



**Bill C-16**, *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code*, was recently passed by the Parliament of Canada and received royal assent on 19 June 2017. This Act adds gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and also modifies the *Criminal Code* to extend the protection against hate crimes to members of groups distinguished by gender identity or expression.

The Catholic Church sees all people, regardless of how they identify themselves or the manner in which they choose to live their lives, as possessing equally an inherent dignity bestowed on them by God our Creator. For this reason, unjust discrimination or violence against a person or community or class of persons is always morally wrong. From the moment of conception onward, every human being has the innate dignity of bearing the image of God. All persons, including those who identify as "transgender," must always be treated with compassion, respect, and love.

While the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops supports Bill C-16's intention to protect Canadians from harm, some of the principles behind the legislation – even if widely accepted in our society – cannot be endorsed by Catholics. The most serious of these is the claim that gender is separable from biological sexuality and is to be determined by the individual. This central tenet of contemporary gender theory is not in accord with natural law or Christian revelation and has therefore been explicitly rejected by Pope Francis and by Pope Benedict XVI.

According to Genesis, we are created male and female, in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27). Each of us – man or woman – is challenged to fulfill our human vocation in a way that is

individually unique yet true to what we have been created to be. In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2332 and 2333, each man and woman "should acknowledge and accept" his or her biological sexual identity, including "physical, moral, and spiritual *difference and complementarity*," which "affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul." This identity "especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others."

Having in view the well-being, not only of Catholics but of all Canadians, we wish to express again our serious concerns with Bill C-16. Questions about freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of religion are also likely to arise in connection with this legislation. We urge those of Catholic faith, and all people of good will, to be diligent in defending these freedoms and the vision of human dignity on which they are based.\*

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Bishop of Hamilton

President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

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[PDF Version](#)

\*A list of resources for further reading and consideration is provided as a supplement to this statement at the following link.□

<http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/CCCB%20Statement%20on%20Bill%20C-16%20-%20Bibliography%20with%20annotations.pdf>