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 the Body.”
“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

D O N'T

just say no
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
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
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

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
"God has assigned as a duty to every man the dignity of every woman." JP II

made in His Image
“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.
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.
“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 Beloved
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)

“Let Us Make Man In Our Image”

“The human being is created in the image and likeness of God” JPII
...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.
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
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.

It is not good for man to be alone.
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.
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
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).
WOMAN 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. *(Muliaris Dignitatem, 6).*

**Side of Adam- Eve born**  
**Pierced Heart- Church born**
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 JPII 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
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

Ruth
ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement
"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... JPII
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.
Lust: Grasps
- Seeks Only Pleasure
- breaks
- Enslaves
- Thinks Only of Self
- Sexual Desire Confused by Self-Love
- Clouds Relationships

Love: Gifts
- Seeks Total Communion
- Builds
- Liberates
- Sexual Desire Infused with God's Love
- Thinks Always of Others
- Clarifies Relationships

The Body Speaks a Language
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
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
“In the arduous test of faith and fidelity women prove stronger than men in time of danger precisely because of their great love:” JPII
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.
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
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.
JP11 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
SENSTIVITY

They are concretely and personally sensitive to others in all circumstances – Because they are wholly human and they love.”
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
Mary Magdalene - first to witnesses 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
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.”

Based on John Paul II's TTOP 21:2:3. © Copyright 2014 by Monica Ashour. All rights reserved.
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
As a professor of Ethics, Karol Wojtyla found this “communion of persons “ in Aquinas ‘ Summa in the Treatise on Love and he made it the thesis off 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.
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.
"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

Rupture Communion

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

To show the dignity of woman
All women. JPII MD
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)
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

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
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 Church is the 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.
"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