Gender Theory's Tyranny of the Will:

now for a jarring dose of reality

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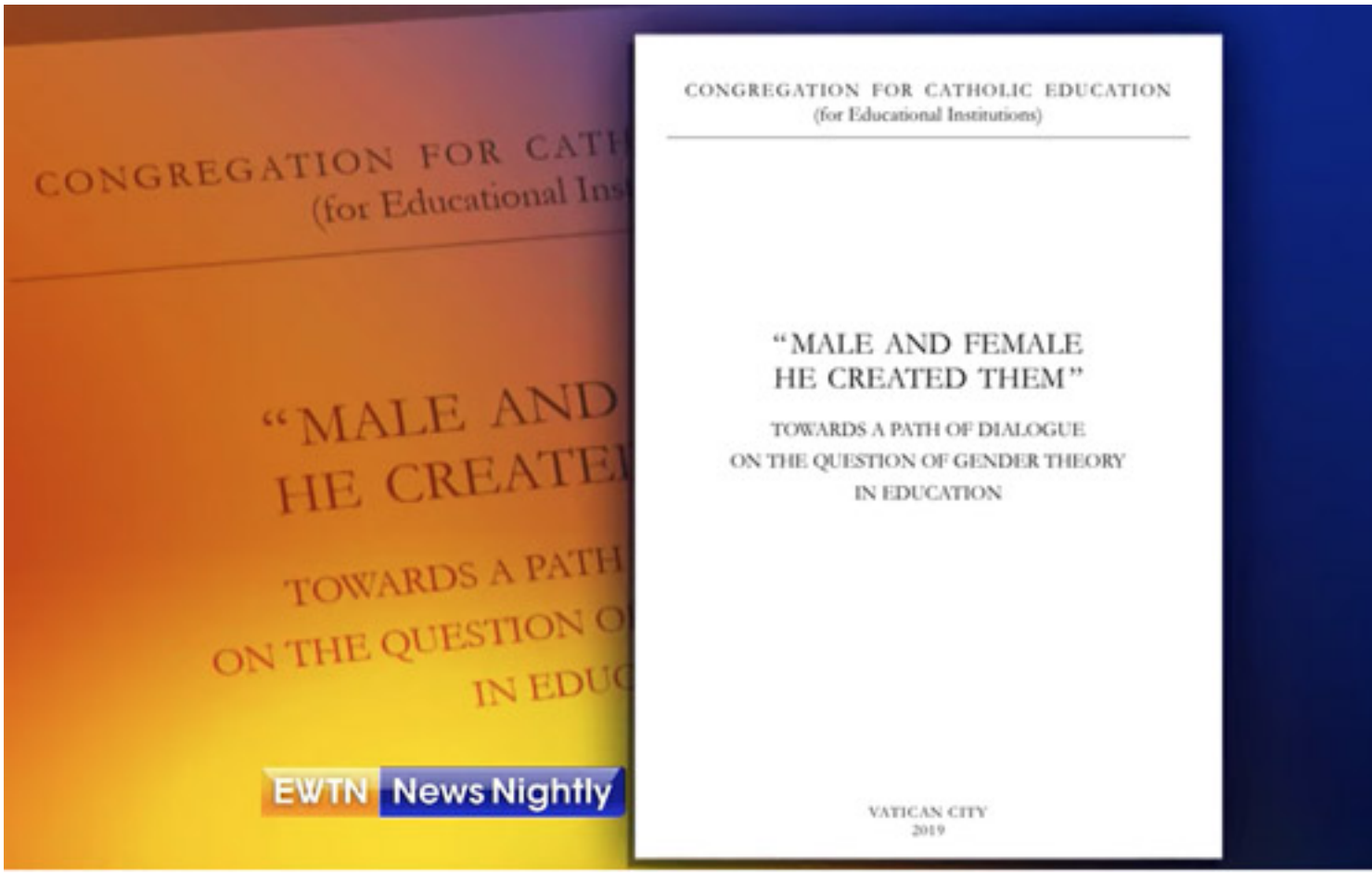

A jarring dose of reality is currently rocking the already-distorted world of "LGBT-friendly" Catholics across the globe, courtesy of the **Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education**'s new resource, " Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education ."

What's the earth-shaking reveal found in this document that has so many folks in a tizzy? Deep breath, everyone.

Men are men, and women are women, despite some people trying to will it otherwise.

In the often-wacky world of things Jesuitical, it's no surprise to learn that one Jesuit welcomes this document on behalf of U.S. Catholics, while another Jesuit claims this is no "final answer" on this subject. Bishop Michael Barber, SJ, the U.S. Bishops' chairman for Catholic education writes that the text "provides the light of truth and compassion that is most needed in our world today."

But Jesuit Father James Martin, alongside his positive Twitter-fest extolling "Pride Month," has tweeted up a storm about the June 10 release of the document (though the document itself, interestingly, bears a February 2, 2019, publication date), saying that "sadly, it will be used as a cudgel against transgender people, and an excuse to argue that they shouldn't even exist."

Once again, Martin's panicked conflation of disordered inclinations with the people themselves is a smoke-screen. Homosexual inclinations aren't part of God's good plan, nor are emotions that deny the reality of one's identity as man or woman. Saying so doesn't mean that people with these conditions "shouldn't even exist." Martin was quick to respond to the document in *America* magazine, and quick to put distance between it and another Jesuit—Pope Francis himself—by saying the document "was not signed" by him.

Martin adds that the text “leaves open room for further developments and also avoids some of the harsh language of other Vatican pronouncements on sexuality and, especially, on homosexuality.” Regarding the audacious claim that men are men and women are women, Martin states:

This traditional view, however, is contradicted by what most biologists and psychologists now understand about both sexuality and gender. These contemporary advances in understanding human sexuality and gender have been set aside by the congregation in favor of a binary understanding of sexuality. Even the term “sexual orientation” is put into quotes in the document, as if to call that very notion into question.

No wonder the usually unflappable Martin is pushing back so hard against this remarkably clear and accurate expression of real Catholic teaching. It completely upends both fundamental and unassailable claims of the “LGBT community,” that the human will—not God—gets to decide who can have sexual relationships and who can be men and who can be women.

Well, enough of that claptrap already. Martin’s “response” essay does expose his erroneous views with notable clarity, for anyone interested in making that case. Instead, let’s examine the Vatican document and its claims.

“gender theory,” . . . “denies the difference . . . in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.

The document follows a simple outline. It is intended as a help for “parents, students, school leaders and personnel, bishops, priests, religious, ecclesial movements, associations of the lay faithful, and other relevant bodies.” In its introduction, it offers a helpful reminder of the true understanding of “sexuality” (singular, not plural):

The Christian vision of anthropology sees sexuality as a fundamental component of one's personhood. It is one of its modes of being, of manifesting itself, communicating with others, and of feeling, expressing and living human love. Therefore, our sexuality plays an integral part in the development of our personality and in the process of its education."

Significantly, the authors quote Pope Francis at length (from *Amoris Laetitia*, 56) in describing the problem with "gender theory":

The context in which the mission of education is carried out is characterized by challenges emerging from varying forms of an ideology that is given the general name "gender theory," which "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time."

The document lays out its claims within the structure of listening, reasoning, and proposing. In listening, it details the few "areas of agreement" between the Church and the ideology of gender theory: the desire to eliminate unjust discrimination, to respect every person and avoid bullying, and to acknowledge and promote the values of femininity and women's "affective, cultural, and spiritual motherhood."

What follows this is an unblinking and necessary critique of gender theory's "denaturalization" of man, its distorted and false "fluidity" toward both sexual identity and the family, and, of deep importance, how gender theory involves what I call a tyranny of the will:

The underlying presuppositions of these [gender] theories can be traced back to a dualistic anthropology, separating body (reduced to the status of inert matter) from human will, which itself becomes an absolute that can manipulate the body as it pleases.

The same simple truth, at the heart of all unreality and sin, is at the heart of gender theory—"I will not serve." This self-idolatry and attempted divinization of human will has echoed since before human history, in Satan's own doomed attempt to divinize his angelic will. This is the

diabolical core corrupting every flavor of “gender theory” that our so-called “expert” scientists and psychologists seek to foist upon the world at large.

The Holy Spirit-inspired response of the Church to the spirit of the age remains, in the words of Jesus, “Get behind me.”

In its “reasoning” section, the Vatican authors (who deserve praise for providing great footnotes to magisterial texts, including from Pope Francis) present a rational defense of the Church’s anthropology and “the centrality of the body as an integrating element of personal identity and family relationships.” Indeed, interwoven in the text is a laudable emphasis on how the ideologies of orientation and gender both harm God’s true plan for family life.

The authors rightly make an appeal to science to provide a basis for ensuring “objective parameters” to determine one’s bodily sexual identity as male or female in difficult specific cases of genital or even genetic ambiguities. Rightly, the term “sexual identity” is used only in reference to the being “man” or the being “woman,” and is thankfully not associated in any way with the equally false ideology of “orientation.” Regarding transgenderism, it states:

Efforts to go beyond the constitutive male-female sexual difference, such as the ideas of “intersex” or “transgender,” lead to a masculinity or femininity that is ambiguous, even though (in a self-contradictory way), these concepts themselves actually presuppose the very sexual difference that they propose to negate or supersede. This oscillation between male and female becomes, at the end of the day, only a “provocative” display against so-called “traditional frameworks,” and one which, in fact, ignores the suffering of those who have to live situations of sexual indeterminacy.

The document also appeals to historic philosophical views throughout human history that rationally support the claim that “sexual difference between male and female is constitutive of human identity.” It covers how “otherness” (i.e., forming identity in relation to those who are “not me”) and physiological complementarity shape us and also form the obvious “necessary condition for procreation.”

In its “proposing” section, the document lays out the truth of Christian anthropology and God’s authentic plan for us, in contrast to the worst that gender theory has to offer us. From the

“beginning” in Genesis, human nature’s unity of body and soul have constituted the “unified totality” of what it means to be truly human.

In the words cited from Pope Benedict XVI:

[The] human person becomes himself only with the other. The ‘I’ becomes itself only from the ‘thou’ and from the ‘you’. It is created for dialogue, for synchronic and diachronic communion. It is only [in] the encounter with the ‘you’ and with the ‘we’ that the ‘I’ opens to itself.”

With this in mind, the authors present a magnificent “proposal” of the Church’s teaching on the family, “the natural place for the relationship of reciprocity and communion between man and woman to find its fullest realisation.” Unlike the humanly willed false forms of “kinship” found in the “LGBT community,” the true family is “an anthropological fact, and consequently a social, cultural fact.”

In paragraph 37, we are reminded that “[r]eason tells us that two fundamental rights, which stem from the very nature of the family, must always be guaranteed and protected.” These are, first, the “right to be recognised as the primary pedagogical environment for the educational formation of children, and, second, of equal importance, children have the right to “grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child’s development and emotional maturity.” Out-of-control human will in the guise of gender theory obliterates both of these fundamental rights.

As expected in a document from this congregation, it proposes how “the school” can successfully fill the role of “educating community” by embracing real Christian anthropology instead of gender theory. The authors note that “[e]ducation in affectivity requires language that is appropriate as well as measured. It must above all take into account that, while children and young people have not yet reached full maturity, they are preparing with great interest to experience all aspects of life.”

In making proposals about society itself, the document makes clear the stark contrast between the glorification of the human will (and resulting false sense of “freedom”) and gender theory. Such false ideologies “in reality, brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.” The importance of “forming formators” is

also emphasized: “[I]t is important that their own formation includes not only professional qualifications but also cultural and spiritual preparedness.” Paraphrased in the negative, formators who get gender theory wrong need not apply.

In one of the concluding paragraphs (55), we’re reminded of the vitally important liberty that the Church truly possesses in the public square to believe these truths:

The culture of dialogue does not in any way contradict the legitimate aspirations of Catholic schools to maintain their own vision of human sexuality, in keeping with the right of families to freely base the education of their children upon an integral anthropology, capable of harmonizing the human person’s physical, psychic and spiritual identity.

However, even having to assert this right remains a sobering reminder of how fragile that right has become in so many corners of the world, including in the United States.

Such is the tyranny of the human will. Such is the diabolical root of gender theory. Even so, we now have in one Vatican document a trove of truth to guide us and inspire us as we continue fighting our good fight to uphold the inestimable dignity of man as man, and woman as woman.

(Photo credit: EWTN / Youtube screen shot)

By Jim Russell

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