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## Care for Persons who Experience Same-Sex Attraction or Distress Related to Sexual Identity – Select Teaching Resources

### I. THE HOLY SEE

#### **Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, Dignitas Infinita (2024)**

- Teaching about the need to respect the natural order of the human person, Pope Francis affirmed that “creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.” It follows that any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception. This is not to exclude the possibility that a person with genital abnormalities that are already evident at birth or that develop later may choose to receive the assistance of healthcare professionals to resolve these abnormalities. However, in this case, such a medical procedure would not constitute a sex change in the sense intended here. (No. 60)

#### **Pontifical Council for the Family, The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality (1995)**

- Especially when the practice of homosexual acts has not become a habit, many cases can benefit from appropriate therapy. (No. 104)
- Homosexuality should not be discussed before adolescence unless a specific serious problem has arisen in a particular situation. This subject must be presented only in terms of chastity, health and "the truth about human sexuality in its relationship to the family as taught by the Church." (No. 125)

#### **Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons<sup>1</sup> (1986)**

- We encourage the Bishops, then, to provide pastoral care in full accord with the teaching of the Church for homosexual persons of their dioceses. No authentic pastoral programme will include organizations in which homosexual persons associate with each other without clearly stating that homosexual activity is immoral. A truly pastoral approach will appreciate the

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<sup>1</sup> The Church's previous use of “homosexual persons” should not be understood to imply that the Church labels a subset of people with an “identity” according to their sexual desires.



- need for homosexual persons to avoid the near occasions of sin... We would heartily encourage programmes where these dangers are avoided. But we wish to make it clear that departure from the Church's teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve. (No. 15)
- “In a particular way, we would ask the Bishops to support, with the means at their disposal, the development of appropriate forms of pastoral care for homosexual persons. These would include the assistance of the psychological, sociological and medical sciences, in full accord with the teaching of the Church.” (No. 17)

#### **Congregation for Catholic Education, Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983)**

- “The causes [of adolescent homosexuality] having been sought and understood, the family and the teacher will offer an efficacious help in the process of integral growth: welcoming with understanding, creating a climate of hope, encouraging the emancipation of the individual and his or her growth in self control, promoting an authentic moral force towards conversion to the love of God and neighbour, suggesting - if necessary - medical-psychological assistance from persons attentive to and respectful of the teaching of the Church.” (No. 103)

## **II. THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

#### **USCCB Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care, Seventh Edition (2025)**

- Since “creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift,” we have a duty “to protect our humanity,” which means first of all, “accepting it and respecting it as it was created.” In order to respect the nature of the human person as a unity of body and soul, Catholic health care services must not provide or permit medical interventions, whether surgical, hormonal, or genetic, that aim not to restore but rather to alter the fundamental order of the human body in its form or function. This includes, for example, some forms of genetic engineering whose purpose is not medical treatment, as well as interventions that aim to transform sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex (or to nullify sexual characteristics of a human body). (No. 28)



- In accord with the mission of Catholic health care, which includes serving those who are vulnerable, Catholic health care services and providers “must employ all appropriate resources to mitigate the suffering of those who experience gender incongruence or gender dysphoria” and to provide for the full range of their health care needs, employing only those means that respect the fundamental order of the human body. (No. 29)

**USCCB Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body (2023)**

- The human person, body and soul, man or woman, has a fundamental order and finality whose integrity must be respected. Because of this order and finality, neither patients nor physicians nor researchers nor any other persons have unlimited rights over the body; they must respect the order and finality inscribed in the embodied person... (No. 7)
- What is widely in practice today, however, and what is of great concern, is the range of technological interventions advocated by many in our society as treatments for what is termed “gender dysphoria” or “gender incongruence.” These interventions involve the use of surgical or chemical techniques that aim to exchange the sex characteristics of a patient’s body for those of the opposite sex or for simulations thereof. In the case of children, the exchange of sex characteristics is prepared by the administration of chemical puberty blockers, which arrest the natural course of puberty and prevent the development of some sex characteristics in the first place... These technological interventions are not morally justified either as attempts to repair a defect in the body or as attempts to sacrifice a part of the body for the sake of the whole. (Nos. 14-15)
- ...Catholic health care services must not perform interventions, whether surgical or chemical, that aim to transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex or take part in the development of such procedures. They must employ all appropriate resources to mitigate the suffering of those who struggle with gender incongruence, but the means used must respect the fundamental order of the human body. Only by using morally appropriate means do healthcare providers show full respect for the dignity of each human person.



**USCCB Letter Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care (2006)**

- A considerable number of people who experience same-sex attraction experience it as an inclination that they did not choose. Many of these speak of their homosexual attractions as an unwanted burden. This raises the question of whether or not a homosexual inclination can be changed with the help of some kind of therapeutic intervention. (Pg. 7)
- [T]here is no consensus on therapy... Catholics who experience homosexual tendencies and who wish to explore therapy should seek out the counsel and assistance of a qualified professional who has preparation and competence in psychological counseling and who understands and supports the Church's teaching on homosexuality. They should also seek out the guidance of a confessor and spiritual director who will support their quest to live a chaste life. (Pg. 7)
- Pastoral and psychological care for adolescents who struggle with sexual attraction issues is of particular importance. Adolescents with homosexual attractions can be at serious risk for personal difficulties, including suicidal tendencies and attempts as well as enticements to promiscuity and exploitation by adults. Every effort should be made to ensure that adolescents have access to age-appropriate professional counseling services that respect Church teaching in matters of human sexuality. (Pgs. 22-23)
- Professionals providing counseling services for persons who experience same-sex attraction and the families to which they belong should be chosen carefully to ensure that they uphold the Church's understanding of the human person. (Pg. 23)