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MULIERIS DIGNITATEM

*Study Guide to John Paul II's
Apostolic Letter on the Dignity &
Vocation Of Women*


Endon





Mulieris Dignitatem

Vocation of Women

An Encyclical Written by Saint John Paul II

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Opening Prayer

Memorare

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known
that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy
intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O
Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful
and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me.*

AMEN



Chapter *One*

SIGN OF THE TIMES

PROLOGUE

Dubbed “the human event of a generation,”¹ more than two billion people watched the April 8, 2005 funeral Mass of Pope Saint John Paul II on television. Another half a million people wedged themselves into the streets adjacent to the basilica and an additional 300,000 pilgrims actually attended the Mass in Saint Peter’s Square. In some form or fashion, all had gathered to respectfully bid farewell to this disciple of Christ who had led the Catholic Church through the tumultuous time after the Second Vatican Council and into the third millennium.

Shortly after the distribution of Holy Communion, however, the unexpected happened. This enormous crowd set formalities aside and shamelessly began shouting, “Santo Subito [A saint immediately!],” and “Magnus [The Great!].”² Their voices reverberated throughout Saint Peter’s Square at a volume that “could be heard atop the Janiculum Hill, overlooking Vatican City.”³

Nine years later, on April 27, 2014, in one of the quickest beatifications in recent Church history,⁴ Pope Francis did indeed canonize Pope Saint John Paul II, together with Pope John XXIII. To be sure, canonizing two popes on the same day is an extraordinary occasion, made even more so by the fact that two living popes concelebrated the Mass.

The day of the canonization will always be remembered as the day of the four popes—Francis, Benedict XVI, John Paul II, and John XXIII. All four of these men were alive together at a particular moment in history. It is the first time ever in Church history that two popes were canonized together. It is also the first time in Church history where a current pope and his predecessor celebrated Mass publically together.⁵



[Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II] were priests and bishops and popes of the twentieth century. They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful— faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful too was the closeness of Mary our Mother.

POPE FRANCIS, HOMILY AT THE CANONIZATION MASS OF SAINT JOHN XXIII AND SAINT JOHN PAUL II

1 George Weigel, *The End and the Beginning* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 396. Quoting Brian Williams.

2 Ibid. 394.

3 Ibid.

4 See Elise Harris, “Popes John Paul II, John XXIII Officially Declared Saints,” 27 April 2014, <<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pop-es-john-paul-ii-john-xxiii-officially-declared-saints>> (accessed 6 July 2014).

5 Father John Paul Mary Zeller, “The Day of the Four Popes,” 28 April 2014, <<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/two-pope-saints/the-day-of-the-four-popes>> (accessed 6 July 2014).

Among these giants in the faith, however, John Paul II stands alone in that he meditated on the role of women in the Church and in the world more deeply than has any other pope in modern history. In a series of authoritative theological documents, as well as in heartfelt pastoral letters, this newly canonized saint addressed such cultural issues as motherhood, abortion, work, family, religious life, the male-only priesthood, gender ideology, and most importantly, the complementarity of men and women.⁶

The Holy Father's understanding of today's cultural issues came from his own personal experience and from the countless numbers of people he interacted with on a regular basis. From the beginning of his pontificate until the end of his life, Pope Saint John Paul II traveled the world more than any other pope in history. He celebrated Mass in city squares, stadiums, and airports. Always at ease when appearing in public, the Pope used these trips to dialogue, to listen, and to understand what he called "the living sanctuary of the people of God."⁷

When he was not traveling, the Pope hosted gatherings of scholars, scientists, artists, philosophers, and theologians. Our Holy Father used these opportunities to discuss and to debate (in charity) the latest advances in human thought, and to determine to what degree these developments promoted the dignity of the human person. Even in the midst of philosophical differences, he found that charitable dialogue was "thick with possibilities."⁸

In his **apostolic letter** *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem)*, John Paul II initiated this kind of charitable dialogue with the women of the twentieth century, a dialogue that will surely continue well into the twenty-first century and beyond. The starting point for such a conversation was his deep and profound regard for women, which he attributed to his Polish heritage:

Everything I have written... in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, I have felt since I was very young, and, in a certain sense, from infancy. Perhaps I was also influenced by the climate of the time in which I was brought up—it was a time of great respect and consideration for women, especially women who were mothers.⁹



DO YOU KNOW?

On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem) is an **APOSTOLIC LETTER**. After an apostolic constitution/decreet, or an encyclical, an apostolic letter is the third most important type of papal document. These letters have ordinary teaching authority, and as Catholics, we are to read them with the intention of adhering to the principles put forth in them.

⁶ See Cindy Wooden, "Pope John Paul II looked closely at the role of women in the church," date unavailable <<http://www.catholicnews.com/jpii/stories/story12.htm>> (accessed 5 September 2014).

⁷ Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 98.

⁸ Eleuterio F. Fortino, "Dialogue of Charity in the Perspective of the Holy Year," 1 July 1997, <http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01071997_p-56_en.html> (accessed 5 June 2012).

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 216–217.

As the late Pope was coming of age, however, it was hard to ignore that the “world at large” was moving toward something quite different from what he had known as a child. Indeed, it was only a matter of time before our Holy Father recognized that a radical, secular feminism was quickly becoming one of the most troublesome cultural issues of the day. Still prevalent today, this brand of feminism promotes a concept of individual rights and personal autonomy that challenges the very meaning of the feminine person.

Because this was and continues to be a cloudy area that needs the light of the Christian perspective, the Pope was determined “to help women recover their dignity and to acknowledge their specific role in society and in the Church.”¹⁰ He held that there were few areas more misunderstood than the Church’s teaching on the subject of women. In fact, in spite of significant criticism, John Paul insisted that the Catholic Church has always been in defense of the dignity of women and has offered a “consistent protest against whatever offends [that dignity].”¹¹

INTRODUCTION

READ SALUTATION

At some point in our efforts to advance in the spiritual life, we come to realize that this is a journey that we cannot complete on our own, and we long for a spiritual guide. We need someone whose knowledge surpasses our own, someone whose commitment to Christianity is total.

We want someone to lift us up and reassure us that every good thing is possible, and that with God, we can accomplish anything. *Anything*. We want someone whose commitment to Christ and the Church is unwavering, someone who teaches what is right no matter how difficult it may seem.

In Pope Saint John Paul II, God gave us such a person. Elected to the papacy on October 16, 1978, this pope’s nearly twenty-seven year pontificate was extraordinarily fruitful. During that time, he appeared week after week in the window of his apartment overlooking Saint Peter’s Square, smiling at us, speaking to us, teaching us, and offering us his blessing.



Breaking centuries of tradition, [John Paul II] insisted on being the master of his own table, inviting guests for lunch and dinner virtually every day of his pontificate. I discovered Wojtyła to be a remarkably unaffected and natural man, with a capacity to put even the most reticent visitors, men and women, laity and clergy, at ease. He seemed to care little about food. Conversation, not carbohydrates, was the food he most craved.

PAPAL BIOGRAPHER GEORGE WEIGEL, “*THE POPE IN PRIVATE*”

¹⁰ Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol*, 167.

¹¹ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 579.

In similar fashion, John Paul II offers each of us his blessing in the *Salutation of Mulieris Dignitatem*, which reads: “Venerable Brothers and dear Sons and Daughters, Health and the Apostolic Blessing.”¹² This greeting is significant because blessings are important. To be blessed means to be favored by God, to rest in His presence.

The German cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger, who had spent more than twenty years of his life with this Polish pope, no doubt understood the significance of a blessing. This cardinal, the man who succeeded John Paul II, celebrated the funeral Mass of his friend and brother. As he brought his homily for the late Holy Father to a poignant conclusion, he pointed to the window of the papal apartment and recalled:

None of us can ever forget how, in that last Easter Sunday of his life, the Holy Father, marked by suffering, came once more to the window of the apostolic palace and one last time gave his blessing *urbi et orbi*. We can be sure that our beloved pope is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, Holy Father . . .¹³

Yes, bless us Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul II, as we begin... as we begin our study of your message to us: *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*.



WID YOU KNOW?

URBI ET ORBI, meaning “to the City [of Rome] and to the World”, was a standard opening of Ancient Roman proclamations. We now use the term to denote a papal address and apostolic blessing that is addressed to the city of Rome and to the entire world.

¹² Pope John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (Mulieris Dignitatem), 15 August 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html (accessed 8 June 2012), Salutation. [hereafter cited as MD].

¹³ His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Homily at the Funeral Mass of the Roman Pontiff John Paul II,” 8 April 2005, <http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-card-ratzinger_20050408_en.html>

Discussion Questions:

1. Share your memories and impressions of the funeral of Pope Saint John Paul II. Similarly, share your impressions of the combined canonizations of Saint John Paul II and Saint John XXIII.
2. John Paul II frequently addressed the topic of “culture.” “He was completely convinced that culture, not politics or economics, was the engine that drove history.”¹⁴ He also firmly believed that we could change the culture by helping to change the way that the people within the culture think and act. Think of some of the positive and negative cultural changes you have experienced in your lifetime and how they came to be. If you could change one aspect of today’s culture, what would it be? What are you currently doing to help make this happen?
3. Imagine together what the world might look like in a post-Christian culture. Try to think of specifics, rather than generalizations.
4. John Paul II frequently provided the venue for people from different occupations to engage in an authentic exchange of ideas regarding the relevant issues of the day. He referred to this type of dialogue as the “dialogue of charity.”¹⁵

The dialogue of charity is thick with possibilities. It purifies the eye, the heart, and the word. It makes one see in a new way, it makes one feel the true motivations of others, and it transmits transparent thoughts, comprehensible even when they are not acceptable. This is the true condition of dialogue.¹⁶

What is the first thing necessary to have a true “dialogue of charity?”¹⁷ What are we hoping for when we engage in such a dialogue? Why is this type of dialogue so difficult in today’s world?

5. Just for fun, if it were possible for you to have dinner with one of the four popes listed above, whom would you choose? Share what you would like to discuss with him and why.
6. The New Testament uses the word “blessing” forty-four times. This underscores the importance of blessing those who cross our path, even those who persecute us¹⁸ and curse us:¹⁹

To bless someone is the most significant affirmation we can offer. It is more than a word of praise or appreciation; it is more than pointing out someone’s talents or good deeds; it is more than putting someone in the light. To give a blessing is to affirm, to say ‘yes’ to a person’s Belovedness.²⁰

From the balcony of St. Peter’s Square, the pope actively “blessed” people on a regular basis. How can we actively bless others and why is it so important to do so?

14 George Weigel, “The Pope in Private,” 5 April 2005, <<http://eppc.org/publications/the-pope-in-private/>> (accessed 13 September 2014).

15 Pope John Paul II, *On Commitment to Ecumenism* (Ut Unum Sint), 25 May 1995, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html> (accessed 5 June 2012), 17.

16 Fortino, “Dialogue of Charity in the Perspective of the Holy Year.”

17 Pope John Paul II, *On Commitment to Ecumenism* (Ut Unum Sint), 17.

18 See Rom 12:14.

19 See Lk 6:28.

20 Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 56.

A SIGN OF THE TIMES



READ ARTICLE 1, PARAGRAPH 1

Pope Saint Gregory the Great (540–604AD), a **Doctor of the Church**, left us a legacy of theological writings. Though he lived more than a thousand years before John Paul II, his words perfectly describe this modern-day saint:

Note that a man whom the Lord sends forth as a preacher is called a watchman. A watchman always stands on a height, so that he can see from afar what is coming. Anyone appointed to be a watchman for the people must stand on a height for all his life to help them by his foresight²¹

Pope Saint John Paul II was this kind of watchman. He could see with the eyes of faith. He could see with the eyes of the heart. He could read the “signs of the times,” and from the vantage point of Saint Peter’s Square, he spoke to us of our world, our culture, and our need for the saving power of Christ.

Consequently, in 1988, the tenth year of his pontificate, John Paul II saw the need to write a letter to all people of goodwill, entitled: *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem)*. In this apostolic letter, he builds upon the words from the Closing Message of the **Second Vatican Council** that highlight that “the hour is coming”²² for women to realize their influence and their calling in the world. This message warns us that the human race is undergoing a frightening transformation and that armed with the saving message of the Gospel, women can and must help humanity from falling.

From these ideas flowed his distinctive brand of Christian feminism, which he coined a **new feminism**. *Mulieris Dignitatem* provides both the theological and philosophical foundation for this new feminism. The Pope later advanced these same ideas by offering them in the forum of public discourse in his 1995 Letter to Women, written on the eve of the United Nation’s Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China.



DO YOU KNOW?

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, is a special title that the pope gives to certain saints. The men and women who receive this title contribute significantly to the formulation of Christian doctrine, which is useful in any age of the Church. Such men and women are particularly known for the depth of understanding and the orthodoxy of their theological teachings. While the Church often considers that the Holy Spirit inspires these writings, this does not mean that they are infallible.

See Catholic Online, “Doctors of the Church”

Pope John XXIII convened the **SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**, the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, on October 11, 1962. Pope Paul VI concluded the council on December 8, 1965. The central purpose of the Second Vatican Council was to emphasize the importance of evangelization, with the intention of making the Gospel more accessible to the modern world.

The **NEW FEMINISM** respects the equality of women as persons made in the image and likeness of God. It acknowledges their special gifts as well as their special calling to defend the weakest among us.

Colleen Carroll Campbell, “The New Feminism”

²¹ Saint Gregory the Great, Homily on Ezekiel as quoted by Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “Who am I to be a Watchman?” n.d., <http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/723/Bishop_as_Watchman_St_Gregory_the_Great.html> (accessed 8 June 2012).

²² Second Vatican Council, “Closing Speech,” 8 December 1965, <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6closin.htm>> (accessed 16 July 2012).

Former Vatican Ambassador and Harvard Law Professor Mary Ann Glendon unpacks the significance of these two documents with the following words:

In a remarkable series of writings, [John Paul II] has meditated more deeply than any of his predecessors on the roles of women and men in light of the Word of God. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, which contains the main theological basis for his messages to women, labels discrimination against women as sinful, and repeatedly emphasizes that there is no place in the Christian vision for oppression of women. The tone of all these writings to and about women is **dialogical**. Their author invites women to help him and the Church reflect upon the quest for equality, freedom, and dignity in the light of faith—in the context of a changing society where the Church and the faithful are faced with new and complex challenges.²³

John Paul II's teaching on the dignity and vocation of woman, expressed in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, is a new presentation of Catholic teaching dedicated to the current times. While the presentation may be new, the truths themselves are not new, as the Pope highlights in the opening paragraphs of the letter. As we will see, it was common for him to look back at the same time he was pointing forward. In doing this, our Holy Father shows us the importance of stopping to evaluate and learn from the past before charting the future.

John Paul II places this apostolic letter in the context of the writings that have preceded it. By setting this document in the historical context of the Catholic Church's constant teaching, the Pope reminds us that Church doctrine is organic. This means that even though these teachings are intrinsic to the faith, as the years pass they continue to be gradually, naturally, and prayerfully developed, while keeping the fundamental truths intact.

By way of analogy, we could say that inside the acorn is found the whole oak tree. The seed has only to grow and sink deep roots into fertile ground and take in the light of the sun to grow into the fullness of the oak. Likewise, the seeds of truth, after being watered with much prayer and meditation, reach their full flowering in the Church's teaching as it is articulated to new generations and situations. In the same way, the text of *Mulieris Dignitatem* builds upon and is the fruit of the Church's ever-deeper understanding of the original gift of woman and femininity.



No one who reads the Pope's writings to and about women can fail to be impressed by the evident love, empathy and respect John Paul II holds for women... Thank you, Lord, for the utterly inestimable gift of faith, and for the privilege of having lived in the time of John Paul the Great.

MARY ANN GLENDON, *TRADITIONS IN TURMOIL*

dialogical: Meaning in the form of a dialogue.

²³ Mary Ann Glendon, *Traditions in Turmoil* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sapientia Press, 2006), 404–405.

Discussion Questions:

7. To be sure, John Paul II has his detractors, and undeniably, a certain percentage of them are women. They question how this celibate man, or any man for that matter, can possibly understand the dignity of women and the inherent difficulties of being a woman. Discuss whether it is necessary for a person to experience first-hand everything about which he/she speaks or writes. Draw from your own experience when answering this question.
8. We have just read that it was common for John Paul II to look back at the same time he was pointing forward, and in doing this, he taught us an important lesson. We also need to pause, evaluate, and learn from our past before charting our future. Share a time when you have done this and the effect that it had on the situation.
9. Share your thoughts on the following quote by Mary Ann Glendon: “I should say... that this seems to me to be a tremendously exciting time to be a Catholic woman.”²⁴



READ ARTICLE 1, PARAGRAPH 2

As we begin reading this letter, we notice at once that Pope Saint John Paul II mentions many of our forebears in faith. For example, he recalls the writings of Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII. He also points to Pope Paul VI, who “conferred the title ‘Doctor of the Church’ upon Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint Catherine of Siena.”²⁵ Prior to this, there had been no female Doctors of the Church, so this was certainly a sign of the times.

In recalling the past, John Paul II is inviting us to take a closer look at a series of events that profoundly affected the lives of women throughout the course of the twentieth century. To help situate these in our minds, let us review them chronologically.

For Pope Saint John Paul II, as well as millions of others, the century’s turning point was the Second World War, which lasted from 1939–1945. Years later in describing the meaning of that event, he wrote:

The Second World War made all people aware of the magnitude . . . , which contempt for man and the violation of human rights could reach. It led to an unprecedented marshaling of hatred, which in turn trampled on man and everything that is human... Many people were led to ask whether, after that terrible experience, it would ever be possible to have any certainty again.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 403.

²⁵ *MD*, 1.

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, “Message to Polish Bishops,” *Origins* 19:15 (September 1989): 251–252.

These were the years of the pontificate of Pope Pius XII (1939–1958), and it was against this backdrop that Pius XII offered the following insights to the women gathered for the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues in Rome on September 11, 1947. Note that in this address, he speaks directly to a woman's interior strength, and at the same time, he warns them of further impending perils:

The years of World War II and the post-war years have presented and continue to present to woman, in entire groups of nations, in practically all parts of the world, a tragic picture without precedent. Never, we believe, never in the course of the history of humanity, have events required on the part of woman so much initiative and daring, so much sense of responsibility, so much fidelity, moral strength, spirit of sacrifice and endurance of all kinds of sufferings—in a word, so much heroism.

The relations, the letters in which women reveal to [me] what has been and still is, in these cruel times, their own fate and the fate of their family, are so impressive that one questions whether this be a nightmare, and asks oneself how such things can have happened in our time and in the world in which we live. In the course of these awful years, women, old and young, have been forced to practice more than manly virtues, and to practice them to a degree required of men only in extraordinary circumstances.

It is a sorrow and a shame to have to mention and confess that even among Catholics, false doctrines on the dignity of woman, on marriage and the family, on conjugal fidelity and divorce, even on life and death, have stealthily infiltrated souls, and like gnawing worms have attacked the roots of the Christian family and of the Christian ideals of womanhood.²⁷

Sixteen years later, during the papacy of Pope Saint John XXIII (1958–1963), the world was again in a profound state of disorder. In fact, just two months before his death on June 3, 1963, John XXIII wrote his last encyclical entitled *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*. During his short pontificate, he had witnessed both the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Unfortunately, the twentieth century, which began with such lofty expectations, had become the century that produced two world wars, destructive tyrannical governments, untold human suffering, and immense persecution of the Church.



A crisis of confidence in the human prospect was the enduring legacy of World War II. In dealing with it, the Church had to remember that, as God does not despair of man, so neither may we despair of man.

GEORGE WEIGEL, *WITNESS TO HOPE*

²⁷ Pope Pius XII, "Allocution to the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues," 11 September 1947, <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P12WOMAN.htm>> (accessed 30 July 2010).

Without a doubt, all of these events profoundly affected the lives and hearts of women and there was a need for women to help address some of the most important issues of the day. In fact, Pope John XXIII highlighted the advancement of women as one of the three “**signs of the time**” in his encyclical letter *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*:

The part that women are now playing in political life is everywhere evident. This is a development that is perhaps of swifter growth among Christian nations, but it is also happening extensively, if more slowly, among nations that are heirs to different traditions and imbued with a different culture. Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.²⁸

Pope Paul VI succeeded Pope John XXIII, and in the seventh year of his papacy, on September 27, 1970, he conferred the title of “Doctor of the Church” upon Saint Teresa of Avila, the first woman honored as such in the history of the Church. Teresa was a reformer and the foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, as well as a prolific writer and teacher of the spiritual life. Teresa’s true gift to the Church is her teaching on the importance of prayer, and although she was a contemplative at heart, she remained tirelessly active throughout her life.

In his homily marking this occasion, Pope Paul VI described her as an exceptional woman who radiated “the flame of her human vitality and of her spiritual vivacity.”²⁹ Acknowledging the affection for her on the part of so many, the pope began his remarks by saying, “We have conferred—rather, we have acknowledged Saint Teresa of Jesus’ title of Doctor of the Church.”³⁰ He continued, “How great she is, how unique! How human, how attractive is this personality!”³¹



Anyone who has not begun to pray, I beg, for the love of the Lord, not to miss so great a blessing.

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA, *LIFE*



DID YOU KNOW?

In describing the two other **SIGNS OF THE TIMES** in his encyclical letter *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, Pope John XXIII explained that the economic and social conditions of the laborers were evolving because of a progressive labor movement which insisted that they be treated as human beings, sharing in all aspects of human society. He also noted that modern society was developing entirely new social and political lines. He predicted that before long it would be impossible for one nation to rule over another, and that the longstanding inferiority and/or superiority of certain peoples and nations would soon become outdated.

28 Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*, 11 April 1963, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html> (accessed 8 June 2012), 41.

29 Pope Paul VI, “Proclamation of Saint Teresa of Avila Doctor of the Church,” 27 September 1970, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1970/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19700927_it.html> (accessed 8 June 2012). Original in Italian.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

On October 3, 1970, one week after naming Teresa of Avila the first woman Doctor of the Church, Pope Paul VI again bestowed the title of “Doctor” on another woman, a lay Dominican, Saint Catherine of Siena. At her canonization in 1461, Pope Pius II referred to Catherine’s “wisdom,” which was not wisdom acquired over time and with great effort, but rather an infused gift of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, Saint Teresa once remarked that after God, the person she felt most indebted to for her spiritual progress was Saint Catherine.

Over five hundred years had passed since her canonization when Pope Paul VI proclaimed Catherine a Doctor of the Church. In doing so, he mentions the indebtedness owed to her by the Church for her “excellence of doctrine.”³² Pope Paul VI also highlights her clear proclamation of the Church as “none other than Christ,”³³ and the pope as the “Sweet Christ on Earth,”³⁴ entrusted with the care and guidance of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Catherine lived during a particularly troublesome time in the Church’s history, one in which a number of popes lived for over seventy years in Avignon, France, rather than in Rome. In January of 1377, Catherine persuaded Pope Gregory XI to depart from Avignon and return the papacy to Rome. Paul VI refers to this event as “the masterpiece of her work,”³⁵ claiming “it will be remembered as her greatest glory and will constitute a quite special claim to everlasting thankfulness on the part of the Church.”³⁶

At the beginning of this section, we noted that the fact that Saint Teresa and Saint Catherine (and more recently, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Saint Hildegard of Bingen) are Doctors of the Church is indeed a sign of the times. As we delve deeper into our study, we will explore just what these “times” mean for us as Catholic women today.



[Saint Teresa’s message of prayer] comes to us just when we are tempted by the great noise and the great busyness of the world outside to yield to the frenzy of modern life and to lose the real treasures of our souls in the effort to win the seductive treasure of the earth. It comes to us children of our own time just when we are losing not only the habit of conversing with God but also the sense of the need and the duty to worship and call on him... We have taken care to see that, having adorned with this title of Master, she may have a more authoritative mission to perform... her perennial, ever present message—the message of prayer.

POPE PAUL VI, “PROCLAMATION OF SAINT TERESA OF AVILA DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH”

32 Pope Paul VI, “Proclamation of Saint Catherine of Siena Doctor of the Church,” 3 October 1970, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1970/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19701003_it.html> (accessed 8 June 2012).

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

Discussion Questions:

10. Share with one another a few of the things you have learned in this quick review of the various papal addresses and actions taken throughout the twentieth century. As our Mother, the Church is in the position of leading and guiding her children, particularly during turbulent and uncertain times. What insights do these events give you into the underlying principles behind the Church's responses and interactions with world events? Can you think of a current event that has elicited a response from the Church?
11. We have outlined a few of the world events that affected women's lives during the twentieth century, but there are many more than this. Discuss some of the other world or cultural events that dramatically changed the lives of women from the Second World War forward. Do you recall if the Church offered her response to any of these issues?
12. In her sixteenth century masterpiece about the importance of prayer entitled *Interior Castle*, Saint Teresa of Avila wrote the following:

A short time ago, I was told by a very learned man that souls without prayer are like people whose bodies or limbs are paralyzed: they possess feet and hands but they cannot control them. In the same way, there are souls so infirm and so accustomed to busying themselves with outside affairs that nothing can be done for them, and it seems as though they are incapable of entering within themselves at all.³⁷

Have you ever felt like this about your prayer life? What advice would you give to someone in this situation?



Saint Catherine was “the humble, learned, undaunted Dominican virgin who loved the pope and the Church with a loftiness and strength of spirit that no other is known to have equaled.”

POPE PAUL VI, COMMEMORATING ST. CATHERINE'S FEAST DAY ON APRIL 29, 1964



[Catherine's] doctrine was not acquired; she was a teacher even before she was a pupil.

POPE PIUS II, AT THE CANONIZATION MASS OF SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA IN 1461



DO YOU KNOW?

A **SYNOD** is an official gathering of clergy and/or laity. A **SYNOD OF BISHOPS** is a gathering of representatives of regional conferences from throughout the world. After the Second Vatican Council, synods of bishops became more regular. Now, about every three years, certain chosen bishops meet with the pope to examine an important topic of Church life and concern. After the synod meets, the pope often publishes a document sharing with the world the wisdom that flowed from the gathering.

³⁷ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1989), 31.



READ ARTICLE 1, PARAGRAPHS 3-4

Following this short history lesson regarding some of the people and events leading up to the publication of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope Saint John Paul II concludes this section by clarifying that this apostolic letter is a direct response to a request from the October 1987 **Synod of Bishops**. This Synod was devoted to the topic: “The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council.”

At this gathering, the bishops asked for “a further study of the anthropological and theological bases that are needed in order to solve the problems connected with the meaning and dignity of being a woman and of being a man.”³⁸ In response to their request, in August of 1988, the pope published *Mulieris Dignitatem*, which speaks to “the reason for and the consequences of the Creator’s decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man.”³⁹

Later that year, Pope Saint John Paul II also published a papal document entitled *On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*. This document was the final word on the 1987 Synod of Bishops. It included, among other things, “proposals of a pastoral nature on the place of women in the Church and society.”⁴⁰ Toward the end of the text, the pope acknowledged, “If anyone has this task of advancing the dignity of women in the Church and society, it is women themselves, who must recognize their responsibility as leading characters.”⁴¹

Discussion Questions:

13. Why is it important for us to understand “the reason for and the consequences of the Creator’s decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man”?⁴² What evidence would lead you to believe that this is an area of confusion in our current culture?
14. Comment on this quote from Pope Saint John Paul II: “If anyone has this task of advancing the dignity of women in the Church and society, it is women themselves, who must recognize their responsibility as leading characters.”⁴³ What are some concrete ways that we as women are advancing the dignity of women in the Church and in society? How are these actions changing the culture? Are there other things that we can do?



A Catholic intellect must see what the Church sees. This means that when we look out upon the Universe, we see the same Universe that the Church sees; and the enormous advantage of this is that the Universe that the Church sees is the real Universe, because she is the Church of God. Seeing what she sees means seeing what is there.

FRANK SHEED, *THEOLOGY AND SANITY*

38 *MD*, 1.

39 *Ibid*.

40 *Ibid*.

41 Pope John Paul II, *On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*, 30 December 2012, <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html> (accessed 8 June 2012), 49.

42 *MD*, 1.

43 Pope John Paul II, *On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*, 49.

THE MARIAN YEAR

READ ARTICLE 2

As this study unfolds, we will begin to understand more fully what it means to think with the “mind” of the Church. Thinking with the “mind” of the Church means that we live our everyday lives in the context of the Gospel. We do this by celebrating the story of our faith through the liturgy and through the sacraments, as well as by marking both the liturgical feast days and fast days throughout the Church year.

Pope Saint John Paul II frequently used the liturgical feast days to remind us of the story of our salvation. By way of example, the publication date of *Mulieris Dignitatem* is remarkable not only for its historical timeliness, but also for its synchronicity with other events and teachings of the Church.

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II anticipated the celebration of the Great Jubilee year of 2000, traditionally a time when all things are made new.⁴⁴ As previously noted, our Holy Father wrote this apostolic letter in 1988, twelve years before the Great Jubilee year of 2000. One year earlier, John Paul II set the stage for this event with his encyclical letter, *Mother of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Mater)*, which he issued on the solemnity of the Annunciation of our Lord on March 25, 1987.

In *Mother of the Redeemer*, he called for the universal Church to observe a **Marian Year** from Pentecost on June 7, 1987, to the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15, 1988, the date our Holy Father signed and dated *Mulieris Dignitatem*. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger spoke of the significance of these dates in relation to our own salvation history:

The dates demand not only remembrance, but also much more a renewed awareness of our true historical and human identity transpiring in these dates. Such renewed orientation of our history toward its foundations is the profoundest meaning of this Jubilee Year. At this historical moment, with its explosion of new knowledge combined with a crisis of all spiritual values, who would deny our dire need for the repositioning of our existence?... The Church has to learn anew from Mary how to be “authentic” Church.”⁴⁵



DO YOU KNOW?

In the Catholic tradition, a Holy Year, or **JUBILEE** is a great religious event. It is also a year of special spiritual benefits (i.e., indulgences). It is a year of reconciliation between adversaries, of conversion and of receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. Consequently, it is a year of solidarity, hope, justice, and commitment to serve God with joy and in peace with our brothers and sisters. A Jubilee Year is above all the year of Christ, who brings life and grace to humanity through His Church. “What is a Holy Year?” www.vatican.va

The highest ranking of the feast days in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church is called a **SOLEMNITY**. These feast days commemorate events in the life of Jesus, Mary, and other important saints. Besides the feasts of Easter and Pentecost, the universal Church celebrates fifteen solemnities.

MARIAN YEARS are chosen exclusively by the pope. In the history of the Church, there have been only two Marian years. In 1954, Pope Pius XII called for a Marian Year, which was the first in the history of the Church. The year was filled with Marian initiatives, which were designed to increase the faith of the people and their devotion to the Blessed Mother. In 1988, Pope Saint John Paul II initiated a Marian Year in preparation of the Great Jubilee of 2000.

⁴⁴ See Rev21:5.

⁴⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: God's Yes to Man: John Paul's Encyclical Redemptoris Mater*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 38–39.

The Church has always compared the Christian concept of women to the image of the Blessed Mother. In fact, in his book, *There are Women and There are Women*, Father Luigi Faccenda, O.F.M., Conv. explains that the two are forever tightly linked:

The Christian concept of women, whatever its origin might have been, became more exalted thanks to the venerable person of Mary and to the role of this Woman in the mystery of salvation. It followed that the Christian idea of women assumed a typical and transcendent importance, which affected the daughters of Eve, conferring on women's virginity, motherhood, and influence a renewed value and an inexhaustible meaning.

Every age... identifies the figure of Mary with its own Christian ideal of womanhood. It follows that, as the woman is more correctly understood, so the person and mission of the Blessed Virgin will be better understood. Therefore, the study of Mary ultimately coincides with the study of woman, since the mystery of Mary is the very mystery of femininity itself.⁴⁶

As women's lives have changed over the past one hundred years, essentially moving from the home into the public square, many have lost this connection with Our Lady. For some, taking Mary of Nazareth as our model seems rather restricted compared with all of the possibilities open to women today. Marian devotions, which sustained our mothers and grandmothers, have largely been lost due to the discrepancy between the traditional image of Mary and the modern image of women.

In clarifying the reason for adopting Mary as our model, both in season and out of season, Pope Paul VI addressed these misconceptions:

First, the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived and which today scarcely exists anywhere. She is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God, because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.⁴⁷



Every grace that God has given to Mary he has given to her for us. The blessings bestowed upon Our Lady are bound to be ours.

FATHER PETER JOHN CAMERON, O.P., *MYSTERIES OF THE VIRGIN MARY: LIVING OUR LADY'S GRACES*

⁴⁶ Father Luigi Faccenda, *There Are Women and There Are Women*, (West Covina, CA: Immaculata Press, 1993), 18.

⁴⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, (*Marialis Cultus*), 2 February 1974, <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/P6MARIAL.HTM>> (accessed 8 June 2012), 35.

We live in a culture that constantly reminds us that we should be able to do whatever we want, no matter the cost. Consequently, we should not be surprised that some modern-day women struggle with Mary's absolute willingness to submit to God's plan. They describe her attitude as too passive and too unrealistic for the world in which we live.

In doing so, however, they dismiss the fact that virtues such as surrender, humility, obedience, and the ability to serve and sacrifice are difficult. Living these virtues every day demands a high degree of spiritual maturity. Such maturity enables us to ignore our own desires and to look to the needs of others, following the example of our Blessed Mother.

Today and always, Mary embraces everything involved with being a Christian woman. It was in her capacity as woman that Mary cooperated with our redemption by completely accepting God's plan and making it her own. In fact, "Mary—the woman of the Bible—intimately belongs to the salvific mystery of Christ, and is therefore also present in a special way in the mystery of the Church."⁴⁸ Our Holy Father reminds us that because of the intimate relationship between mother and Son, Jesus has much to teach us about the dignity and vocation of women. This common thread runs throughout the Holy Father's apostolic letter, and it will be our guiding light along the way.

As we study *Mulieris Dignitatem*, we must remember that Pope Saint John Paul II did not mean for it to be an academic or intellectual exercise. Rather, he writes, "It seems to me that the best thing is to *give this text the style and character of a meditation*."⁴⁹ A meditation requires that we take a truth and ponder it over and over again, reflecting on it from various perspectives, while asking the Holy Spirit to give us a clearer and deeper understanding of the text.

In reading through this letter, we will find that certain points reflected on in earlier chapters show up again later in the document with added insight and depth. This repetition should not distract us; rather, we should take the opportunity to use *Mulieris Dignitatem* as a true meditation. The Holy Father is inviting us to ponder the beauty of the truth about women, our dignity and vocation, and to let the power of the Holy Spirit mold us according to the splendor of God's design.

Discussion Questions:

15. Pope Saint John Paul II spent years preparing us for the Great Jubilee year of 2000 using prayer, catechesis, and various pastoral actions. Unbeknownst to many, during those years he was teaching us to think with the "mind" of the Church, as we were about to enter into a new millennium, a new time of grace and mission. Discuss what it means to think with the "mind" of the Church and share examples of how we do this as faithful Catholics.
16. Is there anything that you have read so far that you plan to use for your own personal prayer and meditation?

⁴⁸ MD, 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Point for Personal Meditation

Gracious Father,

*You have called us to this pivotal moment,
a time of expectation because the hour has come.*

You have pursued us in love, and You are asking for a response.

*Help us to have that holy power and feminine influence
that changes the world one heart at a time.*

*Bring the light of faith to our quest, the quest for freedom, equality,
and dignity, which all human persons desire.*

*Give us the internal strength and heroism of the Virgin Mary,
who stands at the foot of the cross, daring to live the Gospel in a radical way.*

Amen.



I do not believe that any person can achieve intimate union with Our Lord... unless he has established a very deep union with the Blessed Virgin and a great dependence on her help.

LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT, *TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN*



This meditation [*Mulieris Dignitatem*] on the anthropological and theological foundations of women ought to enlighten and guide the Christian response to the most frequently asked questions, oftentimes so crucial, on the “place” that women can have and ought to have in the Church and in society.

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *ON THE VOCATION AND THE MISSION OF THE LAY FAITHFUL IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD (CHRISTIFIDELIS LAICI)*

Endow Adult Studies

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II COLLECTION



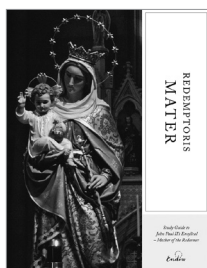
LETTER TO WOMEN | Study for John Paul II's Letter Addressing Women

Navigate the complexities of modern life with faith and clarity through our most popular and foundational study grounded in the timeless wisdom of Pope St. John Paul II. In an age marked by confusion about what it means to be a woman and how we are called to love, *Letter to Women* offers insights rooted in Divine Revelation. Written for the 1995 Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, this letter uncovers profound reflections on human dignity, the vocation of women, and timeless truths revealed through Christ's love. *Letter to Women* helps you rediscover the beauty of your unique vocation and the power of your feminine genius.



MULIERIS DIGNITATEM | On the Dignity and Vocation of Women

Discover the profound insights of Pope St. John Paul II's apostolic letter, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (*Mulieris Dignitatem*), with Endow's comprehensive study. His timeless 1988 letter reflects on the divine purpose of men and women and calls us to emulate Our Blessed Mother, Mary. Through Christ's interactions with women in the Gospels, the Pope illuminates the sacred vocations of spiritual and physical motherhood. By the study's end, you'll gain an appreciation for the Church's unwavering support for women, empowering you to become a joyful, faith-filled evangelizer in words and actions.



REDEMPTORIS MATER | Mother of the Redeemer

Ignite your unique feminine genius through Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Pope St. John Paul II calls our Blessed Mother, Mary, the "most excellent expression of the feminine genius." His presentation of Mary in *Redemptoris Mater* gives each of us a model to follow in navigating our personal vocation. This study helps you connect with Mary as a sister, a companion, and above all, a mother who awakens hope and confidence in God's infinite mercy and love.



ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE | The Most Holy Rosary

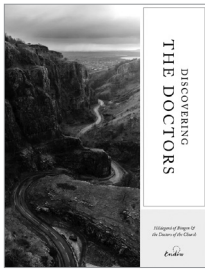
Bring countless blessings into your life and the lives of those around you by growing in devotion to our Blessed Mother. Pope St. John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* invites you into deeper prayer with Jesus through Mary. Whether you have never prayed the Rosary or pray it daily, this study will draw you closer to Christ by meditating on His life and mission. Through *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, you will develop a deeper devotion to praying the rosary and reignite your relationship with Mary, who will lovingly guide you along your spiritual journey.



SALVIFICI DOLORIS | On the Christian Meaning of Suffering

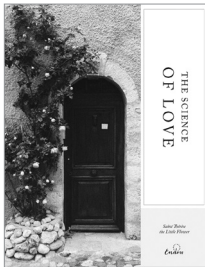
Reconciling the world's beauty with the weight of human suffering is a problem almost as old as the world itself. Every age and culture has attempted to understand the meaning of human suffering. In this study, you will meditate upon the words of Pope St. John Paul II, explore the various ways we experience suffering, and reflect on how suffering can serve as pathways to personal sanctification. Through this study, you will examine your own heart, mind, and actions, seeking to find the meaning in your own walk through 'the Valley of Tears.'

FEMALE SAINTS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH COLLECTION



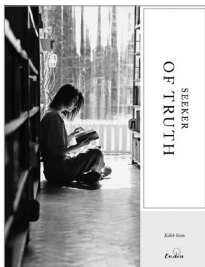
DISCOVERING THE DOCTORS | *St. Hildegard of Bingen and the Doctors of the Church*

The title “Doctor of the Church” is a rare and prestigious honor, celebrating intellectual brilliance and profound spiritual depth. Explore the meaning of this revered title before diving into the life of St. Hildegard of Bingen. A Benedictine nun, composer, playwright, preacher, healer, and prophet, Hildegard’s extraordinary story includes providing spiritual guidance to popes and monarchs and leaving a legacy in music and theology. Discover Hildegard’s multifaceted life then reflect on how God works in your own journey. This study challenges you to deepen your spiritual understanding and embrace the rich inheritance and community of the esteemed Doctors of the Church.



SCIENCE OF LOVE | *St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower*

Encounter St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who offers the modern woman a fresh perspective on happiness, discipleship, and sainthood. She presents her “Little Way” with a striking simplicity that continues to challenge conventional norms. Thérèse’s singular aspiration was clear: to become a saint. This study explores Thérèse’s own writings as well as the writing of numerous experts, including Pope St. John Paul II. Through this study you will encounter St. Thérèse—a remarkably original woman brimming with dreams, authenticity, and freedom—in a whole new way.



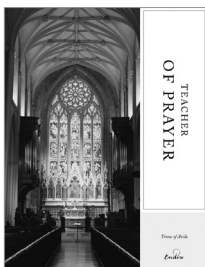
SEEKER OF TRUTH | *Edith Stein*

Uncover the extraordinary journey of Edith Stein in *Seeker of Truth*. Raised in a devout Jewish family, Edith drifted from her faith and became an atheist, but her relentless search for truth as a young German philosopher led to her conversion to Catholicism. Embracing a life of deep faith, she became a Carmelite nun and ultimately gave her life in martyrdom at Auschwitz. Her profound insights on the dignity and vocation of women deeply influenced Pope St. John Paul II’s understanding of the feminine genius. This study explores Stein’s life, writings, and witness, revealing God’s guidance at every step. Let Edith Stein’s unwavering faith and courageous witness inspire you to step out of your comfort zone and pursue truth with passion.



SETTING THE WORLD ABLAZE | *St. Catherine of Siena*

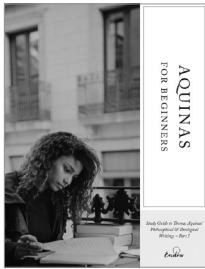
In an age when women were expected to either marry or retreat to the cloister, St. Catherine of Siena lived large in the world. She counseled rulers, reprimanded bishops, and advised popes. Despite her brief 33 years on earth, St. Catherine’s profound impact earned her the distinguished title of Doctor of the Church. Through this study, you will get to know St. Catherine as a friend, teacher, and sister in Christ. Her witness and wisdom will draw you closer to Jesus, helping you to follow the advice that Catherine both gave and completely embodied: “Be who God made you to be, and you will set the world ablaze”.



TEACHER OF PRAYER | *St. Teresa of Ávila*

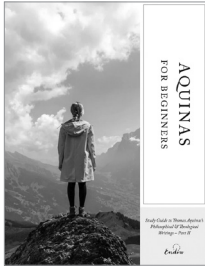
At the heart of this study lies the passionate, unrelenting love of St. Teresa of Ávila, the renowned sixteenth-century Spanish nun who became the first female Doctor of the Church. With her feminine heart and deep spiritual wisdom, St. Teresa leads us on a sacred journey that unfolds within our souls. This study guides women through Teresa’s “Interior Castle,” where Christ abides in the center of our being. Teresa of Ávila’s profound insights on prayer will lead you to a deepened interior life, empowering you to confront the challenges of our modern world.

WISDOM OF THE CHURCH COLLECTION



AQUINAS FOR BEGINNERS, PART I

Unlock the wisdom that has shaped centuries of thought with *Aquinas for Beginners, Part I*. This study introduces you to St. Thomas Aquinas' foundational philosophy, revealing the profound truths about what it means to be human, made in the image of God. Through Aquinas' writings, you will uncover his five compelling reasons for the existence of God and gain a deeper, more enriching understanding of the human person as a union of body and soul. Explore these timeless insights and strengthen your faith with clarity and purpose.



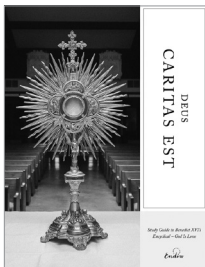
AQUINAS FOR BEGINNERS, PART II

Aquinas for Beginners, Part II builds on the foundation of Part I by examining the powerful virtues that shape a joyful, purposeful, and deeply fulfilling Catholic life. Through a detailed exploration of each virtue, you'll uncover their true meaning and learn how to cultivate them daily, transforming your actions and relationships and becoming a source of light and hope to those around you. This study will inspire you to live with greater intention, deepen your faith, and build a life rooted in empathy, understanding, and moral strength.



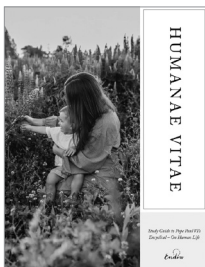
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

A call to action for every woman to inspire meaningful change, *Catholic Social Teaching* is not a mere collection of principles, but a divine narrative inviting us to restore harmony within humanity. As women, we are uniquely called to lead this mission to share God's love through the gift of femininity. With insights and the wisdom of Mary, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and others, discover how to heal our broken world—starting in our hearts and radiating outward as instruments of God's peace.



DEUS CARITAS EST | God Is Love

Reclaim the true meaning of love with Pope Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*. In this study, Pope Benedict XVI confronts how modern culture has distorted the word 'love' and invites us to rediscover its authentic, Christ-centered essence. By delving into this profound encyclical, you will gain insight into how true love is expressed in your relationships—with God, with family, and within your community. This understanding empowers you to bring Christ's transformative love into every aspect of your life, enriching the world with a deeper, more meaningful love.



HUMANAE VITAE | On Human Life

Pope Paul VI's prophetic encyclical explains the Church's teaching on the beauty of marriage, the sanctity of human life within the marital bond, and the problematic nature of contraception. The document's key message is understanding the inseparable dependency of authentic love and truth in human relationships. This study addresses many questions modern Catholics face regarding human love. *Humanae Vitae* is a valuable resource for understanding God's role in procreation and why the Church so strongly guides us toward honoring our dignity within intimate relationships.



LUMEN GENTIUM | Light of the Nations

Transform your understanding of the Church's divine mission with *Lumen Gentium* — *Light of the Nations*. This pivotal Vatican II document reveals the Church as the 'sacrament of salvation'—a living expression of Christ's presence in the world. This study invites you to reflect on essential questions: What does the modern Church look like? What are we supposed to be to the world in our current culture? By embracing these teachings, you'll discover your unique role within the Church and become a powerful bearer of Christ's light in your community and beyond.

Studies for Middle and High School

Endow Youth Studies guide young women on a journey to discover their true identity as daughters of God. Through engaging readings, group discussions, dynamic activities, and prayer, young women explore how their gifts and purpose contribute to their relationships, the Church and society. These studies enhance faith understanding, cultivate virtue, and foster a vibrant interior life, aiming to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, the source of their dignity.



Magnifica
por Endow
Spanish Language Studies

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*Visit www.endowgroups.org
to browse and purchase all studies.*

About Endow

Endow (Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women) is a Catholic apostolate that calls women together to study important documents of the church. Through Endow groups, women encounter their identity as daughters of God, enabling them to grow in their faith and ultimately discover their mission in life.

Mission

Endow seeks to educate women toward a deeper, more profound understanding of their God-given dignity. Rooted in the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, Endow affirms the genius of women—the feminine genius—and empowers them to fulfill our culture's desperate need for an authentic feminine presence in every aspect of life and society.

Endow attracts women of all ages, races, nationalities, and vocations and brings them together in small group communities of faith and friendship. We encourage women to recognize and cultivate their unique feminine genius through the study of papal and magisterial documents, as well as the lives and writings of the saints. Endow group members encounter the Catholic intellectual tradition together, sometimes for the very first time, and learn how to live the fullness of their feminine genius in their families, workplaces and communities.

History

Endow was founded in 2003 when three women—Betsy Considine, Marilyn Coors and Terry Polakovic—encountered the writings of Pope St. John Paul II on the new feminism. They quickly realized the impact of these life-changing truths and wanted all women to learn them too. With the help of Archbishop Charles Chaput, Archbishop José Gomez, and renowned Catholic scholar Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., they began writing studies for use in small groups. These studies have enabled our participants—wives, mothers, single and consecrated women—to encounter the beauty and depth of the Church's teachings on womanhood. From its humble beginnings as a lunch-time conversation in Denver, Endow has grown into an international apostolate present in over 130 dioceses, impacting over 40,000 women worldwide.

Contributions

To keep Endow studies accessible to as many women as possible, our registration costs are supplemented by the generous gifts of our many supporters. Endow operates as a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Please consider joining our mission by donating at www.endowgroups.org/give. We would not be able to exist without our generous donors. *Deo gratias!*