

International Women's
Year - 1975
AD54580

VATICAN STUDY COMMISSION ON WOMEN
IN SOCIETY AND IN THE CHURCH

International Women's Year 1975

Study Kit

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
YEAR
1975**

**VATICAN
STUDY COMMISSION
ON
WOMEN IN SOCIETY
AND
IN THE CHURCH**

**STUDY
KIT**

**Information, Suggestions and Study
Material for the Use of Local Churches**

1975

Publications Office

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

LIBRARY

1285

1285


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY
1285
1285

1285
1285

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

Contents

	Page
International Women's Year:	
A Commitment for the Church	1
Practical Proposals	5
Two Addresses of Pope Paul VI:	
To the General Secretary of I.W.Y.	7
Women in Society Today: To Italian Catholic Jurists	9
Biblical Studies:	
Woman in Holy Scripture	11
The Novelty of the Evangelical Outlook on Woman	19
Marialis Cultus: Guidelines for the Study of the Apostolic Exhortation	22
The Participation of Women in the Life of the Ecclesial Community: Questions for the Local Churches	24
The Participation of Women in the Work of Evangelization: Recommendations made to the Synod of Bishops	28
Appendix: U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	30
The Council Message to Women	33



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/internationalwom00unse>

International Women's Year: A Commitment for the Church

We rejoice, especially on the eve of International Women's Year, proclaimed by the United Nations, at the ever wider participation of women in the life of society to which they bring a specific contribution of great value. . . .

(Extract from the Message of Pope Paul VI for the Day of Peace, 1975)

For the People of God, 1975 will be a *Holy Year*; for the whole human family it will be *International Women's Year (IWY)*. This auspicious coincidence may truly be interpreted as a "sign of the times." If the Holy Year is to be a year of renewal and reconciliation, many and determined efforts must indeed be encouraged among the People of God for a *renewal* of the whole concept of the person and mission of woman in the Church and in society, and for a *reconciliation* of men and women, in all fields of life, so that, in mutual respect, new relationships may be established, based on truth, equality, love and peace.

In the light of the Holy Year, the Church will be able to make its own specific contribution to the movement that is now initiated all over the world, to regain for woman the fullness of dignity conferred on her in the beginning by the Creator and that sin and the many vicissitudes of history, have tarnished. The more the Church helps woman, *within the People of God*, to take the place and fulfill the mission traced in the first prophetic pages of the Bible, and later proclaimed in the Gospels, the more it will be *helping human society in a similar effort* for the promotion and liberation of woman at the level of earthly realities.

I. WHY AN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR?

On December 18, 1972, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution proposed by the Commission on the Status of Woman: Resolution 3010 (XXVII) which proclaimed 1975 International Women's Year and assigned as its aim:

- a) promoting equality between men and women;
- b) ensuring the full integration of women in the total effort for economic, social, and cultural development at national, regional and international levels, especially during the Second United Nations Development Decade;
- c) recognizing the importance of woman's increasing contribution to development of friendly relations and co-operation between States and to the strengthening of peace in the world.

One may ask the reason for this proclamation of Women's Year.

Originally it was an historic event: the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the United

Nations Commission on the Status of Women: appreciation of the work done by the Commission during this period; and finally official recognition of the contribution women have made to the social, economic, political and cultural life of their countries.

However, this commemorative event falls at a period in time when women are becoming more aware:

- of their dignity as full human beings,
- of their aspirations, their potential, which they now have the opportunity to fulfill and develop,
- of the force they can and do represent in the world, for the common good of humanity, for peace and development,
- of the responsibilities which are increasing as their rights are more widely recognized,
- of the need for women to abandon their still too passive mentality and adopt a more active, more "committed" attitude.

The coincidence of these factors cannot but give a dynamic, future-oriented character to International Women's Year. Everything will not be over on December 31, 1975! Women's Year should not merely be the celebration of an anniversary; that is useful, but of secondary importance. International Women's Year should mark the beginning of action for the improvement of the status of women, and at the same time, for progress in the whole community of mankind.

II. ORIENTATIONS AND PROGRAMS

Equality, development and peace are, then, the central themes of Women's Year. Along with these the United Nations also presented numerous suggestions for action programs, which show the perspective in which the United Nations views Women's Year.

1. It is clearly stated that a long-term effort is demanded on the part of the international community to improve the condition of women and their contribution to society.

2. The program, while taking as a starting point the various demands made specifically for women,

tends to go beyond these and to set them in the overall perspective of the promotion of the person as such and the improvement of the quality of life in the whole human community.

3. The Year should demonstrate the value of a unified approach to issues of human rights, development and peace, which cannot be successfully dealt with as isolated questions distinct from each other. It should be viewed also as an event which concerns both men and women.

4. The word "development" is to be given a very wide meaning: social, cultural and economic progress, participation in the fashioning of a just and human society. Taken in this sense it concerns not only women in developing countries, but all women. The fruit of this process of total development should be Peace.

5. Though the activities and programs should involve both men and women, they should particularly concern women, of all ages, walks in life, and countries, and should stimulate their imagination and their creativity.

6. Programs and activities should be directed towards certain specific goals:

- full equality before the law,
- equality in meeting health needs and providing social services,
- eliminating illiteracy and ensuring equality of educational opportunity: training opportunities in all fields, including citizenship and leadership, consumerism, management, and science and technology,
- equality of rights and responsibilities in the family,
- equality of economic rights. Improvement of living and working conditions, improvement in the quality of rural life and in the status of rural women,
- protection of working mothers. Society and individuals should become more aware of the social value of motherhood and endeavor to make effective the consequences deriving from it (vacations, leave of absence, refresher courses),
- struggle against prostitution, and particularly against its "regulation,"

- opportunity for women as well as men to take a full part in decision-making at all levels.

Equality in the various sectors is already demanded in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, November 7, 1967, and which at present is in process of appeal for transformation into a Convention.

III. THE CHURCH AND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The Church has already recognized, in the contemporary effort to promote the advancement of woman in society, "a sign of the times" and has seen in it a call of the Spirit. . . . The program of International Women's Year . . . is thus not extraneous to the most lively interest of the Church herself.

The Church, which although not of the world works and acts in it, cannot but feel challenged by the threefold aim of IWY. Equality, development and peace are only "different names" for one, unique reality: Pope Paul VI (cf. *Populorum progressio* and *Octogesima adveniens*) has made this reality a resounding theme of his Pontificate. Again, recently, during an audience granted to Mrs. Helvi Sipila, Secretary General of IWY, the Holy Father reasserted the harmony that exists between the theme of IWY and the synthesis of the social teaching of the Church (cf. the Address quoted above).

In 1975, the human family will constantly be encountering a similar action of the Church to promote equality, development and peace, in the light of Revelation and Redemption. The Church, also, will find its task made easier by a new openness and availability of the whole of society with regard to these aims; but at the same time, it will realize that it is being closely scrutinized with regard to its authenticity and coherence, and therefore, once again, being judged.

A series of questions arise today, to which the prophetic inspiration of the Church must find an answer. In the light of the Gospel and with respect for the diversity of peoples and cultures, its action and commitment should tend towards the total promotion of the human person, man and woman.

In this sense, what original contribution can the Church, as People of God, make to International Women's Year? Three basic points may be distinguished:

1. discernment of the "signs of the times";
2. educational commitment;
3. witness of life.

1. Numerous phenomena have enabled women today to have an ever more effective participation in the life of society. They necessitate, on the part of the whole community of believers, led by their pastors, an effort of "discernment" in the light of faith, in order to grasp the meaning of these "signs of the times" (cf. *Pacem in terris*) and better understand God's plan for mankind and for the world.

Let us reflect on the words of Paul VI in the address already quoted: "Equality can only be found in its essential foundation, which is the dignity of the human person, man and woman, in their filial relationship with God of whom they are the visible image."

2. The Church must support and develop certain extremely positive elements of these new phenomena, in a Christian sense and with an involvement that is mainly educational:

- a heightened degree of awareness in woman: an awareness of her status as a person, which can be the starting-point of progressive personalization;
- a new sensibility to all that might offend the dignity of the person. In this context importance must be given to educational action, for men and women, young and adult, through the mass-media, and the "image" of woman that they project in all sectors of society;
- greater demands for justice in society, demands which tend to eliminate "with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion . . ." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 29). Christians know that all oppression has its roots in sin, and all hope of liberation is founded on Christ's redemption;
- the seeking for a "quality of life" that should be interpreted and developed as mean-

ing a life made more fully human through the harmonious co-operation of men and women at all levels.

3. Lastly, "The Church is bound to give witness to justice." These words are in the document "Justice in the World" published by the Synod of Bishops in 1971: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." And, when undertaking "an examination of the modes of acting and of the . . . life style found within the Church," the Bishops urged "that women should have their own share of responsibilities and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church."

IV. THE SPECIFIC TASK OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The participation of the Catholic Church in the effort to achieve the triple goal of IWY is a specific task of the local Churches and should not be cast back generically on the universal Church: both because men and women encounter the universal Church more immediately in the local Church, and because, since Vatican II, the Church has called more clearly on the faithful as individuals, and on the particular Churches whenever divine law has to be expressed in the life of the earthly city, that divine law from which comes "the universal charter of values" which can change the face of the earth (cf. GS, 43 and 91). The Council considered the faithful not as isolated individuals but as active and responsible members of the local Churches under the guidance of their pastors (GS, 91).

The priority given to the local Churches is also a way of both respecting and promoting all the diversity of cultures in the unity of the human family.

In the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens* (No. 4), Pope Paul VI recognizes the local Churches as having explicit mandate:

1) to analyze with objectivity the situation proper to their own country;

2) to shed on it the light of the Gospel from within the living tradition of the Church;

3) to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.

That is why, today, the Holy Father is asking the local Churches to live 1975, the Holy Year, also in the dimension of International Women's Year.

V. THE MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION ON WOMAN

Preparation of the Catholic Church's contribution to IWY was entrusted to the temporary Study Commission on Woman in Society and in the Church created by Pope Paul VI in May 1973. The Commission's mandate was extended till the end of January 1976 to enable it to contribute to IWY.

The Commission met for this purpose in December 1974, having invited the collaboration of various departments of the Holy See and other international bodies concerned (the International Unions of Major Religious Superiors, men and women, the Conference of Catholic International Organizations). It was on this occasion that the proposals were formulated which are now submitted to the Churches to guide their reflection and stimulate their activity.

It should be clear that the Commission's proposals and the study material in the appendix are made available to the local Churches merely by way of suggestion. The responsible persons in the various local Churches will decide what use to make of them. The important point is that all the local Churches throughout the world should act in the same spirit and with the same aims.



Practical Proposals

At the level of Episcopal Conferences and Assemblies and for local Churches

METHODOLOGY

1. *General principle: the operative word must be TOGETHER:*

IWY is not the year in which women take the place of men; even less is it the year where men yield their place to women. It is the year in which, within the human family, men and women together reflect, take decisions and set to work to overcome obstacles and create adequate structures, so that all women able to do so, may participate, with the same standing as men, in the various manifestations, activities and responsibilities.

The Church must give the example; everything undertaken during IWY should really be done TOGETHER.

2. *Make use of existing possibilities:*

Existing bodies should be used as far as possible, integrating other men and women when necessary, and renewing the aims and means.

Only when absolutely necessary, special bodies should be created; these must be as flexible and dynamic as possible and not strangled with red tape.

It would be useful to start by an assessment of all that has been done to date in the local context, and with available material, in relation to the total development of the human person, man and woman.

3. *Coordinate:*

The responsible persons in the local Churches should coordinate activities in such a way as to avoid waste of energy and means. In coordination also, the word TOGETHER must not be overlooked.

4. *Create:*

Let there be less creation of structures and more of "contents" and trends. Local situations, the need to move gradually as to time and manner, cultural requirements, the means available, must not at once be advanced as so many pretexts for the least possible involvement in IWY; on the contrary, the more local society appears to be in need of transformation, the more effort should be made to open up new possibilities for the action of all in favor of women.

PROPOSALS

Ad extra

1. Appropriate support of IWY in relations with governments, and possible collaboration with national initiatives.
2. Support for the changing of legislation according to a more Christian line of thought with respect to woman; for instance, in relation to family rights, the right to work, the fight against prostitution, and in particular against its "regulation."
3. Use of mass media, assessment of programs (radio, TV, etc.) in relation to the aims of IWY.

4. Steps to ensure the presence of Christian-minded delegates to the United Nations Conference for IWY, which will be held in Mexico from the end of June to the beginning of July 1975.

Ad intra

1. Pastoral letters on the themes of IWY.

2. Indication of themes and circulation of material for homilies and study groups, based on the Word of God ("Jesus and women," etc.), on Conciliar texts (*Lumen Gentium*, VIII), on the Magisterium (*Marialis Cultus*), etc.

3. Widespread circulation of a study text (appended) in the form of a questionnaire for reflection on the witness given by the ecclesial community regarding responsible participation of women and collaboration between men and women.

4. Meetings, study days, seminars at local, diocesan, national and regional levels.

5. Ecumenical projects (consultations, etc.).

6. Initiatives of teaching nuns for the education of women.

7. Activities in schools and colleges (boys and girls), youth and adult movements, aimed at educating mentalities for healthy co-operation between men and women in social life. The ways and means should be adapted to circumstances and to the various cultural contexts (publications, meetings, etc.).

8. Communitarian celebrations of IWY: liturgical celebrations, "Days" or "Weeks," Youth projects, etc.

9. Creation (wherever it seems opportune) by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, of a Commission on Woman in Society and in the Church.

10. Preparation of a report of activity undertaken for IWY. The report should reach the Holy See before January 31st, 1976 so that an overall evaluation may be made of the participation of the Catholic Church in International Women's Year.



The Holy Father's Wishes for International Women's Year

Address to the General Secretary of I.W.Y.

On November 6, 1974, the Holy Father received in audience Mrs. Helvi Sipilä, Assistant General Secretary for Social Development and Human Affairs of the United Nations and General Secretary of I.W.Y. The following is the text of the Pope's Address.

We very willingly greet in you, this morning, the representative of the commitment assumed by the United Nations for the "International Women's Year," proclaimed for 1975; this meeting offers us the opportunity to express the goodwill and attention with which we wish to follow this initiative.

In fact, the initiative does not find the Church inattentive to the problem or lacking in a clear desire to solve it. On the contrary: in the contemporary effort to promote the advancement of woman in society, the Church has already recognized "a sign of the times," and has seen in it a call of the Spirit. The Study Commission which we set up, accepting a wish expressed by the 1971 Synod, has precisely received the mandate to study, in a comparison of the aspirations of today's world and the enlightening doctrine of the Church, the full participation of woman in the community life of the Church and of society.

The program of International Women's Year, well summed up in the theme "equality, development and peace," is thus not extraneous to the most lively interest of the Church herself.

Equality can only be found in its essential foundation, which is the dignity of the human person, man and woman, in their filial relationship with God, of whom they are the visible image.

But this does not exclude the distinction, in unity, and the specific contribution of woman to the full development of society, according to her proper and personal vocation.

In this way the woman of today will be able to become more conscious of her rights and duties, and will be able to contribute not only to the elevation of herself but also to a qualitative progress of human social life, "in development and peace."

And since the fundamental and life-giving cell of human society remains the family, according to the very plan of God, woman will preserve and develop, principally in the family community, in full co-responsibility with man, her task of welcoming, giving and raising life, in a growing development of its potential powers.

To all those collaborating in the preparation of International Women's Year in the most worthy

purpose of strengthening ever more the dignity and mission of woman, we indicate as a solid point of reference the figure of the Blessed Virgin. As we stated in our recent Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, our age is called upon to verify and to "compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time . . .

(she) offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city, the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts" (37).

— And with this bright vision before our eyes, we wish the undertaking harmonious and profitable work, upon which we invoke the intercession of the Mother of God and the fullness of divine blessings.



Women in Society Today

An Address of Pope Paul VI

On December 7, 1974, the Holy Father received in Audience the participants of the XXVth National Congress of the Union of Italian Catholic Jurists. The subject of the Congress was "Woman in present-day Italian Society."

... The subject you have tackled is such an important one that it would require far greater study and development than is possible in these short moments. We wish, however, to set forth to you some thoughts, not new to you, indeed, which may contribute to the overall and universal view of the problem, all the more relevant today in view of the imminence of "International Women's Year," promoted by the United Nations for 1975.

You know that the Church also and in a particular way is directly interested in questions concerning the presence and role of woman in contemporary society, at all levels. We have set up a special Commission for the study of woman's problems for that very reason.

SOCIAL-CULTURAL CHANGES

We are in fact aware, like any other observer of contemporary events, of the process of socio-cultural transformation which has led also to considerable changes in the position and roles of woman. The rather rapid transition from a mainly agricultural society to a new type of society characterized by industrialization, with the consequent phenomena of urbanization, the mobility

and instability of the population, the changes in domestic life and social relations, has placed woman too at the center of a crisis of institutions and morals. This crisis which is not yet resolved, has had repercussions particularly on family relations, and on the educational mission and the very identity of woman as such and her whole involvement in social life with work, friendships, welfare activities and relief. Even religious spirit and consequent practice have been affected.

Today, therefore, we are faced with some far-reaching phenomena: especially the equality of woman and her increasing emancipation with regard to man; a new conception and interpretation of her roles as wife, mother, daughter, sister; her growing access to professional work on a wider and wider plane of specialization; her marked tendency to prefer work outside the home not without detriment to conjugal relations and above all to the education of the children, emancipated too soon from the authority of the parents, the mother particularly.

VALUES TO CONSIDER

It is clear that not everything is to be considered negative in this new state of affairs. On the contrary, it may perhaps be easier, in this context, for

the woman of today and tomorrow to give full expression to all her energies. Even the erroneous experiences of these years may be useful if the wholesome principles of universal conscience are recognized in society to arrive at a new equilibrium in domestic and social life.

The real problem consists in the recognition, the respect and, where necessary, the recovery of these principles, which are also irreplaceable values in the culture of an advanced people. Let us recall them briefly. Let us mention in the first place the functional differentiation, though identical nature, of woman as compared with man; hence the originality of her being, her psychology, her human and Christian vocation; and also her dignity, which must not be degraded, as often happens today, in morals, work, indiscriminate promiscuity, publicity and entertainment. Let us add woman's primacy in the whole human area in which the problems of life, sorrow, assistance, are most directly met with, particularly in motherhood.

These simple references to the development of woman's position in renewed society, could be summed up schematically as follows.

- We certainly hope that woman will be recognized as having full civil rights, like man, where this is not already the case;
- that the exercise of professional, social and political functions will be made really possible for woman as for man, according to her personal capacities;
- that the prerogatives of woman in married, family, educational and social life will not be ignored: on the contrary, that they will be honored and protected:
- that the dignity of her person and of her status as a single woman, wife or widow will be upheld and defended and that woman will be given the assistance she needs, especially when her husband is absent, disabled, imprisoned, that is, unable to carry out this function in the family.

RESPECT FOR WOMAN

These are all principles and values that, where they are respected, ensure woman her real, unique

and peerless greatness. As we said on another occasion: "For us, woman is the reflection of a beauty that transcends her, the sign of a goodness that seems to us boundless, the mirror of the ideal human being, as conceived by God in his image and likeness. For us, woman is the vision of virginal purity, restoring the highest affective and moral sentiments of the human heart; for us, she is the apparition, in man's loneliness, of his mate, capable of the supreme dedication of love, the resources of cooperation and assistance, the strength of faithfulness and industry, and the habitual heroism of sacrifice; for us she is the mother—let us bow down before her!—the mysterious source of human life, where nature still receives the breath of God, the creator of the immortal soul . . .; for us she is humanity, bearing within her the best disposition for religious attraction and who when she wisely follows it, raises and elevates herself in the most genuine expression of femininity; and who therefore singing, praying, longing, weeping, seems to converge naturally towards a unique and supreme figure, immaculate and sorrowful, which a privileged Woman, blessed among all, was destined to realize the Virgin Mother of Christ, Mary." (To the Italian Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, October 29, 1966; AAS, 8, 1966, p. 1168)

LOOK TO MARY

Far beyond the sphere of the conditions and problems raised at the sociological level, our apostolic ministry indicates to everyone, in a theological and spiritual key, as a point of reference also to solve many worldly, family and social questions, that Creature whom Christ himself, her Son, called several times by the significant name of "Woman." And it encourages the woman of today to look to that type of true feminine promotion, resplendent with real beauty and spotless holiness, as tomorrow's feast indicates.

With these wishes, which spring from our heart, we impart to you our blessing.



Biblical Studies: Woman in Holy Scripture

Nothing can give a better idea of the radically new approach taken by biblical revelation with respect to women than a rapid comparison with the notions current in the Middle East in ancient times. In that region, women were generally considered as inferior beings, not as persons equal to men. The relationship between man and woman was viewed above all under the aspect of the passion of love and of fecundity.¹ The Bible, on the contrary, above all the Christian Revelation, proclaims that man and woman are equal in the sight of God: "they are equal as beings created by God, and equal as children of God" (Cardinal Marty).²

A. HUMAN BEINGS, MALE AND FEMALE, ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

1. The equality of man and woman is taught in the very first pages of Holy Scripture. According to the ancient Yahwist account of Creation (Gen 2, 4b-25), God first formed the human being ('adam), then created the wild animals and finally created woman. But woman belongs to a quite different order from the animals which are simply the "object of man's possession and domination" (2, 19-20). Woman, on the contrary, is created to be near him and like himself, to be his helper, for it is not good for man to be alone (2, 18). When man saw his companion just close by, he exclaimed, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (2, 23). For him, she was like another self. The biblical account gives special

stress to "the mutual attachment of the two partners, man and woman, who have the same nature and an equal dignity".³

Henceforth, they are called 'ish (man) and 'ishsha (woman). To fulfill completely his nature and dignity as a person, a human being has to live in communion. Man and woman fulfill their destiny together. Not only must they fulfill each other mutually: they are called to be "one flesh" (2, 24). The relationship between man and woman is, therefore, expressed in terms of a mutual giving, of total reciprocity, of communion and love.

2. The priestly account of creation (Gen 1, 1-2, 4a), which is much more recent, compares the dignity of man and woman to that of God himself. After the creation of the animals on the fifth day, (1, 20-25), God completes his work on the sixth day by creating man: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created *him*; male and female he created *them*" (1, 27). Man, unlike other living creatures, is created in the image of God, in his likeness (1, 26). Just as a son resembles his father and is his image (5, 3) and is able to do what his father does, so man, who is created in the image of God, shares in God's power: he is called to have dominion over the animals and under God, to subdue the earth (1, 26b-28). Christian tradition developed these themes, distinguishing "image" and "likeness": by his intellect and freedom, man is a personal being "created in the image of God," but he acquires a "likeness" to God only to the extent to which he enters into communion with God by grace and a life of love.⁴

3. The relationship between man and woman, defined as the mutual belonging of two equal persons, was deeply corrupted by sin (Gen 3). This first sin was the joint fault of the couple: both of them, man and woman, transgressed God's command. The consequences of their act were felt immediately: created to live in the closest unity, "the two accomplices, falling back on themselves, experienced loneliness."⁵ The sign of sin is to be lonely, isolated: Adam accused the woman (3, 12) and she blamed the serpent (3, 13). Then, although they had always been naked without feeling any shame in each other's presence (2, 25), they now recognized their nakedness (3, 7). "The sentiment of shame, henceforth linked to sexuality, is a sign of lost innocence, of the wound inflicted on the power to love."⁶ Because of sin, the order willed by God is seriously disturbed. Woman's love for her husband is degraded and becomes lust and seduction; henceforth man will act as dominator over woman: in the Old Testament, the husband is called "ba'al," that is, "master"; the woman is his "property." Both man and woman therefore need to be redeemed, but redemption will come only in Christ: he will bring the liberation which will restore the original balance of God's work.

B. WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Throughout the Old Testament, we find the fundamental aspects stressed in Genesis: on the one hand, the drama involving the couple and the results of sin; on the other, the ideal of the harmony of sexual relationships and of conjugal union in the perspective of the Covenant.

1. In the earliest accounts, the main stress as regards woman is on procreation. A wife is appreciated above all for her fecundity. She is the one who gives birth and thus assures descendants for her husband who will perpetuate his lineage and his name. The wife is considered rather as the possession of her husband. This does not exclude affection and love. Such is the love of Isaac for Rebecca (Gen 24, 67) and of Jacob for Rachel (29, 20). Moreover, within the narrow limits assigned to her in the sociological context of the ancient East, a woman could nevertheless show her greatness. As wives and mothers, women can sometimes have a decisive influence on the course of

historical events. Sara, Rebecca and Rachel remain national figures for Israel. "If the Jews commonly say 'Our father, Abraham,' they also say, 'Sara, our mother.'"⁷ And in Jg 5, 7, Deborah who liberated her people is called "a mother in Israel."

The more recent Old Testament traditions sometimes stress the danger of women, but they also preserve the remembrance of wonderful wives and mothers. Such is Anna, the mother of Samuel. The Wisdom Books warn against woman as a cause of sin (Sir 25, 24), as a seducer (9, 1-9), as versatile (cf. 25, 13-26, 18); but they also proclaim the advantage of "a good wife" for her husband: "Where there is no wife," says Sirach, "a man will wander about and sigh" (36, 25); "a good wife is a great blessing; she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord" (26, 3). And we know the wonderful words of praise for the valiant woman in the Book of Proverbs (31, 10-31).

2. To several women, the Bible assigns a role which is important and at times vital, not simply now of wives and mothers, but with respect to community events and decisions. In the biblical and Jewish tradition, Miriam, the sister of Moses, is represented as someone remarkable. She takes an active share in the "Exodus epic," side by side with her two brothers Moses and Aaron. After the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, she leads the choir of women and intones the passover song (Ex 15, 20-21). The prophet Micah places her on the same level as her two brothers. In her he sees one of the guides of the People of God at the time of their liberation (Mi 6, 4). Miriam is a "prophetess," and it is because of this that she considers herself the equal of Moses, just as Aaron did (Nb 12, 1-2). The reference made to Miriam's death lays particular stress on her place in the history of her people (Nb 20, 1).

In the time of the Judges, a woman, Deborah, is called a "prophetess" like Miriam. "Deborah . . . was judging Israel. . . . She used to sit in the hill country of Ephraim and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Jg 4, 4-5). She is the one who acts as an intermediary between Yahweh and the war-leader Barak; she is the one who gives the latter the order to march against Sisara with his army. She is the one who provides the decisive impulse (4, 14). Another woman, Jael, completes

the victory after the battle by killing the enemy leader with her own hand, while he is attempting to escape (Jg 4, 17-22).

Another woman, Huldah, appears at another important stage in the history of Israel, at the time of the discovery of the Law, which was used as a basis for the reform of Josias. She too is called a "prophetess." She is the one consulted "concerning the words of this book that has been found" (2 R 22, 13).

Two books of a different literary genre present female personages more directly involved in the dramatic history of their people. The first is Judith. In the midst of discouragement, this widow is the one who revives the leaders' faith in the God of Israel. This "devout woman" (Jdt 8, 31) judges the situation calmly, decides on the plan she has imagined and carries it out intrepidly, thus saving the beleaguered city (Jdt 15, 8-9). The book of Esther also sketches the portrait of a woman who takes on herself the destiny of her whole nation when it is threatened with extermination and who saves it at the risk of her own life. Stories such as these bear witness to the fact that the often primary and sometimes decisive role that a woman could play because of a vocation from God in the course of history, was fully understood, as was also the influence she could exert on events which concerned the nation and the responsibility she could be called upon to assume on behalf of the community.

On a more definite historical level than that of the two preceding accounts, the Bible recalls the story of an heroic Jewish mother in the person of the mother of the seven Maccabees: "Though she saw her seven sons perish within a single day . . . she encouraged each of them in the language of their fathers. Filled with a noble spirit, she fired her woman's reasoning with a man's courage" (2 Mac 7, 20-21); and "last of all, the mother died after her sons" (*ibid.* v 41). Involved with all her motherly being in the struggle for the religious and political independence of her nation, she testifies to the eminent role of women in the spiritual growth of the community.

3. As an additional point, the authors of the Bible often use the symbol of a woman to represent the People of God or the holy City. To describe the new inhabitants of Sion after the Exile, the Book of Isaiah compares it to a woman who gives birth (Is

66, 7). A Psalm announces that when Sion has become the mother of all peoples, men speaking of it will say, "this one and that one were born in her" (Ps 87, 5). It is also under the form of a woman that Wisdom is represented in the Wisdom Books.

C. THE COVENANT AND THE NUPTIAL MYSTERY

1. In the writings of the great prophets, the Covenant—the expression of man's union with God—takes on the privileged form of a nuptial mystery. The chosen people is for God a spouse whom he loves passionately. This metaphor brings out the profound meaning of the creation of man, male and female, and the noble significance of sexuality. In creating the human couple, God prepared mankind for the revelation of his love. Man and woman educate each other mutually in view of this revelation. By arousing each other's love by the reciprocal gift they make of themselves, they move towards the discovery of a higher love in the very depths of their being and in perfect equality. In this connection, the drama of his betrayed love prepares the prophet Hosea to understand and denounce Israel's unfaithfulness to her God.

In clear terms, the Bible expresses the selflessness in man and woman which results from their acknowledgment of and respect for their partner, in his/her own being and in what differentiates him/her. The joy and wonder resulting from this (Gen 2, 22-24) find their fulfillment only when lust is transcended and when both realize the sublime love which gives each of them to the other. This is the fundamental lesson of the book of Tobit. In it, the communion of the two young spouses in their equal submission to the God of the Covenant is seen as the only thing able to conquer the power of death which is attached to lust (Tb 8, 7).

The passionate strophes of the Song of Songs point in the same direction.⁸ Love does not withdraw itself into its own enjoyment, into a joy which is possessive and dominating. The two beings which it joins to each other take turns to invite each other to transcend himself/herself. By binding them to each other, their love sets them free and takes them up towards mysterious heights, by means of a constantly recurring dialectic of union and separation, of return and a fresh departure (Cant 8, 14). Man and woman do not really fulfill

themselves except in a total respect for their equal dignity. In a way, this respect separates them in order to strengthen the other in his or her autonomy and in the perfection of his/her being; but in reality, it unites them and makes their love spring forth anew on a deeper level of communion. The Old Testament, therefore, beyond sociological conditions of slavery, did perceive the equal dignity of man and woman in the search for the complete fulfillment of their being through love. According to several authors, this love between bride and bridegroom is a symbol of God's love for His people, and of the love of Israel for its God. This was the interpretation of the Song in Jewish and Christian tradition. Even if we see in it a song of human love, the poem is a foreshadowing of what will appear in its full light as a result of the revelation of the love-relationship between Christ and the Church.

2. The Old Testament represented the Covenant between God and Israel in the form of a nuptial mystery. The New Testament takes up the same symbolism. In the person of Christ, "God and mankind are face to face in the situation of one spouse to another,"⁹ united by the bond of love. According to some texts in the Synoptic Gospels, it is in this way that Jesus presents his Kingdom. He is the bridegroom whose presence fills the heart of his "wedding-guests"—his disciples—with joy (Mc 2, 19). The parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22, 1) and that of the ten virgins (Mt 25, 1-13) repeat the same imagery but with new features. In the fourth Gospel, John the Baptist defines himself as "the friend of the bridegroom." He "rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice" (3, 29). The story of the wedding feast at Cana, told early in the same Gospel, implies a similar meaning: Jesus there takes the place of the bridegroom, and in the Jewish jars used for purification (which represented the old Covenant) he creates the exquisite and super-abundant wine, a "sign" which announces the new Covenant (Jn 2, 1-11).

However, it is in St. Paul that this marriage symbolism is spelled out most fully. The Apostle writes to the Corinthians: "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband" (2 Cor 11, 2). In the letter to the Ephesians, he bases his doctrine on marriage upon the mystery of the union between Christ and the Church. According to St. Paul, the human couple does not merely find its model in the union between Christ and the

Church, nor is that a mere comparison to explain the mystery; on the contrary, the couple can be understood only in reference to the mystery; the union between the spouses is the very expression of this mystery. That is why the Apostle can say, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5, 25), and then comment on the text of Genesis (2, 24) thus: "This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church" (5, 32).

The Johannine Book of Revelation takes up the same symbolism. On the horizon of time, it sees the end coming under the sign of the wedding of the Lamb. History is merely a preparation for it. It is animated and supported by a mystery of love. Mankind purified from its faults in the blood of the Lamb is, according to *Revelation*, the Bride who makes herself ready (Rev 19, 7) for meeting the Bridegroom.

The place occupied by this nuptial symbolism in the New Testament shows the dignity of the human couple in the economy of salvation. Its conjugal reality is raised to the level of a "mystery." As was already foreshadowed in the Old Testament, it educates mankind by making it ready to receive the revelation of the covenant of love by means of which God wants to unite it to himself. Woman represents what the Church and mankind are in the sight of God: like Israel before God, the Church in relation to Christ is the Bride; for us believers, she is our Mother.

D. WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The way Jesus acts with respect to women astonishes by its novelty and its daring. Contemporary Judaism on the whole, still judged women with contempt; "a woman, says the Law, is inferior to man in everything. Therefore, she must obey, not in order to humble herself, but in order to be guided; for it is to man that God gave the power," wrote Flavius Josephus (*Contra Apion*, II, 26). Jesus broke through the religious and social barriers of his time and reestablished women in their full dignity as persons equal to men.

He does not suffer himself to be stopped by the prescriptions of the Law concerning purity, nor by prejudice against loose-living women; he sees in them people to be saved. After unmasking the

hypocrisy and contempt of the Pharisees and Scribes, who want to stone the woman taken in adultery and thus apply the Law, Jesus does not reproach the woman, but only invites her to break away from sin and start a new life (Jn 8, 11). To the woman with an issue of blood who had dared to touch the hem of his garment, Jesus declares that her faith has made her whole (Mt 9, 22 par.). In the house of Simon the Pharisee, when a sinful woman washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and anoints them with perfume, he says to the Pharisee who is scandalized by this gesture, "Her sins are forgiven for she loved much" (Lk 7, 47). The disciples also voice the spirit of their time when they show their astonishment at seeing Jesus speaking in public to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4, 27). Few other passages in the Gospels bring out so well the freedom of Jesus and the way he leads a woman to the faith. He takes the Samaritan woman as she is, with her life of sin and in her state of religious segregation, and leads her to discover in him the Messiah (4, 25-26); then he invites her to join henceforth in Christian adoration in the Spirit and truth (4, 23-34). The woman is completely changed and runs back into the town. Thanks to the testimony she gives, the Samaritans come to Jesus and recognize in him the true Savior of the world (4, 42). At first she is a sinful woman, but then she becomes a believer and the messenger of salvation.

When it is a question of the Kingdom, woman is equal to man. Like him, she is invited to listen to and observe the Word of God. That, more than her physical motherhood, constitutes her greatness in the eyes of Jesus (Lk 11, 27-28). Luke shows us Mary of Bethany "sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to his words" (Lk 10, 39), in the attitude of a disciple, whereas the custom of the Rabbis excluded women from the circle of their students. Christian tradition has seen in this woman sitting at Our Lord's feet, the example and model of contemplative life, or even of the contemplation of God in eternal life.¹⁰ On various occasions, Jesus praises the faith of the women who come to him (Lk 7, 50; 8, 48 par.). After curing the woman who was bent over, he calls her "daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13, 16), a title of honor which is hardly ever applied to women in the rabbinical writings. He praises Mary, the sister of Lazarus, for anointing his feet with an expensive perfume, and sees in her action a preparation for his burial (Jn 12, 1-11).

In order to describe what our behavior should be concerning the realities of the Kingdom of God, Jesus in his parables often takes an example from the actions of women (Mt 13, 33 par.; Lc 15, 8-10; 18, 1-8; Mt 25, 1-13), and he proclaims that husband and wife are completely equal in marriage (Mk 10, 2-12).

The Gospel also indicates the place of women in the work of salvation. In the course of his ministry, Jesus breaks with Jewish customs and, in addition to the Twelve, admits a group of women to be with him: "Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means" (Lk 8, 2-3). At the raising of Lazarus, it is a woman, Martha, who receives the announcement of Jesus' resurrection and who professes her faith in it (Jn 11, 25-27). The women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee are present on Calvary (Lk 23, 49); they observe the burial of Jesus, are there again on the morning of the resurrection (Lk 24, 1-10). Although according to Jewish law, the witness of a woman has no juridical value, those women are the first witnesses and messengers of the Resurrection; the risen Jesus orders them to take the news to the Apostles (Mt 28, 8; Lc 24, 9). According to Jn 20, 11-18, "Mary of Magdala would be the type of the essential female mission, that ministry of witnessing, at a time when the future of Christianity is at stake."¹¹ If the witness of the Apostles founds the Church, the witness of the women nourishes the faith of the Christian communities.

2. The early Church takes its inspiration from the attitude of Jesus. From the beginning, women are present in the Christian assembly: "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1, 14). Luke underlines the part played by women who welcome the brethren into their houses (Acts 12, 12). The home of Lydia in Philippi is the first center of the spread of the Gospel in Europe (Acts 15, 14-15, 40; 18, 2-3; Rom 16, 3; 1 Cor 16, 19). The book of Acts insists on the role played by Priscilla (often mentioned before her husband Aquila): she gives the best example of the work of women in collaborating with Paul for the spread of the Gospel. With this couple, Apollo, who was to become Paul's

co-worker, completed his instruction as a Christian (Acts 18, 26).

Finally, in the letter to the Romans we note the greetings which Paul addresses to the women who collaborate with him; this gives an idea of the part played by women in that community: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess¹² of the church of Cenchreae. . . . Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. . . . Greet Mary, who has worked hard among you" (Rom 16, 1,3,6).

A specially impressive aspect of the life of the early Church is the important part played by the women's prophetic charism. When Jesus was presented in the Temple, a prophetess, Anna, "spoke of him to all who were looking for the liberation of Israel" (Lk 2, 38). On Pentecost morning, Peter proclaims: "In the last days it shall be that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2, 17-18). Philip, at Caesarea, was called the Evangelist by reason of his missionary activity, but "he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied" (Acts 21, 9). In the first centuries, there were many prophetesses,¹³ which shows that this charism was considered one of the most precious graces of Christian women. The Church understood very well the importance of their role for the renewal and deepening of the faith of the community.¹⁴

3. Compared with the Gospel, the teaching of Paul may seem somewhat severe.¹⁵ Paul asks wives to be subject to their husbands, "for the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph 5, 23); but he first proclaims the general principle: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5, 21).¹⁶ In 1 Cor 7, 3-4, he declares emphatically that wife and husband are equal in the exercise of their conjugal rights. And he recognizes the right of women to pray and prophesy in the assemblies held for worship, ordering them even to keep their heads covered (1 Cor 11, 2-16). Recent exegesis interprets this "veil" of the woman in prayer more and more as a sign of her autonomy with respect to men when she addresses God.¹⁷ Some texts, it is true, impose silence on women in the assembly (1 Cor 14, 34-35; 1 Tim 2, 11-15).¹⁸ But these different disciplinary measures and other similar prescriptions were partly inspired by the Jewish

notions of the time and should not be considered normative for subsequent periods.

The essential point is that, in an important doctrinal text, Paul proclaims the complete equality of man and woman in Christ: "In Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free; there is no longer man and woman; for you are all one in Christ" (Gal 3, 26-28). This is one of the most "liberating" texts of the Pauline letters. Here Paul does not write "there is no longer male *nor* female," but using a different form from what he has written earlier (slave *nor* free, Jew *nor* Greek) he says, "there is no longer male and female, thus referring to the account of the Creation in which "male and female" expressed the human being (*ho anthros*) created in the image of God (Gen 1, 27); thus, too, in the new creation (Gal 6, 15), the duality of the sexes is assumed into the unity of the new man: all are one in Christ; all Christians have the same fundamental vocation, i.e., to become children of God by faith, to become ever more conformable to the image of the Son of God (Rom 8, 29).¹⁹

E. MARY, TYPE OF THE CONDITION OF WOMEN, MODEL OF EVANGELICAL LIFE AND FIGURE OF THE CHURCH

Christian tradition, "in contemplating the figure and mission of Mary, the new Woman and the perfect Christian who recapitulates in herself the most characteristic situations of woman's life as a Virgin, a Spouse and a Mother, has considered the Mother of Jesus as an eminent type of the condition of women and an absolutely remarkable model of the evangelical life."²⁰

1. The three fundamental situations of spouse, mother and virgin find an incomparable model in Mary. She is the instrument God chooses to become the Mother of the Messiah. Jesus is born of a woman (Gal 4, 4), Joseph is Mary's husband (Mt 1, 16). Mary is his wife (Mt 1, 20, 24). Both are the parents of Jesus (Lk 2, 27, 41, 43) and constitute a true family with him. But the title given most often to Mary in the Gospel is: the Mother of Jesus. Luke does not follow the usual custom of

naming the husband before the wife (cf. Lk 15), but in the case of Jesus, he changes the order and names Mary before Joseph (Lk 1, 27; 2, 16):²¹ in the Incarnation of the Son of God, which is the principal event of salvation history, the main role was played not by the husband, but by the wife.

What, however, constitutes the "strange and unusual" case of Mary is the fact that she becomes the mother of Jesus while remaining a virgin.²² She is the only woman in the New Testament to whom the name of virgin was applied almost like a title (Lk 1, 27; cf. Mt 1, 23).²³ The Virgin Mary thus becomes the model not only of women who embrace the married state, but also of those who freely choose in the Lord to remain virgins. Christian virginity consists not only, nor principally, in the integrity of the flesh; it is fundamentally a careful loving attention to the Word of God (Lk 8, 21; 11, 27-28), the integrity of faith (cf. 2 Cor 11, 2),²⁴ an integral dedication to the Lord (1 Cor 7, 32-25).

2. At different times in her life, Mary played a decisive part in salvation history. When the Angel on God's behalf asked her to become the Mother of the Messiah, her consent was not merely an act of submission to the will of God, but a free and active co-operation "in the greatest event of all ages."²⁵ Mary gave this consent to the work of salvation in the name of all mankind.²⁶ "At no other time did a woman exert such a decisive influence over the history of mankind."²⁷

At the Wedding Feast at Cana, Mary by her initiative gave Jesus the chance to work his first miracle and "to reveal his glory" (Jn 2, 1-11), thus helping "the apostolic community to believe in Christ."²⁸ On this occasion, Jesus no longer called her "Mother," but "Woman", to emphasize her role as a "woman" in God's plan.²⁹ The Mother of Jesus also played an active part in the work of redemption: she was a valiant woman who, like her Son, "experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile" (cf. Mt 2, 13-23).³⁰ On Calvary she stood at the foot of the Cross and here again Jesus called her "Woman" in reference to Eve, the first woman. His relationship to Mary was no longer on the basis of the family; he wanted her to be henceforth the Mother of the beloved Disciple (Jn 19, 25-27). If Eve became the mother of the living (Gen 3, 20), Mary, the new Eve, became "from that hour" the Mother of believers, the Mother of the Church. This maternal role of Mary

is also described in the Book of Revelation: the "great portent" which appears in heaven, the Woman crowned with stars (Rev 12, 1-6), is a symbol of the Church, but this eschatological figure also represents "Mary, the new Eve, the daughter of Sion, who gave birth to the Messiah."³¹

3. Mary is, then, a perfect representation of the Church. "The Mother of God is the type of the Church, in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 63). In her is fulfilled what should be the attitude of the Christian community, the spouse of Christ, always attentive to the voice of her Lord and adorned for the coming of Christ her Spouse (Rev 21, 2).

F. CONCLUSION

The specific contribution of Revelation has been to affirm the perfect equality of man and woman as persons in God's eyes. Christ freed women from their inferior status. The early Christians considered them as sisters. The primitive Church integrated women into the Christian assembly, recognized their particular responsibility and associated them in the work of the apostolic ministry. The Scriptures also bring out the difference between man and woman. No longer is it a relationship between superior and inferior, but a mutual fulfillment, which finds its full meaning in the union of the Church and Christ and its most perfect expression in Mary's attitude before God.

The woman of today "desires to share in the power of decision and in the choices made by the community."³² The promotion of woman takes place in truth through a deeper understanding of her responsibility as a woman, equal to man and his "companion." To be a woman, just as to be a man, is a vocation of the person. Each one must assume his or her human reality as something that is holy.

NOTES

¹ P. GRELOT, *Le couple humain dans l'Écriture* (Lection divina, 33) Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 1962, 17-22.

² *Op. cit.*, 33.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cf. WESTERMANN: *Genesis 1-11* (Erträge der Forschung, 7), Darmstadt, 1972, 24-26: "Die Gottesebenbildlichkeit"; for the interpretation of tradition see P.N. BRATSISOTIS: *Genesis 1, 26 in der orthodoxen Theologie*, in *Evang. Theol.*, 11 (1951-52) 289-97; A. SOLIGNAC, art. *Image* in *Dict. Spir.*, VII/2/1970, 1406-1425; *Gaudium et spes*, 17.

⁵ P. GRELOT, *op. cit.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ R. le DEAUT, *Marie et l'Écriture dans le chapitre VII de "Lumen Gentium"*, in *Bull. de la Soc. franc. d'études mariales*, 22 (1965) 69 and n. 49.

⁸ See A. CHOURAQUI, *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, Paris, P.U.F. 1970.

⁹ P. GRELOT, *op. cit.*, 86.

¹⁰ Mary of Bethany has been presented as the model of contemplative life, e.g., by St. GREGORY THE GREAT, *Hom. in Ezech.*, I,3,9 (PL, 76,809 C) and by St. BRUNO, *In Ps.* 144 (PL, 152, 1396); as the symbol of eternal life, by St. AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 103, 4-5; 104,3; 169,14; 255,2 (PL, 38, 615-616, 617-618, 925, 1186); *De Trin.*, I, 10,10 (PL, 42, 834).

¹¹ J. VINATIER, *La femme, Parole de Dieu et avenir de l'homme*, Paris, Les Editions Ouvrières, 1972, 114; see below, n. 13.

¹² The title is not used at this stage in the technical sense it will have later in Tradition. It seems to indicate a ministry in the wide sense.

¹³ Valentine BUISSERET, *La Femme et l'avenir de l'Eglise. Adresse aux Pères du Synode*, Brussels, 1971, 6: "The list of the prophetesses is a long one, and this means that, among the first generations of Christians, women were allowed to speak in the church" (quoted in J. VINATIER, *op. cit.*, 117, n. 25).

¹⁴ J. VINATIER, *op. cit.*, 117, explains the importance of the prophetic charism for the life of the Church: "To nourish the faith in its beginnings, to follow its progress with tact and patience, experience shows that woman is specially well prepared for this task. In this field, . . . she can receive a genuine ministry of the word of God, especially to nourish the faith of the new communities which are springing up before our eyes."

¹⁵ Cf. D. DELLING, *Paulus' Stellung zu Frau und Ehe*, Stuttgart, 1931; E. KAEHLER, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen*, Zürich, 1960; J. GALOT, *Mission et ministère de la femme*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1973, III, pp. 113-143: "La position doctrinale et pratique de Paul"; H. VAN DER MEER, *Sacerdozio della donna? Saggio di storia della teologia* (ed. in Italian by A. Bellini), Morcelliana, 1971, 22-64.

¹⁶ Other passages remind women of their responsibilities in the family (1 Tim 2,15; 5,10; cf. Eph 6,4).

¹⁷ See Morna D. HOOKER, *Authority on Her Head. An Examination of 1 Cor 11, 10*, in *New Test. Studies*, 10 (1964) 410-416; Annie JAUBERT, *Le voile des femmes* (1

Cor XI, 2-16), *ibid.* 18 (1972) 419-430; A. FEUILLET, *Le signe de puissance sur la tête des femmes* (1 Cor 11,10) in *Nouv. rev. théol.*, 105 (1973) 945-954.

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of these texts, cf. H. VAN DER MEER, *op. cit.*, 19-37.

¹⁹ An attempt has been made at times to discover in Gal 3, 28 an argument in favor of ordaining women to the priesthood. But is not this a confusion of two levels which in Paul are quite distinct: the level of the vocation which is common to all Christians, viz., the vocation to become the children of God (that is the point at issue in Gal 3, 28), and that of special vocations and of specific ministries in the Church? On this question see J. GALOT, *Mission et Ministère de la femme*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1973, 119, 195, 199.

²⁰ PAUL VI, *Apostolic Exhortation "Marialis Cultus"*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 marzo 1974, 1-5. Cf. J. GALOT, *Maria, Immagine della donna*, in *Civ. Cattol.*, 1974, II, 217-229 (presentation of the Document).

²¹ R. LAURENTIN, *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-11* (Études Bibliques), Paris, Gabalda, 1957, 34.

²² F. DUMAS, quoted in J. VINATIER, *op. cit.*, 55.

²³ Cf. Art. *Virginité*, in *Voc. de théol. bibl.*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 1970², 1368-69.

²⁴ As was well shown by St. Augustine, in 2 Cor 11, 2, it is not a question of the virginity of bodies, but of virginity of faith; see R. HESBERT, *S. Augustin et la virginité de la foi*, in *Augustinus Magister. Congrès international augustinien*, II, Paris, 1954, 645-655; M. AGTERBERG, *L'Ecclesia Virgo et la Virginitas mentis dans la pensée de Saint Augustin*, in *Augustiniana*, 9 (1959) 221-276.

²⁵ S. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, *Sermo* 146 (PL 52, 583); quoted in "*Marialis Cultus*", *ibid.*; cf. too *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56.

²⁶ S. THOMAS, *Summa theol.*, IIIa, 9,30, art. 1; cf. H. Urs von Balthasar, *L'amour seul est digne de foi* (Coll. Foi vivante, 32) Aubier, 1966, 100 ". . . l'unique fiat prononcé pour tous d'une manière archétypique par la Mère-Epouse, Marie-l'Eglise".

²⁷ J. GALOT, art. cit., 219.

²⁸ PAUL VI, Exhort. "*Marialis Cultus*", n. 37.

²⁹ D. MOLLAT, *Saint Jean* (Jerusalem Bible, edition in separate volumes) 3rd edition, Paris, Cerf, 1973, note h on Jn 2,4.

³⁰ PAUL VI, Exhort. "*Marialis Cultus*", *ibid.*

³¹ Bible de Jérusalem, new edition, Paris, Cerf, 1973: 1791-92, note m on Revelation 12, 1.

³² PAUL VI, Exhort. "*Marialis Cultus*", *ibid.*



Biblical Studies: The Novelty of the Evangelical Outlook on Woman

When reading the New Testament, and more particularly its teaching on woman, one is struck above all by a sort of reversal of perspective with regard to the situation created by sin.

1. COMMUNION REDISCOVERED

The first weighty and inescapable fact is the integration of woman in the group proclaiming the Gospel.

When he preaches the Kingdom of God, Jesus is accompanied by the twelve, certainly, *but also by women*. Luke 8, 1-3, gives the most explicit account: "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

But there is testimony of the fact in the other synoptics also: Matt 27, 55-56; Mark 15, 40-41.

And it is confirmed by the prayer of Mary and some women with the apostles in the upper room before Pentecost (Acts I, 14).

So that, around Jesus, in the embryo of the apostolic Church, there is a rediscovery of com-

munion between man and woman, a communion that is essential to the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel.

This communion supposes that Jesus looks at woman in a *new way*, and remarkable witness is given to this in the New Testament.

2. A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT WOMAN

Christ by looking on woman, freed her from the covetousness and the domination of man.

We need only consider the text of the sermon on the mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5, 27-28).

And the reversing of the usual way of seeing things, stressed by the disabused remark of the apostles, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry" (Matt 19, 10), is shown even more strongly in the scene where Christ repudiates divorce; he destroys at the roots the principle of woman's domination by man, he appeals to the plan of creation that he restores in the light of his own resurrection.

It is also Christ's new way of considering woman that frees her from legal impurity as appears in the case of the woman with the issue of blood (Mk 5,

25-34), or from the domination of Satan (Mk 13, 10-17).

But the most significant attitude of Jesus is certainly his attitude towards the woman taken in adultery: he refers man, who, as in Genesis, throws the blame on woman, to his own conscience: "let him who is without sin among you throw the first stone at her" (John 8, 7). Far from blaming only the woman, on the contrary, he forces man to acknowledge his responsibility. It is, as it were, the divine retort to man's accusation of woman at the beginning of mankind.

Jesus had no hesitation in refusing to reduce woman to her functional role of mother: when the woman exclaimed "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that gave you to suck" he replied: "happy rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk 11, 27-28).

This communion restored between man and woman by a look from Jesus—the sign of the Kingdom—makes it possible to show woman, on the one hand as a type of faith and love and on the other as the one who mediates the Gospel message.

3. WOMEN, TYPES OF FAITH AND LOVE

Mary of Bethany is—contrary to all Rabbinical usage—the very type of the disciple (Lk 10, 38-42): she listens to the word.

The sinful woman at the house of Simon the pharisee becomes the perfect example of the response of love to God's pardon (Lk 7, 36-38): through her Jesus reveals what is specific to the Gospel mystery.

The widow's mite (Mk 12, 41-44; Lk 21, 1-4) proclaims the depths of the total gift with no return.

It is a woman, Martha, who gives us the most beautiful profession of faith in the whole of the Gospel—similar to Peter's in Matthew—at the very moment when Christ, by raising Lazarus, seals his own death warrant: "She said to him, 'Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world'" (Jn 11, 27).

And, because of this faith and this love, Jesus seems to speak more directly to the heart of woman and reveals his mystery more completely to her: we have only to consider the dialogue between Christ and the Samaritan woman, and his Messianic statement: "I who speak to you am he" (Jn 4, 26), and his compassion for the widow of Naim (Mk 7, 11-17); while his intimacy with Martha and Mary emerges clearly in the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus.

The women do not receive an official call to follow Christ, as do the men, they follow him spontaneously; but they are given a special mission in the apostolic community.

4. WOMEN IN THE APOSTOLIC MISSION

It was to a woman—the Samaritan—that were revealed both the universal import of the evangelical message and the mystery of the Messiah:

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4, 23-24). "The woman said to him, 'I know that the Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he'" (Jn 4, 25-26).

The Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, 21-26, prefigures the same mystery of the universalism of salvation.

But it goes further: while the apostles come to grief over the prophecies about Christ's passion, the women have a presentiment of his mystery of death and resurrection. The scene of the anointing by Mary at Bethany (Mt 26, 6-13; Mk 14, 3-9; Jn 12, 1-8) appears here, to be of major importance; this is remarkably emphasized by the integration of Mary of Bethany's gesture in the very object of the evangelical proclamation.¹

Mary guessed what Christ was always saying to the apostles and what they were incapable of

¹ "Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (Mt 26, 13; Mk 14, 9).

realizing: she had a presentiment of the mystery of what was about to happen.

So the women have, as it were, a sort of intuition of the development of the plan of salvation. That is no doubt, the reason why it was the holy women, especially Mary Magdalene, who were the first witnesses of the Resurrection.

The mystery of Christ needed, therefore, to be prepared and mediatized for the apostles through the interiorization of the evangelical message in the heart of the women.

At first, it is true, the apostles did not acknowledge this feminine mediation—they considered it to be women's gossip—but in the light of the Holy Spirit everything became clear, and the Gospel itself was to give witness to what the apostles owed the holy women.

In this way, within the apostolic kerygma, there is the presence of the holy women.

5. MARY

There is, however, something more hidden and more intimate at the heart of the Gospel mystery, the presence of Mary, in the power and the shadow of the Spirit of God (Lk 1, 34): the account of the Annunciation is enlightening: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1, 38). More than any other, Mary is, par excellence, the model of reception of the word, and response in faith and love. She receives the plenitude of God's word, and even when she does not understand it, as in the finding of Jesus in the Temple, she keeps it in her heart.

The whole of God's plan for her is, in fact, to bring her to comprehension of the mystery of the Suffering Servant, as shown in the first two chapters of St Luke. It is also Mary who introduces the mystery of her Son: at Cana, Mary inspires the miracle, and the account ends: "he manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him" (Jn 2, 11). And the cross, which associates Mary with the act by means of which Jesus takes the place of sinners, as had been announced by the prophet Simeon, makes her the mother of the apostle himself—the beloved disciple—and in consequence, of the whole Church.

CONCLUSION

The apostolic experience would not have been what it is without the experience of the holy women, and particularly of Mary.

At the heart of the apostolic experience—it is not sufficiently noted—there is a presence, that of the women, and particularly of Mary.

This presence is not something apart from the apostolic witness, it is at its very heart.

Therefore, to say that the Church is apostolic, if one does not give its whole meaning to the apostolic experience itself, may lead to error. It can only be stated with truth by adding that the Church is Marian. The official proclamation of the Word of God to the world can only be based on the Marian experience recapitulating that of the holy women, that is to say of a Church that lives the interior experience of the Spirit.



Marialis Cultus

Guidelines for a study of the Apostolic Exhortation

Whilst awaiting the publication of commented editions of His Holiness Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (February 2, 1974) in the various languages, meditation of certain paragraphs of the document that fall within the context of International Women's Year, might be suggested to the faithful.

The Exhortation continues the presentation made by Vatican II on Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, Chap. VIII), by encouraging the promotion of types of devotion to Our Lady that are suitable to contemporary cultural forms.

The Exhortation treats of the relation between the liturgy as such and devotion to the Blessed Virgin (1-23); it gives reasons for the promotion of the legitimate development of this devotion, stressing the Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesial aspects of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, with biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological guidelines (24-39); gives more detailed observations on the *Angelus* and the Rosary (40-55) and closes with some considerations on the theological and pastoral value of devotion to Our Lady (56-58).

We are quoting some of the more outstanding passages.

Modern anthropological concepts and renewal of devotion to the Blessed Virgin

"Devotion to the Blessed Virgin must also pay close attention to certain findings of the

human sciences. This will help to eliminate one of the causes of the difficulties experienced in devotion to the Mother of the Lord, namely, the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion and modern anthropological discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field in which modern man lives and works. The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today's life style, especially the way women live today. In the home, woman's equality and co-responsibility with man in the running of the family are being justly recognized by laws and the evolution of customs. In the sphere of politics women have in many countries gained a position in public life equal to that of men. In the social field women are at work in a whole range of different employments, getting further away every day from the restricted surroundings of the home. In the cultural field new possibilities are opening up for women in scientific research and intellectual activities." (34)

Mary, model for all believers, men and women, of free acceptance of the Divine Will

"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 (cf. Lk 1:38), 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 most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value." (35)

Mary, an example for women: a woman who shared in the making of vital decisions, who esteemed virginity and the married state, a woman who, in poverty and suffering, gave praise to the Lord.

"Finally, we wish to point out that our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the Word of God, and, keeping to the matter at present under consideration, to compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time. Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy, Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent, not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that "event of world importance," as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called. The modern woman will appreciate that Mary's choice on the state of virginity which in God's plan

prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God. The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions (cf. Lk 1:51-53). The modern woman will recognize in Mary who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord," a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt 2: 13-23). These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society. And Mary will appear not as a mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ (cf. Jn 2: 1-12) and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary." (37)

Mary, model for all

"The figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city, the disciple who works for that justice that sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts."³⁷



The Participation of Women in the Life of the Ecclesial Community

"Since in our times women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."

(Vatican Council II, Decree on the Lay Apostolate, n. 9)

"We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church."

(The Synod of Bishops, 1971)

QUESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES

N.B. This questionnaire is made available to local Churches that wish to make use of it. The aim of the questions is merely to stimulate reflection, discussion and awareness among pastors and faithful, men and women religious, lay men and lay women, adults and young people. They are only pointers. Other lines of reflection may be developed, on the responsibility of the bishops, in relation to the needs of the local Churches and to the particular cultural context. It will be interesting to gather the opinions not only from the faithful actively engaged in the life of the ecclesial community, but also from those who are considered apathetic or even marginal.

I. THE WITNESS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

What witness does your local Church give from the point of view of the participation of women in

ecclesial life and of co-operation between men and women within the People of God?

1. To what extent do women—nuns or lay persons, married or single—contribute to the life of the ecclesial community?

a) In the Parish Councils?

b) In the Pastoral Council or other forms of consultation at diocesan level?

c) In special services: catechesis and catechumenate? Liturgical services? Welfare work? Ecumenical activities? Etc.

2. Do people know about, and do they implement all existing possibilities for the active participation of women in the liturgy: the readings, prayer of the faithful, etc.; in certain cases of pastoral necessity, distribution of Holy Communion?

3. Have "lay ministries" open to women been experienced? Ministries = stable services, such as leadership of the community, catechetical instruction, welfare work, etc., undertaken in terms of a mandate, officially conferred, possibly with a non-sacramental rite.

- If so, with what results?
- Do the women who exercise such ministries wish to have them formally "instituted"? Why?

4. Are women who hold positions of responsibility in society (in professional, cultural, social, political life . . .) requested to place their experience and specialized knowledge at the service of the Church's mission? In what forms?

- Are these women available for such service?
- Is their service welcomed by the community?

5. Are there any women associated with the work of the Episcopal Assemblies and Commissions?

- Religious sisters?
- Lay women? Married women? Single women?
- Women who hold responsible positions in institutions of the ecclesial community (schools, hospitals, etc.)?

- Is their participation symbolic or real?
- Is their participation statutory or only occasional?

"It is our wish that the ascetic, contemplative tradition of religious life, or the active one, should be recognized by everyone, by the ecclesial community particularly, as valid and relevantly updated as it must be according to the spirit of the recent Council. . . . It is our wish furthermore to promote and perfect the assignment of Sisters, when they so desire and are qualified for it, to cooperation in the pastoral ministry. . . ."

(Pope Paul VI to Sisters in Rome, February 2, 1973)

II. RELIGIOUS SISTERS IN THE COMMUNITY

1. What is thought of sisters: in the parish? In pastoral activities? In institutions (schools, charitable works, hospitals, etc.)?

- Are they considered persons in their own right?

- or expendable and interchangeable?

2. Are contemplative sisters considered to be part of the community? As active members? Are they associated with pastoral plans and concerns?

3. Everywhere in the world sisters are endeavoring to study their vocation more in depth, to specify more clearly their place in the Church and the forms of their presence in the world today.

In your locality

- Do the other members of the ecclesial community try to understand the sisters' vocation and their present day searching?

- Are sisters required to do work that is incompatible with their vocation (possibly, in the name of "aggiornamento")?

- Are religious consulted directly or through appropriate bodies, with regard to decisions concerning them?

III. LAY ASSOCIATIONS

1. In mixed associations (men and women), do women share the real responsibilities? If not, why not?

2. What is the role of women in new types of groups? Charismatic groups? Groups involved in the struggle for justice? Basic communities? Any others?

3. Are women's organizations associated with pastoral activity in the local Church? Are they consulted about problems of society involving the ecclesial community?

4. Do you know any cases of amalgamation of masculine and feminine associations?

- If so, how have they worked out with regard to co-operation between men and women?

- Do women participate in the leadership of the associations?

- Do they carry the whole burden of organization? Of finance?

- Is the spiritual and communitarian life better than in the past? Or, on the contrary, is it slacker?

5. Do you know any groups of women who when faced with the possibility of amalgamation have

opted for the continuation of their separate existence?

- If so, what were their motivations? The requirements of formation? Possibility of expression and of real responsibility? Efficiency? Specificity of women's contribution?

IV. THE TRAINING OF WOMEN TO HOLD RESPONSIBILITY

1. Is anything being done about deepening the faith-life of women? Or is it still only a case of "a few uplifting words for the good ladies"?

2. What is being done to give spiritual, moral, and doctrinal support to women holding responsible positions in society?

3. What are the possibilities of formation for women who have to hold positions of responsibility in the ecclesial community?

4. Does preparation for Christian marriage take into account the evolution of the status of woman and does it encourage the sharing of responsibilities while taking into account the concrete possibilities of each partner?

5. What training can women receive to equip them to be usefully involved in the ecumenical movement? Sisters? Lay women?

"How many situations require your joint study, situations in which you are committed as women and where you must bring your specific witness as Christian women! How many fields to be explored, in domestic and social life, in which personal relations must be transformed by love! How many experiences of your various Christian movements to be pooled, how many considerations to be pursued in the light of faith, and perhaps new activities to be undertaken in the charity of Christ, so that men and women of our time, our brothers and sisters, may fulfill more perfectly their vocation as children of God!"

(Pope Paul VI to an ecumenical group of women, October 28, 1970)

V. WOMEN AND THEOLOGY

1. Are women encouraged to acquire a sound theological formation? Sisters? Lay women?

- Only in words? Or in practical ways (organization of courses with adapted time-tables, study grants, etc.)?

2. Do you know any experiences of fruitful collaboration between men and women in the field of theological reflection?

3. Do women participate in the teaching of theology? In what forms? With what results?

4. Are the skills of women who give religious instruction in the schools valorized in the ecclesial community?

5. Are women consulted in the research for a theological language adapted to contemporary mentalities? In the formulation of pastoral documents?

- Sisters? Lay women? Women with various experiences and skills?

VI. THE "CLIMATE" OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

1. Is the atmosphere of your ecclesial community favorable to responsible participation on the part of the laity in general? Of women in particular? Of sisters? Married women, single women?

2. When women are asked to undertake service involving responsibilities, is this done:

- as a concession or a privilege?
- only because there are no men available?
- or rather, because their character as baptized persons and their personal aptitudes are being recognized?

3. Is the possibility and the value of voluntary commitment of women in the service of the community recognized?

4. Is the question of "co-operation between men and women" considered as a serious problem of the ecclesial community?

- Is an effort being made to understand the positions of the "Women's Lib" movement,

even when such positions are polemical and exaggerated or even inadmissible?

- Do questions concerning “woman” raise smiles in mixed groups?

VII. THE EDUCATION OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

1. Does Catholic education prepare people for open, healthy relationships between men and women in the whole life of society and the Church?

If not, what can you propose in order to make it more fitted for its task?

- Is the “image” of woman presented in Catholic education nearly always that of a religious sister, or a wife and mother? Or, on the contrary, that of a professional woman?
2. Has any critical reflection on the “image” of woman presented by the mass media been undertaken within the ecclesial community?
3. Does the training of the clergy help future priests to prepare for healthy collaboration with women in pastoral activities?

- Does this training include a study of religious and other vocations for women in the world today?

4. When women are mentioned in sermons and in catechesis, is inspiration taken from the example of Jesus?

VIII. ...AND THE MENTALITY OF WOMEN?

1. How do women see “their place” in the Church?

- Sisters?
 - Young women?
 - Young married women?
 - Mothers of families? Mothers working outside the home?
 - Married women with no children?
 - Widows?
 - Married or single women holding responsible positions in the professions?
2. Marginalized women (divorcees, wives of migrants, etc.)—What do they expect from the Church?
- Do they feel able to contribute something to the Church?
3. What is being done to help women be more aware of their share of responsibility in the mission of the Church?
4. Do women holding responsibility in the Church find that they are helped and supported by other women?
5. If women want to play their rightful part in the activity of the Church, is not doubt too often, or too quickly, thrown on their sincere concern for evangelization? On their spirit of disinterested service? Their loyal acceptance of authority in the Church?
- Do you know of any experiences of dialogue and reconciliation which have made it easier to go beyond the stage of “claiming rights”? Any efforts made by men and women together to arrive at a more just attitude and a better integration of women in the various sectors of the Church’s mission?



The Participation of Women in the Work of Evangelization

Recommendations made to the 1974 Assembly of the Synod of Bishops by the Study Commission on Woman in Society and in the Church.

The Study Commission on Woman in Society and in the Church,
considering

- that the mission of evangelization involves, according to their specific vocations, all baptized members of the People of God,

- that the work, both human and divine, of evangelization demands, for the plenitude of its human quality, co-operation between men and women and the valorization of each one's specific contribution,

- that, in respect for the dignity of every human being, this co-operation should give each person, according to his or her talents, the possibility of responsible participation in the work undertaken,

- that often, in the past, the participation of non-ordained members of the Church—particularly of women—was not sufficiently solicited, prepared or promoted,

- that this inadequate participation of the "non-ordained" was often more marked with regard to women owing to prejudice and socio-cultural attitudes that were prevalent in society and within the ecclesial community itself,

- That the evolution of woman's situation in society necessitates an urgent revision, today, of her place in the life of the Church,

- that this urgent need is further emphasized by the fact that the United Nations has proclaimed 1975 as *International Women's Year*,

addresses to the 1974 Assembly of the Synod of Bishops the following suggestions:

I. PARTICIPATION

1) That, bearing in mind the experience acquired since Vatican Council II, the participation of women in the work of evangelization, in positions of recognized and effective responsibility, be promoted and developed:

- for individuals in local communities,

- for members of women's or mixed ecclesial organizations,

- according to individual competence, as members of temporary Commissions or of delegations created by the Bishops or by the Holy See,

- as members or consultants, or as officials of the departments of the Holy See.

2) That particular importance be attached to the participation of religious and lay women in ecclesial bodies for reflection, planning, decision making and evaluation at parochial, diocesan, national and international levels.

3) That religious Sisters be given their place in the work of evangelization according to their specific vocation and the charism of their Institutes. This requires:

- that the Bishops have a thorough knowledge of the Institutes whose apostolate comes under their jurisdiction;
- that they be concerned to help the Sisters in the in-depth study of their vocation;
- that where the ecclesiastical authorities consider that the Church needs new forms of apostolate, these new calls be studied in dialogue with the Sisters concerned and the Superiors of the Institutes.

4) That the Episcopal Conferences study, with the collaboration of lay men and women and Sisters, the expediency and the possible modalities of "*non-ordained ministries*," open as much to women as to men, and which would be formally instituted for pastoral and missionary tasks.

II. EDUCATION

1) That educational action be undertaken at all levels of the Church's life in order to bring about changes in the way of *thinking* that will promote better relationships of collaboration between men and women—on basically equal terms and according to each one's vocation—in the work of evangelization and at the level of pastoral responsibilities in the Church.

2) That a special effort be made to assure that the *education of the clergy* enables them to have a good understanding of the various Christian vocations for women and to collaborate sincerely with them in the different sectors of the apostolate.

3) That the Pastors of the Church attach importance to the *education of the faith* of women, and to providing them with a spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral formation which will enable them to participate according to their true abilities in the work of evangelization.



Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations
on November 7, 1967 (Resolution 2263—XXII)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

CONSIDERING that the peoples of the United Nations, have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

CONSIDERING that the Universal Declaration on Human Rights asserts the principle of non-discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein without distinction of any kind, including any distinction as to sex,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the resolutions, declarations, conventions and recommendations of the United Nations, and the specialized agencies designed to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to promote equal rights for men and women,

CONCERNED that, despite the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other instruments of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and despite the progress made in the matter of equality of rights, there continues to exist considerable discrimination against women,

CONSIDERING that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society, prevents their participation, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

BEARING IN MIND, the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic and cultural life and the part they play in the family and particularly in the rearing of children,

CONVINCED that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women as well as men in all fields,

CONSIDERING that it is necessary to ensure the universal recognition in law and in fact of the principle of equality of men and women,

SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMS this Declaration:

Article 1

Discrimination against women, denying or limiting as it does their equality of rights with men, is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity.

Article 2

All appropriate measures shall be taken to abolish existing laws, customs, regulations and practices which are discriminatory against women, and to establish adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women, in particular:

- a) the principle of equality of rights shall be embodied in the constitution or otherwise guaranteed by law;
- b) the international instruments of the United Nations, and the specialized agencies relating to the elimination of discrimination against women shall be ratified or acceded to and fully implemented as soon as practicable.

Article 3

All appropriate measures shall be taken to educate public opinion and to direct national aspirations towards the eradication of prejudice and the abolition of customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women.

Article 4

All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to women on equal terms with men, without any discrimination;

- a) the right to vote in all elections and be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- b) the right to vote in all public referenda;
- c) the right to hold public office and to exercise all public functions.

Such rights shall be guaranteed by legislation.

Article 5

Women shall have the same rights as men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. Marriage to an alien shall not automatically affect the nationality of the wife either by rendering her stateless or by forcing upon her the nationality of her husband.

Article 6

1. Without prejudice to the safeguarding of the unity and the harmony of the family, which remains the basic unit of any society, all appropriate mea-

asures, particularly legislative measures, shall be taken to ensure to women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in the field of civil law, and in particular:

- a) the right to acquire, administer, enjoy, dispose of and inherit property, including property acquired during marriage;
- b) the right to equality in legal capacity and the exercise thereof;
- c) the same rights as men with regard to the law on the movement of persons.

2. All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure the principle of equality of status of the husband and wife, and in particular:

- a) women shall have the same right as men to free choice of a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
- b) women shall have equal rights with men during marriage and at its dissolution. In all cases the interest of the children shall be paramount;¹
- c) parents shall have equal rights and duties in matters relating to their children. In all cases the interest of the children shall be paramount.

3. Child marriage and the betrothal of young girls before puberty shall be prohibited, and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

Article 7

All provisions of penal codes which constitute discrimination against women shall be repealed.

Article 8

All appropriate measures, including legislation, shall be taken to combat all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

Article 9

All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried,

¹ We give the full text as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is clear that we cannot accept the reference made here to the "dissolution" of marriage.

equal rights with men in education at all levels, and in particular:

a) equal conditions of access to, and study in, educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;

b) the same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard, and school premises and equipment of the same quality, whether the institutions are co-educational or not;

c) equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

d) equal opportunities for access to programs of continuing education, including adult literacy programs;

e) access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well-being of families.

Article 10

1. All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to women married or unmarried, equal rights with men in the field of economic and social life, and in particular:

a) the right, without discrimination on grounds of marital status or any other grounds, to receive vocational training, to work, to free choice of profession and employment, and to professional and vocational advancement;

b) the right to equal remuneration with men and to equality of treatment in respect of work of equal value;

c) the right to leave with pay, retirement privileges and provision for security in respect of unemployment, sickness, old age or other incapacity to work;

d) the right to receive family allowances on equal terms with men.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on account of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, measures shall be taken to prevent their dismissal in the event of marriage or maternity and to provide paid maternity leave, with the guarantee of returning to former employment, and to provide the necessary social services, including child care facilities.

3. Measures taken to protect women in certain types of work, for reasons inherent in their physical nature, shall not be regarded as discriminatory.

Article 11

1. The principle of equality of rights of men and women demands implementation in all States in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals are urged, therefore, to do all in their power to promote the implementation of the principles contained in this Declaration.



The Council Message to Women

The Message to Women was read on December 8, 1965 at the solemn closing ceremony of the Second Vatican Council

And now it is to you that we address ourselves, women of all states—girls, wives, mothers, and widows, to you also, consecrated virgins and women living alone—you constitute half of the immense human family. As you know, the Church is proud to have glorified and liberated woman, and in the course of the centuries, in diversity of characters, to have brought into relief her basic equality with man. But the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires 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 impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do much to aid mankind in not falling.

You women have always had as your lot the protection of the home, the love of beginnings, and an understanding of cradles. You are present in the mystery of a life beginning. You offer consolation in the departure of death. Our technology runs the risk of becoming inhuman. Reconcile men with life and above all, we beseech you, watch carefully over the future of our race. Hold back the hand of man who, in a moment of folly, might attempt to destroy human civilization.

Wives, mothers of families, the first educators of the human race in the intimacy of the family circle, pass on to your sons and your daughters the tradi-

tions of your fathers at the same time that you prepare them for an unsearchable future. Always remember that by her children a mother belongs to that future which perhaps she will not see.

And you, women living alone, realize what you can accomplish through your dedicated vocation. Society is appealing to you on all sides. Not even families can live without the help of those who have no families. Especially you, consecrated virgins, in a world where egoism and the search for pleasure would become law, be the guardians of purity, unselfishness, and piety. Jesus, who has given to conjugal love all its plenitudes, has also exalted the renouncement of human love when this is for the sake of divine love and for the service of all.

Lastly, women in trial who stand upright at the foot of the cross like Mary, you who so often in history have given to men the strength to battle unto the very end and to give witness to the point of martyrdom, aid them now still once more to retain courage in their great undertaking, while at the same time maintaining patience and an esteem for humble beginnings.

Women, you who know how to make truth sweet, tender, and accessible, make it your task to bring the spirit of this Council into institutions, schools, homes, and daily life. Women of the entire universe, whether Christian or non-believing, you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for you to save the peace of the world.



