



Diocese of Davenport

Office of the Bishop

Dear Friends in Christ,

In January 2021, I formed a committee to consider drafting a policy regarding sexual and gender identity issues that were beginning to arise in schools and parishes. Clergy, Catholic school personnel, and parish staff members were expressing a desire to learn how to better minister to individuals and families in their parishes and schools who are experiencing gender discordance or differences in sexual orientation.

In addition, one of the leading subjects that emerged from our diocesan synod listening sessions was concern over the treatment of people identifying as LGBTQ+. The fact that this issue was raised is another indication that a pastoral response is necessary, particularly as we focus on welcoming and fostering a sense of belonging in our diocese this year.

Given the complex nature of this topic, the committee recognized the need to consider a variety of sources and perspectives before offering any guidance. The committee identified, read and discussed theological, medical and human resource articles; attended on-line webinars; and reviewed statements and policies promulgated by other dioceses, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Vatican.

Pope Francis talks often about going to the peripheries to encounter people living there, to listen and dialogue with them, and to accompany them. Hence, the committee also sought out a number of people who live on this periphery, namely individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ and their families. We heard about their experiences and learned what they hope for from the Church.

To gain additional insights, we interviewed Church ministers who have been journeying with Catholics experiencing differences in sexual orientation or gender identity and their families. To gain professional perspectives, we consulted a number of medical and psychological experts.

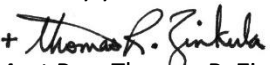
All along, we have been seeking to find a balance in addressing the real pastoral needs of sexual and gender minorities and their families, while remaining true to the teachings of our Catholic faith.

The committee desired to create a space within the cultural tension associated with this topic where each person feels welcomed and heard, as our Church and society strive to attain a clearer comprehension of this complex situation. In the end, we concluded that there is not an easy, “one-size-fits-all” solution that can be applied to all persons and in all circumstances; we are called to accompany the person in front of us in all of their particularity. Pastoral discernment is key.

While we must continue to pray, study, listen and discern, there comes a time to act. Therefore, on October 4, 2023, I promulgated “Guidelines for Pastoral Accompaniment of Sexual and Gender Minorities.” This document offers basic guidance on the accompaniment of sexual and gender minorities in a way that is pastorally sensitive, practical and faithful to Catholic Church teaching on the nature of the human person.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for their good work. They are available to assist parishes and schools with additional resources and in applying these guidelines as need arises. Collaborating with one another and guided by the Holy Spirit, may we respond with wisdom and love to the challenges faced by our neighbors on the peripheries.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Most Rev. Thomas R. Zinkula
Bishop of Davenport