

In every monotheist's musing comes the question, "Why did God make us?" After all, if God is God, eternal and self-existent in Himself, He certainly doesn't need us—we puny little humans who came along a paltry few tens of thousands of years ago and are, as we hear in scriptures, simply "dust and ashes" ... or, using a favorite Star Trek term, "bags of mostly water," with a few handfuls of chemicals thrown in.

Secondly, think about what are many of our favorite books and stories. Do we not love images and stories in which people help one another or rescue the helpless, especially those in most dire circumstances? You Facebookers: how many heartwarming stories and videos are posted daily, with gazillion "likes" noted ... or examples of people enduring hardship to help others—electric power linemen and public services workers in the recent polar vortex, for example, doctors and nurses working in the COVID ICU wards, or teachers struggling to corral kids to teach effectively with online classes (or anytime, for that matter). Sure, they get paid ... but in such circumstances they certainly don't get paid nearly enough. And, we most admire those who help and receive no material reward whatever—our admiration proportionate to the degree of selfless sacrifice, and even self-endangerment.

Thirdly, think about how scripture tells us: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:26-27) Obviously this "image" does not mean physical image, as God has no physical body (prior to Jesus, at least) So what can it mean other than in His spiritual image? After all, physical descriptions attributed to God in scripture are simply imagery used to describe some manifestation or feature—arms/swords for power, hands for creating/crafting, wings for protection, etc.

But St. John tells us simply that "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:16) ... a love which is so plainly manifest throughout the Bible if one looks at the whole of salvation history rather than isolating some particular phrase, passage or story. Naysayers will often focus on individual incidents in the Bible as God's "harshness" or "unfairness" ... but is parents' love for their children discerned from a single incident of corrective discipline, or from a superficial interpretation of a "tough love" action? Of course not. One need look at the whole of the relationship and the parents' ultimate purpose. Likewise, we must look at the whole of God's design and action—which we can never discern in toto.

God crafts all for a/His purpose; in creating He does not simply "doodle" absentmindedly, like we might in a boring meeting. To perceive His complete purpose for this or that thing—the immensity of the universe, for example—and how it works in the totality of His plan, is simply not possible for us; we are wholly incapable of such perception, much as a mouse does not have the capability to understand quantum mechanics. But ... we humans do not like to think of ourselves as intellectually limited; it wounds our pride since we are the most intellectually-able of all known creatures. But limited we are nonetheless—by the very physicality of our brains, not to mention the internal "wiring" of each person. As a painting is not capable of understanding the artist, we cannot possibly completely understand our Creator. And yet, as the painting reflects something of the artist—being made in the artist's "image", so to speak—we are made, and reflect (ever so dimly), our own Creator's image. Thus, when enduring something we cannot quite understand, we fall back upon knowledge of God being love, and that He reminds us of the humility we ought to have: "...as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)

Finally, the pinnacle of history is with Jesus—His incarnation, life, mission and death the very embodiment of absolute self-sacrifice and love ... not only for a few, but for all Mankind—past, present and future.

So, utilizing all of these points ... why does God make us? St. Irenaeus puts it succinctly: "In the beginning God created Adam, not because He needed Man, but because He wanted to have someone on whom to bestow His blessings" ... or, perhaps a bit more poignantly, one might rephrase slightly and say that "God creates us to have someone upon whom to bestow His infinite love" ... for it is love's nature to want to be shared, and since God IS love, He is always desirous to share Himself—even literally, as we see in Jesus. Jesus' self-sacrifice is why we Catholics have the crucifix rather than the bare cross in our churches and our homes: it is the very image of God's absolute love for Mankind.

As St. Irenaeus continues: "...the Lord [did not] need our service. He commanded us to follow Him, but His was the gift of salvation. To follow the Savior is to share in salvation...Those who are in the light to not illuminate the light but are themselves illuminated and enlightened by the light. They add nothing to the light; rather...they are enlightened by the light. The same is true of service to God: it adds nothing to God, nor does God need the service of Man. Rather, He gives life and immortality and eternal glory to those who follow and serve Him...He is rich, perfect and in need of nothing. The reason why God requires service from man is...[that] because He is good and merciful, He desires to confer benefits on those who persevere in His service."

What is that service? Because we are made in God's image, and He IS love, we are called to emulate and reflect His love to the world, even when—especially when—that love is not or cannot be returned, just as Jesus died for those who crucified Him. And so ... we are to go out to serve others who are in need, and the greater the selfless sacrifice, the more we reflect God's own divine love—indeed, His very divinity.

So ... what is God's desire? Mercy. Kindness. Gentleness. Generosity. Selflessness.

Love.

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"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)