

Why a custody dispute over a 'transgender' child matters for everyone

James or Luna? The 7-year-old child caught in the middle of a nasty custody battle goes by either name, depending on whether mom or dad is around. Although the child is a biological male named James, his mother, a pediatrician named Anne Georgulas, insists he is actually a transgender girl named Luna. According to court testimony, when James was 3, he asked for a girl's toy in a Happy Meal and exhibited interest in stereotypically "girl" toys and activities, unlike his twin brother. Following a gender therapist's advice, the mom helped James to "transition" socially – calling him a girl's name (Luna), enrolling him in school as a girl, dressing him in girls' clothing and insisting that teachers and the boy's father, Jeff Younger, affirm the child as a girl. The gender therapist referred the child to a hospital-based program, Genecis, for future hormonal "gender affirming care" – a plan the mother supports. The child's father vehemently opposes the mother's transition plan, describing it as child abuse.

After two years of legal wrangling, the divorced couple had their day in court. Following a week of testimony from the parents and various experts, a Texas jury initially ruled against the father, but the judge's final decision granted both parents shared medical authority, assisted by a court-appointed facilitator. Although the judge imposed a gag order preventing the parents from speaking to media, a media and political firestorm erupted anyway. Political leaders tweeted their concerns, and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton formally asked the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to investigate, citing the mother's intent to medically transition the child. Paxton instructed the agency to protect James from "permanent and potentially irreversible harm by his

mother.” Mainstream media mostly sided with the mom, framing opposition to gender transitions as irrational. (A Forbes headline, for example, read: “Texas is afraid of a 7-year-old transgender girl.”)

This is a tragic case. But Catholics need to see its lessons clearly.

1. Science is being distorted to advance an ideological agenda.

Gender ideology creates confusion about who we are. The truth is that each human person is created male or female, forever; sexual identity cannot change. In biology, “sex” describes an organism’s whole-body design for a specific reproductive role: either male (generating sperm) or female (ovum, gestation). Every cell has a sex, male or female. Although a person claiming a transgender identity asserts a new identity, this identity is rooted in subjective feelings of masculinity or femininity, not in bodily reality. Transitioning – using medical or surgical interventions to alter appearance – does not change a person’s sex; hormones and surgery only modify the body to resemble the opposite sex. (Intersex conditions are not a “third sex,” but rather the result of a disorder in the child’s sexual development, occurring in utero.)

2. Children are vulnerable.

Emily Zinos, author of the [free Parent Resource Guide](#), reminds parents that “every child is born in exactly the right body.” Young children can get confused because they do not understand permanency and must learn to decipher the clues to the world around them. They also want to please their parents. In turn, parents must make sense of the child’s world, rather than bending reality to fit a child’s wish. A child who expresses a desire to be the opposite sex needs reassurance that the child’s bodily reality is exactly right. If the desire persists, a wise parent will affirm the child’s sexual

identity, gently probe why a child feels it's better to be the opposite sex, and then seeks to address the underlying concerns.

Parents who need guidance to help a confused child should seek out a Catholic therapist, not a person who claims expertise in gender issues. Gender ideology radically contradicts the Catholic vision of the human person. Gender therapists and clinics take the ideological position that a person's identity is determined by feelings, not a biological reality, and that the right response to identity confusion is gender affirmative treatment – support for transitioning away from one's bodily reality. Schools, family law courts and medical personnel increasingly support gender ideology, so parents must beware.

3. Speak the truth boldly.

Cases similar to James Younger's are happening all over the country. What's different about this case is that it became public. The child's father was bold enough to publicly resist the mother's attempts to transition the child and to speak loudly about what was happening. Catholics similarly need to be bold and speak the truth loudly: We are created male and female, forever. And that's a very good thing.

The only way our children will have the clarity and confidence to know who they are is if we adults are courageous enough to proclaim the truth about who we are, with boldness and great love.

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