

Teaching the Faith with CURRENT EVENTS

Can Love Be Legislated?

Overview

On February 25, 2021, HR-5 (called the Equality Act) was passed by the House of Representatives, sending it on its way to the Senate floor. At face value, the bill is presented as a great stride in civil liberty—a call to prohibit discrimination and increase equality of all members of society. Yet beneath its apparently affirmative title, the bill restricts religious liberty and strips persons of the true equality and dignity that belongs to us all as human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

If passed into law, HR-5 would, ironically, impose discriminatory measures against anyone opposed to its flawed understanding of the origin and end of the human person.

While the bill is not expected to pass in the Senate, it brings into sharp relief the ideology of transgenderism which is currently influencing our society—and which is directly opposed to Catholic teaching on true human dignity, true social justice, and the true equality shared by all people, made in God’s image and likeness, as “male and female” (Genesis. 1:27).

TEACHER NOTE: This lesson is suited only for older, more mature students, as it contains references, discussion prompts, and news articles that explicitly reference gender ideology (including a reference to genital surgery) in the context of HR-5 (The Equality Act). Additionally, certain linked articles may ostensibly favor what is contrary to Church teaching on human nature and dignity. We encourage you to send the lesson home for parents to discuss with their children.

In this lesson your students will:

- Explore what Scripture and the *Catechism* teach about our being made in the image of God, and how our human dignity calls us to treat others.
- Discuss how we can bring Christ's love to all members of society, seeing everyone we meet as a person deeply loved by God.
- Consider how the Catholic Church calls us to respond to those who oppose the true understanding of the human person and human sexuality.
- Examine what is proposed by HR-5 (the Equality Act), its potential consequences, and upon what faulty understanding of the human person it is based.

Resources:

- “*Equality Act introduced in House to provide sweeping LGBTQ protections*”: **[SophiaOnline.org/EqualityActIntroduced](https://www.sophia.org/equality-act-introduced)**
- “*Against the Equality Act*”: **[SophiaOnline.org/AgainstTheEqualityAct](https://www.sophia.org/against-the-equality-act)**

Activities:

Part I: 15–25 mins.

- First, have your students read over the Gospel passages in the **Scripture Reflection** activity, and either silently or in small groups, answer the reflection questions.
- When they have finished, call on students or groups, to share their answers as part of a class discussion on what gives us our human dignity, and based on this, how we are called to treat all people, even our enemies and those who persecute us. Guide the class to an understanding that as disciples of Christ, we must see His beloved face in everyone we meet, even those who hate us. This is the radical love of our Savior, and the love that we are called to imitate in our lives.

Part II: 30–45 mins.

- Have the class read the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church nos. 369, 2357, 2358, 1931***, followed by the two provided articles: “*Equality Act introduced in House to provide sweeping LGBTQ protections*,” from *The Washington Post* and “*Against the Equality Act*,” from the *National Review*.
- Arrange your students into groups of three or four. Have them discuss what they read in the *Catechism* and compare it with what they read in the articles using the discussion questions.

- When each group has finished discussing, call on groups to share with the class some key points from their conversations as you review the answers with them.
- Lead a discussion on what it means to see Christ in our neighbor, and how authentic Christian love does not allow us to condone the sinful behavior of others, yet at the same time calls us to lay down our lives for them in imitation of Christ. While we may judge certain actions as sinful or noble, depending on the act, the intention, and the circumstances surrounding them, only God can judge someone's heart: "All your ways may be straight in your own eyes, but it is the Lord who weighs hearts." (Proverbs 21:2)

Answer Key

Discussion Questions

Part II

1. *Our being made as uniquely as man and woman particularly reflects God's wisdom and goodness. "Being man' or 'being woman' is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity 'in the image of God'." (CCC 369)*
2. *No, for "Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman" (CCC 369). While man and woman have different roles to play in God's loving plan for the family, they still enjoy perfect equality as persons in His sight. What is more, the complementary nature of men and women is what allows them as parents to uniquely share in God's creative, life-giving, fruitful love.*
3. *"Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life" (CCC 2333). Through the natural complementarity of the sexes, designed by God to reflect and participate in His goodness and life-giving love. Accept reasoned answers.*
4. *The union of man and woman in marriage reflects God's generosity and fecundity (fruitfulness or fertility): the marriage union is generous in that it is the total, faithful, and unconditional gift of self between spouses, and fruitful in that it is a participation in God's creative love, ordered toward bringing children—little incarnations of life-giving love—into the world. As the Catechism states, "All human generations proceed from this union" (CCC 2335). If men and women do not properly understand and embrace their God-given sexual identity on the individual level, they repress their natural ability to participate in the fullness and richness of God's loving plan for human*

beings as men and women. Men and women are equal in dignity, yet precisely because of the “physical, moral, and spiritual difference” (CCC 2333) that sets them apart, they are complementary, and their union is the crowning achievement of creation. “The Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him” (Genesis 2:18). Accept reasoned answers.

5. The Catechism describes “fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness” as obstructing “the establishment of truly fraternal societies” (CCC 1931), and that “[s]uch behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a ‘neighbor,’ a brother.” It states that “No legislation could by itself do away” with these attitudes and tendencies. (CCC 1931)
6. It is a bill proposed by U.S. lawmakers that would introduce “sweeping legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity... The Equality Act would amend existing civil rights laws, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act, to explicitly ban LGBTQ discrimination in the workforce, housing, education, credit, jury service and other areas of American life. If passed, the legislation would provide the most comprehensive LGBTQ civil rights protections in U.S. history...”
7. Womanhood is a reality, and not a belief or feeling, no matter how sincerely felt. Denying a biological male access to women’s locker rooms or sports teams is not unjust, rather it is unjust to the females who occupy these spaces to allow men to enter them. Women’s sports were originally created in acknowledgement of the biological differences between males and females (i.e. the physical advantages almost all men would have in muscle strength, speed, etc.) and to allow women to experience the many benefits that come from meaningful competition in sports. People who experience gender dysphoria continue to have access to the teams of their biological sex.
8. It states, “The Equality Act would redefine sex to include ‘gender identity,’ thus forcing every federally funded entity – most notably schools and colleges – to treat males who declare transgender status as if they were females. It would stamp out religious exemptions by regulating religious nonprofits and even goes so far as to block the Religious Freedom Restoration Act from applying to its provisions. And it would... greatly expand ‘the number of businesses that count as “public accommodations” under the Civil Rights Act.” It argues that the bill “would grossly disadvantage females” by treating biological men as though they were women in many sectors of society—such as in women’s sport competitions, women’s locker rooms, etc.
9. Accept reasoned answers.
10. Accept reasoned answers. To love is to will the good of another. As an act of free will, love can only be freely chosen and cannot be forced or imposed.

11. *Each individual person in society must answer the call of fraternity and charity, striving to treat all people as brothers or neighbors for the common good of all. Whether it is particularly in imitation of Christ, or by the adherence to the almost universally accepted Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have them do to you), the discrimination, prejudices, and selfishness that arise in society can only be conquered by charity. Christ has called us to be the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Accept reasoned answers.*

Scripture Reflection

Matthew 5:7-11

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.”

Matthew 25:34-40

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Mark 7:20-23

“But what comes out of a person, that is what defiles. From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”

1 Peter 3:9

Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.

James 4:11-12

Do not speak evil of one another, brothers. Whoever speaks evil of a brother or judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law ...There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save or to destroy. Who then are you to judge your neighbor?

Reflection Questions

1. What connections can you make between the Scripture passages above, if any?
2. Where has Christ revealed His presence in society? How should this knowledge influence the way we see and treat others?
3. What do you think Scripture means by saying “Do not return evil for evil”? How does this reflect Christ’s teaching in the Beatitudes? Explain.
4. In your own words, explain the reason we should not judge others. Does this mean we must therefore approve of everything everyone does, even if it is morally wrong? Explain.
5. Which of the above passages stood out to you in particular? Why?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

nos. 369, 2333, 2335, 1931

Directions: Read the paragraphs from the *Catechism*, followed by the linked resources on the Equality Act. Then, with your group, discuss and answer the questions that follow.

CCC 369 Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God". In their "being-man" and "being-woman", they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness.

CCC 2333 Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

CCC 2335 Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The *union of man and woman* in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." All human generations proceed from this union.

CCC 1931 Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity." No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbor," a brother.

Resources on the Equality Act

- The Washington Post: “Equality Act introduced in House to provide sweeping LGBTQ protections,” which can be found at: **[SophiaOnline.org/EqualityActIntroduced](https://www.sophiaonline.org/EqualityActIntroduced)**
- National Review: “Against the Equality Act,” which can be found at: **[SophiaOnline.org/AgainstTheEqualityAct](https://www.sophiaonline.org/AgainstTheEqualityAct)**

Discussion Questions

1. According to the *Catechism*, what is it about our being created, or willed, by God that particularly reflects His wisdom and goodness? Explain.
2. Does the fact that God made us as man and woman detract from our equality and dignity as persons? Explain.
3. According to the *Catechism*, to what are the differences in sexual identity between men and women naturally ordered? How? Why do you think the harmony of society depends on men and women acknowledging and embracing their God-given sexual identity?
4. According to the *Catechism*, how does the union of man and woman in marriage reflect God’s goodness? Why do you think the existence of the human race depend on men and women embracing their true sexual identity? Give some examples of the unique ways in which men and women each reflect God’s power and tenderness.
5. According to the *Catechism*, what behavior stands in the way of truly fraternal societies? What is the only answer to this behavior? What is definitely NOT the answer?
6. According to the Washington Post article, what is the Equality Act? What does it propose to accomplish if it is passed into law? How?
7. The article asserts that the Equality Act is needed to ensure “transgender people’s access to ... school athletics.” Is barring people (including those with gender dysphoria) from opposite-sex spaces or teams constitute “unjust discrimination”? Does a biological male have a right to be in a women’s locker room or to compete in

women's sports?

8. According to the National Review editorial, what would be some of the concerning consequences for religious institutions if HR-5 became law? Whom does the article state would be among the most disadvantaged as a consequence of the Equality Act? Why?
9. The Equality Act proposes government-mandated provision of legal protection for some members of society at the expense of other members in society (women, Christians and people of other faiths who in good conscience cannot condone gender ideology, etc.). Do you think this bill provides a true solution to discrimination in our society? Why or why not?
10. The Church teaches that we must treat every person as an individual made in God's image, seeing Christ in them and loving Him through our acts of charity toward them. In your own words, how does this Christian answer to the reality of discrimination contrast to the proposed legislation of the Equality Act? Can authentic love be legislated, or forced? Explain.
11. The *Catechism* states, "No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a 'neighbor,' a brother" (CCC 1931). Based on this teaching, who must play the chief role in overcoming discrimination in society? What specific ways can we put this fraternal charity into practice in our own lives?