

## Family

This weekend's celebration is the Feast of the Holy Family and Monday is the Feast of Mary as Mother of God. The very essence of "family" presents to us an icon of the Trinity.

"Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. ..." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." (Gn 1:26-27)

Love must be expressed relationally to be complete. As humans, we experience love as gendered beings. This is because the unity/oneness of God is too simple for us to comprehend. So, God created us in His Image as male and female. Adam and Eve were *created married*.

None of us have everything we need in and of ourselves. We are male and female to be the complement for each other. Therefore, in spousal love, we find the complementary aspects that make us complete—an Other to whom we can direct our love and give ourselves completely.

In order for us to relate to the fullness of God, then, we need a feminine dynamic in which we can relate to Him—who is more than 'masculine'. We refer to God in the masculine because He is the initiator of all that is and that dynamic is in its most natural essence, masculine. However, in Him is the fullness of Love from which flows Love in all of its dynamics, masculine and feminine. This is where Mary comes in.

It is in Mary that we find the feminine dynamic of love that is the corollary of the Fatherhood of God. She is the daughter of the Father, the spouse of the Holy Spirit, and the Mother of Jesus. In these distinct movements of feminine love we find in Mary the perfect human complement of the Love of God. *In Mary we see the perfect creaturely response to the Creator*. This is important to us on two different levels.

Mary is the perfect example for all of us no matter what our gender is. Before God, Who is the initiator, we are all 'feminine'. (This is why classical spiritual authors always refer to the soul as 'she'.) It is in this regard (Daughter) that we all need to imitate her.

Mary is also for us the relational source of the femininity of God's Love as Spouse/Mother. Mary is no more divine than we are, yet by virtue of her Immaculate Conception, unlike us, she completely exercises the divine love given to her by God. Moreover, in Marriage we understand that the 'two' become 'one'. So, as Spouse of the Holy Spirit, there is a oneness between God and Mary that is unique.

Perfect daughter, spouse, and mother, Mary provides for us the 'feminine' dynamic in which we can relate to God from our human and binary experience of love.