

August 31, 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recently the Archdiocese of Omaha issued a policy for Catholic schools regarding issues in schools related to gender identity and gender dysphoria. After schools and parents have begun to face these issues in some places in recent years, it seemed that a policy is needed so that schools and parents can be clear about how to proceed when faced with a question affecting gender.

After listening to recent feedback and questions from school administrators and members of school communities, we are delaying the implementation of the policy. We will use feedback to draft revised norms that will be more clearly focused and will not compromise the teachings of Jesus Christ and the church. We plan to share a revised policy by the end of the calendar year for inclusion in school policy manuals for the 2023-2024 school year. Between now and then, resources will be provided to schools and parishes for education on the issue of gender. For now, schools will use the Pastoral Guidelines for Gender Identity they have used in recent years.

Policies are not primarily teaching documents. However, this moment provides an opportunity for me to call to mind two important things regarding our Catholic schools that I hope can provide a context for formulating and receiving a policy on gender. First, Catholic schools are an extension of the church's mission to bring people to Jesus Christ. Parents have the primary responsibility from God for the education and formation of their children. Catholic schools have been established to partner with parents who desire assistance in fulfilling this responsibility. A primary element of the partnership is the common acceptance of the truths of the Catholic faith, so that students can grow as human persons and disciples of Jesus Christ.

Second, because our partnership with parents is defined primarily by the truths of the Catholic faith, there necessarily are limits on how we might proceed together. In our schools, we communicate to our students the love of God in Jesus Christ. We want them to be confident that God loves them as they are and that he offers them gifts so they can grow. Growing up is challenging, and we try to communicate the presence and the mercy of Jesus, especially at challenging moments.

The thought that gender can be a matter of personal choice threatens the well-being of children and young people. It threatens the relationship between parents and their children established by God. It is a rejection of the place of God as the author of life and the object of true worship, as expressed in the first commandment. It is incompatible with our Catholic faith and the mission of Jesus.

If parents should choose to pursue gender “alteration” for their child or ask the school to cooperate in communicating to their child or others in the school community that which is not in God’s plan regarding gender, the school-parent partnership suffers, thus requiring discernment about the appropriateness of the family’s place in the school. Parishes may be better equipped to accompany the family outside of the school setting.

I am proud of the 70 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Omaha. They are staffed by the most dedicated and competent people I know. We are working hard every day to serve God and to serve our families in integrity. I renew our commitment to serve you by being true to the mission of Jesus Christ. This is what you expect of us. This is what we owe to the families and the communities we serve.

With best wishes and prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George J. Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend George J. Lucas  
Archbishop of Omaha