

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUILDING THE CIVILISATION OF LOVE

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INTRODUCTION

Blessed John Paul's Apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* – Dignity and Vocation of Women was published in 1988.

A woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary is to be found at the center of our salvific event. At the moment of the Annunciation, she said, "Behold the hand maid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). By responding positively to God, Mary conceived a man who was the son of God, of one substance with the Father. Therefore, Mary is truly the Mother of God, because motherhood concerns the whole person, not just the body nor even just human "nature". In this way the name, "Theotokos" – mother of God, became the name proper to the union with God granted to the Virgin Mary.

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27) This concise passage contains the fundamental anthropological truths. Man is the high point of the whole order of creation in the visible world, the human race, which takes its origin from the calling into existence of man and woman, crowns the whole work of creation; both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God's image. The image and likeness of God which is essential for the human being, is passed on by the man and woman, as spouses and parents, to their descendants. "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). The creator entrusts dominion over the earth to the human race, to all persons, to all men and women, who derive their dignity and vocation from the common "beginning".

Man and woman created as a unity of the two in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the three persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life.

God wills for man and woman the fullness of good or supernatural happiness which flows from sharing his own life. By committing sin man rejects this gift and at the same time wills to become "as God knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5), that is to say, deciding what is good and what is evil independent of God, his Creator.

Sin brings about a break in the original unity which man enjoyed in the state of original justice union with God as the source of the unity within his own "I", in the mutual

relationship between man and woman (“communio personatum”), as well as in regard to the external world, to nature.

GLOBALISATION AND CIVILISATION

Globalisation and civilisation has brought good and evil things including the culture of death, e.g. drug addiction, trafficking in human beings, abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, violence against women etc.

What are women doing personally and collectively to stop these evils?

Women are the salt of the earth; they are pivotal to the well being of the human society. That is why God entrusts the human being to the woman.

Women are specially endowed with intuition, patience, resourcefulness, resilience, unique ability for proper planning and a high capacity for attention to detail that enable them to manage their household effectively even under very harsh economic conditions.

A woman who is a wife, mother, professional or business woman must prioritise her time and ensure that her husband, children and home do not suffer in any way because of her work or professional assignment. Children must be reared in a Godly manner to become good and productive citizens of Nigeria and the world. See (Proverbs 31:10-31) on the capable wife.

Women should be courageous. They should live the Gospel and be faithful to the message of Christ. We should be ourselves.

Women should work against the culture of death like the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Blessed Virgin Mary was at the heart of salvation. Man cannot exist alone. We depend on God. Women must build a new kingdom on earth. Look at the Marian road and find the path of salvation. Mary is the model of faith and she responded to the model of God. Civilisation of love began with the Blessed Virgin Mary accepting to be the mother of God. The woman is called to build the human city on love and the self giving of herself to her husband.

The woman should work for a legal system that respects human lives. This will bring about social stability.

The true vocation of women is linked with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is our role model. Women can educate others for peace, love of God and neighbour by their deep relationship with God. The Blessed Virgin Mary will assist us to achieve peace which is the result of the civilization of love.

In the atmosphere of spousal love, whereby the woman's "sincere gift of self" is responded to and matched and by a corresponding "gift" on the part of the husband; only on the basis of this principle can both of them and in particular the woman, "discover themselves" as a true "unity of the two" according to the dignity of the person. The matrimonial union requires respect for and a perfecting of the true personal subjectivity of both of them. The woman cannot become the "object" of "domination" and male "possession". Saint John warns against lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). The inclination of sin (from Adam and Eve's original sin) will burden the mutual relationship of man and woman.

Women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine "originality". The inheritance to sin – original sin – suggested by the words of the Bible – "Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" – can be conquered only by following the path of femininity, i.e. the richness of the femininity which she receives on the day of creation and which inherits as an expression of the "image and likeness of God" that is specifically hers.

Motherhood is the fruit of the marriage union of a man and woman. The woman discovers herself through a sincere gift of self by conceiving and giving birth to a child. Mary's word at the Annunciation, "let it be done to me according to your word" signify the woman's readiness to accept new life.

The woman as mother and the first teacher of the human being (education being the spiritual dimension of parenthood) has a specific precedence over the man. She must rear her children in a Godly manner and imbue in them virtues, fear of God, honesty, patriotism, capacity for hard work, truthfulness, respect for elders etc.

A Christian home is a home in which God is the supreme master and model. A home filled with love. Let your love for each other be real and from the heart (1 Peter 1:22-23) a home in which all actions are undertaken for love, all words spoken are spoken with love in a home in which parents and children do all things for the love of Christ – as if Christ were physically present and watching.

In a Christian home, there will be no bitterness, no jealousy, no resentments, no discontent, no anger, only an atmosphere of love, which one can feel immediately one enters that home.

A Christian home is a prayerful home where prayers are recited daily (not only on Sundays). Mothers, build Godly homes, happy homes so that you can contribute effectively to your homes and the society

In conclusion, how can women stop the culture of death brought by globalisation and civilisation, i.e. homosexuality, lesbianism, abortion, trafficking in humans etc?

Women should pray and fast for God's mercy and change the world. They must scrutinize their children's friends; supervise what their children watch on the Television. They must love their husbands and children and their neighbours. They must evangelize by their way of life – give good example to your children and family. The 12 disciples of Jesus performed wonders by spreading the Gospel. Christian mothers are more than 12. Let us start a new era of evangelization in our homes, our offices, in our society and the world.

In this way, we spread the love of the Gospel and promote the culture of love in our society and in our families.

Women are spiritually powerful and specially endowed by God. They can develop spiritually if they unite their spirit with God's spirit. Women can change their families, the society and the world by prayer and the good example of their lives. Therefore, women, salt of the earth, seek ye first the kingdom of God and all other things shall be added unto you. Amen.