

# Spiritual Maidenhood

by

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Spiritual maidenhood expresses a spiritual way of life that developed quietly in my prayer and spiritual life since 1995. As the hope of the Lord's Coming in glory and the fullness of salvation grew steadily in my heart I saw arise a deep desire to live my womanhood for the Lord. I understood intuitively, and then found confirmed by reading Scripture and John Paul II's writings, that sexual differentiation permeates the whole person, physically, psychologically and spiritually. My femininity is a blessing, a gift given by God with the expectation that it would be cherished and preserved by His saving grace.

Only the gospel message of Jesus Christ – his life, death and resurrection, ascension and Second Coming – offers personal and corporate wholeness that is true and lasting; therefore, spiritual maidenhood focuses on enhancing a Christian woman's relationship with the Lord. While contemplating the face of Jesus she receives a fresh reminder of her prophetic call to image the Church as Bride of Christ. And by means of living her womanhood for the Lord, the spiritual maiden contributes to the authentic advancement of women that the Church labors for and bears witness that sexual difference belongs to creation and the life of the resurrection.

What is special about spiritual maidenhood is that its principal aim is for the woman believer in Jesus to pursue the universal call to holiness in the living hope of the Coming of the Lord in glory. As a spiritual way of life it helps the woman believer personally, and through her the Body of Christ as a whole, to prepare more fervently for the Second Coming of Christ. For ever since the Ascension and Pentecost, Jesus has been coming "soon" (Rev 22:12).

## **Spiritual maidenhood promotes a holy womanhood as an authentic Christian witness.**

Spiritual maidenhood is an invitation for women believers in Jesus to draw ever closer to God's heart (cf. Ps 45:10-15). Having received the love of God through the Son, the maiden of the Lord finds joy in being a "daughter of the Father". This daughterhood evokes a filial trust in God that underscores and supports her particular vocation whether married, single or consecrated. It is a familiar place where infinite Love can be known and translated into a dedicated womanhood for the glory of God.

At the heart of spiritual maidenhood is a woman believer in Jesus who desires to live her womanhood for the Lord (cf. Ps 45:11). With her entire womanhood – spirit, mind and body – she responds to the call of faith. This is the dignity God intended for every woman since creation. As she prays and reads the Scriptures the Holy Spirit forms her feminine soul and leads her to love Jesus and others with the fullness of her being.

Spiritual maidenhood helps develop the genius of her vocation as woman and provides a remedy for many spiritual ills facing women today. Led by the Spirit the maiden of the Lord considers important the discovery of her feminine dignity and the exercise of her feminine gifts as complementary to that of man for the glory of God, the wholeness of the Church, and the salvation of the world (cf. Gen 1:27; 2:21-24). Like the holy ones in the Scriptures she is mindful to let the peace of God rule her heart (Col 3:15).

### **Living one's womanhood for the Lord is at the heart of spiritual maidenhood.**

As a spiritual maiden a woman believer in Jesus affirms her baptismal promises; she does so specifically as a woman. Her femininity is a gift from God and this precious gift is what she presents to God (cf. Ps 139:13-15). The maiden of the Lord lives her womanhood with an awareness of being in God's presence (cf. Ps 139:16-18). She rests knowing that she is a daughter in the Father's house.

The prime example of a spiritual maiden is the "*handmaid of the Lord*" from the Gospel: Mary, the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:43). Filled with the Spirit Mary lives her womanhood for the Lord and offers her all to Him. Mary ponders the glory of God in the events of her life (cf. Luke 2:19, 51b) and trusts that every promise Jesus made will be fulfilled.

The maiden of the Lord treasures the relationship with the Trinity her Savior has gained for her and senses a contemplative dimension to her prayer and spiritual life. She welcomes this dimension and asks the Holy Spirit to guide its development. Understanding that a maiden is one "ready for love" – to receive the love of the Bridegroom and to love in return – she prays for the Holy Spirit to make her attentive to the Lord in prayer and open to the needs of others.

Knowing that she is a "daughter of the Father" strengthens the spiritual maiden to remain fully engaged in the world in which she lives. Preferring the way of spiritual littleness she desires simply to "be" for the Lord, "to live for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:12). She lives out her spiritual maidenhood in the context of her personal vocation and daily activities (cf. Col 1:10; 1 Peter 3:4). In this way she offers to the Lord the greatest treasure she has: her womanhood – that basic element of identity she receives solely by virtue of God's will in her mother's womb.

### **Spiritual maidenhood stirs the Church's longing for the Bridegroom so that together the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17).**

The Holy Spirit fills the Christian woman with love when He awakens the "*blessed hope*" in her heart. Deeply aware of her bridal character as a baptized woman, the maiden of the Lord longs to go out and meet the Lord, the Divine Bridegroom, when he returns. She eagerly seeks after her Beloved in prayer and contemplation and waits for him in humble obedience. In communion with the whole Church she prays, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20)

Living one's womanhood for the Lord also involves a living hope of the resurrection of the body that takes place when Christ comes in glory. Just as the risen Jesus remains a man in his glorified humanity, the woman shall be transformed but her femininity will not be discarded in

the resurrection. As a woman living her womanhood for the Lord becomes aware that her femininity will find the fullness of its meaning and glory in the age to come she is motivated to purify herself of all that entangles her in sin and deception (cf. Rom 1:21) and prepare herself for her Lord (cf. Esther 2:8-17).

In a special way, spiritual maidenhood is a grace for the Church, for her daughters to be like the daughters of Jerusalem who love the King and go out to meet him on his wedding day (cf. Song 1:3; 3:11). They resemble the wise maidens of Matthew 25.

### **Spiritual maidenhood is a spiritual way of life available to all women.**

In order to respond to the call to spiritual maidenhood the only prerequisite is that a woman has a personal knowledge of God's love revealed in Jesus through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). There is no restriction on age or state in life (cf. 1 Cor 7:20).

The expression of a woman's self-identification as a spiritual maiden may be made through an Act of Presentation of her womanhood to the Holy Trinity. The wording of the Act may be of one's own design, and the Act may be offered within the secret place of the individual woman's heart or in the presence of witnesses. Either form is an authentic act of faith, hope and love. The key elements are a) the woman's stated intention to live her womanhood for the Lord, and b) her promise to live her vocation as woman in firm hope of the Coming of the Lord in glory.

Spiritual guidance is of great importance when pursuing spiritual maidenhood and the search for spiritual counsel should be undertaken with prayer and discernment.