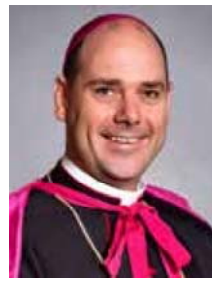


Male and Female He created them



The Bishop Speaks

I have thirty nieces and nephews, twenty eight of them still alive. The first thing their parents always told me about their new baby was whether it was a boy or a girl. Let's be honest: this is what parents and others most wonder about a new human life as it grows in the mother's womb – Is it a boy? Or is it a girl? And haven't we all seen the birth of a new child announced somewhere with the simple statement "It's a girl!" or "It's a boy!" This is one of the basic truths about the world and human life which only recently some have questioned, that is, everybody is either male or female, a man or a woman, a boy or a girl.

There is a great assortment of human beings with many differences among us: We come in various shapes, sizes, and colours; we come with an array of different mental and physical talents; and we each come with our own unique personality and face (even among identical twins). These differences

enrich us as a species and enhance our families and communities. But in the end we know all these differences are really by the bye. In the end we know there is really only one essential difference among us: half of us are female and the other half are male.

Common sense tells us that males and females are different. Just ask any parent who has both girls and boys. My sister and her husband had several daughters with a house full of dolls before they had a son. Commenting to me one day on the way their boy threw the girls' dolls and toys like a football, my sister said "We really need to get some boys toys!"

Our faith and God's Divine Revelation also tell us of this difference. One of the foundational and I think most beautiful passages of the Bible reads "God said 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness' ... So God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female



he created them.” (Genesis 1: 26-27) God put love and thought into our creation; he desired us this way, with this one essential distinguishing and complimentary difference between us. And what’s more, there is something about our being male and being female that images God!

Being a man or being a woman is so integral to who I am that it is also essential to our sense of self identity and self-worth. It is no wonder that individuals with what we now call gender dysphoria suffer so much. The term *gender dysphoria* denotes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. It is a psychological condition in which the person suffers from the persistent feeling of alienation from his or her male or female body and experiences a desire to be loved and accepted by others as a person of the opposite sex.

This condition is not a recent development. Individuals have suffered from gender dysphoria for years. What is new, however, is the emergence of *transgenderism* which is a political ideology and movement which advocates for the complete normalization of gender dysphoria and the practice of “transitioning”. This normalization even extends to assisting a child or adult with gender dysphoria to medically and surgically alter their own body and/or remove their healthy sexual organs.

This is particularly troubling when applied to children or young people as we know that seventy to eighty percent of children who experience gender dysphoria also experience spontaneous resolution of those feelings before they reach adulthood. Even among adults, long term studies of transgender individuals who have undergone surgery demonstrate that they suffer significantly higher rates of mortality, depression, anxiety, substance disorders, and suicidal behaviour than the general population.

Gender dysphoria as a psychological condition must

be distinguished from *intersex conditions*, a range of genetic disorders where the normal anatomical development of the sexual organs is impeded in utero and where a child’s biological sex may not be visually discernible at birth. In the past, surgery to define the child as either male or female was sometimes undertaken somewhat hastily. These days the conventional wisdom is to wait for some time until the child demonstrates whether he or she has a male or a female personality before undertaking the defining surgery.

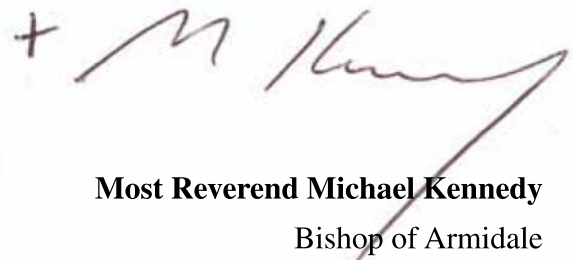
Most sensible people among us would, I think, reject or be very wary of transgenderism. It is important to ensure that this does not translate into a brushing aside of the very real issue of gender dysphoria which

can be a source of great emotional pain and suffering for the person. Individuals with gender dysphoria require authentic care and treatment along with our love and support.

But denying the truth of a person’s nature by helping him or her ‘transition’ to a sex that is not their own is not an adequate response. A fully authentic and human response involves supporting the person

to become reconciled to and accepting of their body, reassuring them of the love of Christ, and patiently working with them to heal the wounds they have suffered to their masculine or feminine identity.

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Front Cover: Sam Reeves