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Parents simply must have the final say

Calgary Catholic Bishop Fred Henry has been called “anti-gay, anti-transgender, and anti-LGBTQ” by an anonymous Edmonton mother of a transgendered child. His opinions are variously described as “harmful, hateful, fanatical, dangerous, hurtful, unfounded, and distressing” by the same mother, by professional gay activist Kris Wells, and by a teacher who was fired by a Catholic school board.

Do these accusations levied against the bishop hold water?

Was it “hateful” for the bishop to explain Catholic teaching that “God created people as male and female” and that God “gave equal dignity to both man and woman”?

Was it “harmful” for the bishop to describe sexuality as “a gift of God by which men and women participate in his saving plan and respond to his call to grow in holiness”?

Was it “fanatical” for the Bishop to assert that in God’s plan “men and women should respect and accept their sexual identity”?

Was it “dangerous” to state that God created both the body and sex as good, and that God’s plan for the appropriate expression of love is “in the marital relationship of a man and a woman”?

Was it “distressing” for the bishop to assert that “sex is more than a physical act” because the body and soul are united in the whole person?

Was it “hurtful” for the bishop to refer to the Loyola ruling, in which the Supreme Court of Canada upheld

the rights of parents to transmit the Catholic faith to their children, and the “rights of parents to guide their children’s religious upbringing”?

Was it “unfounded” for the bishop to point out that Gay-Straight Alliances and Queer-Straight Alliances are incompatible with Catholic teaching because these ideological clubs accept the idea that all forms of consensual sexual expression are legitimate?

A free society encourages frank and honest debate about all issues, including human sexuality and what is appropriate sexual behaviour. A free society does not force one particular view of sexuality on the entire population of a province, neither through the school system nor through other means. Along with respecting freedom of expression, the free society also supports the right of parents to raise up and educate their own children in the way that parents – not politicians and bureaucrats – deem best.

Historically, many totalitarian regimes have used the public education system to indoctrinate children into the state’s ideology. This is why, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights included the “prior right” of parents “to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.” Whether boys are allowed to use the girls’ bathrooms and change rooms is a factor that determines the “kind of education” given to children. The free society does not allow politicians, bureaucrats and special interest groups to usurp the right of parents to choose the curriculum or the learning environment that they consider best for their own children.

The “Guidelines” prohibit referring students or families to programs which

seek to repair or heal Gender Identity Disorder, also known as Gender Dysphoria, a recognized mental illness. Most Alberta parents reject the idea that one’s personal feelings should oust the scientific fact that people are either biologically male or biologically female. Drs. Ken Zucker and Susan Bradley for many years helped children and families through the Gender Identity Service of Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. The NDP ignores evidence that therapy for gender dysphoria, if undertaken in childhood, has a solid record of success in re-connecting gender identity with biological reality. Many parents are grateful to these doctors for sparing their children a lifetime of hormone treatments, and possibly major surgery.

For the government to mandate only one approach to gender identity disorder is to shut down debate, and to close the doors to alternatives for children. When children and parents have a wide range of choices, everyone benefits.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with Catholic teachings on human sexuality is irrelevant. What matters is that parents not be stripped of their right to determine the kind of education given to their children. The imposition of the NDP’s so-called “Guidelines” on every school in Alberta overrides parents’ right to choose. Bishop Henry described this as “totalitarian”. Unfortunately, he is correct.

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