental part of our humanity. It is central to the gift of self. As Abigail Favale notes, sexual difference is an essential part of the cosmos’ goodness. Genesis presents us with a vision of male and female not as adversaries but as complements, created for communion and called to co-create. The body is not a barrier to identity but a revelation of it. It is through our male or female embodiment that our unique personhood and our capacity for relationship are revealed. As John Paul II teaches: “The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine.”[2]

12. This is especially important for educators and curriculum developers. Young people must be taught that their bodies are not meaningless or malleable, but sacramental signs of who they are and what they are made for—communion and love. Maleness points towards femaleness and vice versa. Our sexed body signals our inherent capacity and need for interpersonal communion. Not only that, but our sexual difference is also capable of bringing another human being into existence. Favale says:

The one-flesh union between man and a woman is not exclusive, facing inward and closed off to others. Rather, it is expansive and open, because this union alone has the potential to create new life. Communion and procreation: This is the twofold potential that is recognized and celebrated in the Genesis text through the man’s cry of wonder.[3]

The Fall and the fracture of original harmony

13. Genesis also reveals the rupture caused by original sin. What was once a relationship of trust and openness—between man and woman, humanity and God—becomes fraught with shame, domination, and disintegration. Sin introduces confusion into the person’s relationship with their own body. In today’s world, we see this confusion intensified by cultural messages that promise freedom but deliver fragmentation. The original harmony of male and female is



no longer seen as mutual gift, but as opposition. The Church must be a beacon in this darkness, proclaiming the truth that our bodies are good, our sexual difference is meaningful, and our identity is received, not invented.

Redemption: The restoration of the gift

14. In the fullness of time, redemption enters the world through the body of a woman; Mary's *fiat* makes way for the incarnation of Christ. Grace restores what sin has broken, including the spousal meaning of the body. In Christ, love is revealed as self-gift, and human love is elevated to a sacrament of divine life. We must help our youth and institutions rediscover this redemptive anthropology: that chastity is not repression but integration; love is not mere emotion but virtue; that marriage and celibacy are both paths to holiness through the sincere gift of self.

Christian love, virtue, and the body

15. The Church teaches that love must be anchored in truth. Real love affirms the other as a person, not merely as an object of desire. In *Love and Responsibility*[4], St. John Paul II insists: "Love is an affirmation of the person, or it is not love at all." This is the ethical foundation that must inform educational policy and formation. We cannot promote forms of sexuality detached from virtue and truth without harming the very people we seek to serve. Chastity, often misunderstood, is in fact the key to integration and maturity. It is the successful unification of sexuality within the person, where the body and spirit work together in harmony. Chastity is not just abstinence; it is the foundation for authentic relationships.

Homosexuality and the call to holiness

16. The Church recognises that some experience deep-seated same-sex attraction. These persons must be treated with respect, sensitivity, and compassion. They, like all of us, are called to chastity and holiness. The Church rejects all unjust discrimination and calls each person to integration and spiritual growth.

Nature, desire, and the longing for God

17. Mortal love, however beautiful, always awakens a longing for something more. As J. Budziszewski writes: "Mortal love is not enough... it awakens in us the longing for that greater love which alone can give us all that we long for" (*On the Meaning of Sex*)[5]. Every educational framework, every policy decision must, therefore, begin not with ideology but with truth—truth about the human person, truth about love, truth about our final destiny in God.



Conclusion

18. Christian anthropology offers a life-giving vision of human identity and relationship. In a time of widespread confusion, the Church's voice must be clear: the human body is good, sexual difference is sacred, and love is ordered towards communion. To all those entrusted with forming minds, crafting policy, and shaping culture: we call you to stand with us in defending the dignity of every human person. Let us work together to build a culture that affirms the body, honours the gift of sexuality, and leads our people not into confusion but into the truth that sets them free.

● CALL TO ACTION ●

A call to action

19. We call on all educators, catechists, pastors, parents, and policy makers:

- To uphold the dignity of the human person as a body-soul unity.
- To form young people in the truth about love, sexuality, and the human body.
- To resist ideologies that separate identity from biological reality.
- To accompany those who struggle with identity with love rooted in truth.
- To witness to the world the beauty of God's plan for human love and flourishing.

20. Let us reclaim the language of love and the dignity of the human body. Let us teach the next generation that their worth is not measured by sexual expression, but by the unchanging truth that they are sons and daughters of God, created for communion and called to love. In the chapters that follow, we will explore how science supports this vision, and how the Church must respond to the shifting definitions of identity in our contemporary Caribbean context.



Chapter 2

The Science of Sexual Identity and the Truth of the Human Body

Symbolism and sacred meaning of the body

21. Catholic anthropology sees the human body as more than biology—it is a **theological sign**, a visible expression of invisible truths. In the complementarity of male and female, we glimpse the mystery of communion, mutual self-gift, and the nuptial love that reflects God’s own self-giving. The **one-flesh union** of man and woman is not merely physical; it is sacramental. The man gives life outside himself; the woman receives and nurtures it within. These realities are not interchangeable. They are **complementary**. To obscure this difference in the name of ideology is to obscure a central truth about love, family, and even salvation history.

22. We live in a moment of unprecedented confusion about the most fundamental aspects of the human person. Nowhere is this more evident than in the widespread assertion that **biological sex is merely “assigned at birth”**, a claim that has taken root in popular culture, education, and even legislative frameworks. This chapter seeks to speak clearly and compassionately to those shaping the minds of our youth—parents, **teachers, curriculum developers, health professionals, and lawmakers**—offering a Catholic and scientific understanding of sexual identity rooted in reason, revelation, and the natural law.

23. As Bishops of the Caribbean, we affirm with conviction and love: **each human being is created male or female, body and soul, with dignity, purpose, and meaning inscribed into their very being**. Denial of this truth leads not to liberation but to confusion and harm. It is our pastoral and moral responsibility to present the truth in ways that safeguard the dignity of every human person, especially the most vulnerable.

I. The biological reality of sexual difference

24. It is a scientific fact, not a social construct, that **human beings are sexually dimorphic**. That is, every human body is organised for one of two roles in reproduction: **the production of large gametes (ova) or small gametes (sperm)**. As Abigail Favale writes:

A physiology arranged to produce ova is female, and a physiology arranged to produce sperm is male. This twofold distinction between large and small gametes is stable and universal—not only throughout the human species, but also among all plants



and animal species that reproduce sexually. There is no such thing as a third gamete or a spectrum of possible gametes. **(Genesis of Gender pg. 124) [6]**

25. Sex, then, is not arbitrarily “assigned” at birth; it is **determined at conception** through the presence or absence of the SRY¹ gene. If activated, the gene initiates the development of male gonads. If not, the gonads become ovaries. These biological processes demonstrate that **the sex binary—male and female—is an objective, ordered, and essential dimension of the human person**, forming the very basis for human reproduction and family life. **(Genesis of Gender pgs. 122-129) [7]**

II. Intersex conditions and the illusion of a spectrum

26. Those promoting the concept of a “sex spectrum” often appeal to the existence of **intersex individuals** as evidence for a third sex. However, this is a misuse of medical terminology. The accurate terms are **Disorders (or Differences) of Sexual Development (DSDs)** or **Congenital Conditions of Sexual Development (CCSDs)**. These conditions affect fewer than **0.02% of all births**, and in the vast majority of cases, the person is **clearly male or female**, even if some sexual characteristics develop atypically. This is no different from a malformed limb not calling into question the reality of limbs.

27. Biological sex remains a **stable and recognisable reality in 99.98% of births**. In rare cases of ambiguity, **sex can still be discerned** through multiple biological factors: chromosomal (karyotype), phenotypic (external genitalia), internal structures, gonads, and hormone patterns. Crucially, what determines sex is not secondary characteristics but **the capacity to produce one type of gamete**. To suggest otherwise, especially in the context of childhood education, is not only scientifically flawed but gravely misleading. **(Genesis of Gender pgs. 122-129) [8]** Whilst there exists a number of situations of abnormal sexual development such as CAH (Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia), AI (Androgen Insensitivity) and Swyer Syndrome or Klinefelter Syndrome for which there are appropriate medical responses, what’s important in understanding sexual identity is how an individual develops with respect to the innate roles of male and female members of a species in the **reproductive process**. Biologically, DSDs reveal an organism’s inability to achieve full maturity as male or female, not the existence of more than two complementary sexes. (Sexual Identity, Chapt. 2, pg. 84) [9] In acknowledging the very real presence of children with abnormal sexual development, the basic complementary orientation of humans as male and female remains. People with ambiguous genitalia do not represent a third (or infinite spectrum) of additional sexes. There

¹ SRY (sex-determining region Y)



are two, and only two gonads that contribute to human reproduction. (Sexual Identity, Chapt. 2, pg. 85) [10]

III. The ontology of sex: Being male or female

28. Sexual identity is not merely about visible traits but reflects something deeper—an **ontological reality, a reality of being**. As the tradition of the Church, guided by St. Thomas Aquinas and Christian anthropology, teaches: a woman remains a woman even if she is infertile, postmenopausal, or has undergone medical interventions, because her body is still ordered toward the **potentiality** of gestating life. A man who cannot father a child is still a man because his body was never ordered to carry life internally. This difference is not superficial but essential. It is **inscribed in the body's design**, reflecting a divine logic: “male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27). Human nature, including our sex, is not something we create for ourselves. It is a **gift received**, a sacred reality to be accepted with reverence. Components of the human reproductive system are unique in that they are integral halves of a whole; these halves achieve their purpose only when joined with a complementary half. The uniqueness of the reproductive system is that gonads are also organs for others and not exclusively for oneself. Performance of sexual acts other than male-female genital sex represent a severing of the intrinsic relationship between the form and function of the human person as a sexual being. (Sexual Identity, Chapt. 2, pg. 85) [11]

IV. The brain and sexual difference

29. Scientific studies of male and female brains support this complementarity. Men and women exhibit differences in brain structure, organisation, neurotransmitters, and processing. These are not value-laden but part of a **beautifully ordered design** in which the sexes balance, complete, and support each other. Denying these differences, or claiming they are merely cultural, undermines both science and the relational nature of the human person. A truly inclusive vision must affirm **both the equality and the distinction** of the sexes as gifts, not problems.

30. The pathway of sexual differentiation is affected primarily by sex hormones in the body, but recent research has shown that some aspects of sexual differentiation in the brain occur independent of sex hormones and are directed by the chromosomes themselves. Gonadal steroids have direct sex-specific effects on the X and Y gene expression within the cells themselves. This means that every cell in a male brain is to some degree fundamentally different than every cell in the female brain. Genes, epigenetics and sex hormones all work together to promote sexual differentiation in utero and beyond. Consequently, males and



females follow distinct developmental paths from the earliest moment of life. (Sexual Identity, Chapt. 3, pgs. 106-108) [12]

V. The rise of gender ideology

31. Much of the current confusion stems from a 20th-century shift in understanding “**gender**”. Influenced by psychologists like John Money, the term “gender” was separated from biological sex and redefined as a cultural identity. Over time, “gender” became detached even from stable social norms and came to be seen as **entirely self-determined and fluid**. As Favale warns: “Gender has driven a wedge between body and identity... Unlike sex, gender can be continually altered and redeployed ... becoming entirely disconnected from bodily realities.” (**Genesis of Gender pgs. 149-150**) [13] This ideology, though often clothed in compassion, presents a false and unstable anthropology. It separates the soul from the body, identity from reality, and in doing so, **harms the very people it claims to help**.

VI. The consequences for education and society

32. When schools and institutions adopt gender ideology, they risk teaching children that **truth is subjective**, that **feelings create reality**, and that **the body has no intrinsic meaning**. This not only confuses but also endangers our youth, leading to increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and identity crises. As Catholic bishops, we insist that educational environments must reflect the truth about the human person. Formation must integrate **faith, reason, science, and compassion**, and never sacrifice reality for ideology.

VII. Upholding truth in love

33. Sex is not a spectrum. It is a **binary reality**, inscribed in our nature, affirmed by biology, and upheld by faith. This is not a message of exclusion but of affirmation, an affirmation of the body, of truth, and of the person as a unity of body and soul. As bishops, we urge all those who influence the formation of hearts and minds—teachers, catechists, school leaders, legislators, medical professionals—to **promote policies and curricula rooted in truth**, guided by love, and oriented toward the flourishing of every child of God. Let us stand together in protecting the integrity of the human person. In an age of confusion, may our Caribbean societies become beacons of clarity, courage, and compassion.



Chapter 3

Definitions in a Confused Age – A Catholic Response

34. In our Caribbean region today, the language surrounding identity, gender, and sexuality is being radically redefined. Terms that once had clear meaning, such as male, female, man, woman, and gender, are now caught in an ideological whirlwind that has left many parents, teachers, and even professionals, bewildered. As bishops called to shepherd God's people, we recognise the need for **clarity and courage** in addressing these shifting definitions. This chapter offers a theological and pastoral response, aligned with reason and science, to the new definitions that are shaping our societies, often with **real and lasting harm** to the young, the vulnerable, and the family. We write to **catechists, educators, and policy makers** across the Caribbean, calling them to stand with us in upholding **the dignity of the human person and the truth of our created identity**.

I. Gender and the separation from bodily reality

35. At the root of modern confusion is the **separation of gender from the body**. Once anchored in biological sex, the term “gender” has become **detached from reality**, manipulated to mean anything an individual chooses. The psychologist John Money introduced the term “gender role” in the 1950s, claiming that one's identity is shaped entirely by culture and not by the body. Tragically, Money's theories were tested on a pair of twin boys, one of whom, after a botched circumcision, was raised as a girl named “Brenda”. Despite repeated reinforcement and surgical intervention, the child later rejected this imposed identity, resumed life as a man, and ultimately, took his own life. His twin brother also died by suicide. As author Abigail Favale reflects: “Money's attempt to demonstrate the veracity of his theories failed catastrophically... His theories proved to be not only erroneous, but fatal” (**Genesis of Gender pg. 146**) [14]

36. This harrowing story is not simply a failed experiment; it is **a cautionary tale**. The idea that a person's identity can be entirely detached from the body has led to confusion, psychological distress, and in some cases, irreversible harm. The Catholic perspective insists that **body and soul form a unity**, and **our sexual identity is a sacred gift**, not a social label or an emotion.



II. The myth of “feeling like” a gender

37. Much of modern gender theory is grounded not in biology or reason but in subjective feeling. A person may say, “I feel like a woman” or “I feel like a man,” but such feelings, however sincere, do not define reality. To feel like a woman is not to be one. **Feelings are not facts.** If we accepted identity purely on the basis of emotion, we would need a new category for every possible mood or preference. A man cannot know what it is to be a woman from the inside. His speculation is only from the outside, based on imagined traits. Such **self-identification is a fiction**, not a foundation for human identity.

III. Redefining the terms: Contemporary gender definitions

38. Across universities, schools, and public discourse, the language of gender is multiplying rapidly. Many of these definitions are inconsistent, ideologically driven, and detached from science or theology. As pastors, we offer here a commentary on key terms currently shaping our institutions and public life.

39. Gender identity: Defined by activists as “an internal sense of being male, female, or something else, which may or may not correspond to one’s sex assigned at birth.” (American Psychological Association. (2018). A glossary: Defining transgender terms. *Monitor on Psychology*, 49 (8), 32. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/09/ce-corner-glossary>)

Catholic response: This definition **privileges self-perception over biological reality**, leading to an internal conflict between mind and body. The Church teaches that **each person is a “unity of body and soul”** (CCC 2332)² [7], and that “everyone should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity” (CCC 2333) [7]. Real integration comes from accepting the body as gift, not remaking it according to internal feelings.

40. Gender ideology: A belief system in which **human identity is seen as self-determined**, defined by feelings rather than biological sex.

Catholic response: Pope Francis has called gender ideology **“one of the most dangerous ideological colonizations of our time.”**[8] It denies God as Creator and introduces deep confusion about the nature of the human person. We reject any framework that **detaches gender from sex** and treats the body as meaningless or malleable.

41. Transgender and non-binary: These terms refer to individuals whose gender identity does not align with their biological sex or who reject both male and female identities altogether.

Catholic response: While we must treat all persons with dignity and compassion, we cannot

² Catechism of the Catholic Church



affirm identities that **reject the truth of the body**. Scientifically, one cannot change one's sex. The call of the Church is always to truth in love, accompanying those in confusion towards integration and peace.

42. Gender dysphoria: The distress one feels due to a perceived mismatch between their internal sense of gender and their biological sex. This phenomenon, formerly known as **Gender Identity Disorder**, was once treated as a psychological condition. However, medical authorities today have shifted towards the “**affirmation model**”, which validates the person's self-perception and encourages social, medical, or surgical transitions.

Catholic response: While the Church recognises the deep suffering involved, **we cannot affirm mistaken self-perceptions**. This would be akin to affirming the belief of one living with anorexia nervosa that they are overweight despite being underweight. Real compassion seeks to heal, not reinforce, a harmful disconnect between mind and body.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person... It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way, the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others” (CCC 2332) [7].

43. Intersex: This is a broad term used to describe various **Congenital Conditions of Sexual Development (CCSDs)**, such as Klinefelter Syndrome or Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. These are rare conditions, affecting a small percentage of the population, where sexual characteristics may develop atypically.

Catholic response: While such conditions require pastoral sensitivity and medical discernment, they do **not represent a third sex**. Every person with a CCSD is either male or female. These conditions **do not invalidate the sex binary** but call for compassionate accompaniment and clear medical care.

44. Gender transition: This refers to a person's efforts—social, hormonal, or surgical—to change the appearance of their body to match a self-identified gender.

Catholic response: Such interventions **cannot change one's sex**, and often result in **permanent harm**, including sterilisation, loss of sexual function, and psychological distress. The Church opposes these practices as **contrary to the dignity of the body** and harmful to the human person.

45. Cisgender: An invented term used to describe someone whose gender identity matches their biological sex.

Catholic response: This term is based on a flawed assumption that everyone has a “gender identity” distinct from sex. It subtly promotes **gender ideology** and should be avoided.



46. Queer; Genderqueer; Genderfluid: These terms describe individuals who reject all traditional gender categories and prefer an identity that is fluid, undefined, or oppositional to norms.

Catholic response: These identities reject the truth of sexual difference and the goodness of the body. They are incompatible with a **Christian vision of the human person** as created male or female for communion and love.

47. Agender; bigender; trigender; demifluid; pangender: These terms, often sourced from academic institutions, represent attempts to categorise subjective feelings into new identities.

Catholic response: These definitions are **arbitrary, confusing, and ideologically motivated**. They do not correspond to biological reality or theological truth and must not form the basis of education or policy.

IV. Pastoral accompaniment and the call to integration

48. We must be clear: **persons are not ideologies**. Every individual who experiences gender-related distress must be treated with reverence, compassion, and patience. Authentic pastoral care does not mean affirming every feeling but helping each person **integrate their self-understanding with the truth of their body and soul**. We must accompany those who struggle not as judges but as fellow pilgrims, guiding them towards truth, healing, and communion with God. **Conversion is not coercion**; it is the fruit of love walking with truth. Real accompaniment leads us deeper into the heart of Christ, who alone reveals the truth about who we are.

Let the body speak truth

49. The human body speaks a sacred language. It reveals our identity, our purpose, and our call to communion. We cannot silence its voice without also silencing the truth of our humanity. As bishops of the English, French, and Dutch Caribbean, we call on all catechists, educators, and policy makers to safeguard the truth of the human person.

50. Let us renew our commitment to teaching with clarity, forming with compassion, and governing with wisdom. In this confused age, **the truth of the body remains a light in the darkness**, guiding us back to the One who created us, male and female, in love.



Conclusion

Safeguarding the human person in truth and love

51. We have journeyed through these pages together as shepherds concerned for the integrity, freedom, and flourishing of the human person. In a Caribbean context increasingly shaped by global ideologies, we have seen how the fundamental truths about the human body, sexuality, and identity are being challenged, redefined, or obscured. These are not abstract debates. They are forming the conscience of our youth, influencing education, shaping policy, and disrupting our people's cultural and familial foundations.

52. We, the Bishops of the English, French, and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, write out of a deep pastoral concern and an unwavering hope. We believe that the truth about the human person is not a burden but a liberation. We believe that clarity and charity must walk hand in hand. And we believe that those entrusted with the formation of minds and hearts—**parents, catechists, educators, pastoral leaders, and policy makers**—have a sacred duty to safeguard this truth with both **compassion and conviction**.

The human person: Created, not constructed

53. From our introduction, we reaffirmed that the human person is a body-soul unity, created male or female in the image and likeness of God. Chapters One and Two developed this theological and scientific vision: that sexual difference is not a cultural constraint but a divine gift, one that speaks to our vocation to communion, to love, and to the sincere gift of self.

In Chapter Three, we addressed the ideological confusion of our time, where words are being redefined and reality reshaped to suit interior desires rather than objective truth. We examined the roots, language, and implications of gender ideology and offered a Catholic response grounded in **natural reason, scientific evidence, and the revealed wisdom of the Church**.

Now, we must look ahead. What is the path forward? How do we, as a Church, respond faithfully, courageously, and pastorally?



● PASTORAL GUIDELINES ●

Pastoral Guidelines and Directives

54. We now offer the following directives to parents and to all those involved in education, pastoral ministry, and public life within the Caribbean Church:

1. Affirm the unity of body and soul in all formation

- Catechesis and curriculum must present **Christian anthropology clearly and unapologetically**: every person is created male or female. This is not assigned or chosen but received as a gift from God.
- Avoid and reject terminology that affirms gender ideology, e.g. “assigned at birth”, “gender identity” detached from sex, “cisgender”, and always **use language that affirms biological truth** and the unity of the human person.

2. Form consciences, not just inform minds

- The task of Catholic education is not to accommodate ideology but to **form minds and hearts in truth and love**.
- Teachers, catechists, and youth ministers must be **trained in sound theological anthropology**, equipped to answer questions about gender and identity with **pastoral sensitivity** and doctrinal clarity.

3. Accompany with compassion, but never abandon the truth

- Those struggling with gender dysphoria or identity confusion must never be excluded. They must be met with **welcome, respect, and understanding**.
- Authentic pastoral care **does not affirm confusion**, but lovingly leads each person toward integration, healing, and truth.
- Ensure that Church ministries are places of **safe and honest accompaniment**, grounded in prayer, discernment, and hope in Christ.

4. Protect children and adolescents from ideological harm

- Catholic schools, religious education programmes, and youth ministries must **resist any curriculum or external influence that promotes gender ideology**.



- Parents are the primary educators of their children. Empower them with resources, workshops, and pastoral support to understand these issues and to guide their children with confidence and faith.
- Advocate for legal and policy frameworks that **preserve the rights of parents, uphold biological truth, and safeguard children from premature social or medical transitioning.**

5. Promote the beauty of chastity and vocation

- In a hyper-sexualised world, we must recover the language of **chastity, virtue, and vocation.**
- Teach young people that the path to fulfilment lies not in the indulgence of every desire, but in the **integration of the whole person**, where body, mind, and spirit work in harmony.
- Offer robust formation on the call to **marriage and celibacy**, showing that both are expressions of love as self-gift.

6. Collaborate regionally for a unified Catholic response

- Dioceses and parishes across linguistic lines—English, French, Dutch—should **share resources, strategies, and programmes** to respond cohesively to these challenges.
- Develop **Caribbean-wide formation programmes** for educators and pastoral workers that are contextual, theological, and practical.

7. Engage policy makers with moral clarity and civic charity

- Our voice must not remain within the sanctuary. It must reach the corridors of power.
- Engage governments, education ministries, and civil authorities respectfully but firmly to **advocate for laws and policies that uphold the dignity of the human person.**
- Promote a vision of society rooted in truth, not ideology, and propose alternative frameworks that reflect both human nature and the common good.



● TRUTH + LOVE ●

Final word: Let truth and love meet (cf. Psalm 85:10)

55. We do not face these challenges alone. Christ is the Good Shepherd who walks before us. His truth is not a weapon to wound but a light to guide. His Church is not a fortress to retreat into but a field hospital that offers healing for the wounded. And His call to us—bishops, catechists, teachers, policy makers—is to be **ambassadors of truth and instruments of mercy**. Our Caribbean people deserve the truth. Our children deserve clarity. Our Church must not remain silent.

56. Let us go forward together **with clarity of mind, compassion of heart, and courage of witness** so that every human person in our region may come to know not only who they are, but **whose they are**: beloved sons and daughters of the living God. “Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist ... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph 6:14,17).



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Appendix

PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Scenario 1

“Miss, I think I might be a boy, not a girl.”

(A biologically female student expresses discomfort with her body and says she now identifies as male.)

What’s happening:

The child is experiencing **gender dysphoria**—a disconnect between her biological sex and her perceived identity. This may be influenced by internal confusion, social media, peer pressure, or trauma.

Pastoral response:

- **Listen calmly and respectfully.** Say: “Thank you for trusting me with your feelings. Can you help me understand what you’re going through?”
- **Affirm her dignity:** “You are deeply loved by God. Your life and your body are sacred.”
- **Avoid affirming a false identity:** Do not refer to her with male pronouns or a new name as this reinforces confusion.
- **Refer to parents** with sensitivity: “This is something that needs to be shared with those who love and care for you most. Let’s talk to your parents together so they can support you.”
- **Engage your pastoral team** and seek guidance from your diocesan family life office or school chaplain.

Catechetical note:

Reaffirm the unity of body and soul: “God created us male and female. Sometimes our feelings may not match what’s true, but our bodies tell us the truth about who we are.”



● PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Scenario 2

“I’m non-binary. I don’t feel like a boy or a girl.”

(A student claims to have no gender or says they’re “fluid” between genders.)

What’s happening:

The child is adopting concepts likely learned through online culture or social spaces. This may signal emotional confusion or a desire for belonging or uniqueness.

Pastoral response:

- **Acknowledge the desire to be seen and understood:** “I can see you’re trying to express something really important about yourself.”
- **Gently redirect to truth:** “Even if we don’t feel like it sometimes, each of us has been created either male or female. That’s something sacred, not something we invent.”
- **Avoid using invented pronouns or labels.** Instead, focus on personal connection: “Let’s focus on you as a whole person, not on labels.”
- **Encourage deeper conversation with a trusted adult or counsellor grounded in faith.**

Catechetical note:

Help the student explore the richness of being male or female without stereotypes: “There’s no one way to be a girl or boy. God made you unique, and you don’t need to fit into someone else’s box.”



PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Scenario 3

“My friend is transgender. Why can’t the Church accept them?”

What’s happening:

The child is defending a peer and is likely influenced by a cultural message of unconditional affirmation as the highest good.

Pastoral response:

- **Affirm the value of friendship and loyalty:** “It’s good to care about your friend. Jesus wants us to love everyone.”
- **Clarify the distinction between love and affirmation:** “Loving someone doesn’t mean agreeing with everything they believe. We can love and walk with someone while still holding on to what is true.”
- **Gently explain the Church’s teaching:** “God made each of us as a unity of body and soul. We can’t change our sex, even if we feel uncomfortable, that’s why the Church can’t support changing the body to match feelings. But we never stop loving the person.”

PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Scenario 4

A student asks: “Why does our school say there are only two sexes when the world says otherwise?”

What’s happening:

The child is confused by conflicting messages between Church teaching and secular education or media.

Pastoral response:

- **Frame the question as an opportunity to seek truth:** “That’s a very good question. Not everything we hear around us is based on truth or science.”



- **Use accessible science:** “Every person is either male or female from the moment of conception. That’s something biology confirms and the Church upholds because it’s how God created us.”
- **Encourage critical thinking:** “It’s important to ask: Who is saying this? And what are they basing it on?”

● PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Scenario 5

A teacher is asked to use a child’s “preferred pronouns.”

What’s happening:

A school policy or parental request insists that a teacher address a child with pronouns that conflict with their biological sex.

Pastoral response for the teacher:

- **Remain respectful and calm** while internally holding to truth.
- **Seek a private conversation with school leadership:** “As a Catholic educator, I must uphold the dignity and truth of the human person. Using inaccurate pronouns affirms a false identity, which I cannot do in conscience.”
- **Offer a compromise where possible:** Refer to the student by name without using pronouns, if permitted.
- **Request pastoral or legal support from diocesan authorities** if pressured to act against Church teaching or conscience.

● PASTORAL REMINDER ●

Final pastoral reminder:

Truth and love are not opposites. They are the “two lungs” through which the Church breathes (*Ut Unum Sint* §54)[18]. In a hyper-sexualised culture, the task of the Church is not simply to say no to falsehood, but to say yes to the beauty of the human person as God created them.

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