

Bulletin Article Series on the Family - Week 1 - Creation and the Family

On this Solemnity of the Holy Family, we will begin a bulletin article series on marriage and family life, taking us all the way up to Lent! Why do this, you ask? Because one of the biggest sources of difficulty, and sadly, division in the Church these days is over Her teachings on marriage and the family. What was never easy, but was still taken for granted by most people for countless centuries has come to be rejected by much of Western society over the last 50 years or so. For this reason, over the next 8 weeks of bulletins I would like to examine why we as Catholics believe what we do about marriage and family life. Each article will build upon the next, so it is important to keep these teachings in their totality and not fixate on one aspect in isolation (such isolation is what causes a lot of the confusion and disagreement).

To begin, Catholics take as the first premise of our understanding of marriage that *marriage was designed and instituted by God; it was not created by man*. This belief makes a huge difference. In the Book of Genesis, we hear of two critical moments in human history. First, that “*God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it*” (1:27-28a). In this, we see that God designed human beings to be unique above all other creatures: only human beings are said to be made in God’s own image. Even more, God designed only two “embodiments” of the human being: male and female. And, that as male and female, God has ordained that they be fertile and multiply: they are to be co-creators of new human life with God. When considered on the purely functional level, the only real “need” for two different sexes is for the ability to reproduce.

In the second account of creation in Genesis (2:18, 22b-24), we hear, “*The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him...When [the Lord God] brought [the woman] to the man, the man said: “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of man this one has been taken.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.*” Man finds himself incomplete when alone, even among all other creatures. So God made the woman to be man’s completion, and vice versa; they are gifts to each other. So God’s design of two different sexes is also for mutual help, for communion. But this requires that the man (male) and his wife (female) go out from themselves and from their parents, so that they may cling to each other, and become united as one flesh, and thus creating a new family.

Taken together, we find the basis for the traditional Church teaching on the 2 primary “ends” or “meanings” of marriage: the “unitive” and “procreative,” which are both critical and must not be separated. Marriage (clinging to each other in a one flesh union) is written into the very logic of creation, into the design of human beings as male and female. Now, many people today do not believe in God the Creator, and instead *believe in* some form of spontaneous creation that randomly evolved into life as we know it (even though there is no scientific proof of this idea). With that outlook, it follows that they also believe that marriage is simply an idea of man, and therefore it can look like anything man wishes it to be. Much could be said to refute that idea, but I’ll leave that aside for now. To conclude this column, I’ll just say that the Church’s teaching

about marriage and family draws upon God's Word and a logical observation of creation. Next week, we will look at Jesus' interpretation of these texts in the New Testament.

God Bless you,
Fr. John