

CHAPTER FIVE

GENDER

The sex of a child in a christening entry or the sex of other individuals recorded in christening and marriage entries can usually be determined in one of several ways. Most of the time you will be able to determine the sex of an individual by the first given name. However, there will be times when you will need to look at other information which will indicate an individual's sex.

The purpose of this chapter is to enable you to determine the sex of any individual identified in a christening or marriage entry.



SEX DETERMINERS

First Given Names

To determine the sex of a child from a christening entry, or to tell which is the groom and which is the bride in a marriage record, consider the person's first given name. As a

general rule, given names that end in *a* are feminine; those that end in *o* are masculine. (There is no correlation between a person's surname and his sex.)

Names Ending in E

In addition to the given names that end in *a* or *o*, there are a few given names of each sex which end in *e*. The following list contains the most common:

Masculine		Feminine	
Bernabe	Jaime	Ale	Jure
Bartolome	Jose	Cleonice	Leonilde
Clemente	Josue	Clotilde	Matilde
Constante	Noe	Eunice	Natale
Enrique	Silvestre	Haydee	
Felipe	Vincente	Ilse	

Other Name Endings

A few names end in other letters, for example, the feminine names **Beatriz** and **Dolores**, and the masculine names **Feliz** and **Nicolas** and **Manuel**. You will usually recognize these names because they are similar to English names.

Unfortunately, the correlation between a person's given name and his sex only applies to the *first* given name. A person may have a second given name commonly belonging to the opposite sex. For example, you will find boys named **Jose Maria** and girls named **Maria Jose**.

In most cases, you can determine a person's sex from the last letters of his first name. Some names, however, can be either masculine or feminine. The most common are the following:

Amparo	Jesus
Concepción	Refugio
Consuelo	Rosario
Cruz	Santos
Encarnación	Socorro
Guadalupe	Trinidad

Phrases Denoting Gender

If you cannot determine a person's sex from his name, look at the words used to describe him. The most common words that indicate a person's sex are the following:

(la) ahijada	goddaughter
(el) ahijado	godson
(la) doncella	unmarried woman
expuesto(a)	abandoned
(la) hija	daughter
(el) hijo	son
(un) infante	an infant (male)
(una) infanta	an infant (female)
nacido(a)	born
(la) nieta	granddaughter
(el) nieto	grandson
(un) niño	child (male)
(una) niña	child (female)
(un) parvulo	small child (male)
(una) parvula	small child (female)
(la) soltera	unmarried woman
(el) soltero	unmarried man
(la) viuda	widow
(el) viudo	widower

Notice that, as with names, words that end in *a* refer to females; those that end in *o* refer to males. The word *criatura* ("child") is an exception to this rule. It always ends in *a*, even when it refers to a male child.

The following phrases refer to girls:

bautizé a una parvula de tres días de nacida
I baptized a child of three days of age

hija legítima de
legitimate daughter of

casé a Justa Molina, soltera, originaria, y vecina de
I married Justa Molina, single, native, and resident of

The following phrases refer to boys:

bautizé a un parvulo de tres días de nacido
I baptized a child of three days of age

hijo legítimo de
legitimate son of

casé a Justo Molina, soltero, originario, y vecino de
I married Justo Molina, single, native, and resident of

Occasionally you will find a scribe who was careless or inconsistent. He may have written, for example, "Bauticé a un niño de dos días de nacido, a quien puse por nombre María de la Concepción, hija legítima de." *Un, niño*, and *nacido* are all masculine; but *hija* and *legítima* are feminine, as is the name **María de la Concepción**. In such cases, consider all the evidence and use your common sense to arrive at a conclusion. *The overriding consideration should be the child's first given name.* In the above example, the child is most likely a girl. The scribe probably wrote the first part of the entry automatically, without thinking. He would be less likely to make a mistake on the name (clearly feminine) and on the legitimacy phrase.

Marginal Notation

Another clue to determining sex is the marginal entry. Some scribes would write the girls' names in one margin (usually the right) and the boys' names in the other (usually the left). Sometimes a scribe would write a more complete name in the margin. For example, a priest may have written in the entry, *Bautizé a Guadalupe, h.l.* The name **Guadalupe** could be either masculine or feminine. The abbreviation *h.l.* could stand for either "legitimate son" or "legitimate daughter." Without further information, you could not determine the sex. But in the margin the priest may have given the child's name as **María Guadalupe**, showing that the child was a girl.

Self-Evaluation

Determine the sex of the person named in each of the following phrases. Check your answers.

1. **María Gertrudis Rosalia Española, hija legítima**

2. **bautizé a Juana Paula de Jesús, h.l.**

3. **Ygnacio de la Trinidad Buenaventura**

4. **Serafín Cabezas, viudo, mestizo de este pueblo**

5. **bauticé a un parvulo de tres días a quien puse por nombre Matías**

6. **con M. Leonarda Guzmán, doncella de dieciocho años**

7. **Manuel Piña, soltero, indio**

8. **bauticé a Santos, h.l. de . . ., nieto de . . .**

9. **puse por nombre Guadalupe . . . les dije la obligación de enseñarle a ser buena cristiana**

10. **bautizó a una criatura a quien puso por nombre María Josefa Andrea, hijo legítimo de . . .**

Answers

1. female 2. female 3. male 4. male 5. male
6. female 7. male 8. male 9. female 10. female