

DISCOVER

the Joy of Christ



Why did God create men and women different?

Have you ever been around an expecting couple who is scheduled for their first ultrasound? Not only are they excited about seeing their baby for the first time, they are also very interested in learning if their child is a boy or a girl. Identifying the sex of their child has great significance for the mother and father. It begins unraveling a mystery of life; one that will be framed in either masculinity or femininity. It will help them determine everything from the color of the nursery to the baby's given name. To the parents, gender really matters.

God agrees that knowing who you are as either a man or woman is significant – because He created us that way. Being male or being female is fundamental to each person. From biology to psychology, sentimentality to spirituality, sexual distinction permeates everything that we are and do. According to Saint Pope John Paul II, maleness and femaleness – one's "sexuality" – is a fundamental fact of human existence. It affects the unity of one's body and soul and gives rise to a powerful and tender expression of love.

Remarkably, the first chapter of the Bible tells us "that God created mankind in His image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27) The placement of this text reveals that "from the beginning" God intentionally wanted human persons to be either men or women. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that: "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' and '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" (paragraph #369).

Two genders establish the great human love story that God intends. By creating two sexes, He reveals how a man is made for a woman and woman for man. The inherent differences orient each sex to the other. Their complementarity gives rise to a total and complete union that images divine love. In God's eyes, complementarity is not only a necessary and good thing, it is beautiful.

Sacred Scripture tells us that something was missing in Adam's life before Eve was created. Even though he had complete

reign over the earth and could do whatever he wanted, he was alone. Before Eve, he had no one with whom to talk, to ponder the beauty of life, to share the garden and all its richness. God wanted him to have a suitable helper; a person with whom he could totally share all the wonders of the earth. Someone who would help him find his true meaning as a human person. The person that God chose for Adam was a woman named Eve.

God places high value on the male/female relationship making the complementarity between the genders the norm for permanent, faithful and fruitful love. Through her femininity, Eve helps Adam know himself as a son of God. In turn, Adam's masculinity helps Eve know herself as a daughter of God. Together, they can become "one flesh" catching a glimpse of the glory God intends for generous human love.

The sexual differences between male and female give rise to the biblical passage, "that is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and the two of them become one body" (Genesis 2:24). Just as expectant parents find awe and wonder in knowing the sex of their unborn child, so too should we recognize and respect the mystery and beauty of each gender. Just as the parents of the unborn baby contemplate how the sex of their child will impact their life, so too should we consider the fullness of life that is possible because humans are created male and female, uniquely suited by their complementarity to be joined in a bond of self-giving, fruitful, permanent love. This gift from God of the complementary union of man and woman is so vital to His plan that He instituted it as the Sacrament of Marriage.

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