



A Composition of Wonder

“Men and women are different, and they have very different strengths, which allow them to do very different things; those strengths complement each other, permitting each to reach their greatest potentiality and self-expression. She relies on the gentle strength of his lift to help her achieve moments of transcendent, heart-stopping beauty. He gets to share, with his own subdued steadiness, and together they create something, and its totality is a composition of wonder.” - Elizabeth Scalia²

- Talk about it:** How are men and women different? (consider recreational interests, career choices, parenting style).
- Celebrate it:** Compliment and affirm those you love on their masculine or feminine uniqueness.
- Pray for it:** Lord God, creator of all that is good and holy!
We praise you for the gift of man and woman, masculinity and femininity.
Instill within us a deeper appreciation for this gift
and inspire in us a desire to fulfil your purposes for our sexuality.
Protect us from distractions that would turn our hearts from your plan
and embolden us with a passion to live our masculinity and femininity fully.
Amen.

References:

1. Pope Francis, Humanum Conference 2014, published in Not Just Good but Beautiful: The Complementary Relationship between Man and Woman. Plough Publishing 2015.
2. Elizabeth Scalia, NY Times Writes in Favour of Complementarity, www.patheos.com/blogs/the anchoress/2015/01/03/ny-times-argues-in-favor-of-complementarity/

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The Joy of Difference

St Valentine's Day: It reminds us of a beautiful truth, instinctively recognised and wonderfully appreciated: men and women are different. We can't imagine one without the other. In fact, each one's existence is largely defined by its difference from the other.

We simply cannot
define man without
woman or woman
without man.

From the very first chapters of the scriptures, we are introduced to biology and the essential role of male and female in the story of salvation. God creates, not just a being, but a man and a woman. Their difference is the basis for their union and for their capacity to generate life. Their difference became the foundation of the first human family.

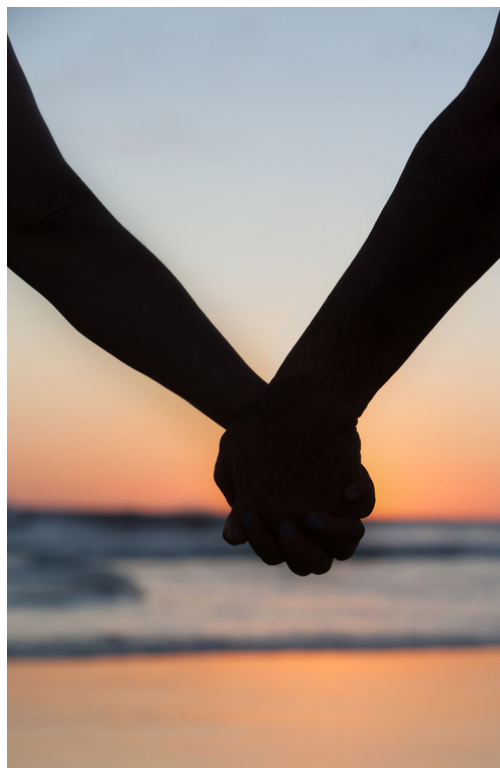
St. Valentine's Day is a poignant reminder of the human story. It is a celebration of a life-giving love that is grounded in a reality that has propelled human existence from before recorded history. Boy meets girl, they fall in love, they commit their entire worldly future to each other and from that deep enduring love a future generation is nurtured into life and maturity.

EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT

At its heart, St Valentine's Day is a celebration of sexual difference and complementarity. Ironically, while popular culture down-plays sexual difference, biology and sociology are confirming the many, innate differences between men and women. Of course society's attitudes affect us strongly but the traditional assumptions about gender roles are mainly due to the fact that our bodies are different. Science is quite clear: males have XY chromosomes and females have XX chromosomes; this creates hormonal differences that are the basis of what we all know in practice: that boys and girls, men and women are different.

Being different doesn't
mean being unequal.
Neither is better.
They're just different -
wonderfully different!

And this difference is a great joy. It is also an evolutionary advantage for us; being different encourages specialist roles which make us more effective together than we are as individuals.



"When our children were young, as a Mum I had a distinctive and irreplaceable role. I nurtured each baby in the womb and at the breast and provided comfort formed via the deep attachment bonds of that shared experience. As our children matured, increasingly Dad's role took centre stage. As teenagers, each of our kids have looked to him for confirmation of their feminine beauty and capability or masculine strength and competence. His way of interacting with them is quite different to mine, but brilliantly complementary!" - Sharon

Making Sense of DIFFERENCES

When we talk about the complementarity of the sexes, we're not referring to gender stereotypes. As Pope Francis has said,

*"When we speak of complementarity between man and woman...let us not confuse that term with the simplistic idea that all the roles and relations of the two sexes are fixed in a single, static pattern. Complementarity will take many forms as each man and woman brings his or her distinctive contributions to their marriage and to the formation of their children – his or her personal richness, personal charisma."*¹

"Complementarity
becomes a great wealth.
It is not just a good thing
but it is also beautiful"

– Pope Francis, *Humanum*

St Valentine

Feb 14

The origins of Valentine's Day are traced back to St Valentine, a Roman priest who was executed for marrying couples against the orders of Emperor Claudius II. While in prison he healed the sight of his jailer's young daughter, and on the eve of his execution, reportedly wrote her a note signed, "From your Valentine". He is celebrated throughout the world as the patron of romance and married love.

"It always delights me to observe young people as they discover the joys of romance. Despite their determination not to conform to old-fashioned rules, the flirting seems to follow a common pattern. The boys are so eager to demonstrate their competence and fearlessness with displays of toughness, while the girls tend more to gestures that present their beauty to advantage. Each vies for the attention and admiration of the other sex but they approach it so differently!" - Dan