

The Redemption of Suffering

PRO TIP
Download other grades for alternate activities!

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 651–655

CCC 1042–1050

CCC 1752–1753

MATERIALS

- ▶ [The Resurrection of Jesus](#)
- ▶ [The Ends Never Justify the Means](#)
- ▶ [Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death by Peter Paul Reubens](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

45–50 min

Teacher Background

A fundamental truth of the human experience is that we will all experience suffering in our lives. Jesus, by His Paschal Mystery, has redeemed and transformed suffering, giving us the promise and hope of our own resurrection. In this life, He offers us His grace and limitless mercy and love to face our sufferings with dignity, and to unite them with His own so that they may become redemptive for ourselves and for others.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

The transgender movement asserts that suffering is meaningless, strips us of our dignity, and is to be avoided at all costs. It further asserts that the only way to be compassionate to transgender-identified persons and uphold their human dignity is to affirm them as a member of the sex they identify as. The truth is, however, that our dignity does not come from the affirmation of others, but from being made in God's image and likeness. And, as good as it may be to want to alleviate someone's suffering, we can never do evil so that good may result. True compassion can only come from a place of honesty; affirming a falsehood cannot be compassionate, even if we mean it to be, because it leads the person away from the truth. In the end, we must always affirm the person, but *not* the perceived trans identity. We must place our faith and hope in Jesus' promises of redemption and salvation, and rely on the grace and mercy He gives us to face our trials and sufferings in this earthly life.

Activity

A. Begin by distributing [The Resurrection of Jesus](#). Read aloud the account of the Resurrection from **Matthew 28:1–10** (or have strong readers take turns reading it aloud to the class). Pause at the icons to discuss the questions as a class.

B. Next, explain the following to your students:

- Suffering is a universal fact of the human experience. It will be a question of how and when, not if, we suffer. We all get sick, we all feel pain, loneliness, and sadness, we all encounter obstacles that must be faced, and so forth. Jesus even taught us to embrace our sufferings, to take up our crosses, and follow Him (Matthew 16:24).

The Resurrection of Jesus

Directions: Read the story of Jesus' Resurrection. Pause at the icons to discuss the questions.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women to reply, "Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and

see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples. He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him." Behold, I have told you." Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and went to announce this to his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid! Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

- 1 Why did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to Jesus' tomb? What had happened in the previous days? What do you think they expected to find at the tomb?
- 2 What did the angel tell the women? Why?
- 3 What message did the angel deliver to the women? How was the angel's message different from what the women expected? What does the angel's message reveal to us about Jesus?
- 4 How did the women respond to the good news delivered by the angel? What example does their response give to us?
- 5 What did Jesus tell the women when he met them on the road? Why do you think this message was repeated twice in this account of the Resurrection?
- 6 Imagine you were with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb that day. How would you have felt seeing the angel and stone rolled away from the tomb? How would you have felt meeting the risen Jesus? How would you have responded?

- Our secular culture wants us to believe that suffering is meaningless, diminishes our human dignity, and must be alleviated at all costs, including through often immoral and evil means of doing so (such as euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, abortion, and so-called sex reassignment surgeries). But, even if a good outcome is intended, an immoral action can never be justified; the ends do not – and cannot – justify the means.
- Those experiencing identity and body-related distress have a particular experience of suffering, just as those who endure a lifelong and debilitating illness, or who have lost loved ones, or who live in extreme poverty experience suffering. This is not to minimize or dismiss anyone’s unique experiences of suffering, but rather to note that suffering is a universal experience.
- Jesus’ Resurrection – on the third day following His own intense suffering and death on the Cross – has transformed suffering and given it definitive meaning. It is precisely through His freely-accepted suffering and death that Jesus accomplished our redemption and salvation. And by His Resurrection, Jesus has defeated the power that sin, suffering, and death had over us. His self-sacrifice was the very means by which He poured out upon us His unconditional, limitless, and merciful love. Because He has won the victory, we no longer need to fear our own suffering. As St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “[W]e rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3–5, RSVCE translation). Jesus promised that those who mourn “will be comforted,” (Matthew 5:4), and that all “who labor and are burdened” that come to Him will be given rest (Matthew 11:28).
- Even more, Jesus’ Resurrection brings with it the promise of our own resurrection at the end of time. As Christians, we believe in the resurrection of the body (which we profess belief in every time we pray the Creed at Mass), when, at the end of time, our souls will be reunited with our risen and glorified bodies. In this glorified state, we will live forever with God in the New Heavens and the New Earth. As St. Paul explains, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22). Jesus’ Resurrection is the model for our own resurrection, when, in the end, God “wipe every tear from [our] eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away,” and He will “make all things new” (Revelation 21:4–5).
- Jesus’ suffering, Death, and Resurrection – the Paschal Mystery – has fundamentally transformed our own suffering in this life, given it meaning, and promises its end in the next life. In the meantime, when we unite our suffering in this life with His, we learn to rely more and more on His strength and grace to endure it, and live rooted in the hope and joy of redemption and salvation He has already won for us and promised to us.

C. Then distribute to your students [The Ends Never Justify the Means](#) and have them work independently to read the essay and respond to the critical thinking questions. When they have finished, call on students to share and discuss their answers. (You may also choose to have them read the essay for homework and discuss the questions with their parents. If you do so, email students' parents the Answer Key so they can refer to it.)

D. Wrap up by distributing or projecting [Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death by Peter Paul Reubens](#). Give your students several moments to view the painting in silence. Then discuss the painting using the questions on the worksheet. Use the answer key as a guide to prompt discussion.

E. Conclude by leading your students in the following prayer:

Father, in your wisdom and generosity you have given each of us life and made us in your image and likeness as male and female. Thank you for your goodness and mercy! Please comfort those suffering from the pain of identity and body-related distress and help them to carry this cross with courage and hope, and with the help of your grace and loving mercy. Please help all of us to learn the truth about our identities as your beloved creations and correctly form our consciences. Give us all the grace to oppose sin with the invincible power of your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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The Ends Never Justify the Means

Directions: Read about the meaning of suffering and how Jesus has redeemed our suffering. Then answer the critical thinking questions in class and/or with your parents.

Is it wrong for someone who is experiencing identity or body-related distress to use social media, or any other means to try to feel better? Shouldn't we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify with? Should we affirm their dignity if we don't?

In order to answer the first question, we must take a step back and consider not only what is being asked. Only then can we contemplate how to properly respond to the second question.


Shouldn't We Avoid Suffering at All Costs?

First, of course it is not wrong for some to want to alleviate their suffering. Our suffering is a normal part of the experience. We all suffer in some universal human experience of never to be completely eliminated. The secular culture around us is suffering is meaningless, strips of dignity and should be avoided. Thus, the various ideologies infect the culture – including the trans movement – often pursue immorality such as abortion, euthanasia, or called sex reassignment surgery attempt to end suffering.

As Christians, however, we know suffering is not meaningless. It is

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Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death by Peter Paul Reubens (ca. 1618)



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GRADE 5, THE GIFT OF OUR IDENTITY

10 THE REDEMPTION OF SUFFERING

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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

The Resurrection of Jesus

Directions: Read the story of Jesus' Resurrection. Pause at the icons to discuss the questions.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. **1** And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women in reply, "Do not be afraid!" **2** I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and

see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you." **3** Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples. **4** And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. **5** Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." **6**

- 1** Why did Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to Jesus' tomb? What had happened in the previous days? What do you think they expected to find at the tomb?
- 2** What did the angel tell the women? Why?
- 3** What message did the angel deliver to the women? How was the angel's message different from what the women expected? What does the angel's message reveal to us about Jesus?
- 4** How did the women respond to the good news delivered by the angel? What example does their response give to us?
- 5** What did Jesus first tell the women when He met them on the road? Why do you think this message was repeated twice in this account of the Resurrection?
- 6** Imagine you were with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb that day. How would you have felt seeing the angel and stone rolled away from the tomb? How would you have felt meeting the Risen Jesus? How would you have responded?

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THE REDEMPTION OF SUFFERING

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- 1. They went to see Jesus' tomb. The other Gospel accounts of the Resurrection note that they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body because He had been buried in haste without time to properly anoint Him according to Jewish custom. In the previous days, Jesus had suffered and died on the Cross. The women most likely had expected to find Jesus' dead body in the tomb.**
- 2. The angel told the women to not be afraid because they had just witnessed the amazing sight of an angel descending from Heaven and rolling back the stone from Jesus' tomb. They also found the tomb to be empty when they had expected to find Jesus' body in it.**
- 3. The angel told the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead and has gone before them to Galilee. They expected to find Jesus' dead body, the entire reason they went to the tomb in the first place. The angel's message reveals the historical reality of Jesus' Resurrection: He really and truly rose from the dead.**

- 4. The women responded to the angel's message by immediately doing as the angel commanded them and running to announce to the disciples that Jesus was risen. Their example of responding to the Good News by immediate action reveals to us that we, too, should respond with action and haste to the Good News. The Good News of Jesus' Resurrection should change our lives and spur us to action.**
- 5. Jesus told the women to not be afraid. It can be fearful initially to encounter the power of Jesus and to hear and see the truth. But Jesus assures us that we do not need to fear because He is with us and will give us His grace and courage. Accept reasoned answers.**
- 6. Accept reasoned answers.**

The Ends Never Justify the Means

Directions: Read about the meaning of suffering and how Jesus has redeemed our suffering. Then answer the critical-thinking questions in class and/or with your parents.

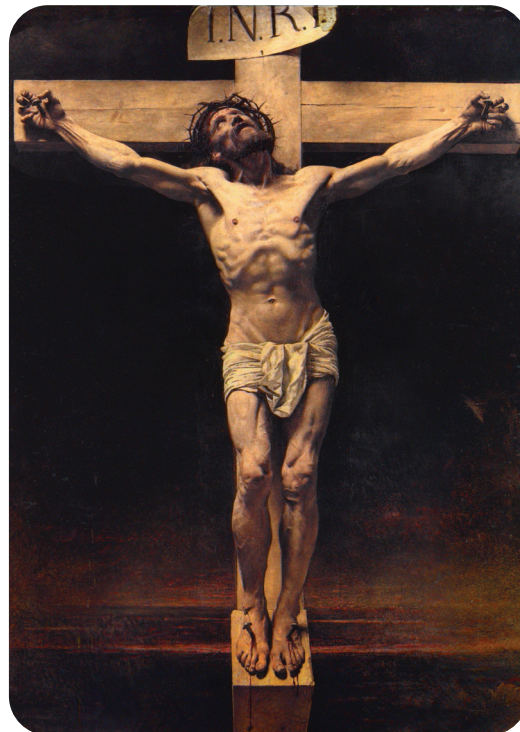
Is it wrong for someone who is experiencing identity or body-related distress to use social, chemical, or surgical means to try to feel better? Shouldn't we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify as? Aren't we denying their dignity if we don't?

In order to answer the first question, we must take a step back and consider rationally what is being asked. Only then can we contemplate how to properly respond to the second question.

Shouldn't We Avoid Suffering at All Costs?

First, of course it is not wrong for someone to want to alleviate their suffering. Even so, suffering is a normal part of the human experience. We all suffer in some way. The universal human experience of suffering will never be completely eliminated in this life. The secular culture around us believes that suffering is meaningless, strips us of our dignity, and should be avoided at all costs. Thus, the various ideologies influencing the culture — including the transgender movement — often pursue immoral means, such as abortion, euthanasia, and so-called sex reassignment surgeries, in an attempt to end suffering.

As Christians, however, we know that suffering is not meaningless. It can even



Christ on the Cross by Léon Bonnat (ca. 1874).

be good, especially when we suffer for others. Jesus redeemed our suffering by His own suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Christ's Paschal Mystery opened the door to eternal life for us and gives us hope in our own resurrection at the end of time when our immortal souls will be reunited with our risen, glorified bodies. It is in this glorified state we will live forever with God, free of suffering

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

and death. We also know that Christ's suffering has transformed our experience of suffering and given it meaning. By His Paschal Mystery, Christ invites us to unite our own suffering to His, giving it value for our redemption and for the redemption of others. The Church calls this redemptive suffering, by which, through our faith in Jesus, we too can offer our suffering to the Father as self-sacrifice to help in the work of redemption. As St. Paul wrote about the mystical Body of Christ, the Church: "If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

It is a fundamental truth of living a moral life that we are never permitted to do evil so that good may result; the ends never justify the means. An evil or immoral act does not – and cannot – become good because good things may result from it. For a person experiencing identity or body-related distress, as good as the promise of alleviation of suffering might seem, it can never be morally permissible to use social, chemical, or surgical means to "transition" to his or her perceived sex.

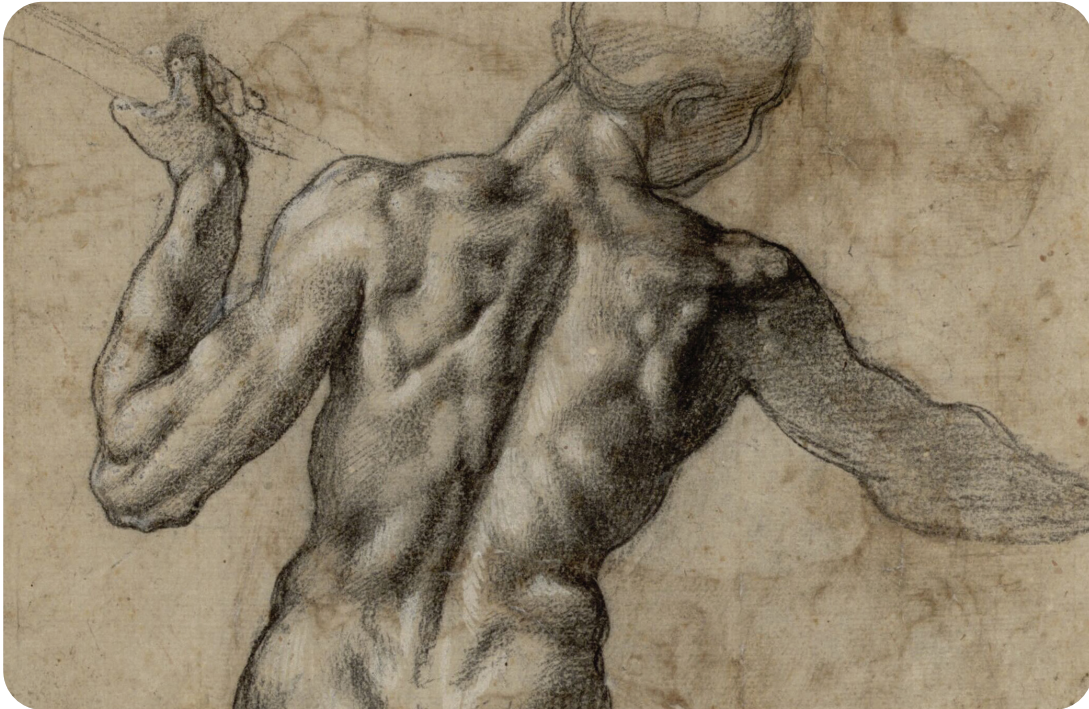
The transgender movement perpetuates the lie that, for example, if a boy or man feels that he *is* really a female, then he really is a female. He is told in no uncertain terms that, for his suffering to end, he must "transition" into a woman through a host of interventions. These typically begin with psycho-social transitioning, such as adopting opposite-sex pronouns and dressing as a woman, and progress to increasingly invasive and harmful interventions such as taking puberty blockers (if he is still a child) and high-dose cross-sex hormones (to suppress his male hormones and increase

female ones to produce secondary sex characteristics), and even having irreversible "bottom surgery" to remove his genitals and use that tissue or intestinal tissue to fashion the appearance of female ones. (Note that, if this example were about a female feeling she was a male, she would be encouraged by transgender activists to have similarly drastic drug interventions and surgeries to remove her breasts [top surgery], close her vagina, and fabricate the appearance of male genitals [bottom surgery].) Insidiously, transgender ideology encourages that this process of transitioning begin at very young ages, before puberty.



The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament
by Raphael (1509–1510)

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY



Male Back with a Flag by Michelangelo (ca. 1504).

The only solution offered by the transgender movement to address the suffering of the person experiencing identity or body-related distress is for him or her to deny the reality of who they are as a male or female made in God's image and likeness, and irreversibly mutilate their bodies, condemning themselves to a lifetime of so-called medical treatments to maintain the illusion they have created. The hoped-for good and happy outcome of eliminating their suffering, even if it did materialize, would not justify the reality-denying and destructive means, or methods, used to accomplish it. In fact, many European countries have begun to turn away from these invasive interventions — finding that they only open the door to many other problems, and typically do not

even resolve the original psychological or emotional issues — in favor of therapy.

Of course, many, if not most, people experiencing identity or body-related distress who turn to these means of resolving their struggles do so out of a sincere desire to be whole. They may not know the full moral implications of their actions and may not have fully informed their consciences. They are most likely misled, not sinful. While the actions of "transitioning" are morally evil and cannot be justified, we cannot judge the full extent of culpability (responsibility) of others in situations where a moral wrong was committed without full knowledge of its wrongness. Informing our consciences is important, as is our trust in God and His plan, which is the only path to love and our ultimate destiny.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

The Source of Our Dignity

The truth is that our dignity comes from being made in God's image and likeness. Because all human beings are made in God's image and likeness, each of us possesses infinite worth, and are called by God to a covenant with Him, to be, through Baptism, His adopted sons and daughters. Our dignity can never be taken away from us. It does not come from having our behavior or feelings affirmed by others.

When we fail to recognize the source of a person's dignity, we perpetuate his or her confusion, and, even if well-meaning, perpetuate the harmful falsehood that has confused them. Leading someone away from the truth does not help them. Nobody is "born trans" or "born in the wrong body." God made every woman a female, and she will always be female. He made every man a male, and he will always be male. God loves every woman and man, no matter what, and wants each of us to be the person He made us to be.

The True Compassionate Response

Now we return to the second question: Shouldn't we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify as? No. The compassionate response to someone experiencing identity or body-related distress is to stand in the truth, rather than in the lie that causes confusion. What is truly good for them is not going along with and supporting a lie, but rather the truth given in charity, and true support to

accept their God-given sexual identity. Compassion without honesty leads to confusion and more pain. This relationship between compassion and truth is why the Ten Commandments prohibit "bearing false witness against your neighbor." As Pope Francis said, "To live with false communication is serious because it impedes relationships and, therefore, impedes love. Where there are lies there is no love; there can be no love" (General Audience, November 14, 2018). It is truly loving and caring to help someone make sense of their own concrete experience in light of the truth. This fact is key: we cannot separate compassion and truth. The Church's teachings on morality and the human person are compassionate because they are true. To support someone in their confusion cannot be compassionate, even if we mean it to be, because it leads them away from the truth.

Ultimately, we must always depend on the mercy of God, which is infinite and without limits. God always offers His mercy to us and invites us to conform our lives to Him in truth and light. We need only to seek and accept His mercy to receive it. He always gives us the grace we need to face the hardships we may face in this life so that we can seek Him and live holy and virtuous lives. While cooperating with the grace of God is no guarantee we will be free of suffering in this life, it does give us the confidence and hope of the redemption and salvation Jesus won for us by His Cross and Resurrection.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

Critical Thinking Questions

- 1 What is the attitude of the secular culture toward suffering? What examples can you give of this attitude toward suffering?

The secular culture around us believes that suffering is meaningless, strips us of our dignity, and should be avoided at all costs. Often, secular ideologies pursue immoral means in an attempt to end suffering. Examples include abortion, euthanasia, and so-called sex-reassignment surgeries. Accept additional reasoned answers.

- 2 How has Jesus redeemed and transformed the human experience of suffering?

Jesus suffered and died on the Cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven to open the door to us to eternal life and give us hope in our own resurrection at the end of time. Then, when our glorified bodies are reunited with our souls, we will live forever with God, free of suffering and death. By His Paschal Mystery, Christ invites us to unite our own suffering to His, giving it value for our redemption and for the redemption of others.

- 3 Why can it never be morally permissible for a person experiencing identity or body-related distress to use social, chemical, or surgical means to “transition” to his or her perceived sex?

We can never be permitted to do evil so that good may result; the ends never justify the means.

- 4 What is the solution offered by the transgender movement to address the suffering of a person experiencing identity or body-related distress?

The solution offered by the transgender movement — for a person experiencing identity or body-related distress to “transition” into his or her perceived sex through a host of interventions, beginning with psycho-social transitioning, progressing to taking puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, and even having invasive and irreversible surgeries (such as so-called “top” and “bottom” surgeries — solves nothing. Ultimately, it is for the person to deny the reality of who they are as a male or female made in God’s image and likeness, and do violence to their bodies, condemning themselves to a lifetime of drugs and often painful procedures to fight their bodies’ natural design and maintain the illusion they have created.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 5 Why might a person suffering identity or body-related distress not be fully culpable for their moral choices as they seek to address their suffering? Does their desire to be whole and free of suffering change the moral qualities of the interventions used to “transition” to their perceived sex? Why or why not?

Many, if not most, people experiencing identity or body-related distress who turn to these means of resolving their struggles do so out of a sincere desire to be whole. They may not know the full moral implications of their actions and may not have fully informed their consciences. They are most likely misled, not sinful. Thus, we cannot judge their moral culpability. Their desire to be whole, however, does not change the morality of the actions related to “transitioning,” which are objectively morally evil and impossible to justify.

- 6 What is the source of our human dignity? What happens when we fail to recognize the source of a person’s dignity?

Our human dignity comes from being made in God’s image and likeness and can never be taken away. When we fail to recognize the source of a person’s dignity, we perpetuate his or her confusion and the harmful falsehood that has confused them.

- 7 Why can’t we separate true compassion from the truth?

True good can only be found in truth rather than in lies and falsehoods. Truth without compassion can be hurtful, of course. But compassion without truth also leads to more pain and confusion. In fact, compassion that is based on lies is prohibited by the Eighth Commandment. The Church’s teachings on morality and the human person are compassionate because they are true.

- 8 What help does God give to us to face the inevitable suffering all of us will experience in our earthly lives?

God always extends to us His infinite mercy and love and invites us to conform ourselves to Him in truth and light. He always gives us the grace we need to face the hardships we may face in this life so that we can seek Him and live holy and virtuous lives. While cooperating with the grace of God is no guarantee we will be free of suffering in this life, it does give us the confidence and hope of the redemption and salvation Jesus won for us by His Cross and Resurrection.

- 9 Given what you have learned in this essay about the meaning of suffering, how would you respond to the second question from the beginning of the essay: “Shouldn’t we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify as?”

No, we should not affirm a person’s perceived sex. Doing so would not be truly compassionate as it would be to perpetuate falsehoods and lies and only lead to more confusion and pain. Accept additional reasoned answers.

***Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death* by Peter Paul Reubens (ca. 1618)**



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GRADE 11, THE GIFT OF OUR IDENTITY

9

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

***Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death* by Peter Paul Reubens (ca. 1618)**

Directions: Observe the painting for a few moments, then discuss the conversation questions.

Conversation Questions

- 1 What do you see in this painting? What stands out to you?
- 2 What objects are found under Christ's left foot? Under His left hand? What is the significance of these objects?
- 3 What is the significance of the color of Christ's cloak and robe? What other details of the painting allude to the suffering, death, and ultimate triumph of Jesus?
- 4 Jesus said, "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (John 16:33). How does this verse connect to this painting? How has Jesus conquered the world? Why is this reason for courage? For hope?
- 5 How could the reality that Christ has triumphed over sin and death be especially comforting to those who experience the pain of identity and body-related distress and the temptation to seek psycho-social, pharmaceutical, or surgical means of alleviating their suffering? How might it comfort those who found that so-called "transitioning" did not solve their problems or eliminate their suffering?

1. Accept reasoned answers.
2. Left foot — a skull and a serpent or snake. Left hand — a globe. The skull signifies death. Christ has triumphed over death by rising from the dead. The serpent or snake signifies sin. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice in expiation of our sins. The globe signifies Christ's kingship and authority over all creation. Nothing can happen without His holy will.

3. Red signifies the passion of Christ, how He died for us by crucifixion. Red also signifies the Kingship and Dominion of Christ over all creation. The sword in His right hand, the wounds He is displaying, and the shape of the cross in the sword allude to the suffering, death, and ultimate triumph of Jesus. Accept additional reasoned answers.

4. Jesus conquered the world by His suffering, death on the Cross, and Resurrection. We will always experience suffering and hardship in this life — just as Jesus did. But when we

place our trust in and have faith in Jesus, we have no reason to fear because He has already won the victory. By His Cross and Resurrection, we have been set free. Accept additional reasoned answers.

5. Accept reasoned answers.

The Redemption of Suffering

The Resurrection of Jesus

Directions: Read the story of Jesus' Resurrection. Pause at the icons to discuss the questions.

Matthew 28:1–10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. **1** And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women in reply, "Do not be afraid! **2** I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and

see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you." **3** Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce this to his disciples. **4** And behold, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them. They approached, embraced his feet, and did him homage. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. **5** Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." **6**

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- 5** What did Jesus first tell the women when He met them on the road? Why do you think this message was repeated twice in this account of the Resurrection?
- 6** Imagine you were with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at Jesus' tomb that day. How would you have felt seeing the angel and stone rolled away from the tomb? How would you have felt meeting the Risen Jesus? How would you have responded?

The Ends Never Justify the Means

Directions: Read about the meaning of suffering and how Jesus has redeemed our suffering. Then answer the critical-thinking questions in class and/or with your parents.

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As Christians, however, we know that suffering is not meaningless. It can even



Christ on the Cross by Léon Bonnat (ca. 1874).

be good, especially when we suffer for others. Jesus redeemed our suffering by His own suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. Christ's Paschal Mystery opened the door to eternal life for us and gives us hope in our own resurrection at the end of time when our immortal souls will be reunited with our risen, glorified bodies. It is in this glorified state we will live forever with God, free of suffering

and death. We also know that Christ's suffering has transformed our experience of suffering and given it meaning. By His Paschal Mystery, Christ invites us to unite our own suffering to His, giving it value for our redemption and for the redemption of others. The Church calls this redemptive suffering, by which, through our faith in Jesus, we too can offer our suffering to the Father as self-sacrifice to help in the work of redemption. As St. Paul wrote about the mystical Body of Christ, the Church: "If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

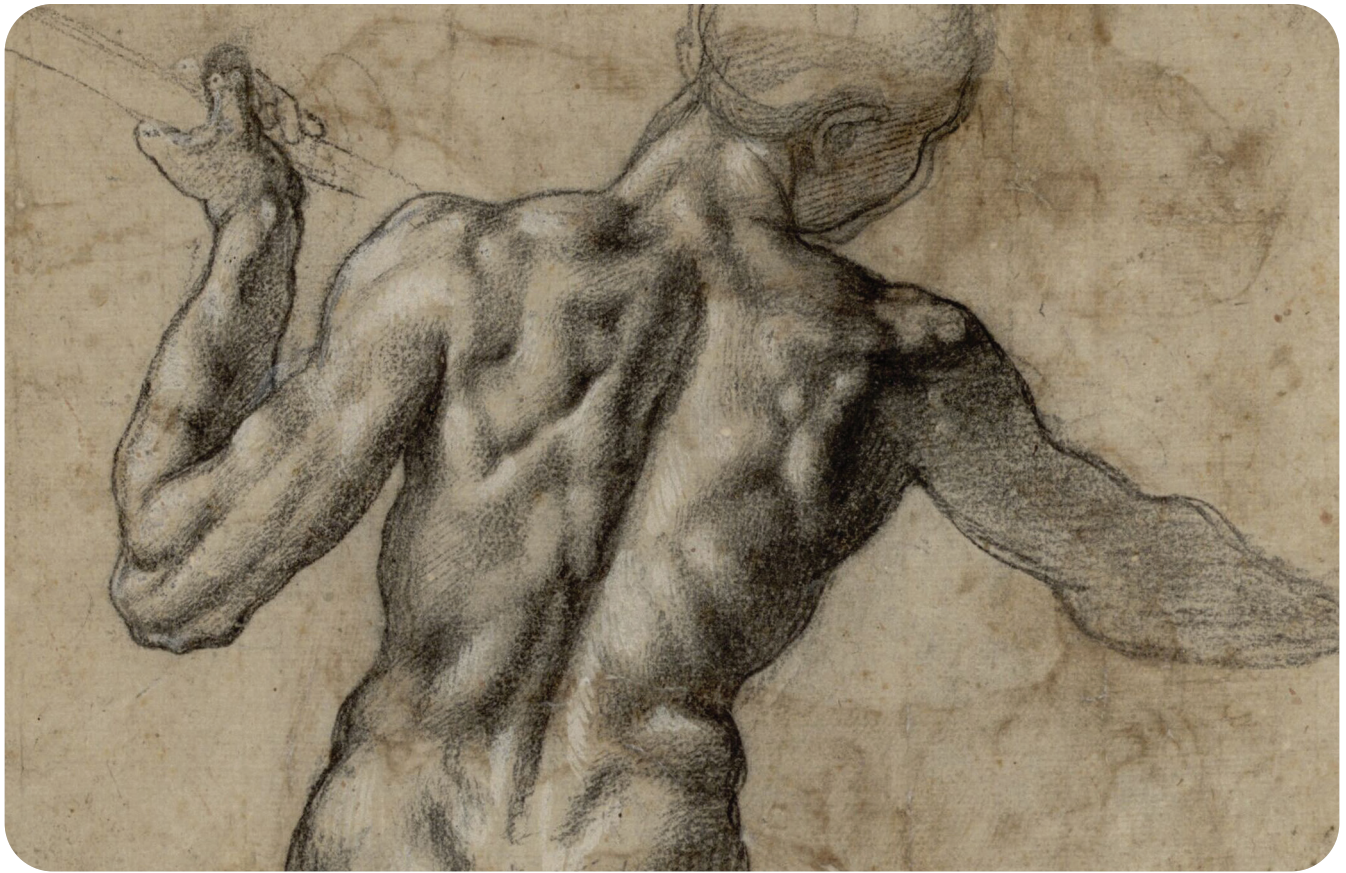
It is a fundamental truth of living a moral life that we are never permitted to do evil so that good may result; the ends never justify the means. An evil or immoral act does not – and cannot – become good because good things may result from it. For a person experiencing identity or body-related distress, as good as the promise of alleviation of suffering might seem, it can never be morally permissible to use social, chemical, or surgical means to "transition" to his or her perceived sex.

The transgender movement perpetuates the lie that, for example, if a boy or man feels that he *is* really a female, then he really is a female. He is told in no uncertain terms that, for his suffering to end, he must "transition" into a woman through a host of interventions. These typically begin with psycho-social transitioning, such as adopting opposite-sex pronouns and dressing as a woman, and progress to increasingly invasive and harmful interventions such as taking puberty blockers (if he is still a child) and high-dose cross-sex hormones (to suppress his male hormones and increase

female ones to produce secondary sex characteristics), and even having irreversible "bottom surgery" to remove his genitals and use that tissue or intestinal tissue to fashion the appearance of female ones. (Note that, if this example were about a female feeling she was a male, she would be encouraged by transgender activists to have similarly drastic drug interventions and surgeries to remove her breasts [top surgery], close her vagina, and fabricate the appearance of male genitals [bottom surgery].) Insidiously, transgender ideology encourages that this process of transitioning begin at very young ages, before puberty.



The Disputation of the Holy Sacrament
by Raphael (1509–1510)



Male Back with a Flag by Michelangelo (ca. 1504).

The only solution offered by the transgender movement to address the suffering of the person experiencing identity or body-related distress is for him or her to deny the reality of who they are as a male or female made in God's image and likeness, and irreversibly mutilate their bodies, condemning themselves to a lifetime of so-called medical treatments to maintain the illusion they have created. The hoped-for good and happy outcome of eliminating their suffering, even if it did materialize, would not justify the reality-denying and destructive means, or methods, used to accomplish it. In fact, many European countries have begun to turn away from these invasive interventions — finding that they only open the door to many other problems, and typically do not

even resolve the original psychological or emotional issues — in favor of therapy.

Of course, many, if not most, people experiencing identity or body-related distress who turn to these means of resolving their struggles do so out of a sincere desire to be whole. They may not know the full moral implications of their actions and may not have fully informed their consciences. They are most likely misled, not sinful. While the actions of "transitioning" are morally evil and cannot be justified, we cannot judge the full extent of culpability (responsibility) of others in situations where a moral wrong was committed without full knowledge of its wrongness. Informing our consciences is important, as is our trust in God and His plan, which is the only path to love and our ultimate destiny.

The Source of Our Dignity

The truth is that our dignity comes from being made in God's image and likeness. Because all human beings are made in God's image and likeness, each of us possesses infinite worth, and are called by God to a covenant with Him, to be, through Baptism, His adopted sons and daughters. Our dignity can never be taken away from us. It does not come from having our behavior or feelings affirmed by others.

When we fail to recognize the source of a person's dignity, we perpetuate his or her confusion, and, even if well-meaning, perpetuate the harmful falsehood that has confused them. Leading someone away from the truth does not help them. Nobody is "born trans" or "born in the wrong body." God made every woman a female, and she will always be female. He made every man a male, and he will always be male. God loves every woman and man, no matter what, and wants each of us to be the person He made us to be.

The True Compassionate Response

Now we return to the second question: Shouldn't we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify as? No. The compassionate response to someone experiencing identity or body-related distress is to stand in the truth, rather than in the lie that causes confusion. What is truly good for them is not going along with and supporting a lie, but rather the truth given in charity, and true support to

accept their God-given sexual identity. Compassion without honesty leads to confusion and more pain. This relationship between compassion and truth is why the Ten Commandments prohibit "bearing false witness against your neighbor." As Pope Francis said, "To live with false communication is serious because it impedes relationships and, therefore, impedes love. Where there are lies there is no love; there can be no love" (General Audience, November 14, 2018). It is truly loving and caring to help someone make sense of their own concrete experience in light of the truth. This fact is key: we cannot separate compassion and truth. The Church's teachings on morality and the human person are compassionate because they are true. To support someone in their confusion cannot be compassionate, even if we mean it to be, because it leads them away from the truth.

Ultimately, we must always depend on the mercy of God, which is infinite and without limits. God always offers His mercy to us and invites us to conform our lives to Him in truth and light. We need only to seek and accept His mercy to receive it. He always gives us the grace we need to face the hardships we may face in this life so that we can seek Him and live holy and virtuous lives. While cooperating with the grace of God is no guarantee we will be free of suffering in this life, it does give us the confidence and hope of the redemption and salvation Jesus won for us by His Cross and Resurrection.

Critical Thinking Questions

- 1 What is the attitude of the secular culture toward suffering? What examples can you give of this attitude toward suffering?

- 2 How has Jesus redeemed and transformed the human experience of suffering?

- 3 Why can it never be morally permissible for a person experiencing identity or body-related distress to use social, chemical, or surgical means to “transition” to his or her perceived sex?

- 4 What is the solution offered by the transgender movement to address the suffering of a person experiencing identity or body-related distress?

5 Why might a person suffering identity or body-related distress not be fully culpable for their moral choices as they seek to address their suffering? Does their desire to be whole and free of suffering change the moral qualities of the interventions used to “transition” to their perceived sex? Why or why not?

6 What is the source of our human dignity? What happens when we fail to recognize the source of a person’s dignity?

7 Why can’t we separate true compassion from the truth?

8 What help does God give to us to face the inevitable suffering all of us will experience in our earthly lives?

9 Given what you have learned in this essay about the meaning of suffering, how would you respond to the second question from the beginning of the essay: “Shouldn’t we, as compassionate individuals who are trying to love others as Jesus taught us, affirm them as a member of the sex they now identify as?”

***Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death* by Peter Paul Reubens (ca. 1618)**



Christ Triumphant Over Sin and Death by Peter Paul Reubens (ca. 1618)

Directions: Observe the painting for a few moments, then discuss the conversation questions.

Conversation Questions

- 1 What do you see in this painting? What stands out to you?
- 2 What objects are found under Christ's left foot? Under His left hand? What is the significance of these objects?
- 3 What is the significance of the color of Christ's cloak and robe? What other details of the painting allude to the suffering, death, and ultimate triumph of Jesus?
- 4 Jesus said, "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (John 16:33). How does this verse connect to this painting? How has Jesus conquered the world? Why is this reason for courage? For hope?
- 5 How could the reality that Christ has triumphed over sin and death be especially comforting to those who experience the pain of identity and body-related distress and the temptation to seek psycho-social, pharmaceutical, or surgical means of alleviating their suffering? How might it comfort those who found that so-called "transitioning" did not solve their problems or eliminate their suffering?