



THE PHILADELPHIA CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Press Release

Philadelphia Guild of the Catholic Medical Association

For immediate release

The Philadelphia Inquirer recently published an article on May 3, 2008 about a nine year old boy at suburban primary school, who will be allowed to dress as a girl and be addressed by a girl's name. In the article the principal of the school is noted to have written a letter to parents explaining that a transgender child is one whose biological gender does not match his or her gender identity.

This demonstrates a common but serious lack of knowledge of the medical literature related to psychiatric diagnoses in children. These studies show that children with strong transsexual thinking and behaviors, in fact, usually have the diagnosis of a *Gender Identity Disorder* (GID). GID leads to the desire to dress in clothing of the opposite sex and to be called by a name of the opposite sex. The major textbook on this subject is *Gender Identity Disorder*, by Zucker and Bradley.

These children have failed to identify and embrace the goodness of their masculinity or femininity for a number of reasons, related particularly to conflicts with peers and parents, primarily with their mothers. As Zucker and Bradley document in their clinical work and research, most children who are treated for GID recover. They come to accept and embrace their birth gender. As this occurs attraction to opposite sex dressing and identity is resolved. Zucker and Bradley encourage early intervention to prevent the suffering of isolation, unhappiness and low self-esteem that children with GID experience and also to avoid a later desire some may have for sex change surgery.

Note that Gender Identity Disorder is described in the DSM IV-TR of the American Psychiatric Association, while there is no diagnosis which specifies a "transgender child."

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Paul McHugh, former chairman of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, studied those who sought transsexual surgery and has written, "I have witnessed a great deal of damage from sex-reassignment. The children transformed from their male constitution into female roles suffered prolonged distress and misery as they sensed their natural attitudes. Their parents usually lived with guilt over their decisions — second-guessing themselves and somewhat ashamed of the fabrication, both surgical and social, they had imposed on their sons. As for the adults who came to us claiming to have discovered their "true" sexual identity and to have heard about sex-change operations, we psychiatrists have been distracted from studying the causes and natures of their mental misdirections by preparing them for surgery and for a life in the other sex. We have wasted scientific and technical resources and damaged our professional credibility by collaborating with madness rather than trying to study, cure, and ultimately prevent it," *Surgical Sex, First Things*, November 2004.

The school district in question appears to be making the same mistake described by Dr. McHugh. In addition it is communicating medically incorrect and harmful information to children and their parents. We urge the school district involved to consider permitting parents at the school to have a conference on Gender Identity Disorder so that they can understand why a nine year old boy in their school desires to dress as a girl. This would help correct the failure on the part of the school administration to provide parents with guidance to an accurate diagnosis of such children.

Superintendents and school district should insist that parents who want their children to attend school dressed in opposite sex clothing be required to have a mental health evaluation for such a child to determine if the child has a gender identity disorder. Permitting behavior such as cross-dressing by a child with GID will not help the child; rather, it will enable and reinforce a serious psychiatric disorder. Principals and superintendents should not permit or tolerate any cross-dressing in schools. Not only will this further harm a child with GID, but it will cause other children to suffer confusion and distress.