

*The level of any civilization is always its level of its womanhood -in as much as woman is loved; it follows that the nobler a woman is, the nobler man will have to be to be deserving of that love. That is why the level of any civilization is always its level of its womanhood.” – Ven. Fulton Sheen*



Unless otherwise stated, these thoughts come from the writings of St John Paul II: *Love and Responsibility*, *Letter to Women*, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* and from his series of lectures on the “Theology of

# “Feminine Genius”

St John Paul II, the Great



Made by Sr. Silvia Maria, SCTJM  
Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary



## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MASCULINE AND FEMININE

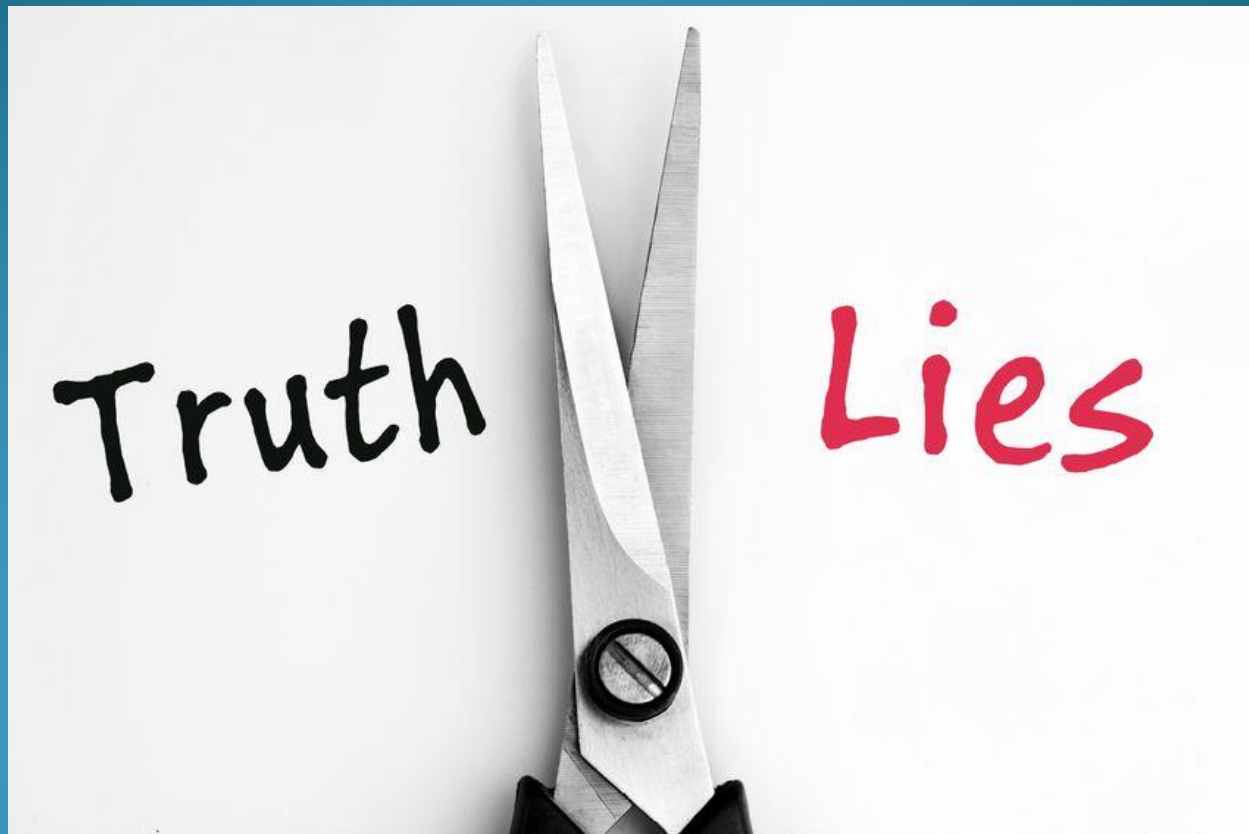
- Masculine is practical, focused, determined, proactive, goal-oriented. The feminine is spiritual, fluid, adaptable, accepting, process-oriented.
- The masculine energy aims and achieves, while the feminine attracts and receives
- The masculine male thrives on competition, while the feminine woman thrives on co-operation.
- The masculine energy “hunts” – goes after or pursues what it wants – while the feminine “gathers” – attracts or manifests what it wants.
- For males, the outcome is important, but to the feminine, the journey is what matters.
- During times of challenge, the masculine tendency is to “fix things”, while the feminine seeks to “understand things”.

## Today's REALITY

- We live in a society that organizes and governs itself according to masculine concepts of competition, hierarchy, status, logic and rank.
- One (unintended,)result of the feminist movement was to create a further imbalance– rather than encouraging both sexes to honor the feminine and creating a society that embraced all parts of ourselves, it simply gave women permission to compete and achieve by being more masculine.)
- As a society, we pursue a politically-correct version of “equality”, which has nothing to do with balance, and everything to do with trying to conform women into roles and positions and policies which are entirely foreign and unnatural to our feminine spirit.
- Women, unfortunately, in order to survive in a society that organizes itself according to masculine concepts and priorities -suppresses the feminine in us....The feminine principles of nurturing and co-operation simply get pushed into the background and ignored.

## GOD's INTENTION

- Both are equally important and necessary – one to envision and understand, the other to implement. Neither is better or worse. They are just different. They are two halves of the whole. Ideally the two were meant by God to balance and complement each other.
- It is time for us to embrace our femininity in an authentic and loving way....
- To bring to the world the part of our selves, our feminine selves that image God!
- These are gifts that the world needs us to give.



Some lies about Women in our Culture today

# Sex Objects



# Women exist for man's pleasure



We expect  
“perfection”  
in our bodies



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRlpIkH3b5I>

# Material Culture: You are what you have





Dignity?

*If you don't see it, then I must not have it*



# Devalues women who prioritizes her family



I'm "JUST" a housewife

# Devalued in history



1776-1831  
**SOPHIE GERMAIN**  
MATHEMATICIAN

WAS UNABLE TO GET A FORMAL EDUCATION BECAUSE OF SHE WAS A WOMAN.

HER PARENTS OPPOSED HER LEARNING, AND DENIED HER FIRE AND WARM CLOTHES AT NIGHT TO STOP HER FROM STUDYING, BUT SHE WOULD SMUGGLE IN CANDLES AND WRAP HERSELF IN QUILTS TO KEEP READING.

SHE TAUGHT HERSELF LATIN AND GREEK SO SHE COULD STUDY CLASSICAL MATHEMATICS TEXTS.

WAS NOT CORRECT

HER ELA

PRO PR MA



1910-1994  
**DOROTHY CROWFOOT HODGKIN**  
BIOCHEMIST

WAS THE THIRD WOMAN TO WIN THE NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY FOR HER DETERMINATIONS BY X-RAY TECHNIQUES OF THE STRUCTURES OF IMPORTANT BIOCHEMICAL SUBSTANCES.

BORN TO BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN EGYPT. WHEN SHE RETURNED TO ENGLAND FOR SCHOOL, SHE WAS ONE OF ONLY TWO GIRLS

ALLOWED TO

CREATED DEVELOPMENT

THEIR BIOMOLECULES

DETERMINED THE STRUCTURE OF PENICILLIN AND INSULIN CRYSTALLINE

AUBER

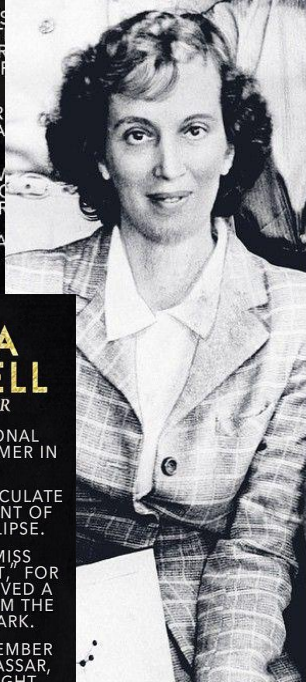


1910-1994  
**DOROTHY CROWFOOT HODGKIN**  
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BORN TO BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN EGYPT. WHEN SHE RETURNED TO ENGLAND FOR SCHOOL, SHE WAS ONE OF ONLY TWO GIRLS ALLOWED TO STUDY CHEMISTRY WITH THE BOYS.

CREDITED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTEIN CRYSTALLOGRAPHY.



1723-1788  
**NICOLE-REINE LEPAUTE**  
ASTRONOMER

PREDICTED THE RETURN OF HALLEY'S COMET.

CALCULATED THE EXACT TIME OF AN UPCOMING SOLAR ECLIPSE IN 1764.

CREATED CATALOGS OF THE STARS THAT PROVED USEFUL IN THE FUTURE OF ASTRONOMY.



COVERED DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE

DEVELOPED THE STRUCTURE OF VITAMIN B12 AND PERFECTED X-RAY CRYSTALLOGRAPHY TECHNIQUE

DESIGNS.COM



1818-1889  
**MARIA MITCHELL**  
ASTRONOMER

FIRST PROFESSIONAL FEMALE ASTRONOMER IN AMERICA.

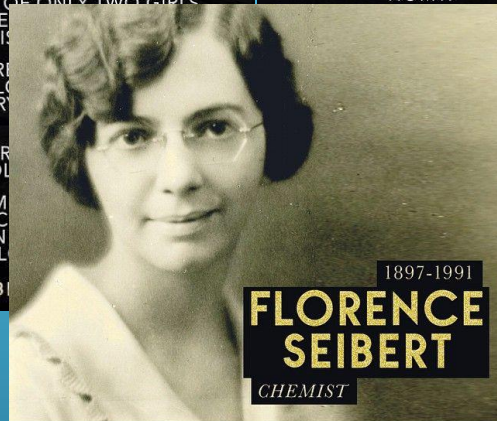
AT 12, HELPED CALCULATE THE EXACT MOMENT OF AN ANNULAR ECLIPSE.

DISCOVERED "MISS MITCHELL'S COMET," FOR WHICH SHE RECEIVED A GOLD MEDAL FROM THE KING OF DENMARK.

WAS THE FIRST MEMBER OF FACULTY AT VASSAR, WHERE SHE TAUGHT ASTRONOMY.

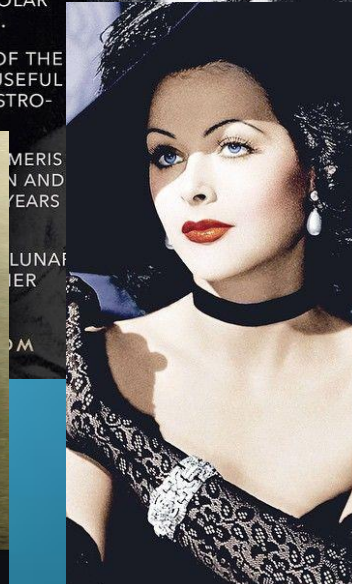
A WORLD WAR II SHIP, A LUNAR CRATER, AND THE NANTUCKET OBSERVATORY ARE ALL NAMED IN HER HONOR.

AUBERGDESIGNS.COM



1897-1991  
**FLORENCE SEIBERT**  
CHEMIST

DEVELOPED THE SKIN TEST FOR TUBERCULOSIS.



1914-2000  
**HEDY LAMAR**  
INVENTOR

FAMOUS STARLET OF HOLLYWOOD'S GOLDEN AGE WHO COINVENTED SPREAD SPECTRUM TECHNOLOGY

INITIALLY DESIGNED TO DEFEAT THE NAZIS, THE SYSTEM BECAME CRUCIAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CELL PHONES, FAX MACHINES, AND OTHER WIRELESS OPERATIONS

SINCE THE PATENT WAS USED UNTIL AFTER IT EXPIRED, HEDY NEVER RECEIVED MONEY FOR HER INVENTION

# Competition with Men for positions of Power



# Women conforming into the masculine



# Outwardly

Outwardly in [no] dress



Fashion



Inwardly:

in attitudes: lust, control, domination



*"I will not serve"*



Women hiding their femininity  
in masculinity, androgynous, sexual fluidity





# Physical Appearance vs Ability

“Humanity owes a great debt to women:  
However, how many women have been and continue to  
be valued more by their  
physical appearance than for their skill,  
professionalism their intellectual abilities,  
their deep sensitivity, in a word,  
the dignity of their being.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsDQEb-qlyM>

# Who are we in our Being?



Beloved

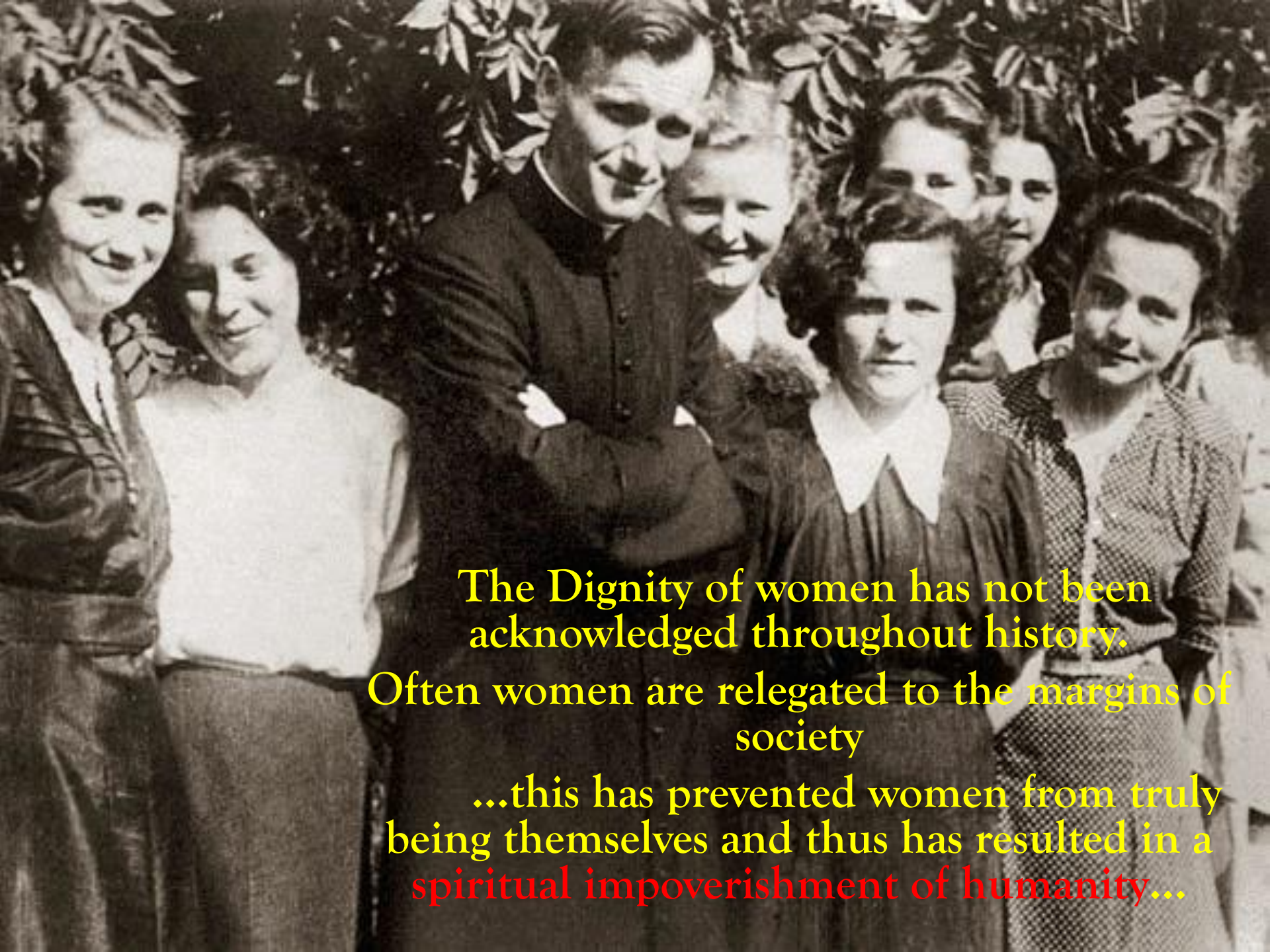


*Daughters*  
*of the* KING   
G

I am a princess not because I have a prince.  
But because my father is a king and he is god.



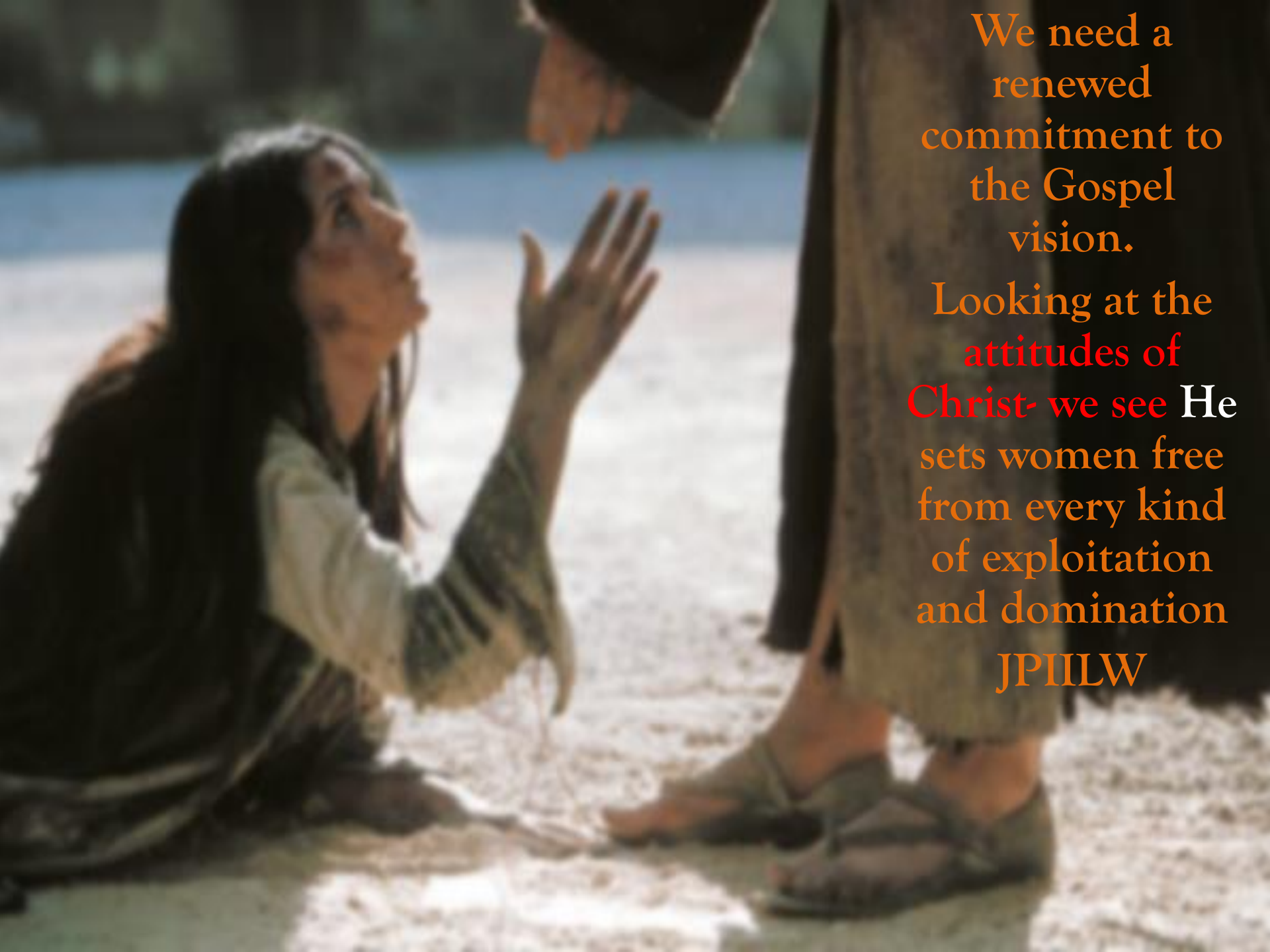
So many girls want a  
guy to save them. A man  
did save you, 2,000 years  
ago on the cross. ❤️



The Dignity of women has not been  
acknowledged throughout history.

Often women are relegated to the margins of  
society

...this has prevented women from truly  
being themselves and thus has resulted in a  
spiritual impoverishment of humanity...

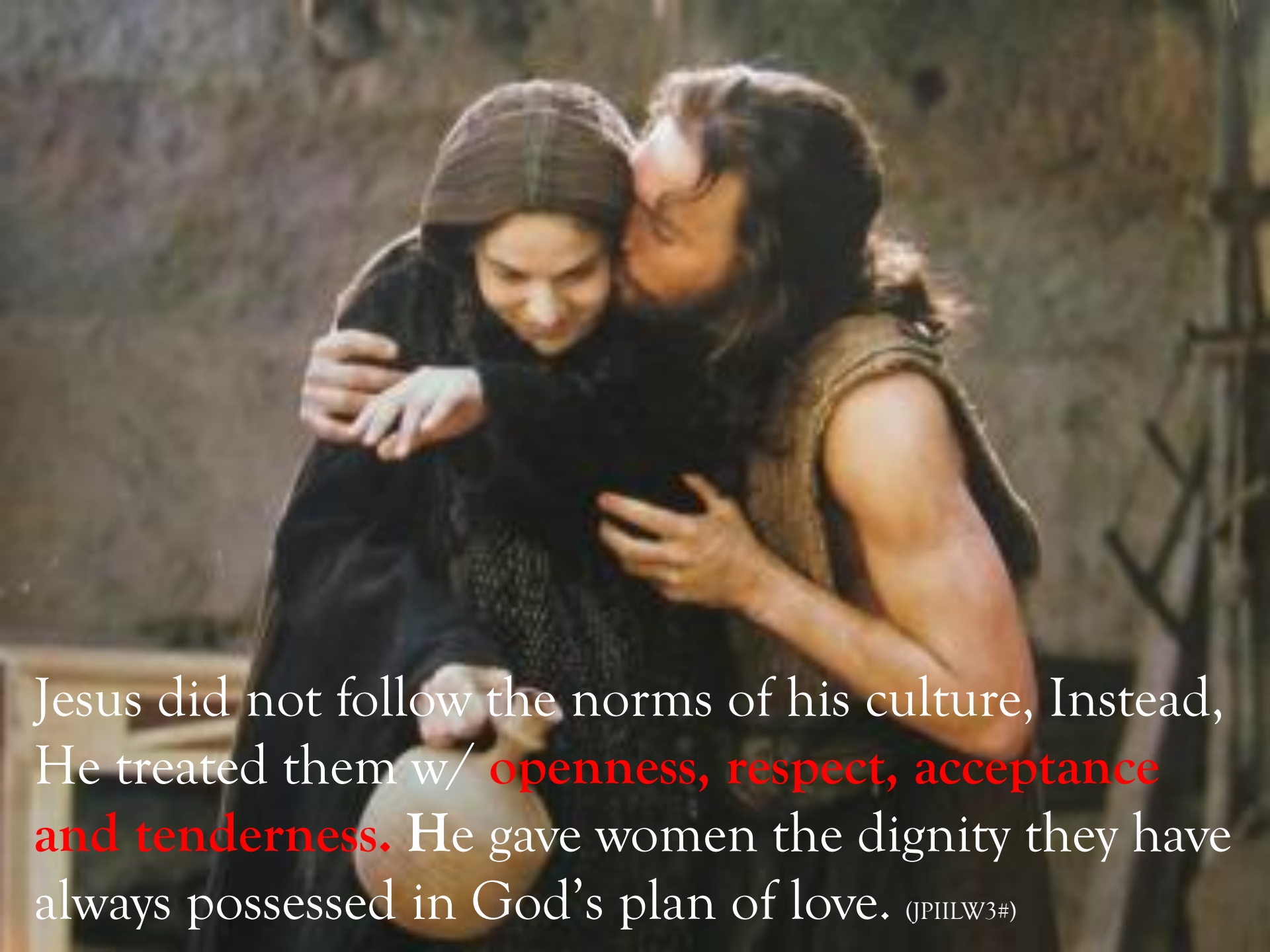


We need a renewed commitment to the Gospel vision.

Looking at the attitudes of Christ- we see He sets women free from every kind of exploitation and domination

JPIILW





Jesus did not follow the norms of his culture, Instead, He treated them w/ **openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness.** He gave women the dignity they have always possessed in God's plan of love. (JPIILW3#)

# First to receive His Messianic message was the woman at the well



(<https://www.lds.org/bible-videos/videos/jesus-teaches-a-samaritan-woman?lang=eng>)


# First to receive the message of the Resurrection



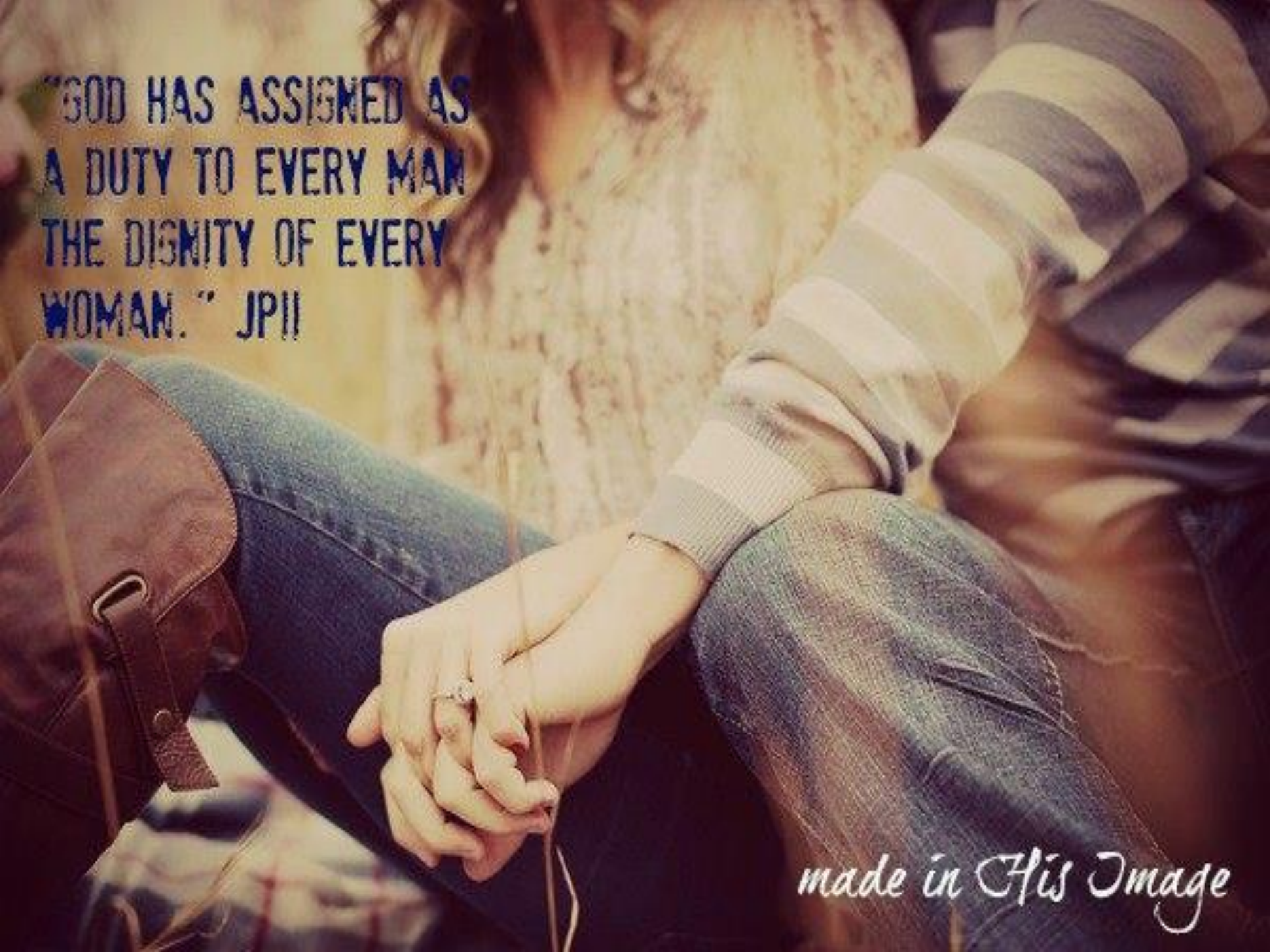
# Authentic Friendships with Women



# Competition vs. Cooperation each with their specific gifts



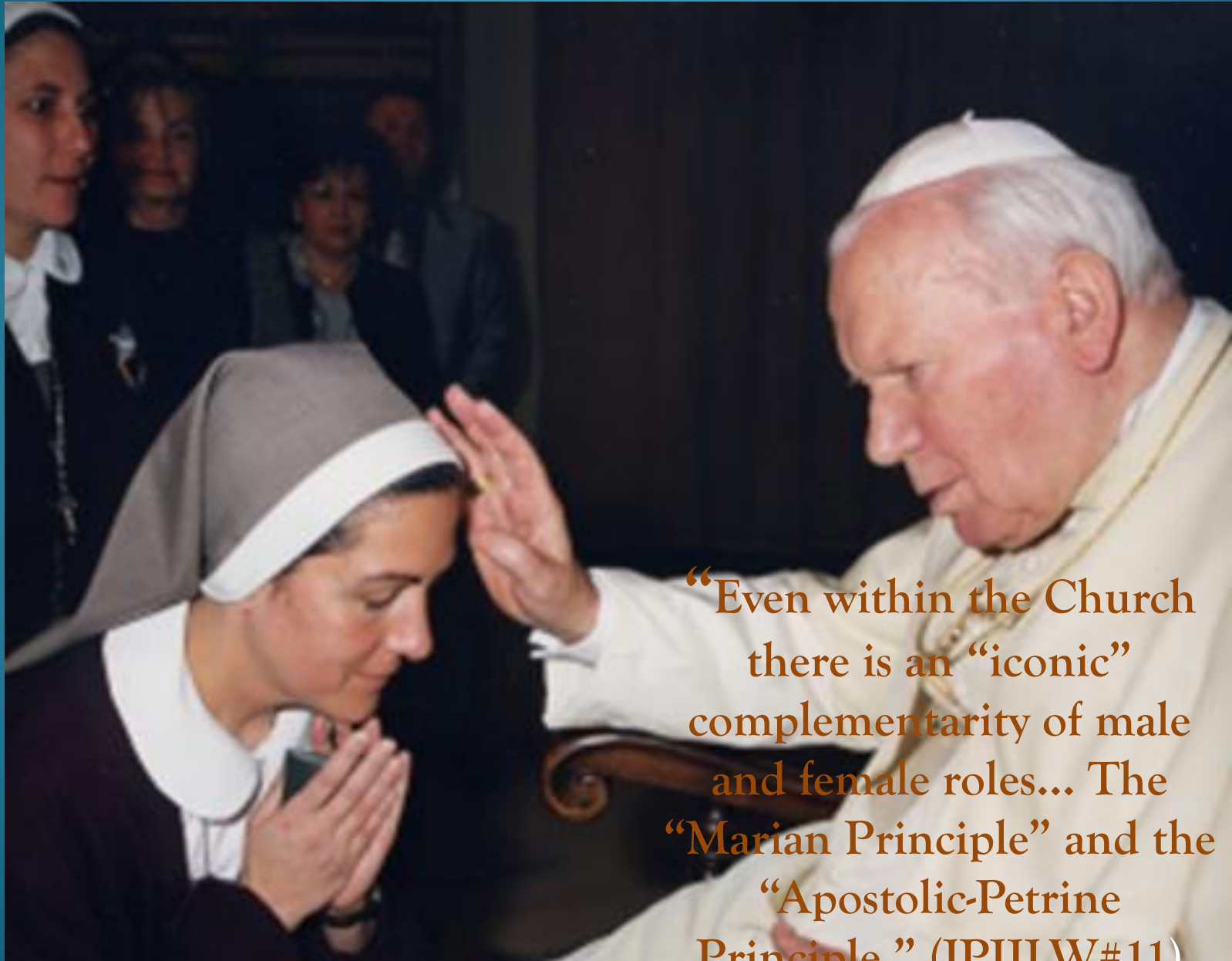
Looking at God's Word, the Church needs to help develop the spirit of communion (between men and women) and foster all those means of participation which are properly theirs..." JPIILW

A close-up photograph of a man and a woman holding hands. The woman is on the left, wearing a brown leather messenger bag and blue jeans. The man is on the right, wearing a grey and white striped long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. They are both looking down at their hands. The background is a warm, textured wall.

"GOD HAS ASSIGNED AS  
A DUTY TO EVERY MAN  
THE DIGNITY OF EVERY  
WOMAN." JPII

*made in His Image*

# Marian & Petrine Principle in the Church

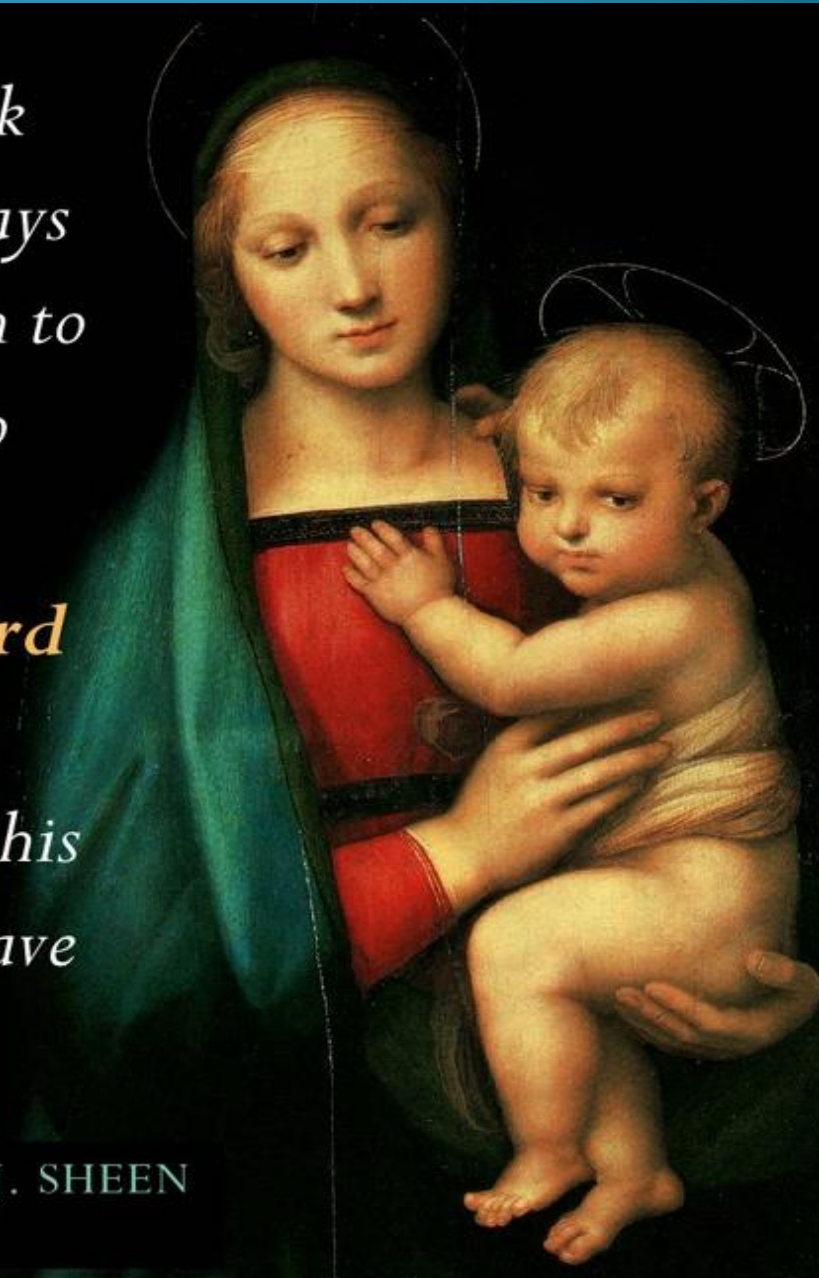


“Even within the Church there is an “iconic” complementarity of male and female roles... The “Marian Principle” and the “Apostolic-Petrine Principle.” (JPIILW#11)

*Let those who think  
that the Church pays  
too much attention to  
**Mary** give heed to  
the fact that  
**Our Blessed Lord**  
Himself gave **ten**  
**times** as much of his  
life to her as He gave  
to His Apostles.*

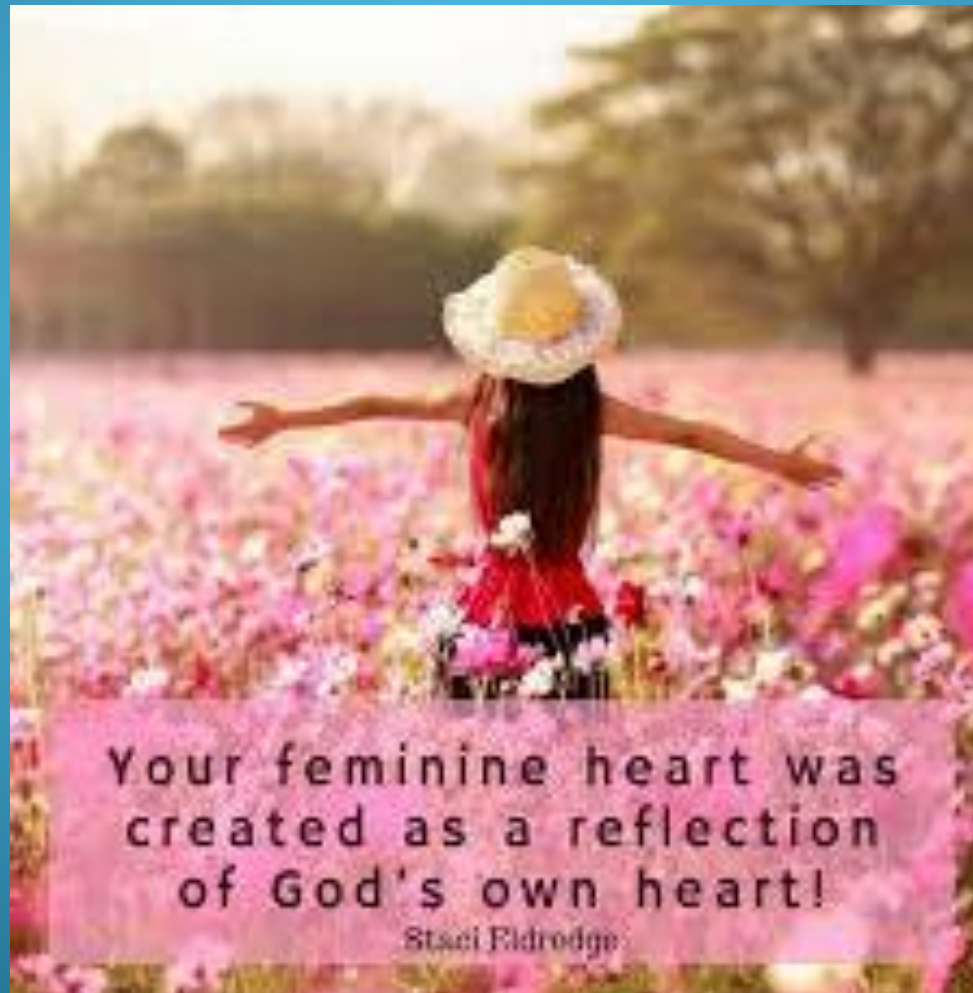
ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

From the book, *The World's First Love*





Not embracing our femininity  
leaves the world without  
the feminine part of the image of God



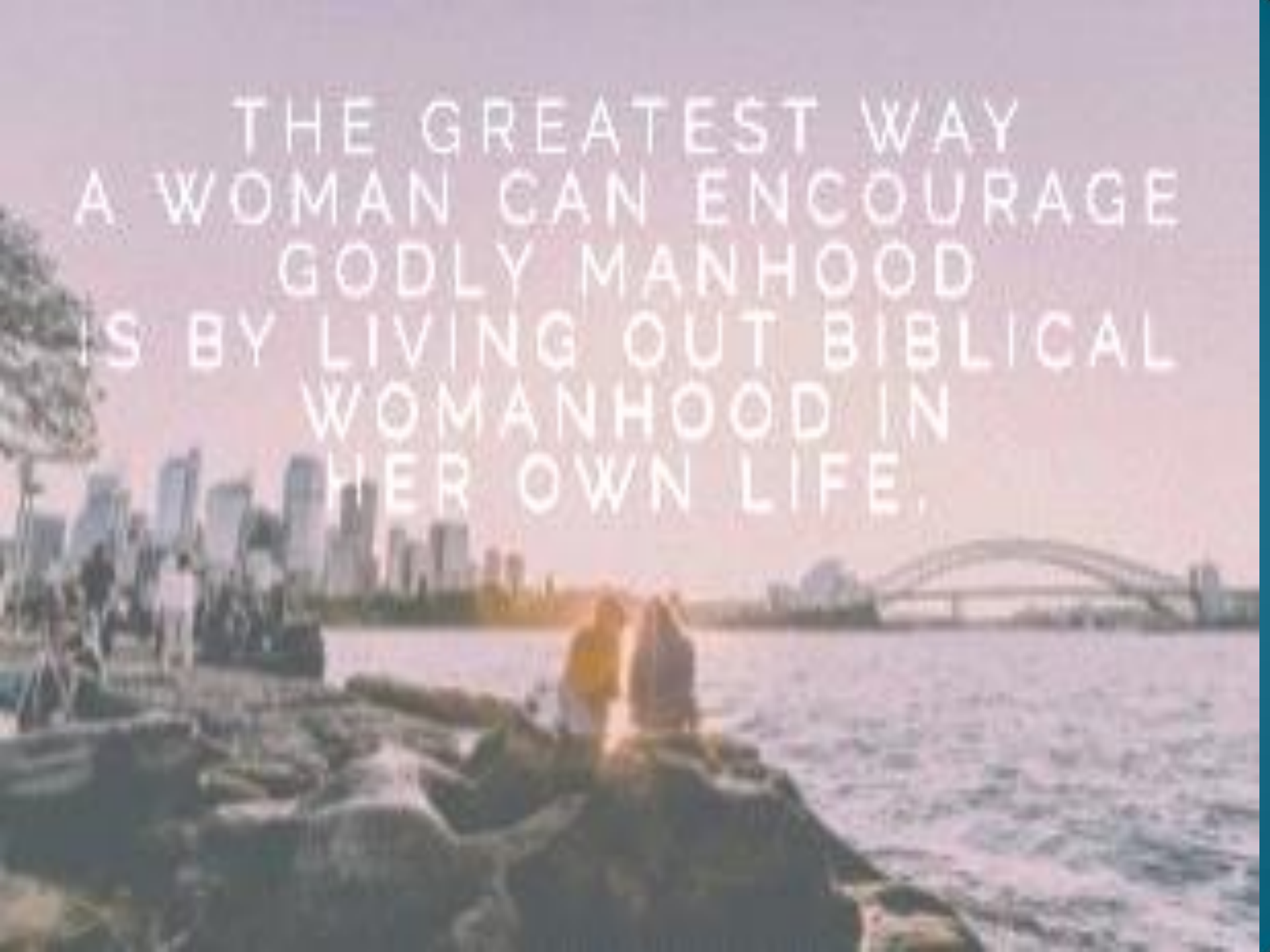
Your feminine heart was  
created as a reflection  
of God's own heart!


Staci Eldrodge



Masculine Woman,  
You Need to Choose.  
Do You Want to be The Girl or  
The Guy In Your Future  
Relationship?

THE GREATEST WAY  
A WOMAN CAN ENCOURAGE  
GODLY MANHOOD  
IS BY LIVING OUT BIBLICAL  
WOMANHOOD IN  
HER OWN LIFE.



A close-up photograph of a woman's hand and forearm. She is wearing a multi-strand pearl bracelet with several rows of pearls. Her hand is resting on a white fabric, possibly a dress or blouse. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of a white garment and a light-colored surface.

*"Authentic femininity is a combination of class, tenderness, and virtue..."*

*"When a woman possesses these traits, a man will naturally want to be more of a gentleman around her."*

*-Jason Evert*

FOREVER HIS BELIEVED

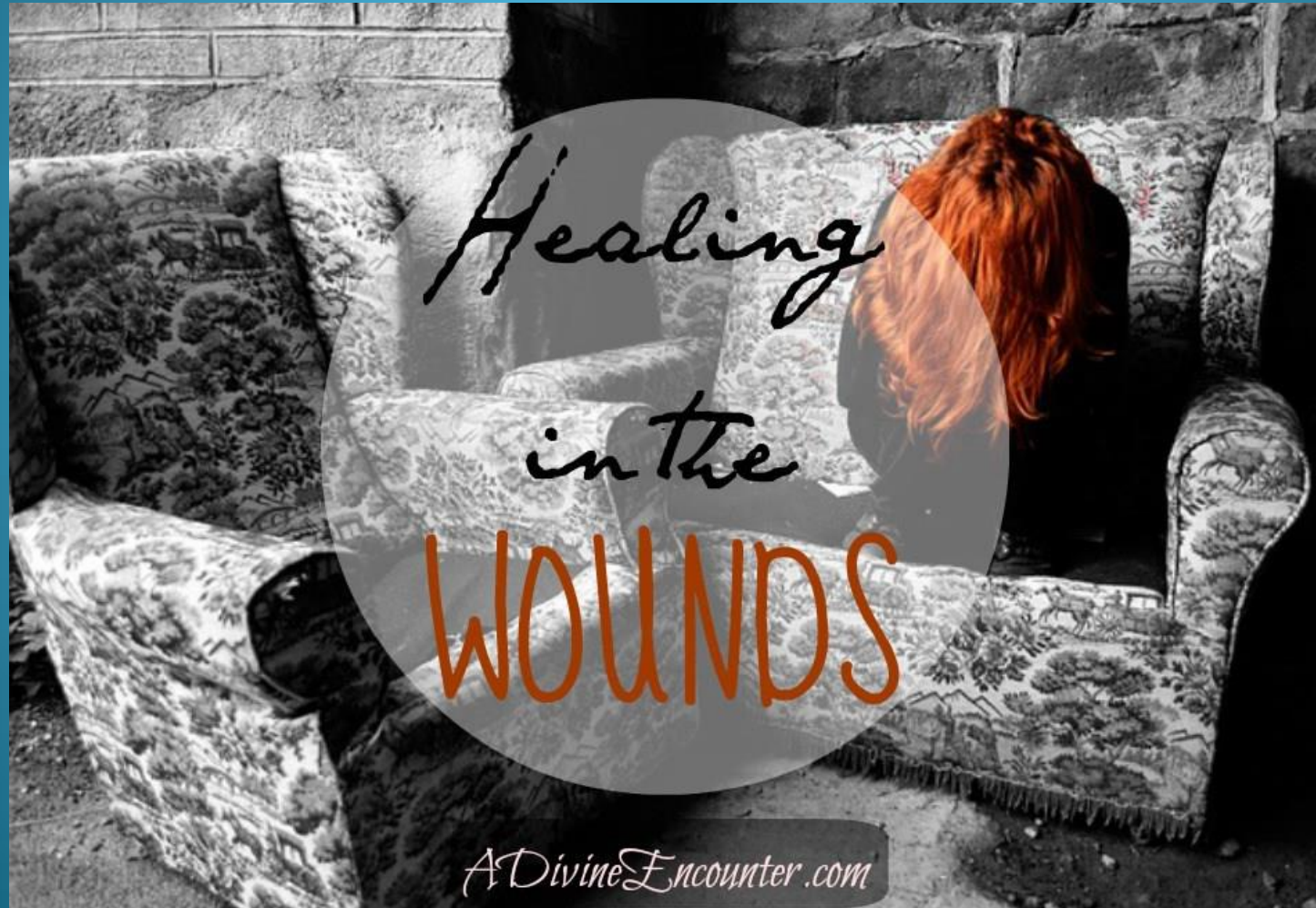
A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in fallen yellow and brown leaves. To the right, there is a gravel path. The background is a dense forest of green trees. The text 'WOMEN' is in a white box, and 'Recalculate' is in a white serif font.

**WOMEN**  
Recalculate

Embrace the gift of our femininity



God has given us the gift of femininity  
It may be in need of healing  
(but it is the core of who we are)



If we receive a gift and it breaks,  
we do not throw it away, we fix it.

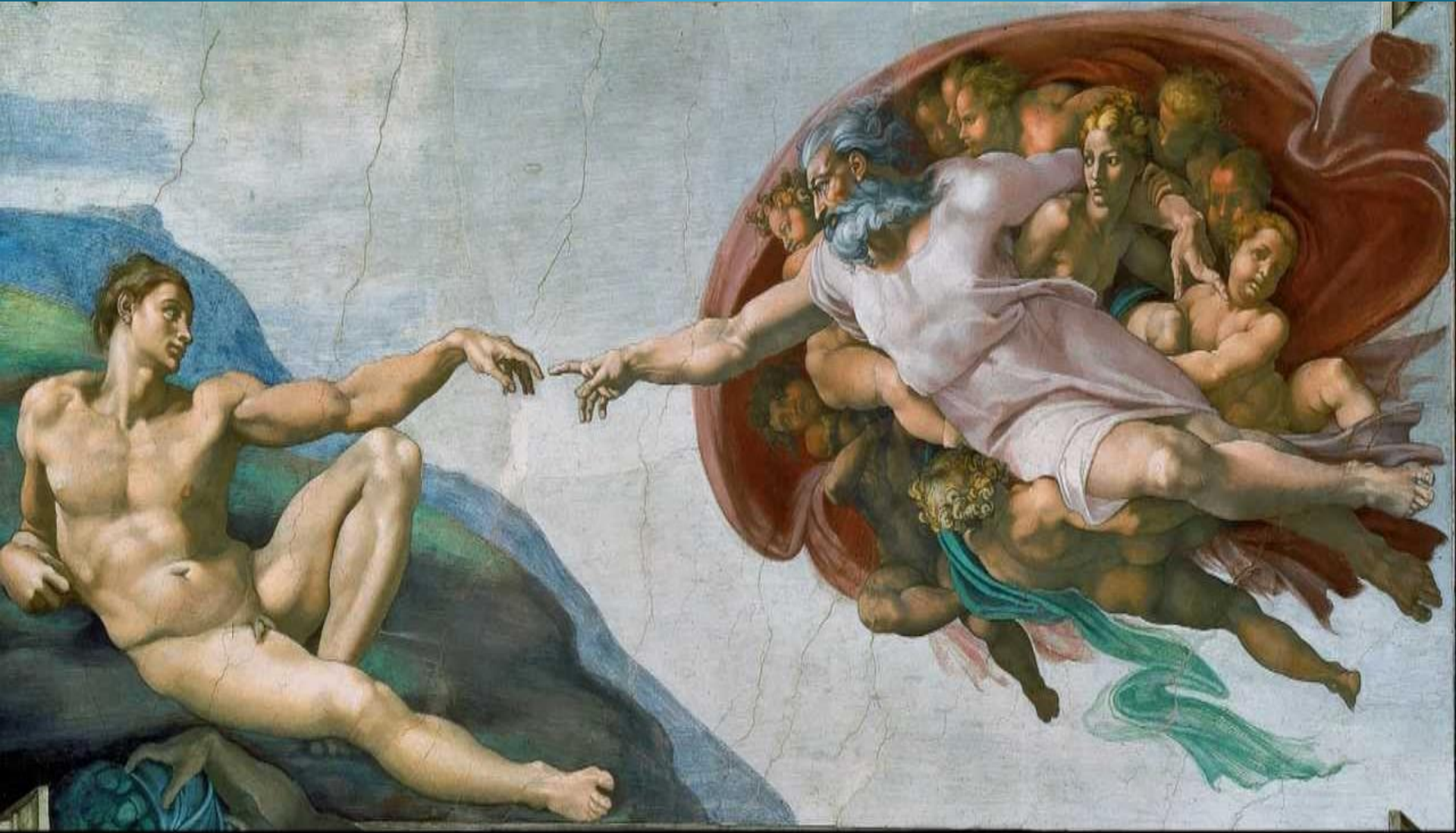




# WHO IS WOMAN?



What is the unique contribution that she brings to the world, her *Feminine Genius*?



# God's plan for creation



God created man “in his own image”

( Gen 1:26)



“The human being is created in the image and likeness of God” JP II

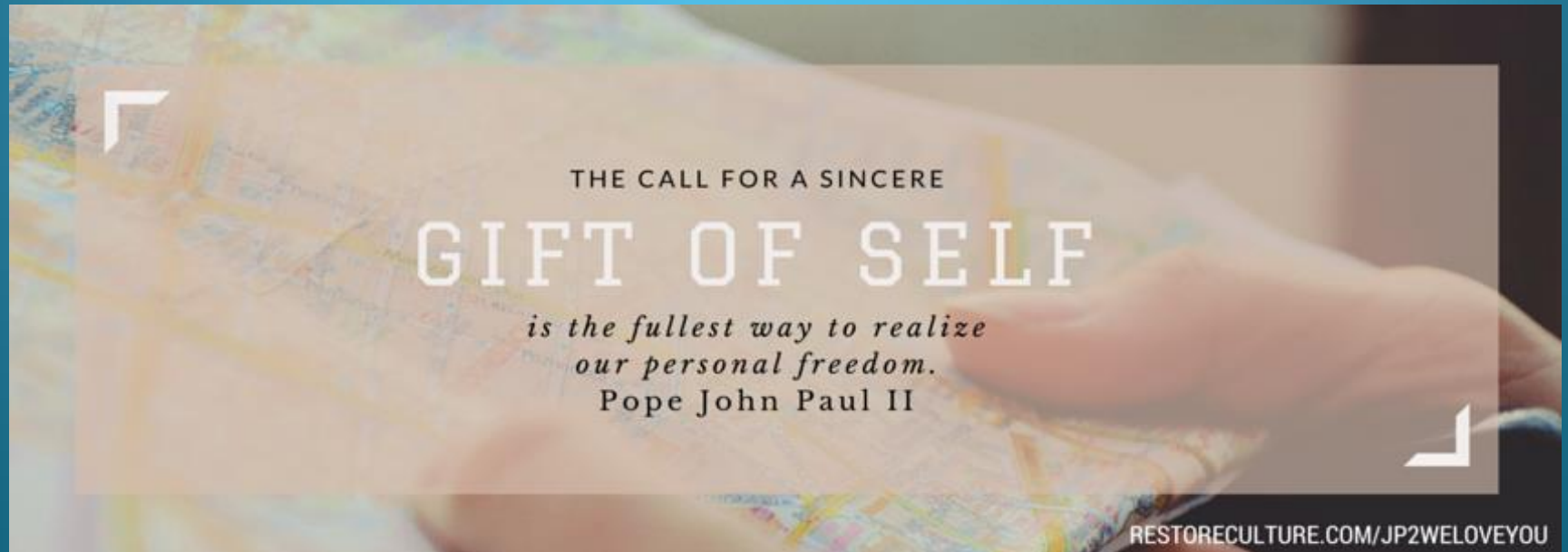
*...In the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27)*



We image God in 2 ways

I. In ourselves:

A. We are rational, free beings



# We image God in 2 Ways

I. In ourselves:

B. and God shares with both of us his attributes:

- Masculine



- Feminine



# God's attributes of femininity throughout scripture-especially Motherhood:

Isaiah: 49:14-15 *Can a woman  
forget her child... even so, I will not*

Isaiah 66:13 *As a Mother comforts  
her child, so will I comfort you.*

Cf. Psalm 131: 2-3 God cares for  
humanity and as a Mother he *"has  
Carried her"*

Isaiah 42:14 and 46: 3-4





# We image God in 2 ways

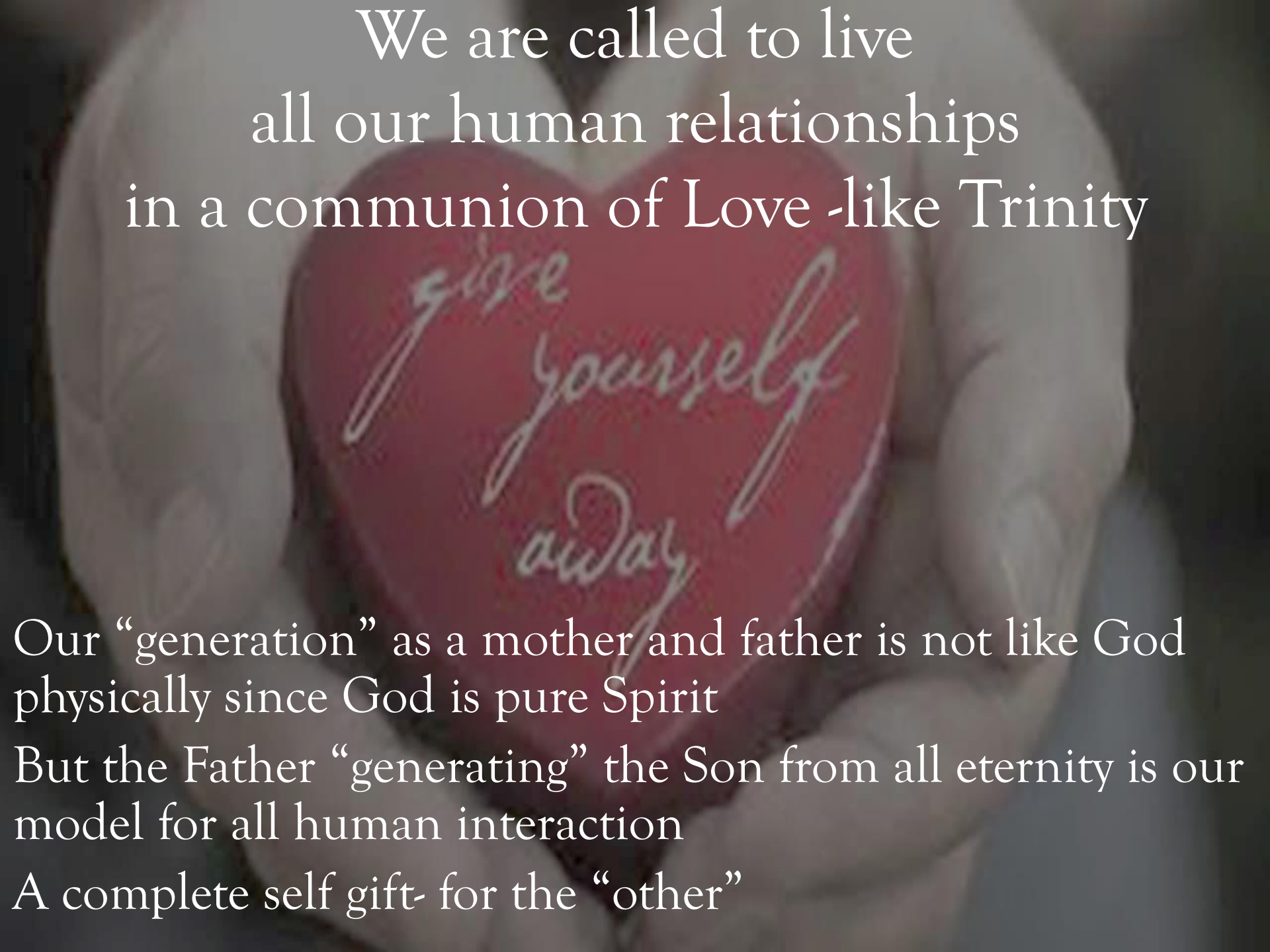
In our communion



Being made in the image and likeness  
of God is not just a GIFT



It is also a TASK  
a responsibility to be,  
to love like God.

A pair of hands is shown holding a red heart. The heart has the words "give yourself away" written on it in a cursive, handwritten style. The background is dark and out of focus.

We are called to live  
all our human relationships  
in a communion of Love-like Trinity

Our “generation” as a mother and father is not like God physically since God is pure Spirit

But the Father “generating” the Son from all eternity is our model for all human interaction

A complete self gift- for the “other”

And how does God love?

Making a complete gift of self for the other



# LOVE

is the

# GIFT OF SELF

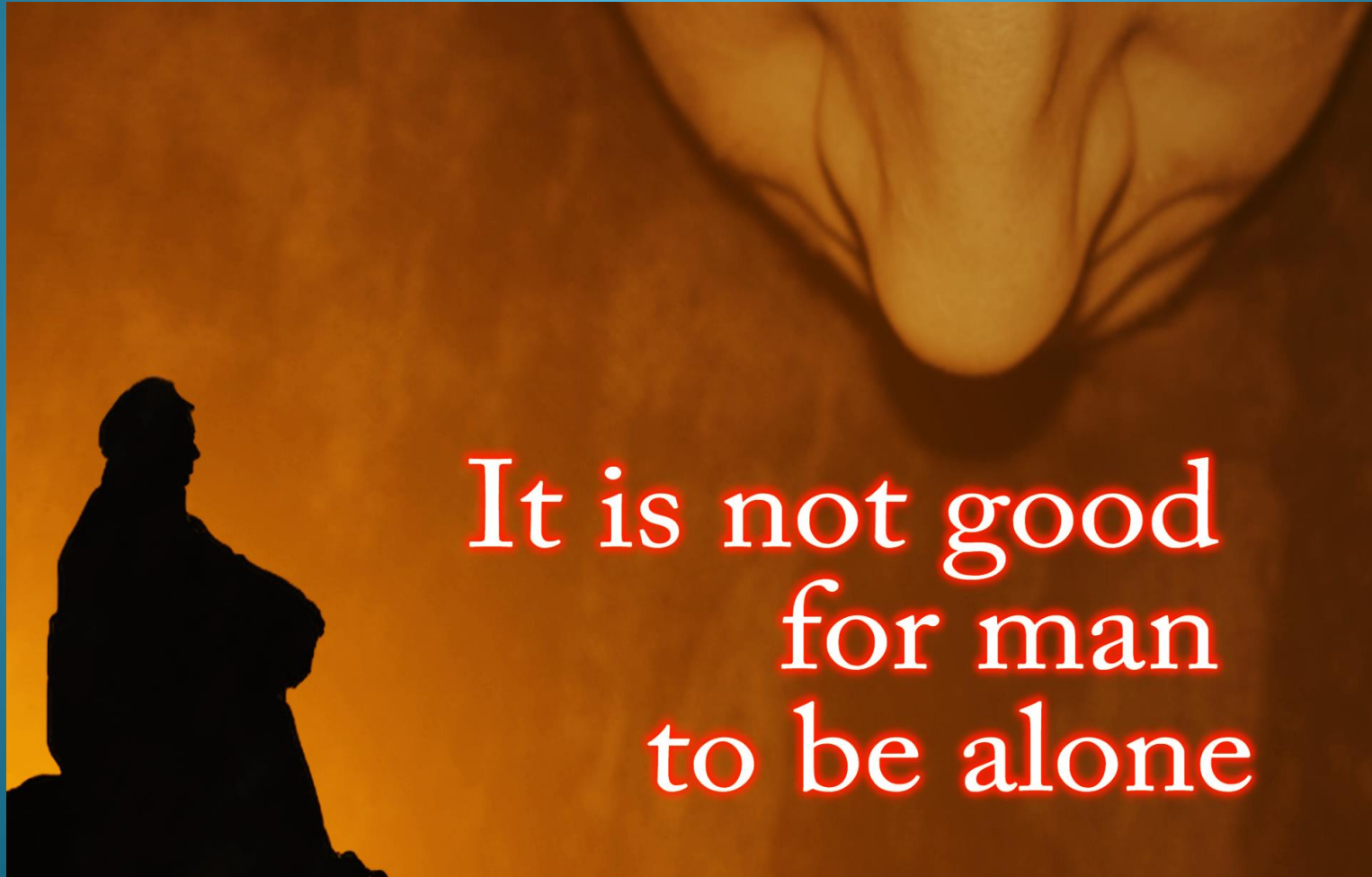
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it means forgetting oneself for the good of the others.

JOHN PAUL II

In the Garden, even though man is surrounded by innumerable creatures ... he realizes he is alone

JPHLW#7



It is not good  
for man  
to be alone

A person is standing in a brightly lit doorway at the end of a long, dark tunnel. The tunnel walls are rough and textured, and the floor is covered in what appears to be dry leaves or debris. The light from the doorway creates a strong contrast with the dark interior of the tunnel.

Then the Lord God said  
"It is not good for the  
man to be alone;

I will make him a  
helper suitable  
for him."

Genesis 2:18

The creation of woman is marked by the principle of help,  
a help which is not one-sided but mutual. JPIILW#7

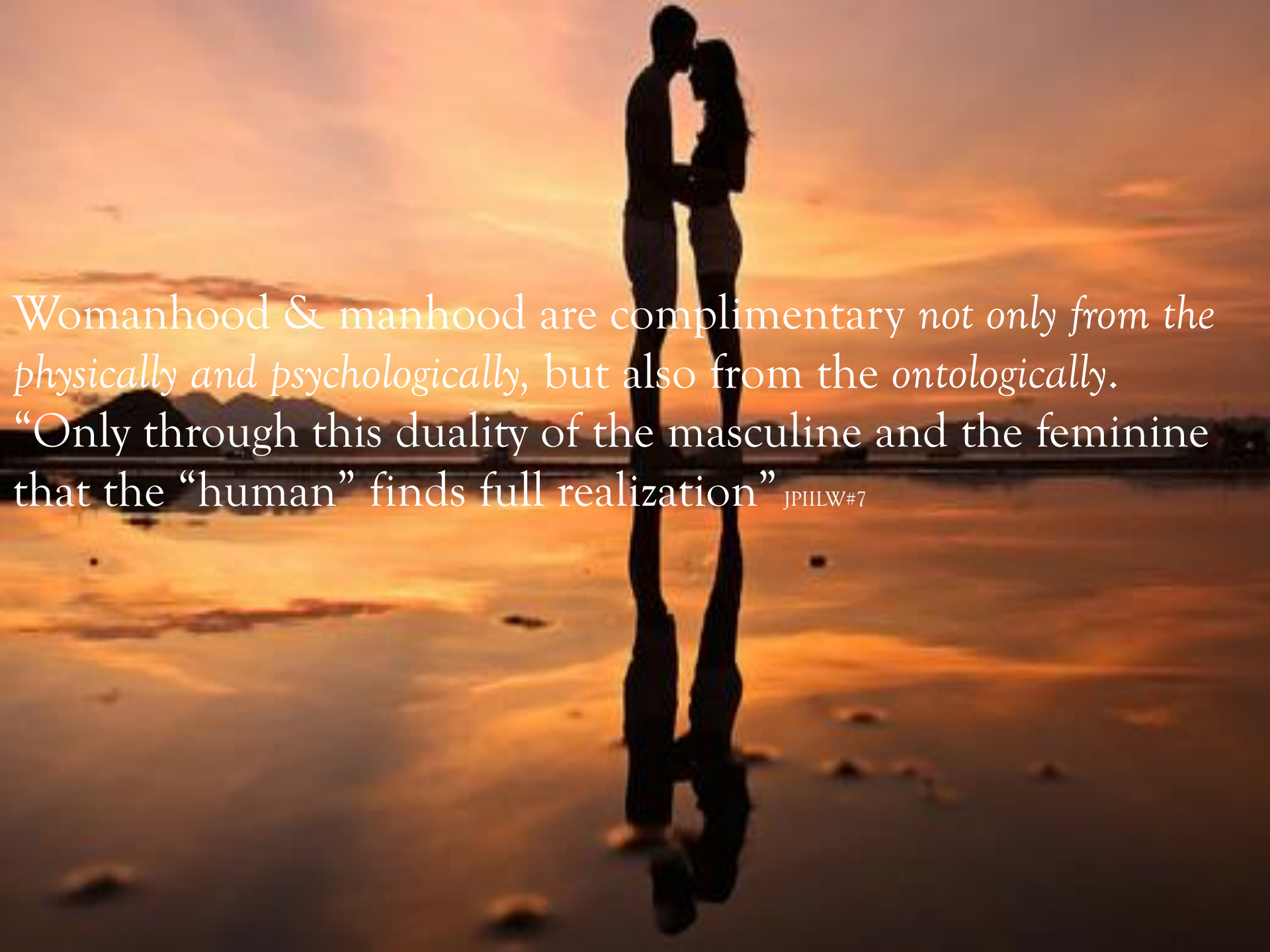






Woman complements man, just as man complements woman.  
Womanhood expresses the “human” as much as manhood does  
but in a different and **complimentary way.**” JPIILW#7



A romantic scene of a couple in silhouette, embracing and kissing on a beach at sunset. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, yellow, and red, with the sun low on the horizon. The couple's dark forms are reflected in the wet sand of the beach. The overall mood is intimate and serene.

Womanhood & manhood are complimentary *not only from the physically and psychologically, but also from the ontologically.*  
“Only through this duality of the masculine and the feminine that the “human” finds full realization” JPHILW#7

# “Fill the earth and subdue it”

God blessed them and said to them,  
“Be fruitful and increase in number;  
fill the earth and subdue it. Rule  
over the fish in the sea and the  
birds in the sky and over every  
living creature that moves on the  
ground.”

Genesis 1:28 NIV

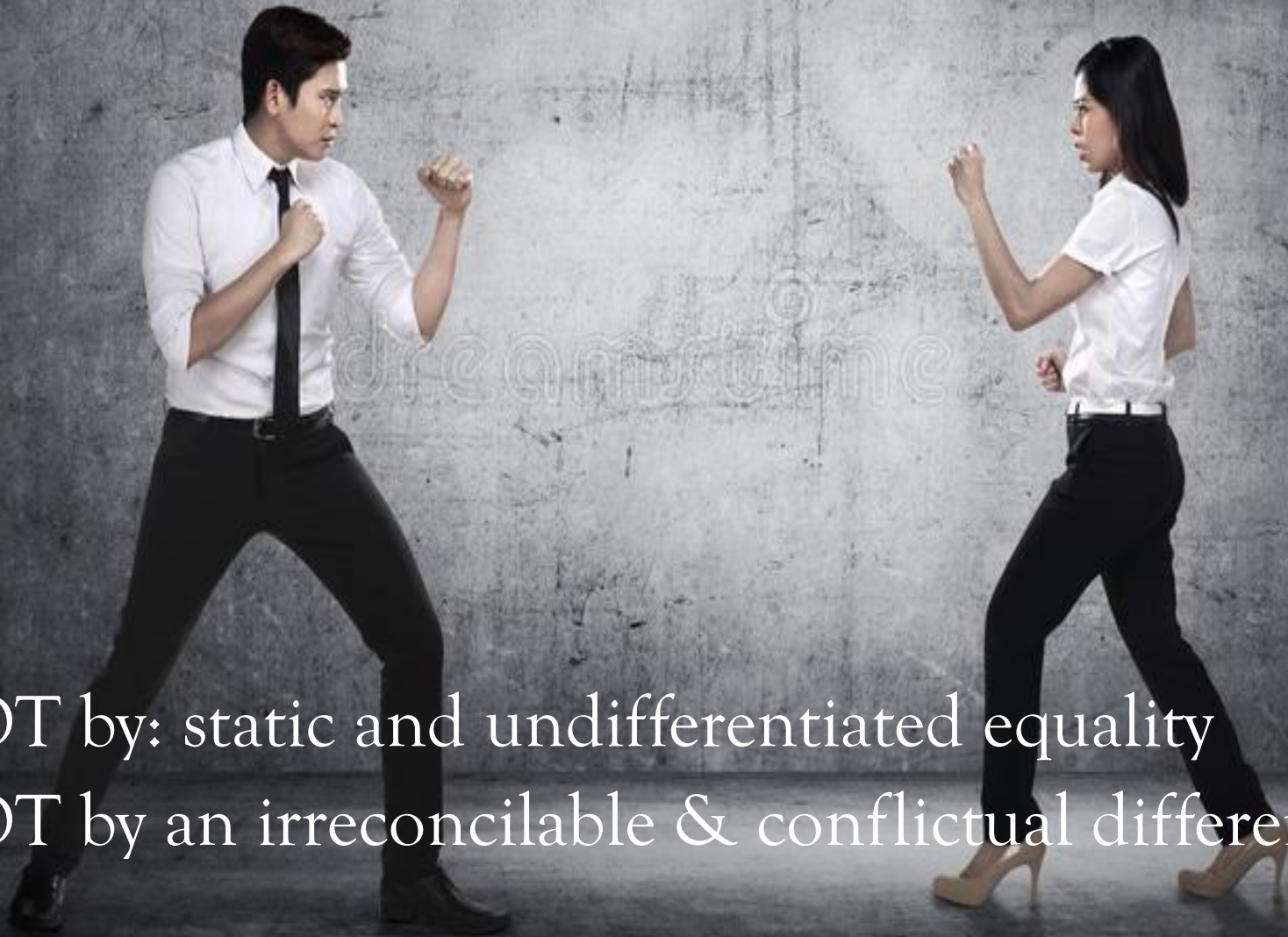
*And God gave them a mission...*

“God blessed them, and God said to them,  
‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth  
and subdue it’

- Genesis 1:28

- Procreate
- Both responsible for the earth and its resources
- Both share in this responsibility

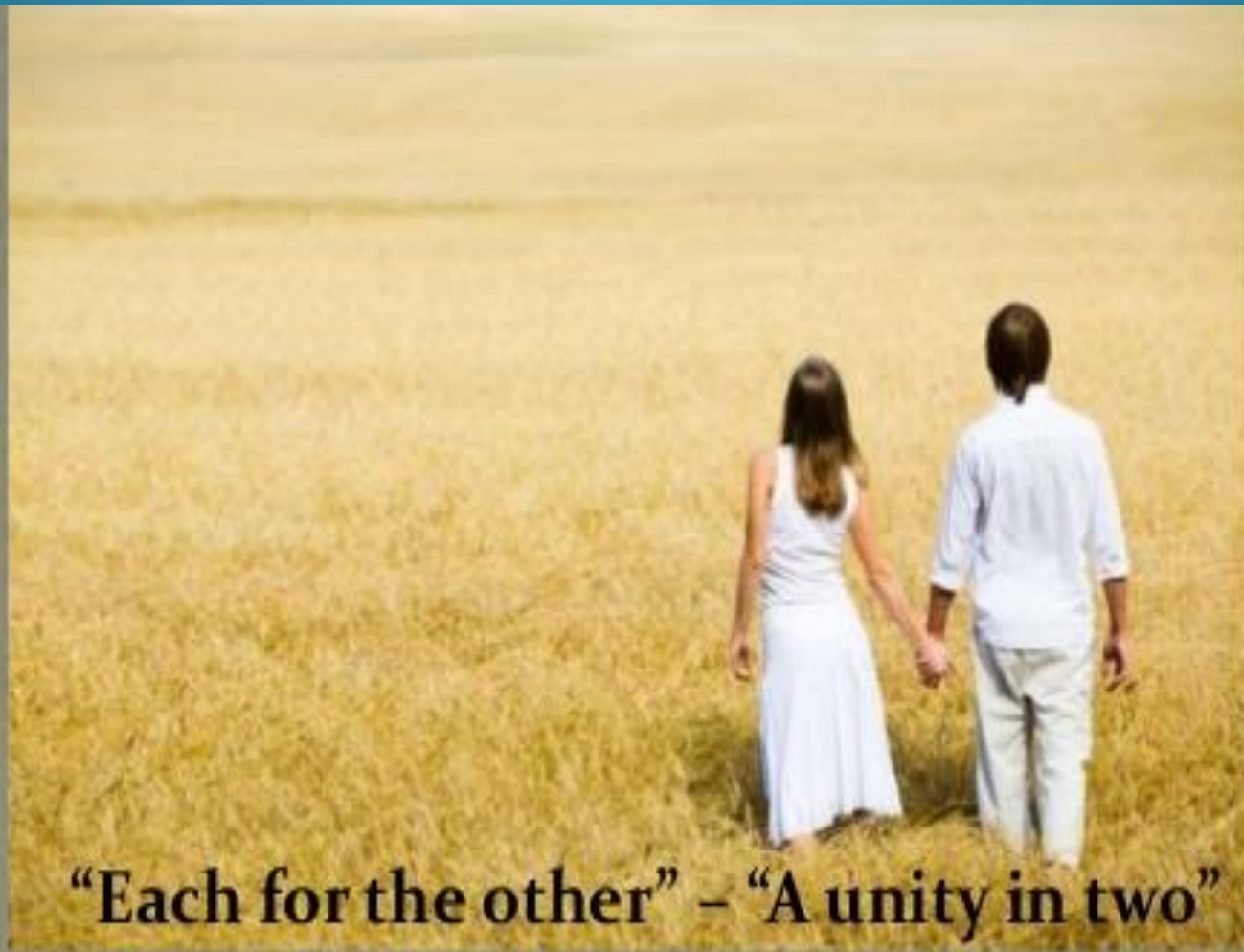
As Husband and wives being fruitful  
And as both, exercising dominion over the earth  
woman and man are marked



- NOT by: static and undifferentiated equality
- NOT by an irreconcilable & conflictual difference.

God's Plan for the husband and wife:

...Their most natural relationship... is the “unity of the two”



**“Each for the other” – “A unity in two”**

God created man and woman together

and willed each for the other.

# Man & Woman are Equal

Both are created in the image and likeness of God:

both *equally image God.*

Both have a *common beginning:*

Both are the only *rational free beings*

Both have the responsibility to *be fruitful*

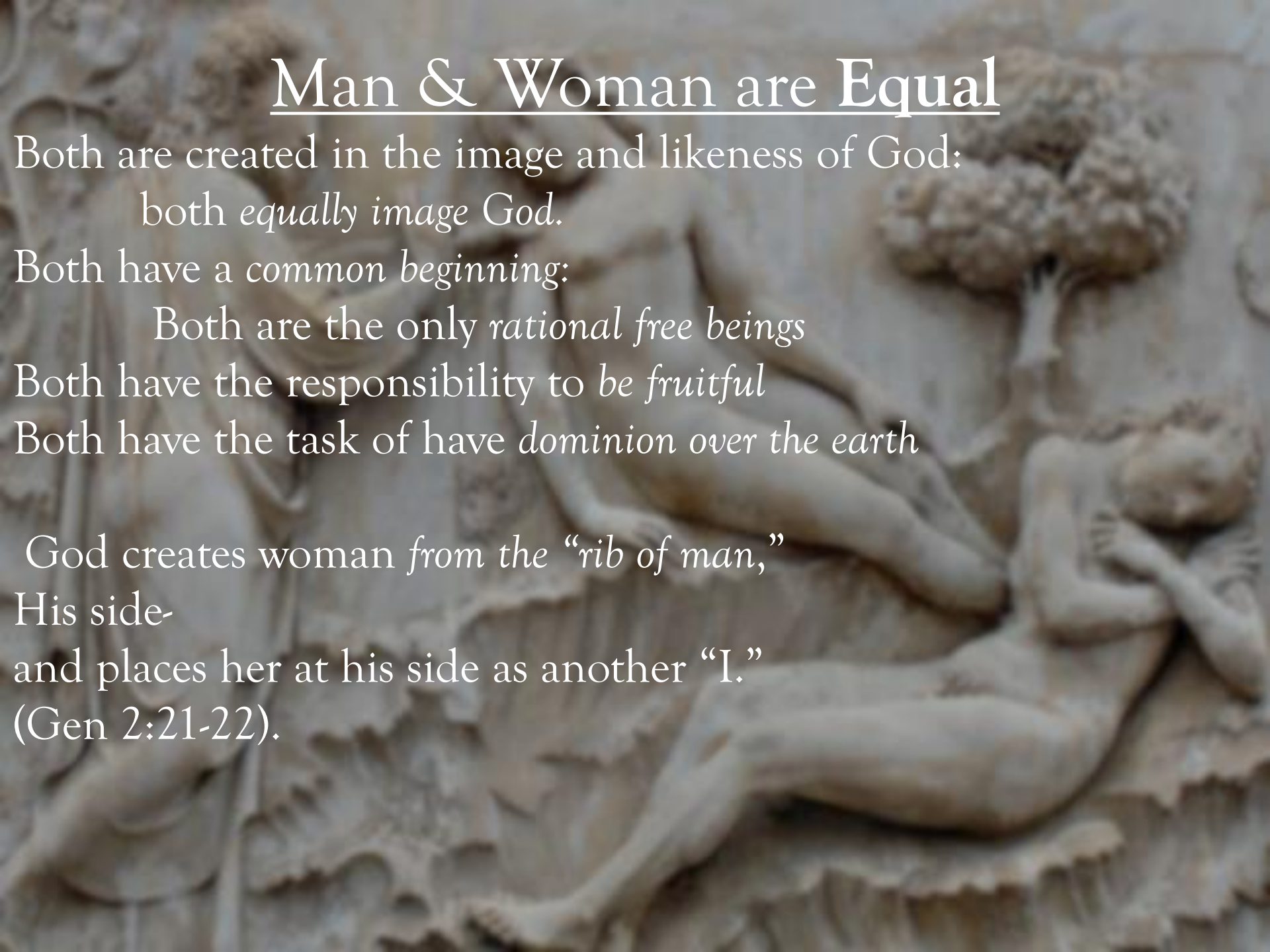
Both have the task of *have dominion over the earth*

God creates woman *from the “rib of man,”*

His side-

and places her at his side as another “I.”

(Gen 2:21-22).



# W O M A N

was made from the rib of a man.  
Not from his head to top him  
nor his foot to be stepped on by him,  
but from his side to be **equal** to him,  
under his arm to be **protected** by him,  
and near his heart to be **loved** by him.




Notice parallel: as from the *side* of Adam -Eve was born,  
so also from the Pierced *side* of Christ' at the crucifixion,  
Christ's Bride- the Church, was born. (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6).

Side of Adam- Eve born



Pierced Heart- Church born



A photograph of a smiling couple in wedding attire. The man is in the foreground, wearing a blue vest and a patterned bow tie, holding up his right hand to show a wedding ring on his ring finger. The woman is behind him, wearing a white dress and a floral crown, also holding up her right hand to show a wedding ring on her ring finger. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and a path.

Both are  
Equal  
but  
not the  
Same

Equality is not sameness

# *Viva La Difference!*

Men and Women  
are scientifically different:  
Biologically,  
Psychologically,  
Hormonally,  
and  
even Cell level

And this difference is intended by God!





Women have contributed:

Procreation & Family Life

(especially as Mothers)

And in History

(Primarily spiritual & cultural, but also social-political & economic)

The various sectors of society, nations, states and the progress of humanity are deeply indebted to the contribution of women.” JPIILW#8



What does JP II say is the  
**RICHNESS OF FEMININITY**

What are the  
**SPECIAL PREDISPOSITIONS**  
women have

that are capable of enriching the world  
according to her own vocation to build a civilization of love.



**WOMEN MUST NOT DO:**  
Women need to reject models of male domination to acknowledge the true genius of women.

*In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place, in thought and action, which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a “new feminism” which rejects the temptation of imitating models of “male domination,” in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome all discrimination, violence, and exploitation. You are called to bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship – Gospel of Life #99*

A painting of a red heart with a face, held by hands. The heart is the central focus, rendered in a vibrant red color with a textured, almost fabric-like appearance. It has a human-like face with dark, swirling eyes, a nose, and a smiling mouth. The heart is held gently by two hands, one on the left and one on the right, with fingers visible. The background is a mix of blue and green tones, suggesting a sky or a natural setting. The overall style is soft and expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of warmth.

# What Women are:

The Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty mirroring the loftiest sentiments the human heart:

From John Paul II, on *Mother of the Redeemer*

the self-  
offering  
totality  
of love

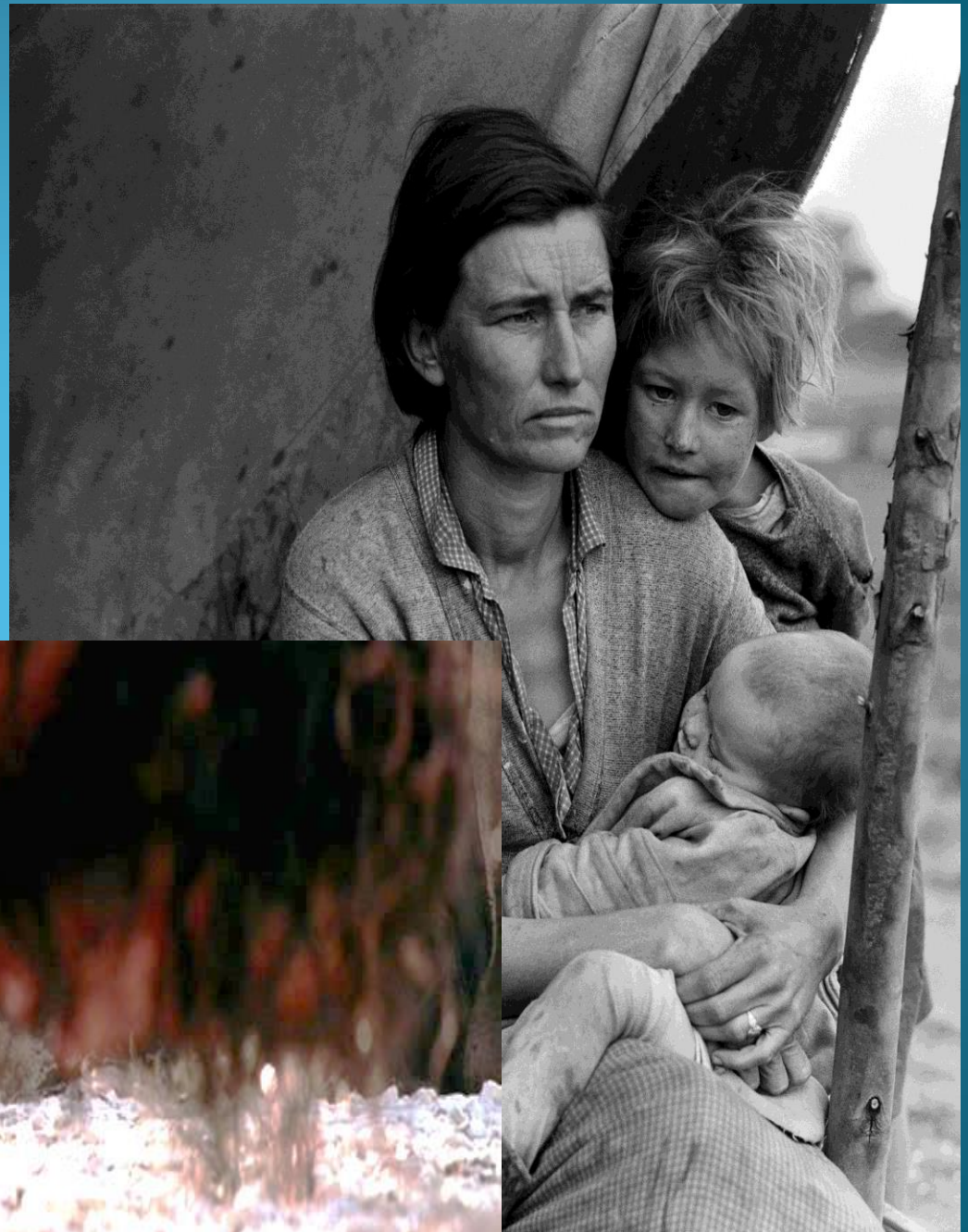




# Mother who lost seven sons 2 Maccabees 7



strength  
capable of  
bearing the  
greatest  
sorrows







tireless devotion to work

Limitless  
fidelity





ability to  
combine  
penetrating  
intuition



with words of  
support and  
encouragement

Intuitive,  
Insightful

"Thank you, every woman,  
for the simple fact of being a

*woman.*

Through the insight which is  
so much a part of your  
womanhood you enrich the  
world's understanding  
and help to make human  
relations more

*honest & authentic."*

- St. John Paul II





Wedding at Cana



***I DON'T JUST WANT TO BE  
'PRETTY,' I WANT TO BE  
"I see Jesus in her."***



# RECEPTIVITY



Our bodies speak a language of who they are

God has given the feminine woman the  
beauty of receptivity to the other



Women are the first to *receive*  
in the order of Love



All people are called to be  
receptive to God

Women are built to Receive

Language of the Body



Women are the  
first to receive  
Love in the Order  
of Love and thus-  
They can then  
show men how to:  
Love & Receive

Blessed Mother showed the apostles  
how to receive Love



The chief difference is in **male initiative** and **female receptivity**.

For the Marital Act (sex act) even to happen, a husband must act, in an energetic and obvious way, and his wife must receive his action.

He exercises a kind of initiative and the woman is receptive to it. But his initiative is not aggressive and oppressive. It is a headlong rush to hand himself over to his woman, lock, stock, and barrel.

And her receptivity is not passive and degrading. She gratefully accepts his compliment and responds with an equally active gift in kind, rushing to hand herself over to him, lock, stock, and barrel.

JPII Love and Responsibility







For a brief moment, the two become putty in each other's hands, achieving a communion of persons that is uniquely intense for both of them-

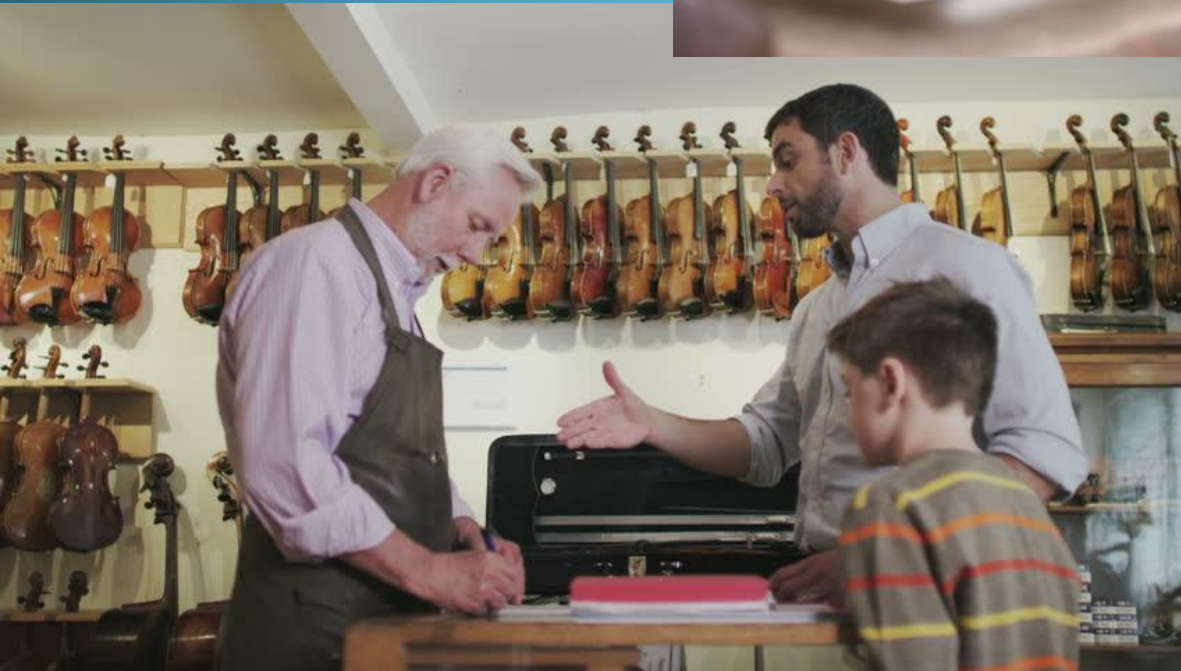
That uniquely intense moment is sacramental. As a sacrament, it is a causal symbol of their entire life together, their communion carries over from the bedroom to every aspect of their lives... JP II

Their  
communion  
in the  
bedroom  
carries  
over...

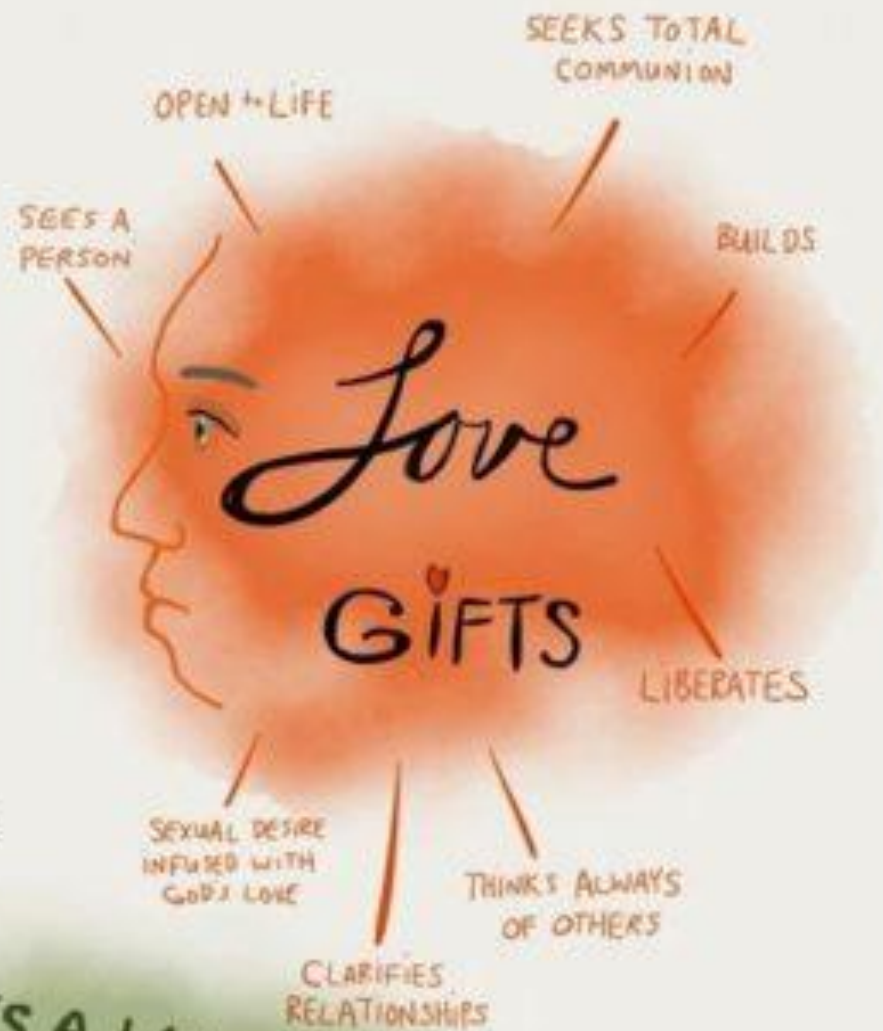


to the kitchen, the living  
room, the yard —  
wherever they go  
as they live out the  
promise of that  
moment.

Their special moment is also sacramental for the rest of mankind, a model for all other interactions of all human persons



— in family life and business, education, health care, politics, and international relations. This momentary marital holiness is meant to characterize all of human life.



THE BODY SPEAKS A LANGUAGE

@BillDonaghy  
THEOGRAPHY101

# Beyond Marriage

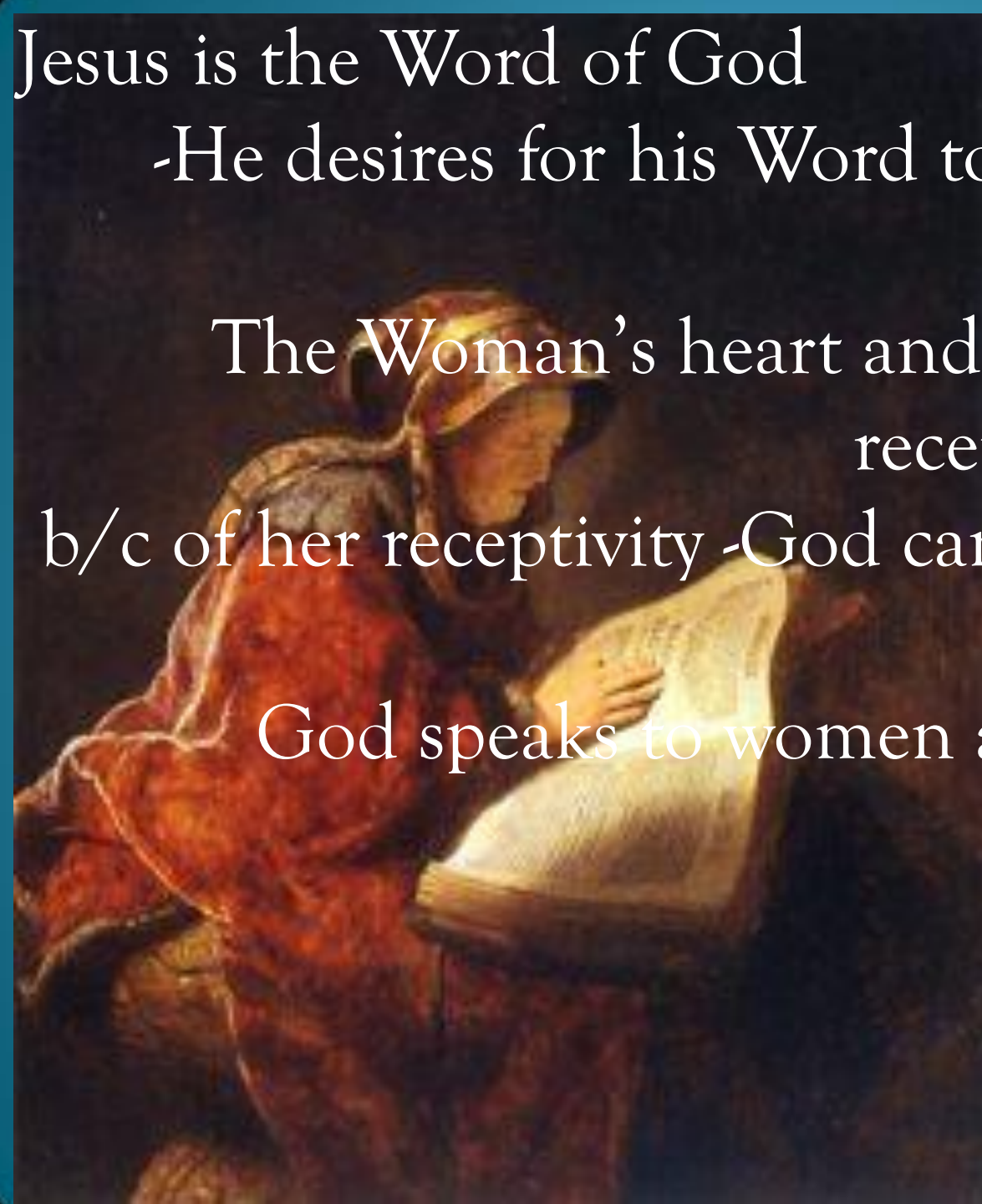
Jesus is the Word of God

-He desires for his Word to be received by his children.

The Woman's heart and mind is this open, receptive vessel so God

b/c of her receptivity -God can entrust to her his treasures:

God speaks to women about the things of God



For  
Religious-  
*He is*  
our Spouse



And He approaches us  
as a Spouse



and we receive His  
Love in the  
Eucharist



Our Bridegroom also tells us:



"This is my body which is given for you"

We intimately commune with Him



The fruit of  
this  
communion  
is  
A. Union  
with Him



The fruit of this communion is:  
B. Spiritual Children



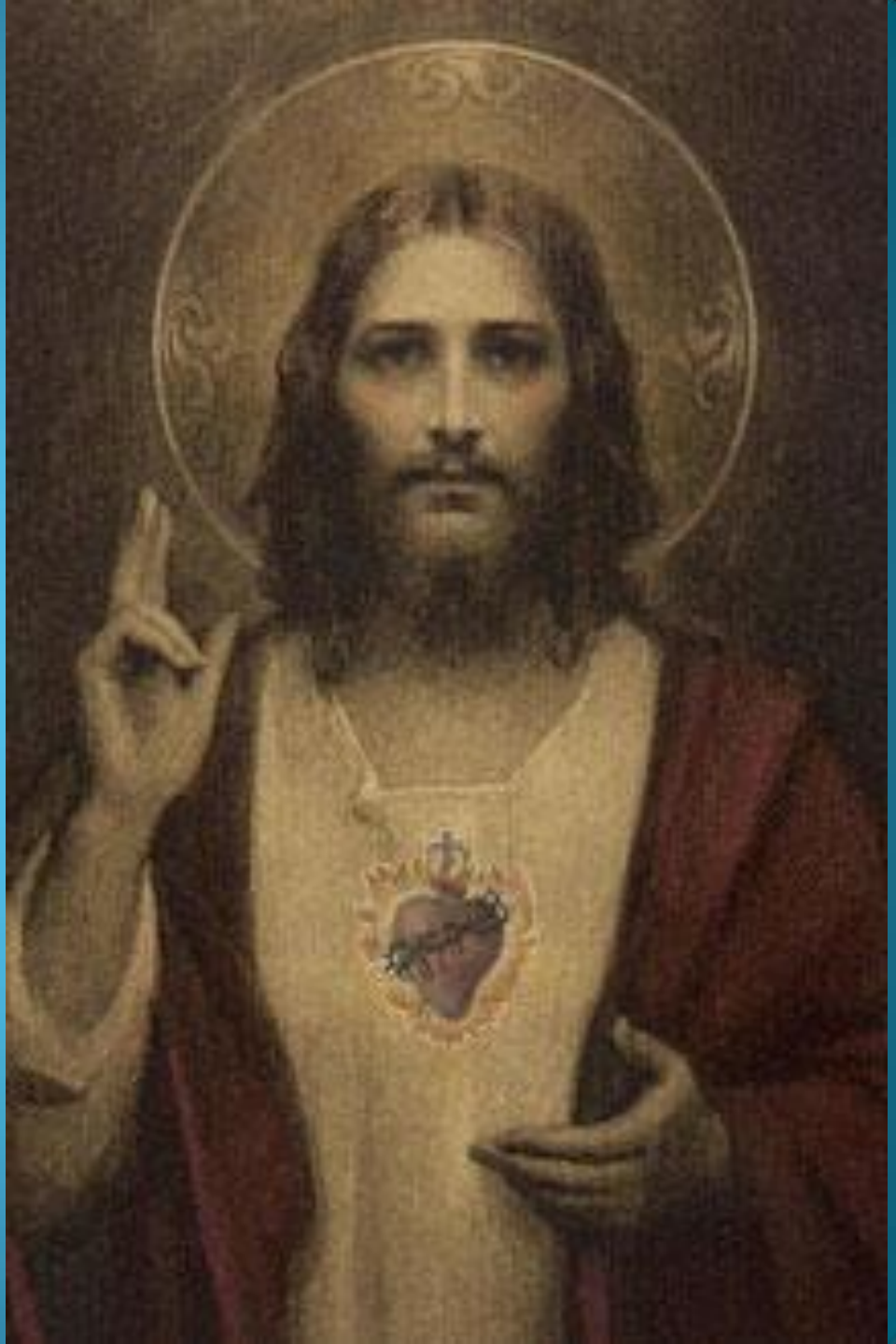
Teaching others to love Him



many...

Because receptive  
women can be  
channels  
of God for the  
world

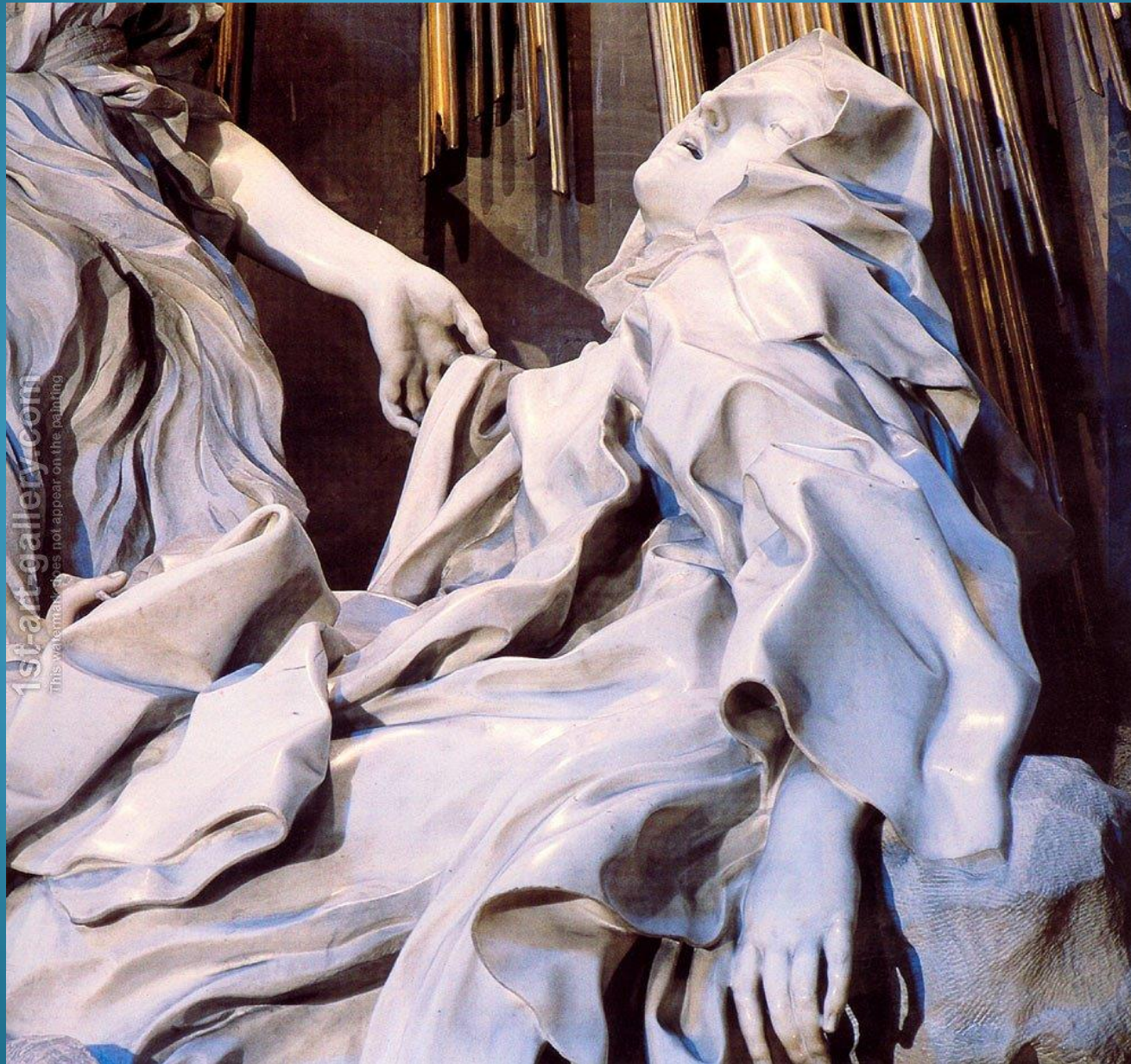
Throughout history  
Lord has chosen Religious  
and Lay women to reveal his  
Heart..



# St Margaret Mary



# St Teresa of Avila

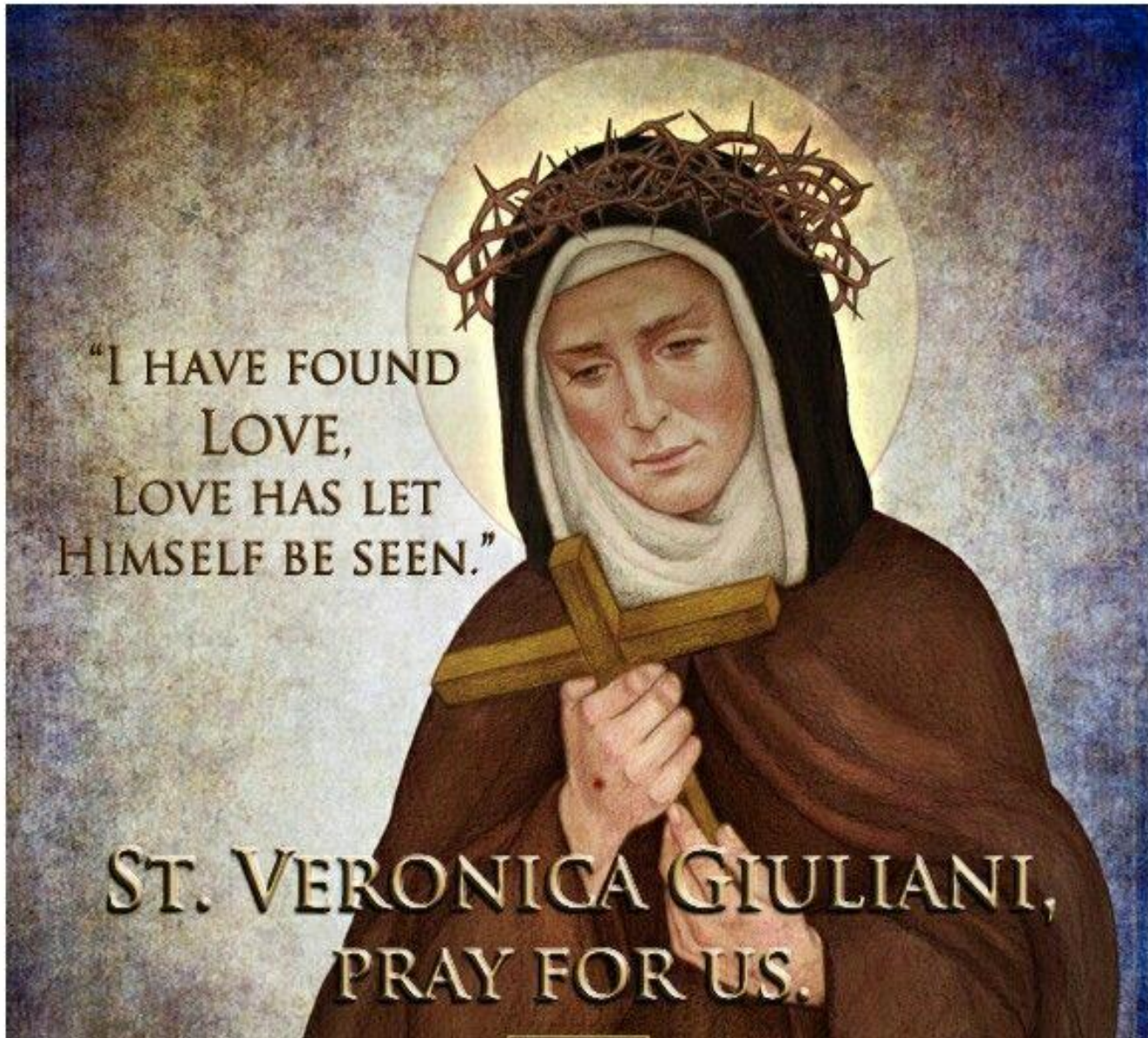






St Maria Faustina

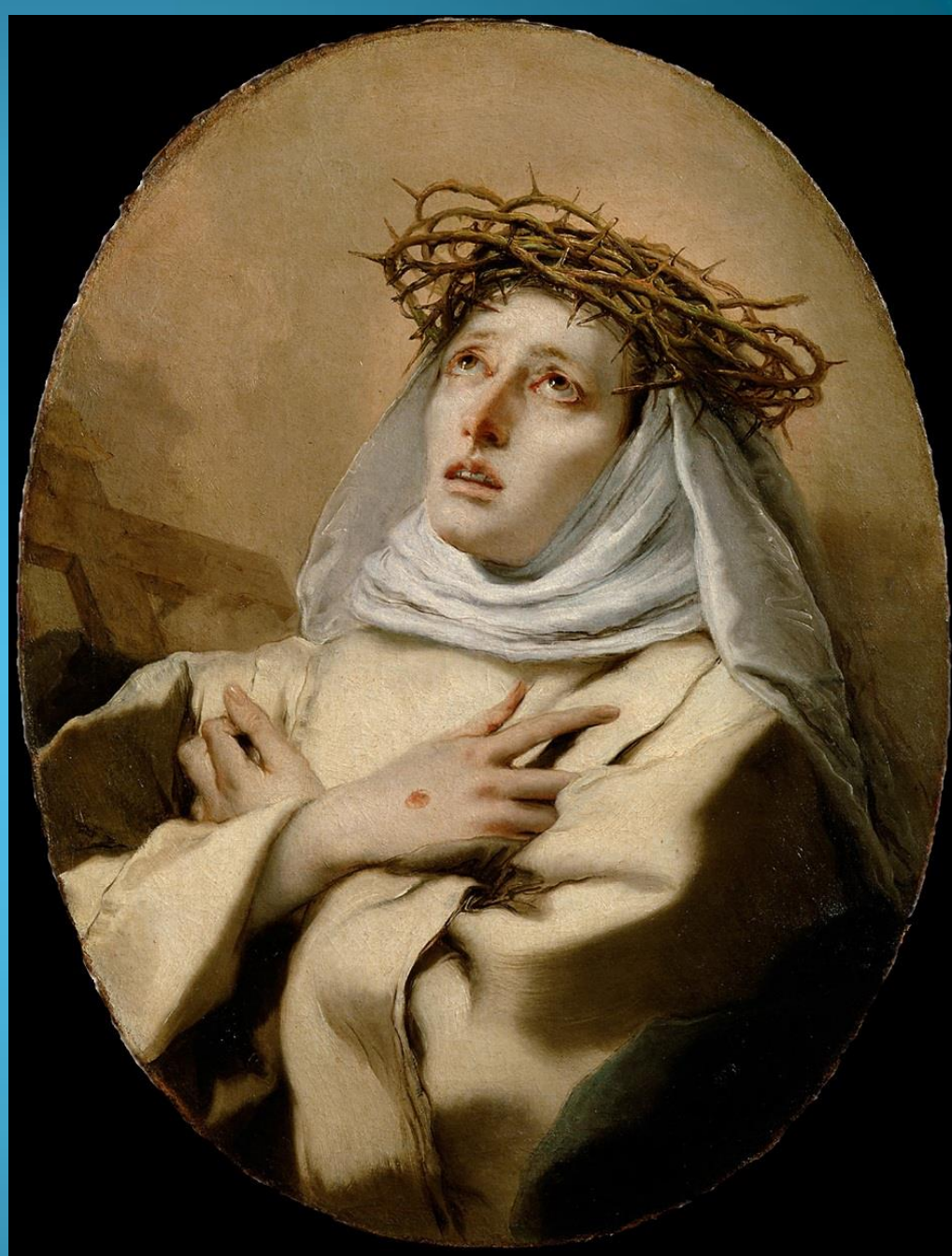
# St Veronica Giuliani



"I HAVE FOUND  
LOVE,  
LOVE HAS LET  
HIMSELF BE SEEN."

ST. VERONICA GIULIANI,  
PRAY FOR US.

St Catherine of  
Sienna



# Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich



# St Gemma Galgani



JESUS, I SHALL LOVE YOU, I SHALL LOVE YOU ALWAYS;  
WHEN DAY BREAKS, WHEN EVENING TURNS INTO NIGHT,  
AT EVERY HOUR, AT EVERY MOMENT;  
I SHALL LOVE YOU ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS.

SAINT GEMMA GALGANI

# Edith Stein

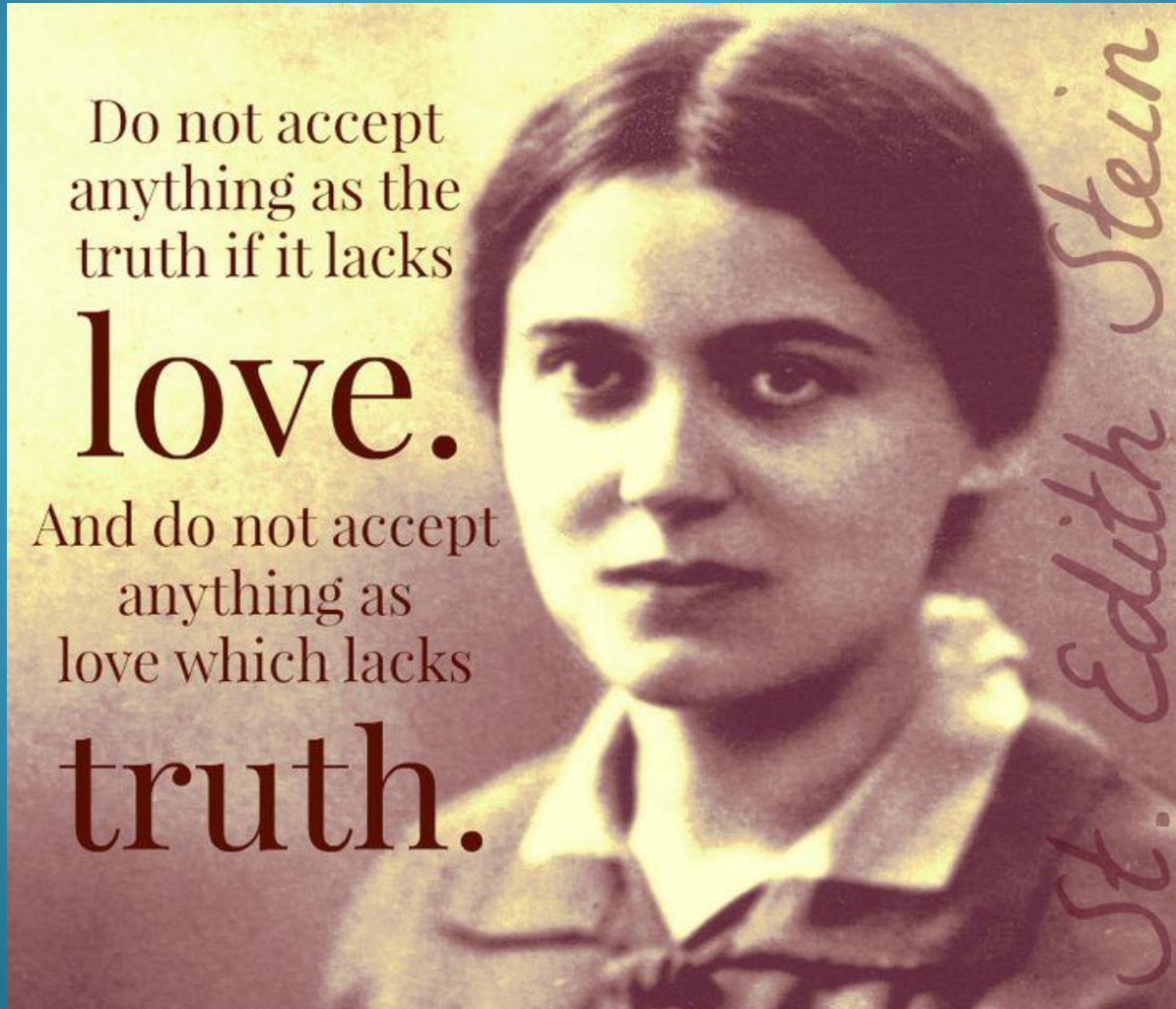
## St. Benedicta of the Cross

Do not accept  
anything as the  
truth if it lacks

**love.**

And do not accept  
anything as  
love which lacks

**truth.**



*Those who love have been granted  
the special privilege of seeing with  
incredible intensity the beauty of the  
one they love.*

*- Alice von Hildebrand*





# Blessed Mother

God chose to come into the world through a woman;  
Could have chosen any way he wanted.

What does this teach us?

The gift of womanhood  
To gift we have to bring life:  
physical and spiritual life



Mary sheds light on womanhood as such by the very fact that God, in the sublime event of the Incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman. It can thus be said that women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement. In the light of Mary, the Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement. — Blessed John Paul II [Redemptoris](#)

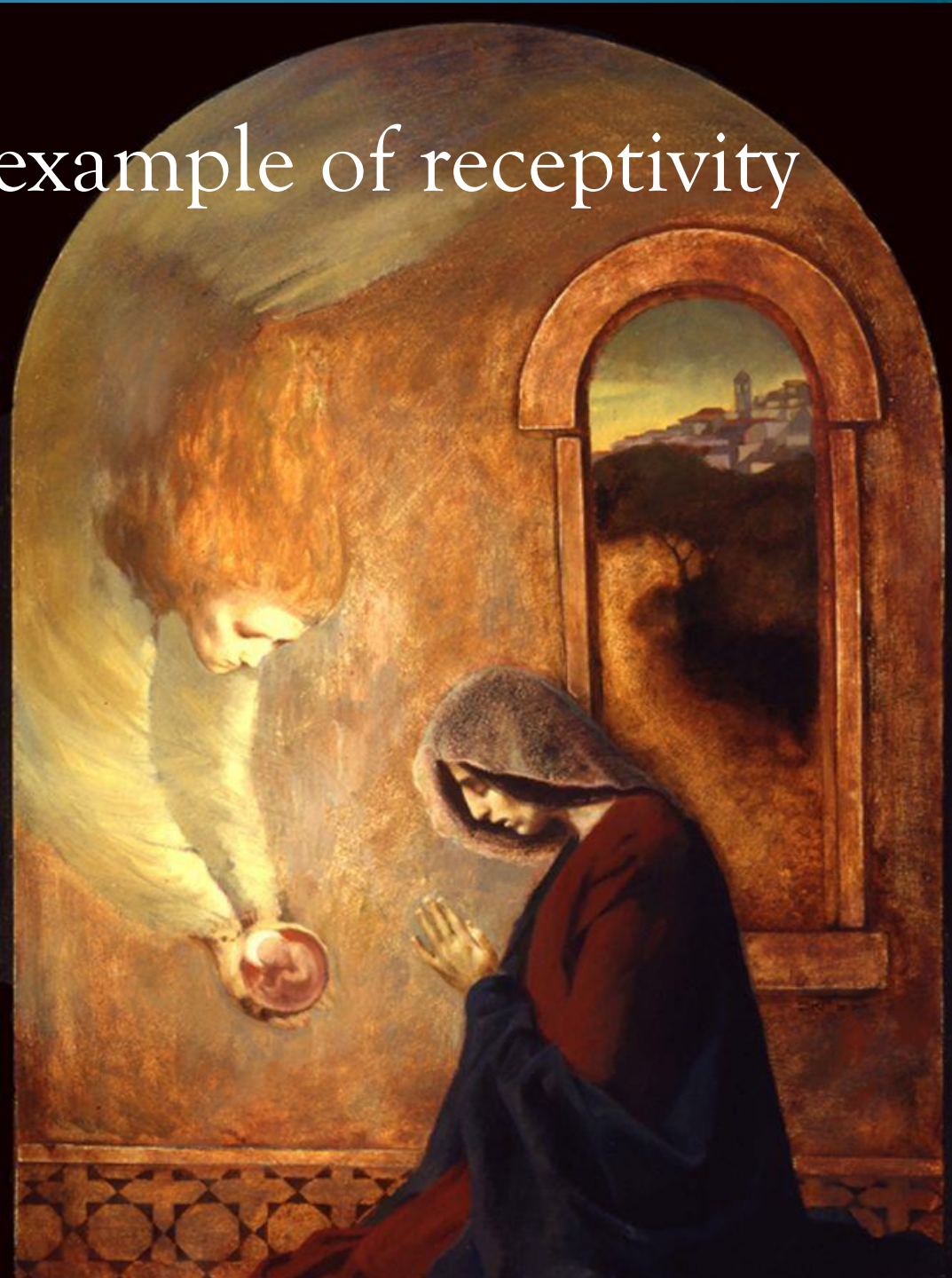
[Mater](#) (46)



# Mary, Greatest example of receptivity

She received

- Jesus
- St John at the foot of the Cross
- The Apostles at Pentecost
- God's perfect Plan for her in everything



# GREAT LOVE helps women OVERCOME THEIR FEARS

“In the arduous test of faith and fidelity women prove stronger than men in time of danger precisely because of their great love.” JPII



gettyimages®  
Fred Ramage

# So many killed for professing their Faith in Christ

Denisa, a sixteen-year-old, was beheaded for her faith.

Cecilia was placed in a scalding bath for several minutes and then beheaded.



# Perpetua and Felicity

Felicity- married and pregnant, and Perpetua, were stripped naked and thrown to a wild bull to be gored, but not killed. Then they were beheaded. These women were martyred simply for confessing a faith in Christ.



# Women of Grace, Brave and Invincible



I feel an indescribable pleasure in reading the Acts of the Martyrs; but when the Martyr is a woman, my enthusiasm is doubled.

For the frailer the instrument, the great is the grace, the brighter the trophy, the grander the victory; and this, not because of her weakness, but because the devil is conquered by her, by whom he once conquered us.

He conquered by a woman,  
and now a woman conquers him



**I am not afraid;  
I was born to  
do this.**

— *Joan of Arc*



LEELEE SOBIESKI IN THE EPIC STORY OF SAINT

**JOAN OF ARC**

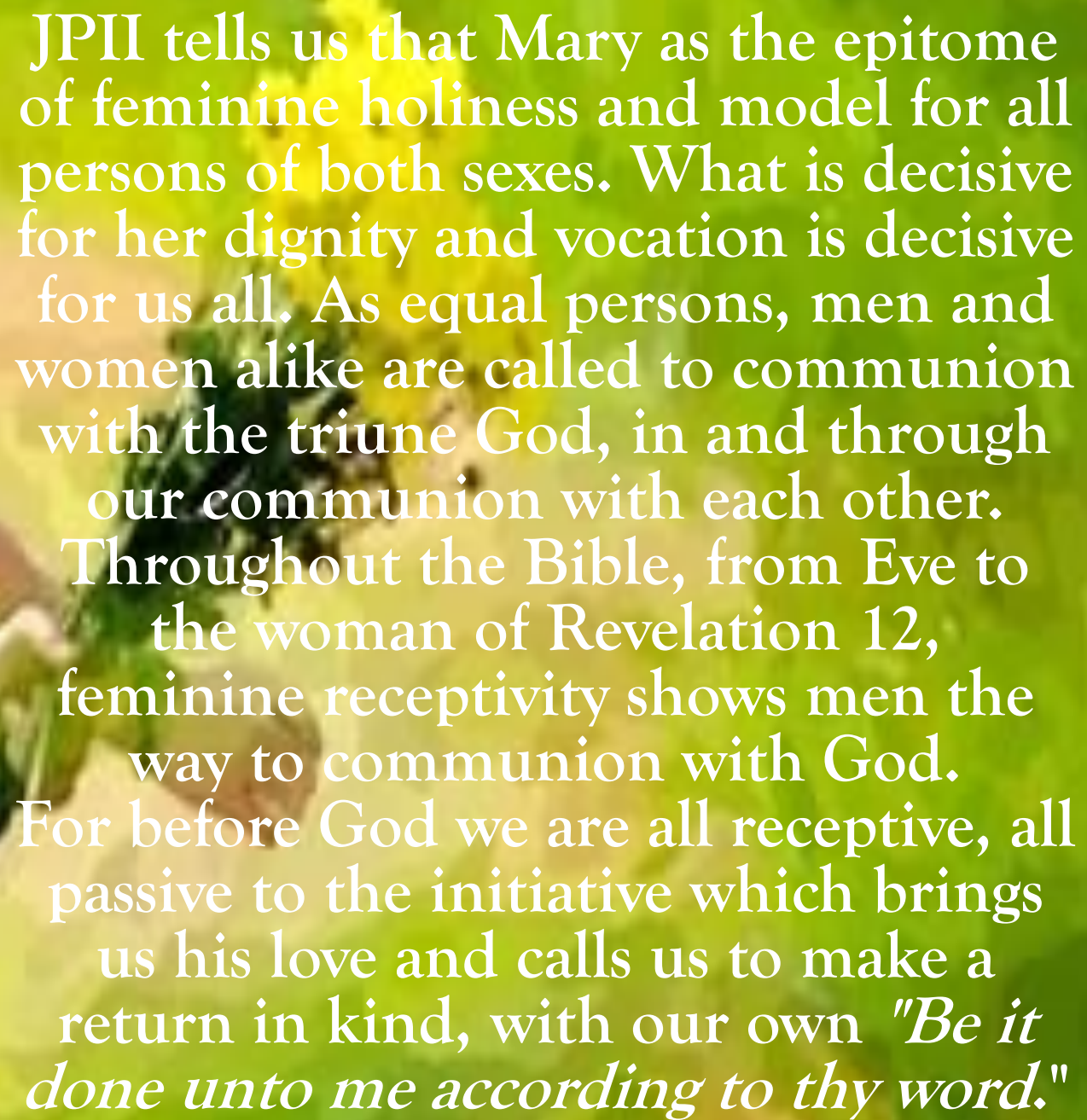




April 9, 2018 - Leah Sharibu, a Christian girl is still held prisoner by the Boko Haram terrorist army because **she** refuses to renounce her **Christian faith**.  
The **girls** who were freed say that Sharibu refused to wear a hijab or **convert to Islam**.



It takes immeasurable courage and unflinching faith to stand firm in the face of deadly monsters. A young Nigerian girl named Leah Sharibu possesses both.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white sleeveless dress, is shown from the side, holding a large bouquet of white flowers with green stems. She is standing in a field of yellow flowers, possibly a sunflower field, with a blurred background. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

JPII tells us that Mary as the epitome of feminine holiness and model for all persons of both sexes. What is decisive for her dignity and vocation is decisive for us all. As equal persons, men and women alike are called to communion with the triune God, in and through our communion with each other. Throughout the Bible, from Eve to the woman of Revelation 12, feminine receptivity shows men the way to communion with God. For before God we are all receptive, all passive to the initiative which brings us his love and calls us to make a return in kind, with our own *"Be it done unto me according to thy word."*

# Sensitivity

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a grey cardigan, is seen from behind, pushing a man in a wheelchair. The man has white hair and is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. They are walking through a lush green field. The background is a soft-focus green landscape.

# SENSITIVITY

They are  
concretely and  
personally  
sensitive to  
others in all  
circumstances –  
Because they are  
wholly human  
and they love.”

A photograph of a woman and a young girl smiling and hugging. The woman has dark hair and is wearing a light-colored top. The girl has blonde hair and is also smiling. In the foreground, there is a bouquet of pink flowers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting.

*I make an appeal to all women whose hearts have been engraved in love and are able to love with a great capacity of self-giving and self-donation, in our society so attacked by selfishness, indifference, coldness and death – you must make a powerful statement:*

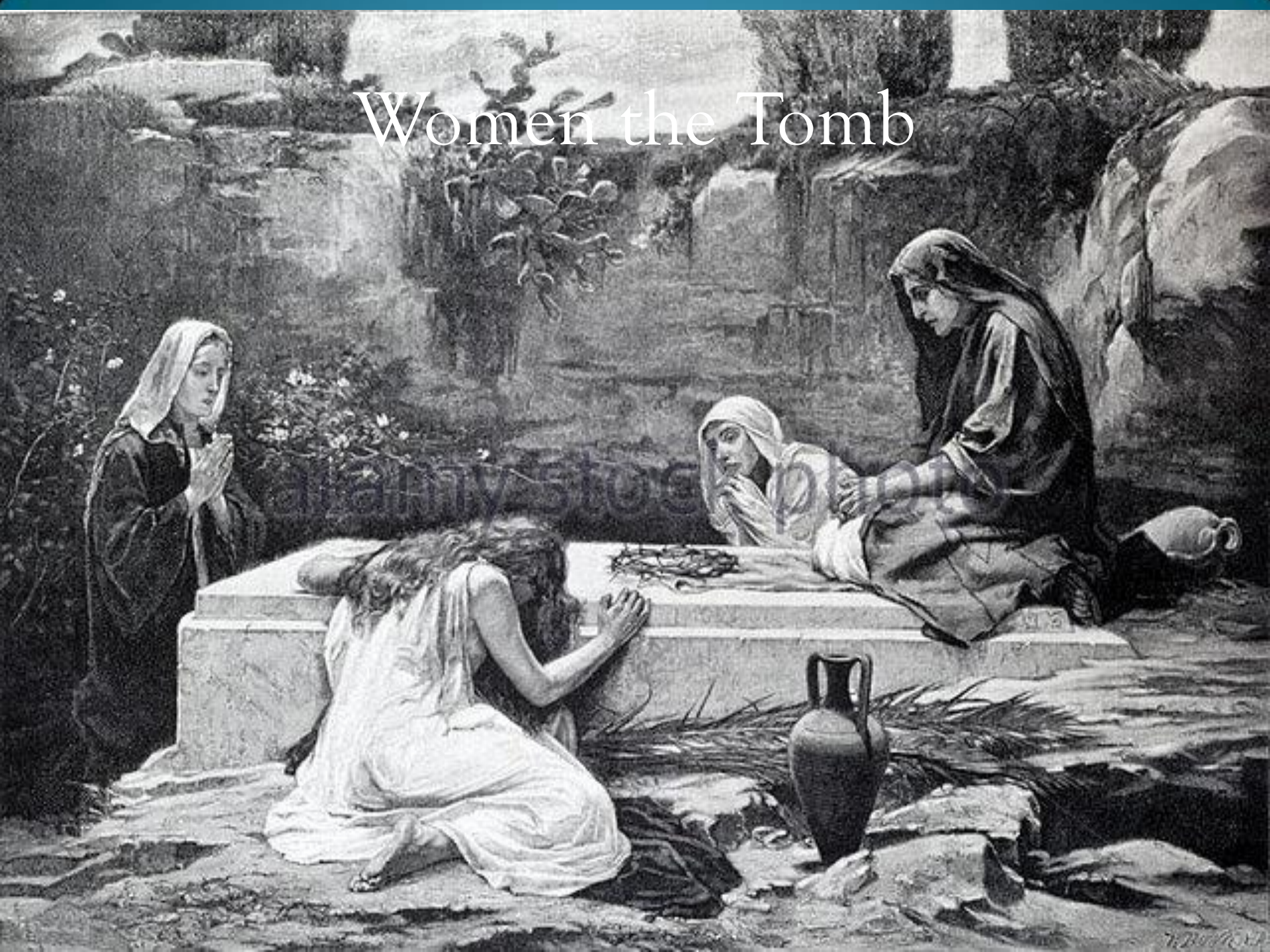
*Love is greater, love triumphs, love conquers, love is stronger than death, love is fruitful, and love triumphs in the end.*

*Do not forget that in Fatima the promise of Our Lady was a promise of a motherly heart: at the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. Mothers, make your hearts full of maternal love; thus, you can make love triumph in our third millennium. Mother Adela, from Motherhood, a Vocation of Love*



# Women at the foot of the Cross

# Women the Tomb



# Mary Magdalene -first to witness the resurrection





# SENSITIVITY

## INTUITION





John Paul II in his [Letter to Women](#) says, “Women are ever ready and willing to give themselves generously to others, especially in serving the weakest and most defenseless.”



Women have a special sensitivity to persons and their needs, because their bodies are apt for the physical closeness to another at conception and pregnancy.

**Mothers-first to notice their children's psychological needs.**  
**Wives perceive their husband's mood changes before their husbands do.**

# Capacity to nurture is instinctively in us

(Women enjoy a psychological closeness to persons in all situations, that is rooted in our capacity for the physical closeness of pregnancy. The dignity of women, then, is located in our distinctively feminine, spousal, and maternal capacity to foster new life... With that innate, sensitive maternal insight into their individuality, we often know by a kind of instinct how to nurture ...)





This nuptial meaning of the feminine body- our capacity to nourish human life in a myriad of ways, opens wide vistas. Women's choices should be as varied as are the modes of feminine loving.

Thus we can find the dignity of our vocation, our feminine fulfillment, in any role or any action in which we can exercise our sensitive and intuitive self-giving love.

One highly dignified life is that of a full-time, stay-at-home wife and mother. Domesticity, which consists in cultivating a genuine marital intimacy and in teaching children how to love in their various sexual and individual ways, is one of the most creative and demanding challenges that anyone could ask for.

Other possibilities would be a single life, a widowed life, a life of vowed virginity, a sterile marriage, a life as an active or contemplative religious, a life combining career and family, a life on an invalid's bed or in a wheelchair.



*JPII's vision offers a strong basic principle: whatever women are physically and psychologically capable of doing as an enactment of self-giving love is a legitimate occasion of the dignity and vocation of women.*

# Women educate your children in love



Teach them to care for others,  
the beauty of self-giving,  
the values of self-sacrifice, and  
welcoming and reverencing new life....



This education for love must be learned in the true “school of the virtues,” especially those of humility and charity. Women can teach all humanity the values of the heart, the greatness of peace, the pre-eminence of self-donation over self-preservation, and the dignity of every human being. Mother Adela, from *Motherhood, a Vocation of Love*





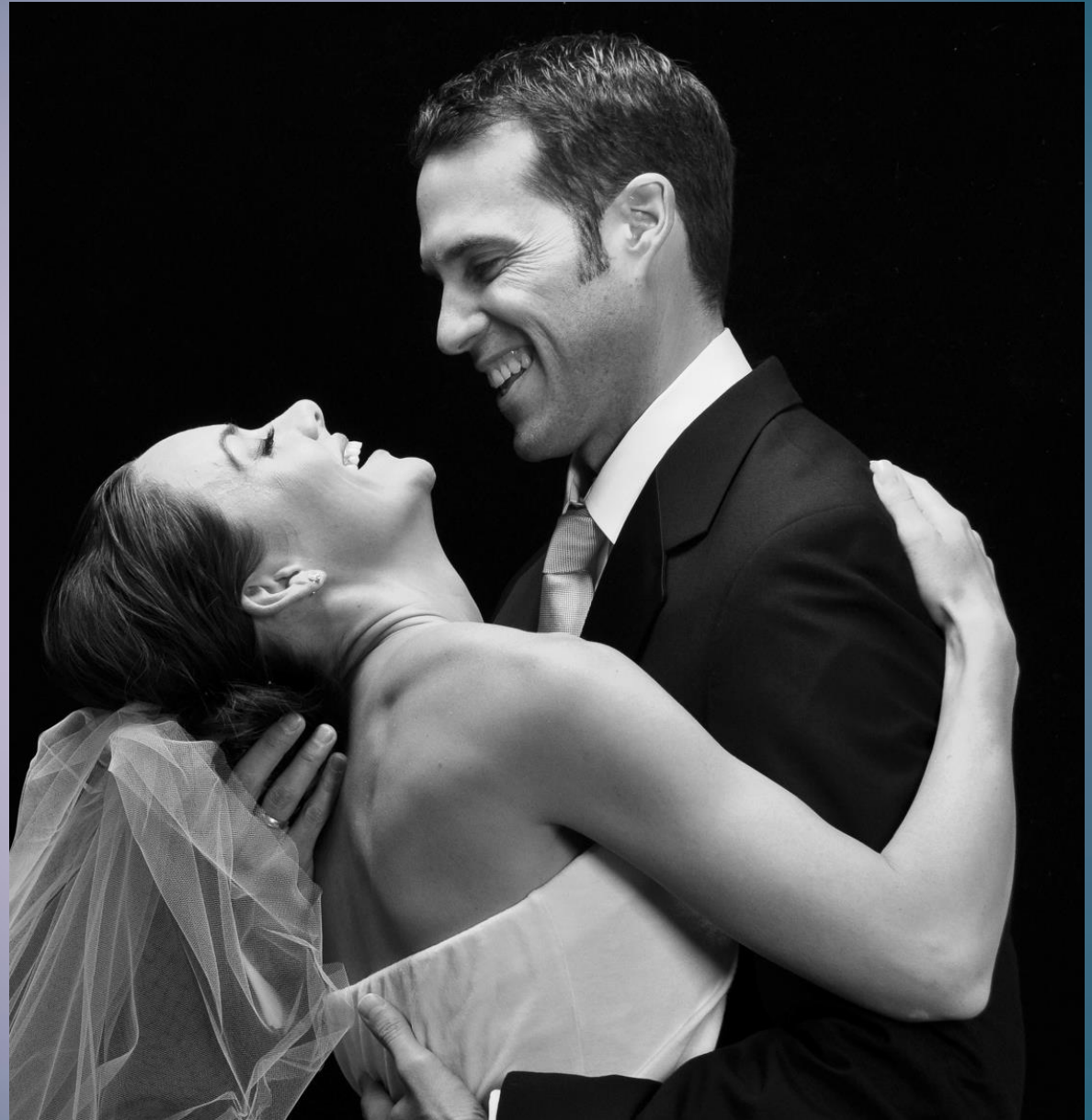
THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH OF A WOMAN IS JOINED TO HER AWARENESS THAT GOD ENTRUSTS THE HUMAN BEING TO HER IN A SPECIAL WAY.

ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II



# BRIDAL ASPECT

- The Bride is loved and as she receives love- she gives it away. Woman's special gift is to interiorize love and return it making it bare fruit-



# Help Mate- Mutual

” ...the woman must ‘help’ the man – and in turn, he must help her – To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion.” MD7



# Mutual Submission

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Eph 5:21



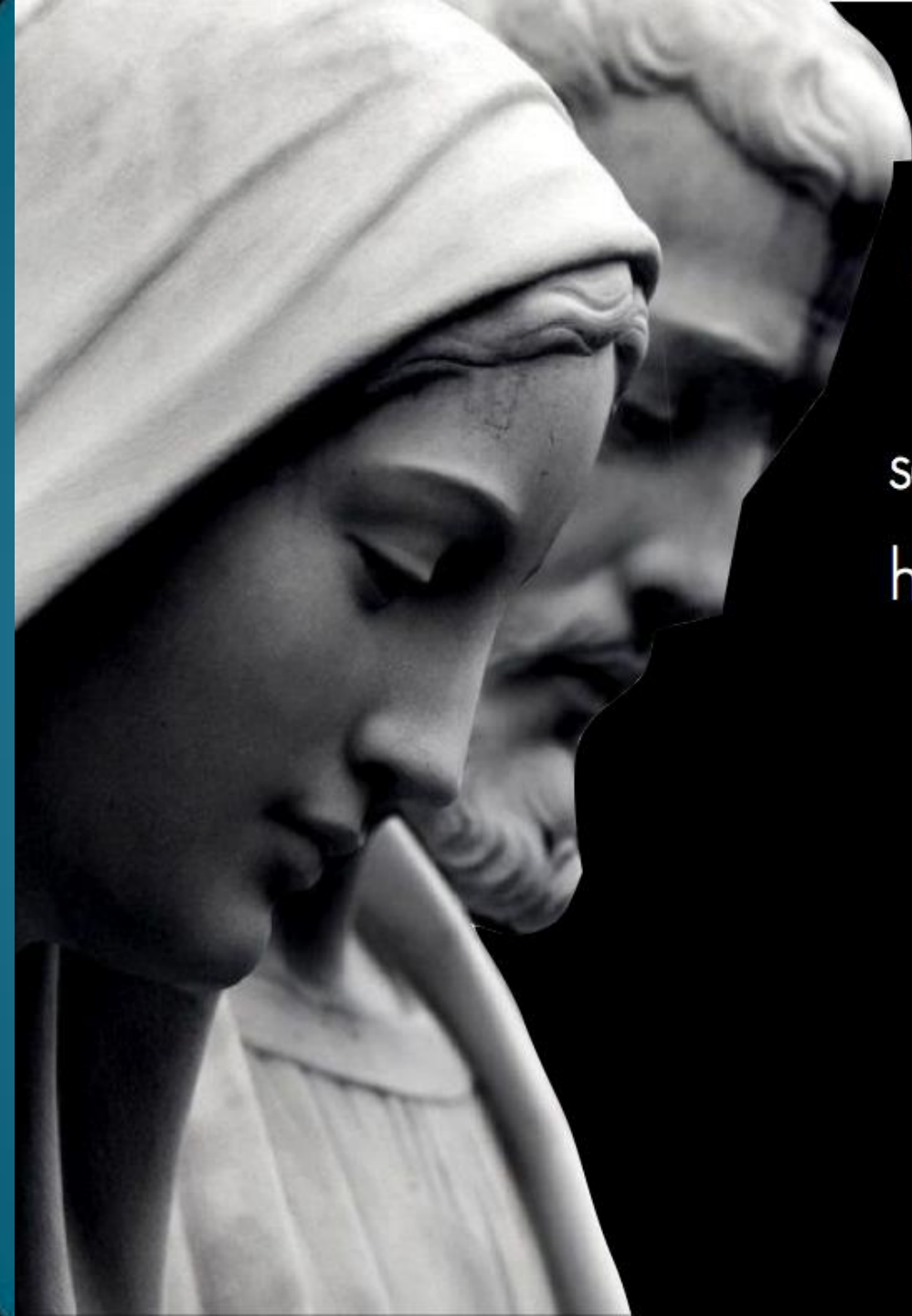
*We can only  
find ourselves  
in a truthful  
gift of self.*

*(See Gaudium et Spes, 24)*



The male body says  
“initiate.”

The female body says  
“receive.”



reciprocity is the proof that  
love...has become  
something 'between' persons,  
has created a community  
of feeling and that its  
full nature has thereby  
been realized.

*- Love & Responsibility*



# Communion of Persons



As a professor of Ethics, Karol Wojtyła found this “communion of persons” in Aquinas’ *Summa in the Treatise on Love* and he made it the thesis of his *Love & Responsibility*.



Aquinas states: we humans need fulfillment b/c we are:  
limited, needy, deficient, in our very being.

But we can only find fulfillment by union with what  
is other than ourselves.

And that union can only come: through a very special  
kind of love whose name is *amor amicitiae*.

**Pope John Paul II calls it "self-giving love.**

# Self giving-love vs Desire (Lust)

JPII contrasts self-giving love w/ its opposite, *amor concupiscentiae*, 'Desire'

Self-giving love is love in the truest sense - genuine or perfect love.

Desire and all other kinds of love are deficient.

Self-giving love constitutes the communion of persons.

Desire does not and cannot do so.





# SELFISH VS. SELFLESS

To love is to wish the good to the other: benevolence

Can be benevolent in 2 ways, depending on our motivation:

we can wish a good to someone,

A. for that beloved's sake,

B. or for our own.

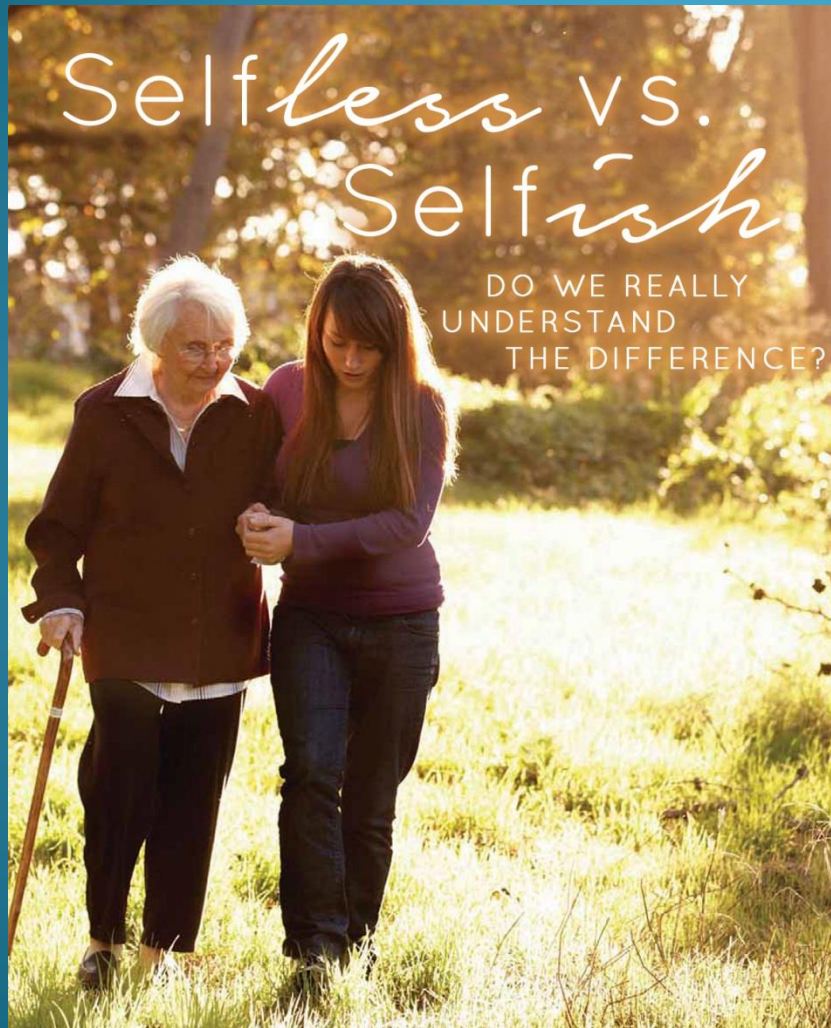


For example, Thomas Hobbes once gave money to a beggar, not in order to relieve the poor man's misery, but to relieve his own discomfort and guilt — we might say. His love was desire. Although Hobbes wished a good to another, his own good was the center of his concern. Such egocentric love does not unite a lover to the person loved, simply because the focus of concern in such transactions is the self. **Desire does not reach out to** form a bond with another. It leaves us still locked into our original limited being.

Self-giving love-  
wishing a good to another for the other's sake  
brings about a communion of persons.



Because then our love is centered not on me,  
but on that other's being, his well-being.



In this altruistic loving, we reach beyond ourselves and extend our own being since we identify the good of another as our good too.

We thereby possess it as our own.

Had Hobbes been concerned foremost with relieving the beggar, the good he would have wished to the beggar would have also belonged to Hobbes. His union with the beggar, (a communion of persons,) would have extended his own being, thereby fulfilling his own existential emptiness. Such is the power of love. And that is how men and women are fulfilled.




“It is in giving that we receive”

We are all equal precisely in our ability, and our need, to exercise self-giving love.  
When we do, we enter into communion w/ each other and the Father, Son & Spirit.



God is love, and he who lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in him"  
(I Jn 4:16).



It is in giving myself  
to others  
primarily  
for the good of others  
that I receive  
Because then my self  
expands  
to the other  
and to the Trinity  
who is love

A romantic couple in silhouette against a sunset background. The woman is wearing a long, flowing dress, and the man is in a suit. They are standing close together, with the man's arm around the woman. The background is a soft, warm glow from the setting sun, with some tree branches visible on the left side. A large, diagonal, semi-transparent pinkish-red shape is overlaid on the left side of the image.

"GENUINE LOVE IS DEMANDING.

*But its beauty lies precisely  
in the demands it makes."*

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II



# He Shall Rule over You",

JPII uses self-giving love vs. desire to interpret Genesis. Adam & Eve misused their freedom. They were created as a "unity of the two."

But they chose desire over love.

The penalty that choice is: A. our fallen human nature and B. as God said to Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16).



Eve choosing desire over self-gift has now weakened Adam to dominate rather than love Eve. Eve has lost her dignity as a woman and Adam has violated his own dignity and vocation as a man (DVW, pp. 33-41)

# DESIRE & DOMINATION

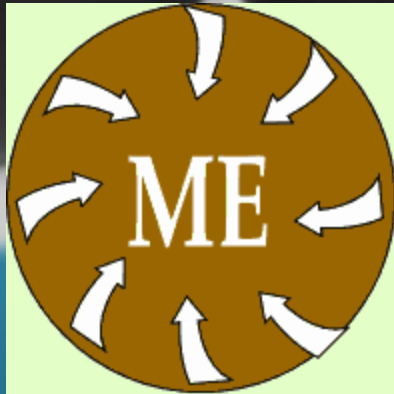


- From this story there is a paradigm for all human relationships,  
JPII -2 main ways any communion of persons is ruptured is
  - – by desire and
  - – by domination.

# 2 Ways Communion is ruptured

Desire

Domination



# Grace reverses our egocentric tendency



Thanks to the grace of Christ, we can become capable of love rather than desire for each other, and be at the service of rather than dominate.

# Women's movement today is desire not self-giving love

Women's concern for personal fulfillment (JPII calls- "self-discovery") (DVW, pp. 37-45) is a deep/legitimate human need.

In feminism this need is perverted by a misunderstanding of what personal fulfillment is.

Falsely they believe:

*It is an egocentric urge to desire and dominate other persons instead of finding communion with them in self-giving love. For too many feminists – see, for example, the wife in the film Kramer vs. Kramer – freedom translates into the right to be egocentric, to define our fulfillment as we see fit, and to seek it without interference from anyone.*



A black silhouette of a woman with long, flowing hair, shown from the back and slightly to the side. She is wearing a dark, form-fitting top. The background is white.

If my search for  
“self-fulfillment”

Means:

Abandoning husband and children, so be it.

Acquiring power for the sake of power, so be it.

Sexual license and abortion on demand, so be it.

Relationships in which we use each other, so be it.

Relationships that calculate devotion to each other on  
a strict costs/benefits analysis, so be it.

First & foremost, we must take care of ourselves.

Commitments and relationships are loose and  
conditional, depending directly on the benefit we gain  
for ourselves.





# The Remedy: Simple, but not Easy

We need to convert from self-seeking to self-giving love in all our interactions with everyone.

Note “experts” today are an obstacle to this eternal truth. With a few notable exceptions (Erik Erikson, for example), psychologists, therapists, counselors, and others regard altruism, devotion, and service to others as masochistic, unhealthy, and harmful to personal fulfillment.



Need to form the culture  
3 ways self-giving love is the remedy for  
self-fulfillment



# 1. Self-giving love is not masochistic



Altruistic love generates love as communion of persons so there is an unavoidable fulfillment for the giver of love. It's built into the very nature of love so there is no possibility that self-giving love will lead to self-destruction. On the contrary it always brings us into communion with the three Divine Persons.

## 2. SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Love, involves giving to others not just gifts and words and time and energy, but giving our very selves. But the giving of oneself presupposes having a self to give. And so, the love that builds a communion of persons absolutely requires the personal development of its giver. Thus JPPII calls women to a recognition of our rights to education, employment, the discovery and use of our talents, to positions of influence and power, to care for our health and safety.

The only requirement is that our self-development must have its right orientation — not self-fulfillment for the sake of the self, but self-development in order to have something to give.



### 3. RECIPROCITY

Self-giving love is anything but masochistic in its hope for reciprocity, the hope that those whom we love will love us in return. The operative word here is hope. Desire demands the return of love as a condition of its giving. Genuine love hopes for reciprocity without making it a condition or demand.

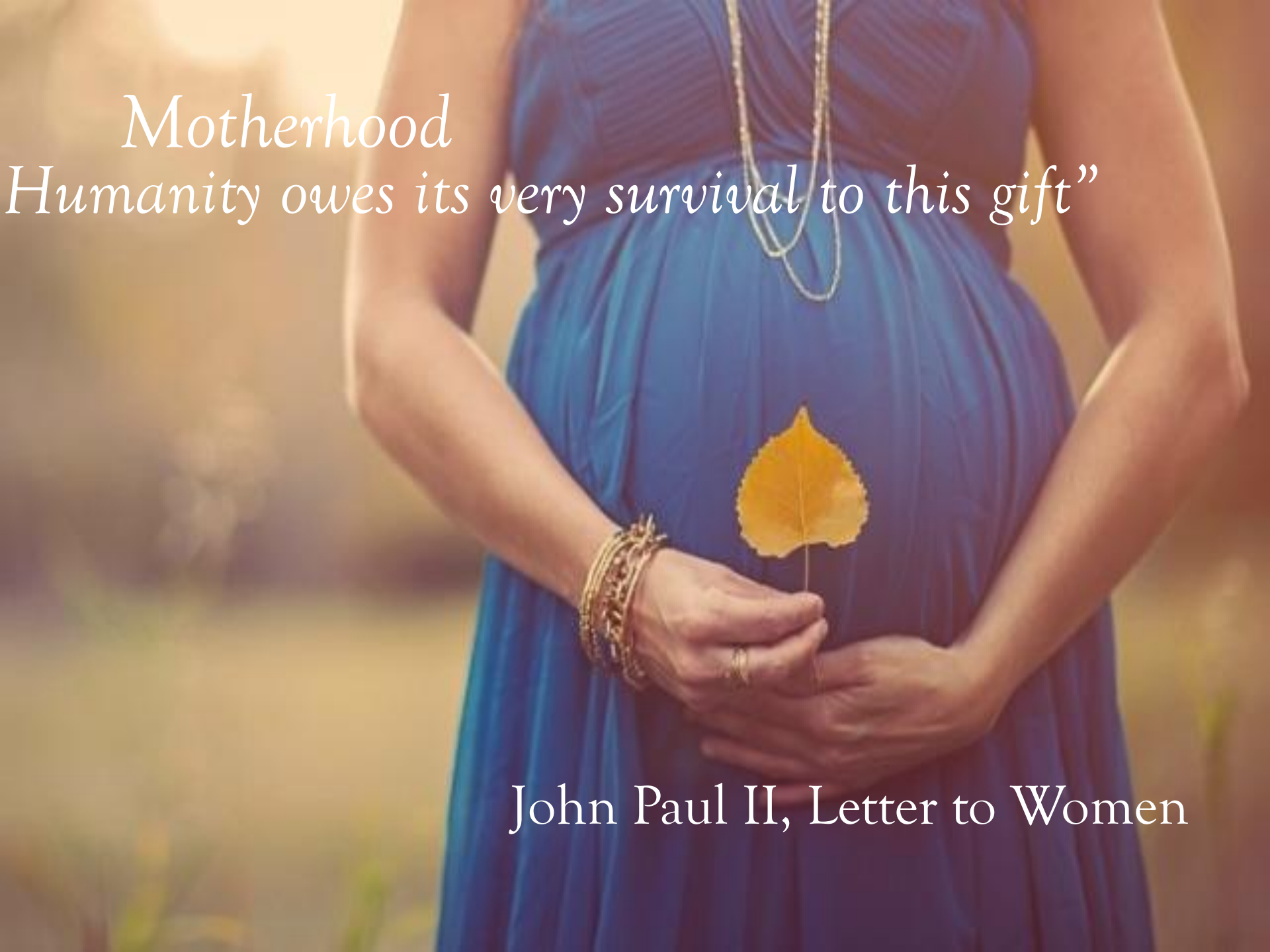
# “nuptial meaning of the body”

JPII means not just the male and female genital organs, but a feature of the entire person. Sexuality is, of course, much more than a mode of reproduction. Our basic biological differentiation pervades our personalities and affects everything we think, do and say.

Thus, in every human encounter, something resembling the nuptial union must occur. For our bodies bear a meaning - to be expressed or violated, as we freely choose either to desire or to love the people we meet in daily life. All human interactions, even buying a newspaper must be characterized by self-giving love that has a nuptial character, that is marked by a fidelity appropriate to the occasion, by sexual differentiation and by some sort of fruitfulness for new human life.


# Motherhood



A pregnant woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a vibrant blue, sleeveless dress. She is holding a single, bright yellow leaf against her bare belly with her right hand. Her left hand is resting on her hip. She is wearing several gold bracelets on her right wrist and a gold ring on her right hand. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and symbolic.

*Motherhood  
Humanity owes its very survival to this gift”*

*John Paul II, Letter to Women*

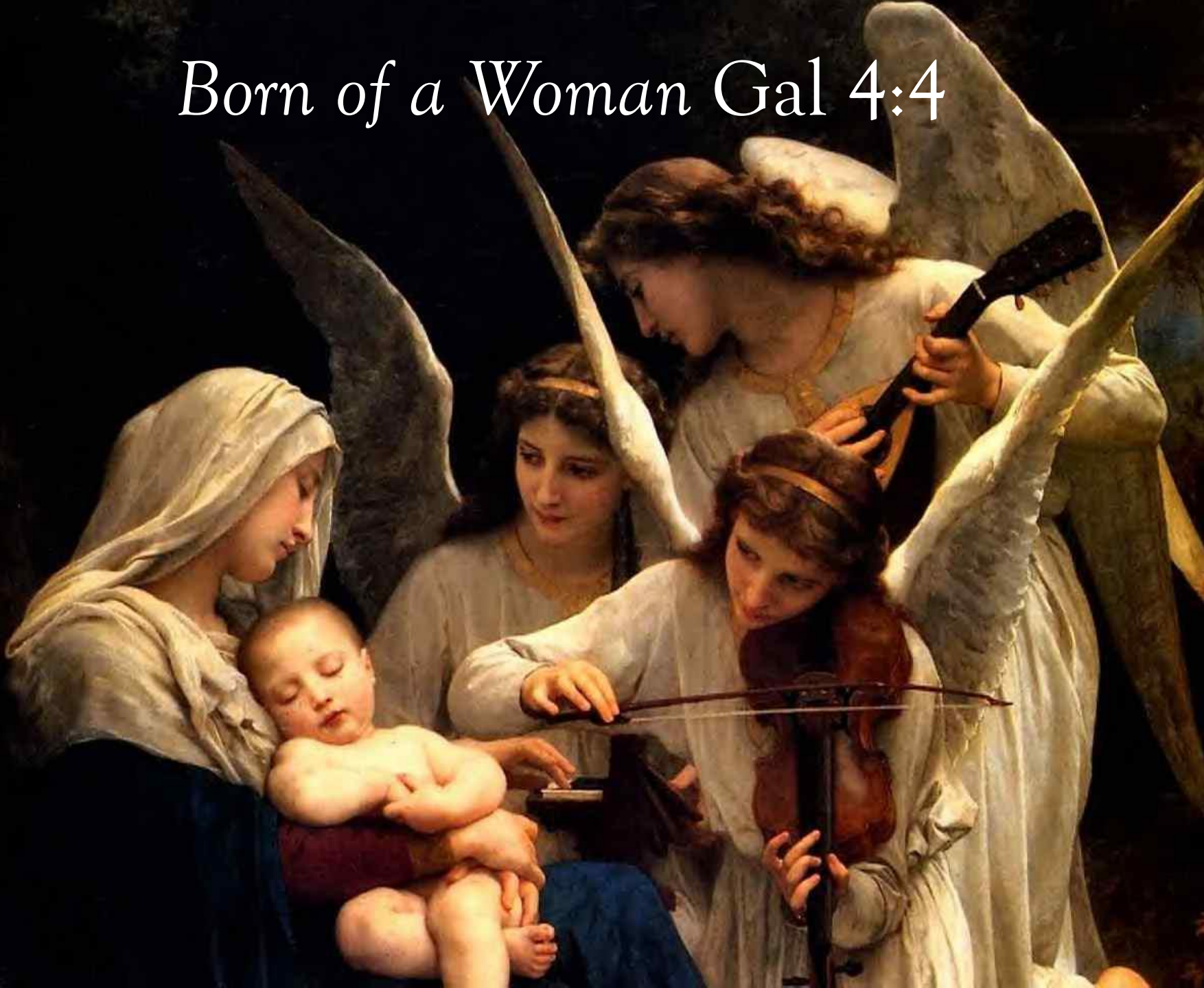



when the fullness of time had come  
God sent forth His Son

Galatians 4:4



*Born of a Woman Gal 4:4*



A white marble statue of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child. Mary is depicted with a serene expression, wearing a long, flowing robe and a head covering adorned with a crown of thorns. She cradles the infant Jesus in her arms. The background is a dark, textured brick wall.

The “woman” in an  
exceptional way enters  
in this turning point of  
history for humanity

To show the  
dignity of woman  
All women. JPIIMD



*The feminine sex is ennobled by virtue of the Savior's being born of a human mother; a woman was the gateway through which God found entrance to humankind.*

*– Edith Stein (aka St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)  
“Vocations of Man and Woman” Essays on Woman (70)*



Be fruitful and multiply”

Through the mutual gift of each other in marriage the couple and especially the woman opens herself up in body and spirit to the gift of new life.

She is Receptive to this gift of Motherhood

# All women are called to be Mothers

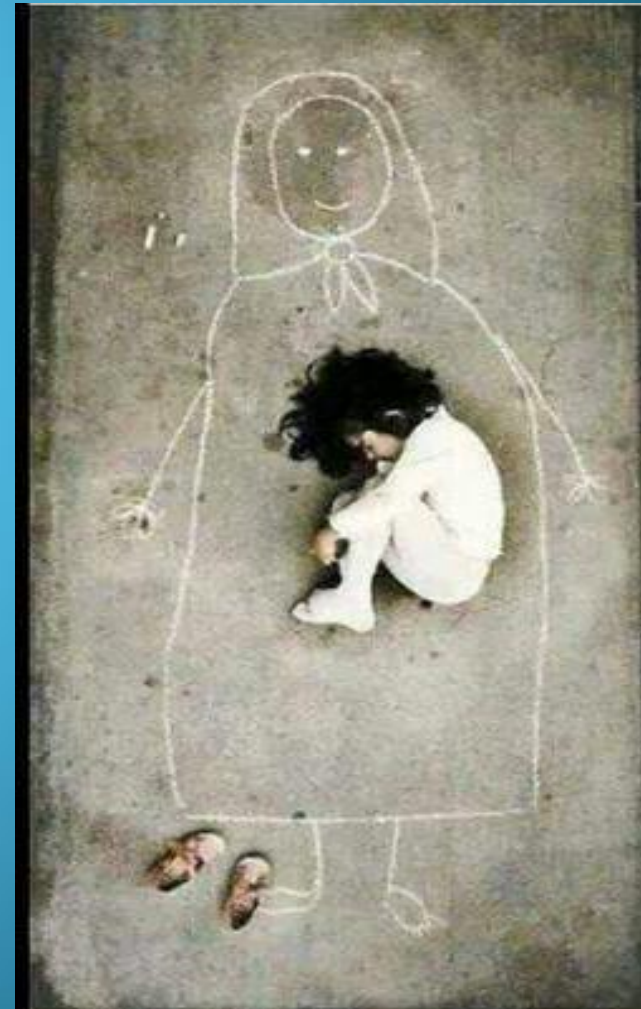
*Everywhere woman meets with a human being,  
she has the opportunity to sustain, to counsel, to help.*

*If the factory worker or the office employee would only pay  
attention to the spirits of the persons who work with her in the  
same room, she would prevail upon trouble-laden hearts  
through a friendly word, a sympathetic questions;  
she will find out where the shoe is pinching and will be able to  
provide relief.*

*Everywhere the need exists for maternal sympathy and help,  
and thus we are able to recapitulate in the one word  
motherliness that which we have developed as the  
characteristic value of woman.*

*Only, the motherliness must be that which does not remain  
within the narrow circle of blood relations or of personal  
friends; but in accordance with the model of the Mother of  
Mercy, it must have its root in universal divine love for all who  
are there, belabored and burdened.*

— Edit Stein (aka Teresa Bendecita of the Cross)  
“Woman’s Value in National Life” Essays on Woman  
(264)



A photograph of two young children with blonde hair hugging in a field of sunflowers. The child on the left is wearing an orange shirt, and the child on the right is wearing a red shirt with white polka dots. They are both holding a large sunflower. The background is a vast field of sunflowers under a clear sky.

# All Women

Married, divorced, religious, widow  
singles Nurture the:

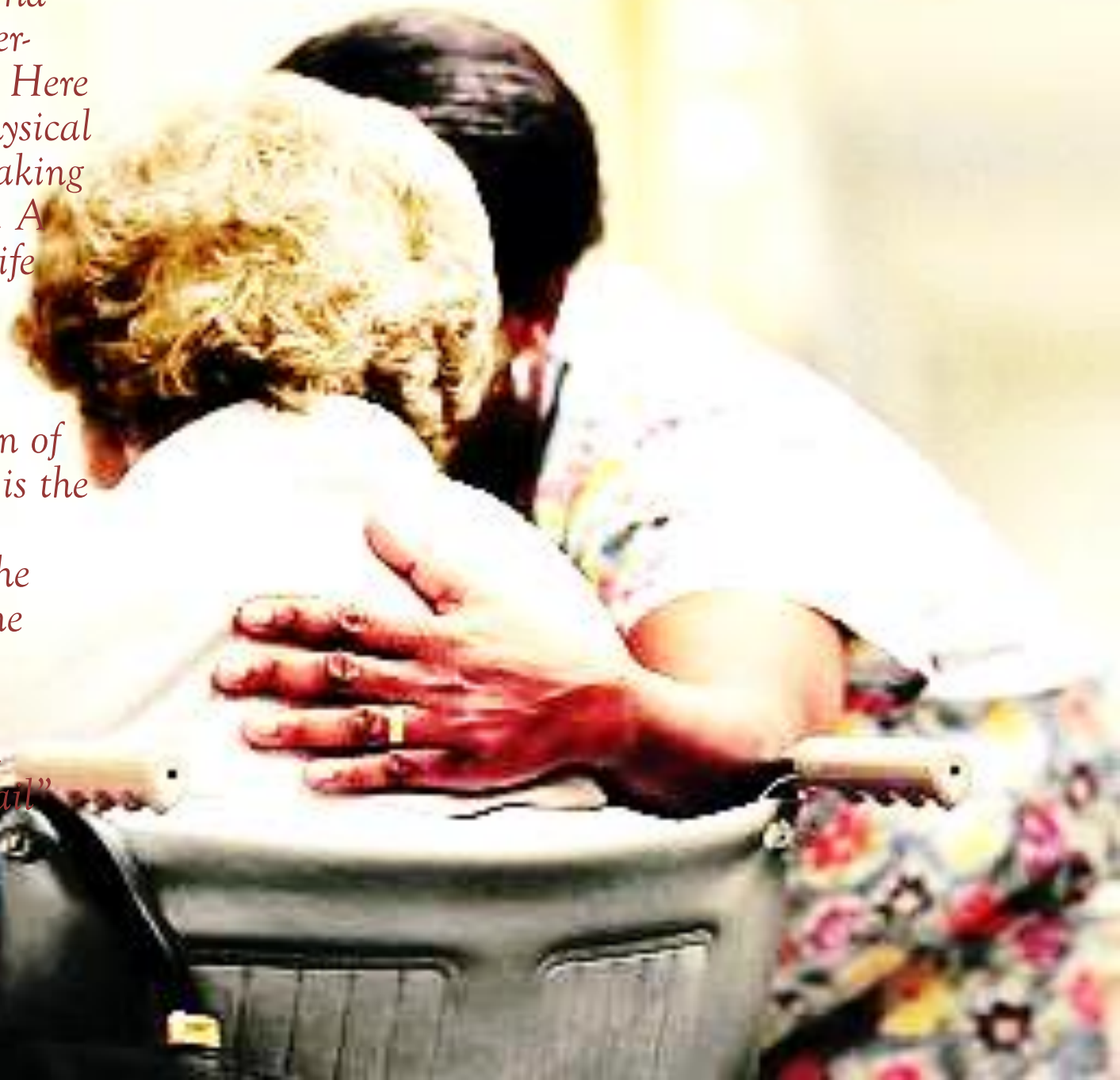
- Emotional
- Moral
- cultural and
- spiritual
- life of others

*Every woman in the world was made to be a mother-physically or spiritually. Here we are not talking of physical motherhood, we are speaking of spiritual motherhood. A woman in professional life is happy when she has the occasion to be feminine.*

*The man is the guardian of nature, but the woman is the custodian of life.*

*Therefore in whatever she does, she must have some occasion to be kind and merciful to others...*

*Venerable Fulton Sheen  
"Women Who Don't Fail"*



# Generosity

A woman in a light-colored blouse and a gold necklace is holding a glowing Christmas tree branch with lights. The background is softly lit with warm, bokeh lights, suggesting a festive indoor setting.

THE FEMININE GENIUS:  
GENEROSITY





Our Bodies speak a language of  
femininity

All women are Mothers with an empty, sacred space  
-our womb within us to hold the “other”

We are called to receive others into that sacred space  
and nurture their  
(emotional, moral, cultural spiritual) lives....

Motherhood involves a special communion with human life as it develops in the woman's womb. This unique contact with the new human being developing in her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings, not only towards her own child, but every human being- which profoundly marks the woman's personality.





Spiritually, the motherhood of every woman also expresses a profound listening to the Word of God and a readiness to safeguard the Word

Mary's maternal fiat is a model for all women-She trusts so completely in God's love that she can say in everything "Let it be done to me according to your Word"-

*Let Your will be done in my life!*  
(JPII MD)



“The Church desires to give thanks to the Trinity for the mystery of woman, and for every woman-for all that constitutes the eternal measure of her feminine dignity, for the great works of God which through human history have been accomplished through her.”(MD 31)



“I would like to extend this concrete word of thanks at the same time to every woman, for all that they represent in the life of humanity.” JPII



Christ  
the  
Bridegroom,

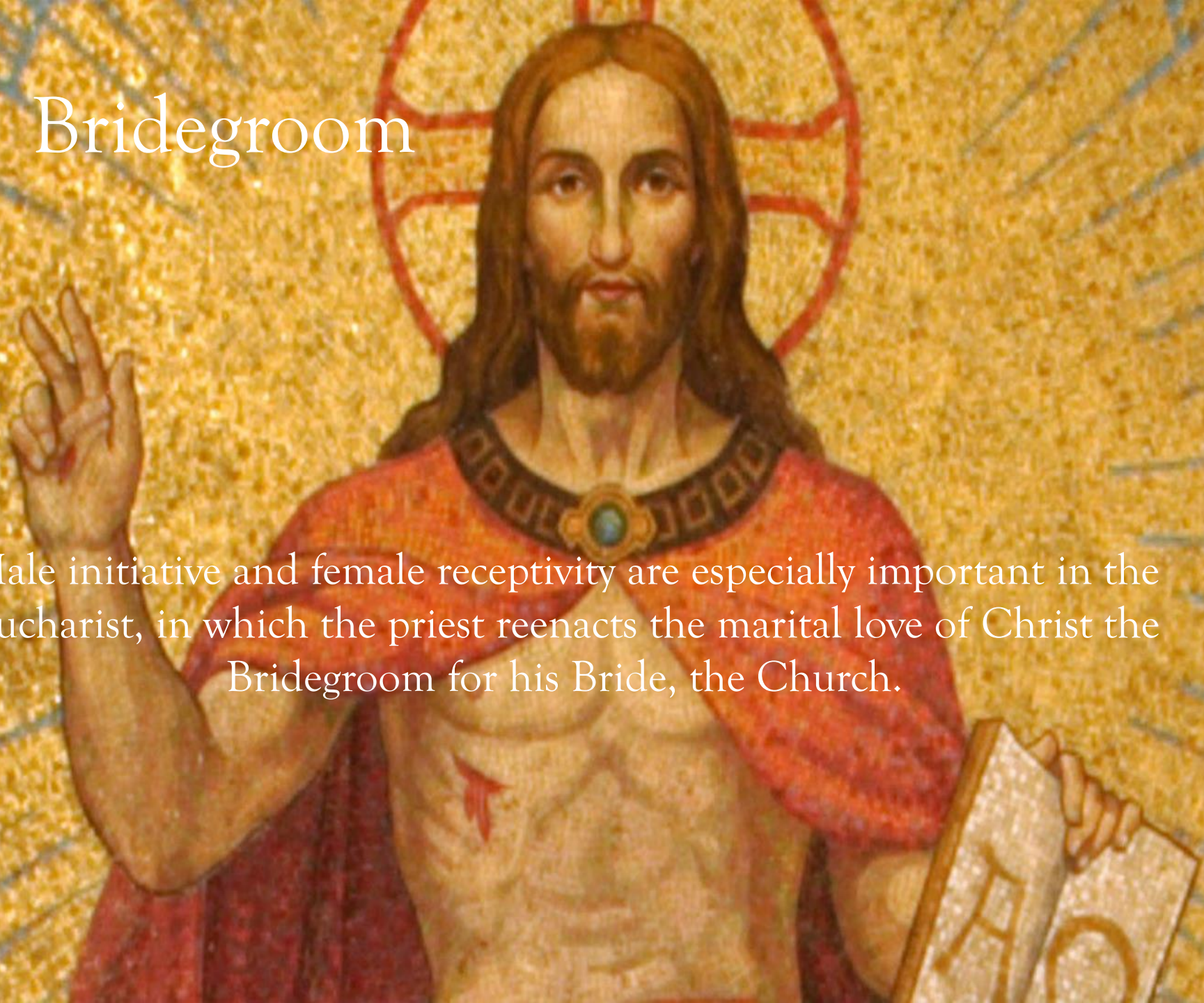
Church  
His  
Bride

# JESUS *the* BRIDEGROOM

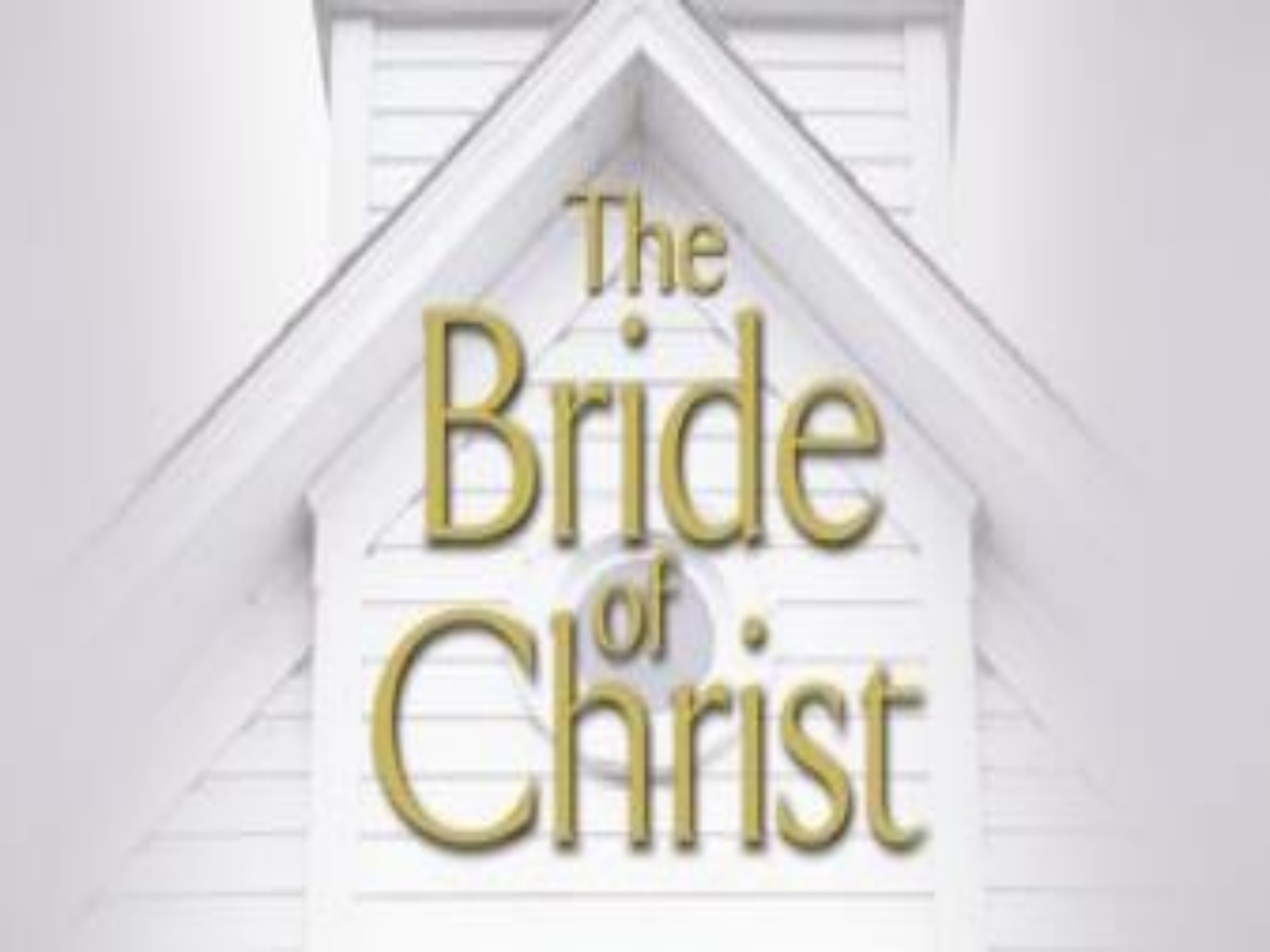


# Bridegroom

Male initiative and female receptivity are especially important in the Eucharist, in which the priest reenacts the marital love of Christ the Bridegroom for his Bride, the Church.



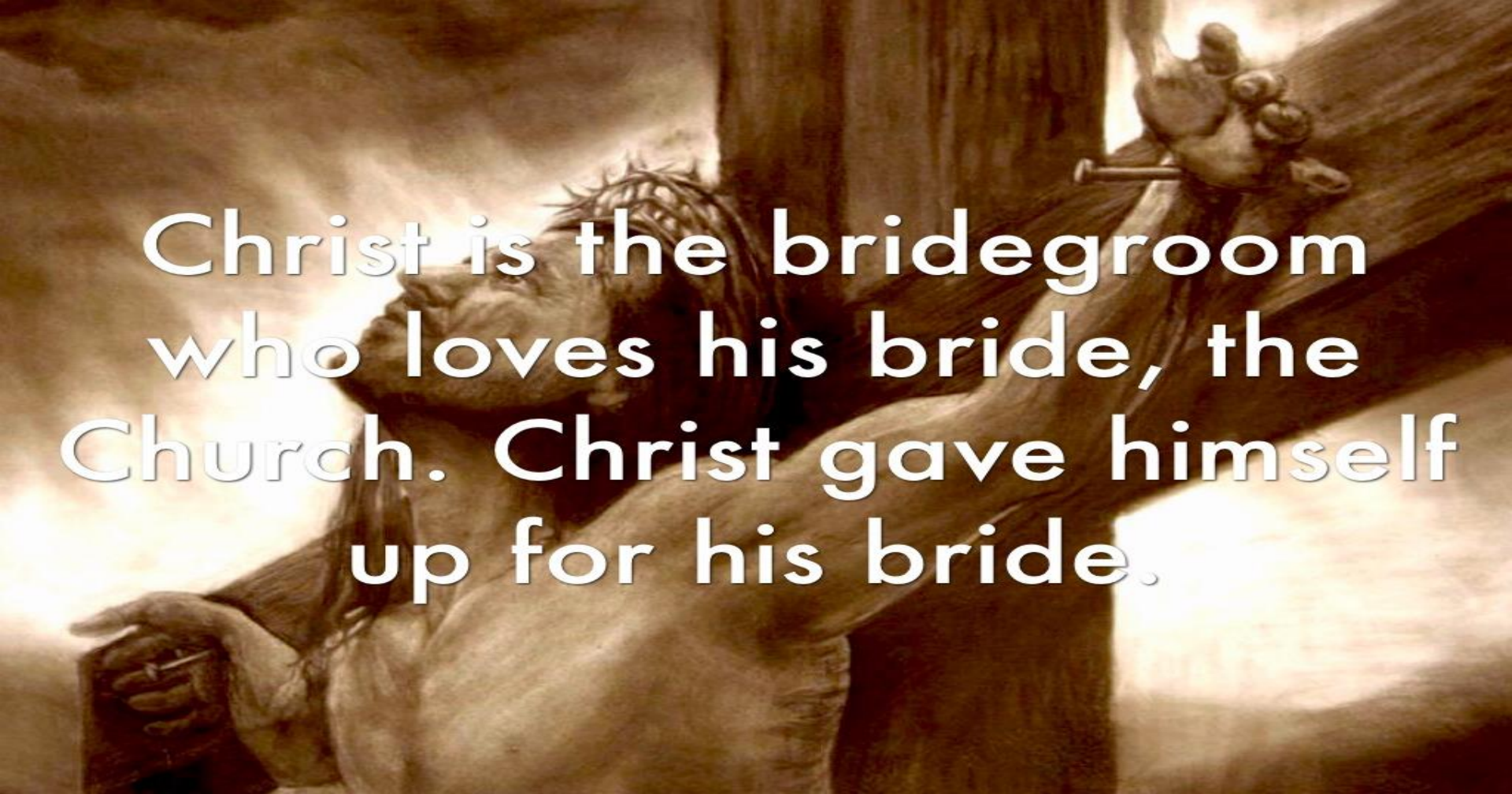




The  
Bride  
of  
Christ

# The Church is the Bride





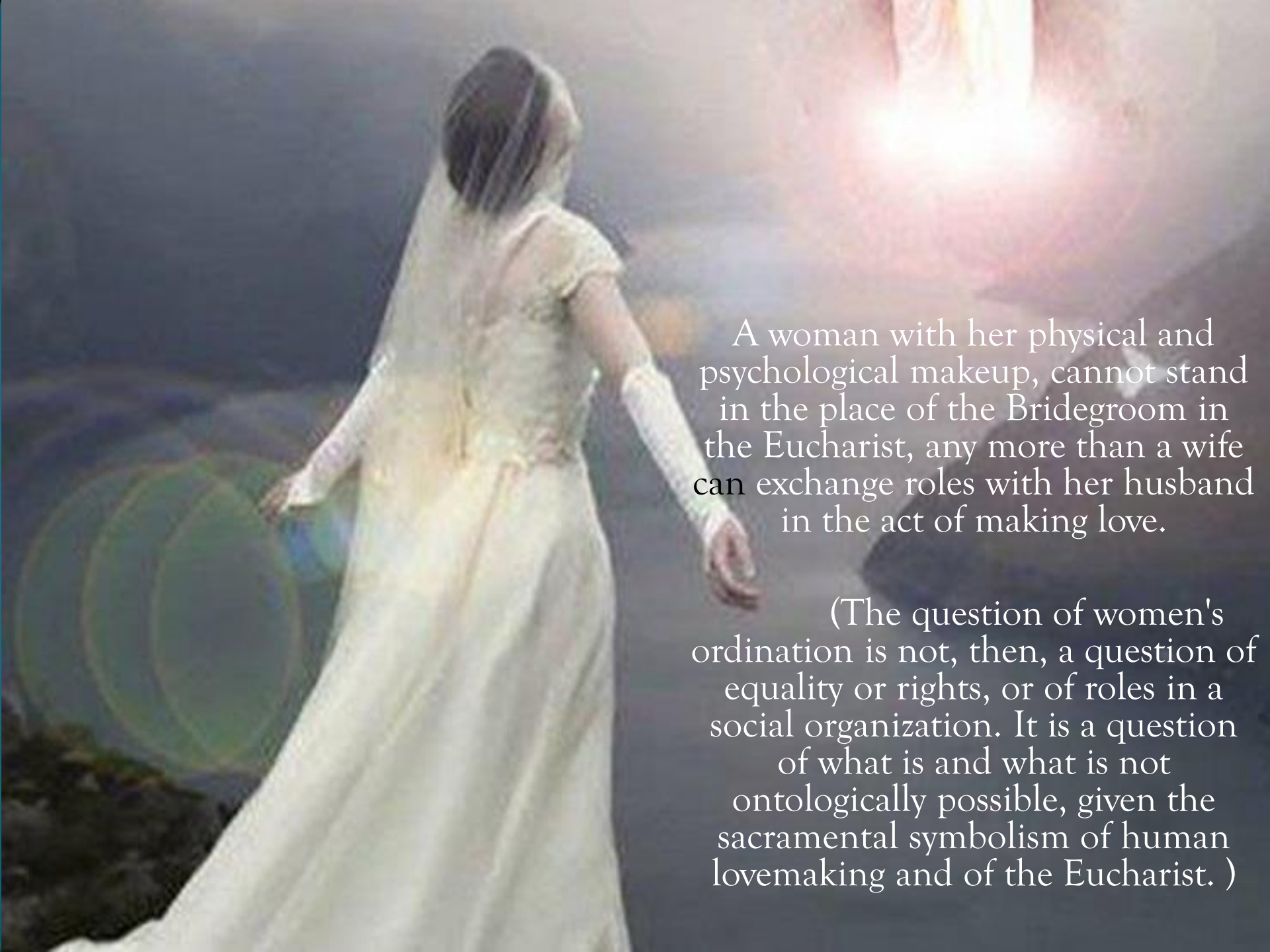
Christ is the bridegroom  
who loves his bride, the  
Church. Christ gave himself  
up for his bride.

In this most marital of all marital acts, the initiative is taken by the Divine Bridegroom, who "*first loved us while we were yet sinners*" (1 Jn 4:19). That love is received then, by the free, grateful receptivity of the human persons who are the collective Bride- the Church-, as we respond by our gift of ourselves to Christ, "*giving up our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*" (Rom 12:1).

This divine marital love, in which the Son of God makes himself putty in the hands of sinners needing redemption, is the heart of the sacrifice of the Eucharist. And we as Church respond by accepting His Gift and in so doing we make ourselves putty in the hands of Divine Love.



In the Eucharist, the Divine Bridegroom gives himself up for his Bride and becomes one flesh with her. Thus, matrimony, the "great sacrament" of which Saint Paul speaks in Ephesians (5:32), while it does represent and effectively cause the presence of Christ for husband and wife, is but a faint and distant image of that divine marital embrace



A woman with her physical and psychological makeup, cannot stand in the place of the Bridegroom in the Eucharist, any more than a wife can exchange roles with her husband in the act of making love.

(The question of women's ordination is not, then, a question of equality or rights, or of roles in a social organization. It is a question of what is and what is not ontologically possible, given the sacramental symbolism of human lovemaking and of the Eucharist. )

The Church is primarily feminine because her primary, all-encompassing truth is her ontological gratitude, which both receives the gift and passes it on. And the masculine office, which has to represent the true giver, the Lord of the Church (albeit within the Church's feminine receptivity), is instituted in her only to prevent her from forgetting this primary reality, to ensure that she will always remain a receiver and never become self-assertive possessor and user.

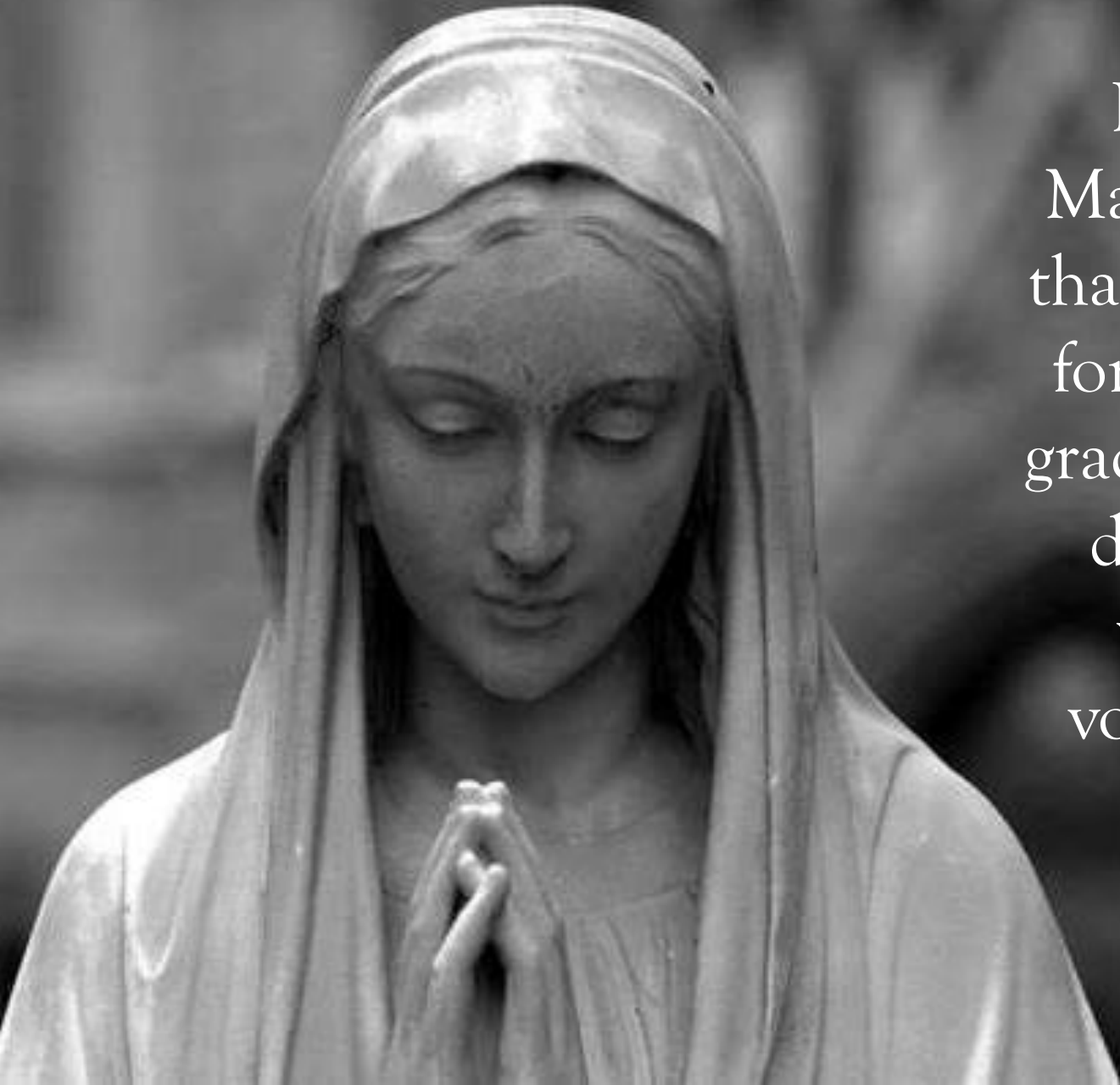
From a certain point of view, the Church's structure is primarily matriarchal and only secondarily patriarchal, although these sociological categories can be applied only in a very loose sense to the Church. We use them here because there can be a demand for ecclesiastical office **only when there is a failure to appreciate the real dignity of women in the Church** (as the Church). —

Hans Urs Von Balthasar, [Mary: The Church at the Source](#), page 140)



In closing:  
The  
Blessed  
Mother





Let us pray to  
Mary, our Mother  
that she will obtain  
for all women the  
grace of finding the  
dignity of their  
vocation, the  
vocation to love.



# ON THE DIGNITY AND VOCATION OF WOMEN

*"The hour is coming, in fact has come,  
when the vocation of women is being  
acknowledged in its fullness,  
the hour in which women acquire in the world  
an influence,  
an effect and a power never hitherto achieved.  
That is why, at this moment when the human  
race is undergoing so deep a transformation,  
women imbued with a spirit of the Gospel  
can do so much to aid humanity  
in not falling."*

JPII MD#1 St. John Paul II

