

Parents First

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)

Church Teaching *Male and Female*



Why did God make us different? This is perhaps one of the great unanswered questions of all time. Often such questions are brushed aside with the phrase, “It’s a mystery.” While the Church teaches that the differences between men and women *are* a great mystery, it also helps us to understand that mystery in an ever increasing way. The Scriptures tell us, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). A part of what it is to be made in the image of God means to be made to live in a relationship with others (CCC 2331). The Catechism of the Catholic Church

(CCC 370) explains that men and women each reflect, in a unique and limited way, something of the nature of God. This reflection of the nature of God makes them equal in dignity even though they remain different in kind (CCC 2335). But these differences are not meant to divide us. They are in-

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stead given to us as a gift from God so that we can grow in communion, so that we will, quite naturally, be drawn to others. Males and females complement each other, bringing different parts to their shared humanity (CCC 371).

Growing in Virtue

Prudence is known as wisdom. It is also known as the prince of virtues because it governs each of the others. Aid your child in developing the ability to examine situations and help them to properly pay attention to the world around them. This may be more difficult for some children than for others.



Justice is the virtue of right relationship. This is a skill that takes work for most children and requires a sense of proper em-

pathy for those they encounter. This skill can be developed by helping out around the house, through play with peers, or through the care of a pet.

Culture Alert...

Number of minutes per week that parents spend in meaningful conversation with their children: 38.5

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Guidelines for Answering your Child's Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more"). Your child's response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married..." or "As Catholics, we believe...").
- Keep your answers short and simple.

Example: Why do boys have a penis ?

Know the context of the question, i.e.: Did they hear something on TV, or are they just curious? This information will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to your child.

Possible Responses :

- "God gave boys a penis to show they are uniquely different from girls."
- "God created a boy's penis to help him go to the bathroom."
- "Later in life, when he is married, it will help him make babies with his wife."



Practical Suggestions



Children have limited life experience, short attention spans and the tendency to store most information in their short-term memory. Therefore, it is quite

common for a child to misunderstand or forget what you've said.

- Ask your child to repeat back whatever you've communicated.
- Clarify any misunderstandings.
- Praise your child for using good listening skills. Notice and praise what your child did well while listening to you (i.e. "Awesome job looking at me while I was speaking! When you look at me I can tell you are listening.")
- Thank your child for coming to you to ask their question. Doing so reinforces the likelihood that your child

will come to you with future questions.

- Remind them to talk to you about any uncomfortable feelings or situations that enter in their Circle of Grace.

Children many times mirror their parents' behavior, good and bad. They do this because they trust their parents as all-knowing and look to them for guidance.

Parent Resources

- *Simple Truths with Mary Flo Ridley* Parent Resource, DVD, and study guide: A step-by-step resource for the process of establishing healthy guidelines in the home and answering tough questions young children have about sex.
- <http://www.justsayyes.org/resources/display.php?cat=3>
- Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality Handout