

1st Nail of our Interior Crucifixion
LC Encounter 2020 – 5th Reflection

Purification of our Desires – Part II

Growing in the Likeness and Image of God as MC and MOC

Based on the apostolic letter of St. John Paul II, "[The Dignity and Vocation of Women](#)"¹

Sin

Although he was made by God in a state of justice, from the very dawn of history man abused his liberty, at the urging of the Evil One. Man set himself against God and sought to find fulfilment apart from God. #9

Sin is a negation of God as Creator in his relationship to man, and of what God wills for man, from the beginning and forever. Creating man and woman in his own image and likeness, God wills for them the fullness of good, or supernatural happiness, which flows from sharing in his own life. By committing sin man rejects this gift and at the same time wills to become "as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5), that is to say, deciding what is good and what is evil independently of God, his Creator.

Isn't this the reality of our world and the reality of each of us? We are seeing it as we enter our disordered desires. None of us are living fully in the will of God, so all of us, to a certain extent, are living according to what we want and not what God wants.

We should desire to be like God. Jesús came so that we be like Him, to follow Him, and imitate Him. But this is achieved by allowing Him to reign in our hearts, not by trying to take His place. The temptation, the lie, is to want to be "as God" but separate from Him. We have a choice: To be self-centered and use God and others or to recognize God as God and live in communion with Him and others.

The Dignity and Vocation of Women continues:

The sin of the first parents has its own human "measure": an interior standard of its own in man's free will, and it also has within itself a certain "diabolic" characteristic, which is clearly shown in the Book of Genesis (3:15). 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. #9

The source of those relationships is our union with God, and that has been broken due to original sin with great consequences for all of us.

As I set aside God to decide on my own what is right and wrong, my relationship with others is also damaged and becomes self-centered. This is important for us that are living the Simple Path because we have done the work of going to our wounds from our experiences and our ancestors, our father wounds, mother wounds, grandparent wounds, and on and on. Yet it is very important for us to understand that we have wounds that go beyond just our close ancestors. These are wounds that go all the way back to the beginning, to our first parents. St. John Paul II speaks about this diabolical characteristic. This is why, as we live the Path, we're constantly discovering that there is evil in us that goes way back.

¹ Mulieris Dignitatem

Isaiah 1:16-20

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil... 18 though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow;... 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword.

It's important to know that there is an evil, a darkness in all, and we need to be open to discover that darkness so that the light of God can penetrate it. There are two important words from Isaiah Ch. 1: “willing” and “obedient.” The Lord taught us those words, especially in the first nail of crucifixion. We need to be willing to grow in obedience as the Lord reveals our darkness and leads us in the process of purification. Those who are not willing to obey do not discover their darkness. This rebelliousness has serious consequences.

What do we learn from Genesis that applies to us?

The sin of Adam and Eve disposes us to certain disordered tendencies called concupiscence. Let us look at some of them:

To Blame

Adam blamed Eve. He said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” (Gen. 3:12) Not only does he blame Eve, but he also blames God, “you gave her to me.” So ultimately, he claims that it is the fault of God. While at first he had said, “this is really bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh,” now he is judgmental, self-righteous.

We continue, like Adam, to fail to look at ourselves, take responsibility, and repent. Instead, we immediately blame someone else; we protect our false self-image at the expense of others. This tendency is strong in us, and we must fight against it.

An example of this is found in John 5:10-11, where a man who is healed by Jesus ends up blaming Him in order to evade the wrath of the Jews:

The Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’”

To Believe Lies

In Genesis 3:4-5

The serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

Living the Simple Path, we come to see how our personality has become disordered: we have believed many of Satan’s lies and continue to believe them.

To Desire to be “like God”

Genesis 3:5 teaches us about our tendency to desire to be “like God.” It means that we want to supplant God and be ourselves the ultimate judge of what is good and evil. As a result, we live independently of God’s will and don’t even know it.

To Desire what delights our eyes

The devil cannot create anything; all he can do is offer us the good things that God created while hiding from us how they fit in God's plan. If we have become judges of what is right and wrong apart from God, then we no longer recognize the demands of love. We act according to what delights our eyes without any other consideration. What is itself good can easily be abused and turned against what is good for others and ourselves.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes... she took of its fruit and ate; (Gen.3:6). We succumb to greed and materialism. Communion is no longer possible. If we want to trap a mouse, we put cheese in the trap. The mouse only sees and smells the cheese which is good for him. He knows nothing about traps. Have you ever seen a mouse trap in action? It is ugly. That is what Satan does with us. Our defense is to trust in God and resist the delights of our eyes when He tells us to do so. In obedience to God, Adam and Eve should have kept away from the tree. But they thought they could play with fire and not get burned. We need to avoid all desires that are not the will of God. Due to concupiscence, those desires are in all of us. We need to discover them: What desires do I have that are outside the will of God?

To hide

To hide our sins from God and ourselves; hide our shortcomings; hide behind masks of falsehood...

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Gen.3:8)

The opposite of hiding is living in the light, exposed and transparent. That is what the Path teaches us, beginning in chapter 2. It is amazing to see the many masks we wear to hide something that is false in us.

A break in the “unity of the two”

JPII's The Dignity and Vocation of Women continues:

Sin in fact "diminishes" man, as the Second Vatican Council also recalls. If man is the image and likeness of God by his very nature as a person, then his greatness and his dignity are achieved in the covenant with God, in union with him, in striving towards that fundamental unity which belongs to the internal "logic" of the very mystery of creation. #9

When we read in the biblical description the words addressed to the woman: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16), we discover a break and a constant threat precisely in regard to this "unity of the two" which corresponds to the dignity of the image and likeness of God in both of them. But this threat is more serious for the woman, since domination takes the place of "being a sincere gift" and therefore living "for" the other: "he shall rule over you." This "domination" indicates the disturbance and loss of stability of that fundamental equality which the man and the woman possess in the "unity of the two"#10.

The minute sin comes in, the union of the two is broken, and as a consequence, God says, "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." This domination was not the plan of God; He is declaring what happened as a result of their sin. There was a break in their

union. Instead of being for the other, there is domination. Coming to understand what happened to our relationships due to sin is very important because it continues to cause great damage.

Constant inclination toward sin

JPII's *The Dignity and Vocation of Women* continues:

The words of the biblical text directly concern original sin and its lasting consequences in man and woman. Burdened by hereditary sinfulness, they bear within themselves the **constant "inclination to sin,"** the tendency to go against the moral order which corresponds to the rational nature and dignity of man and woman as persons. This tendency is expressed in a **threefold concupiscence**, which Saint John defines as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn 2:16). The words of the Book of Genesis quoted previously (3: 16) show how this threefold concupiscence, the "inclination to sin", will burden the mutual relationship of man and woman. #10

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

We all have the inclination to sin, which S. John Paul II called “hereditary sinfulness” because it goes all the way back through generations. We go against the moral order, which corresponds to the rational nature and dignity of men and women. We need to recognize these sinful tendencies in us and cooperate with Christ in restoring us, our relationships, and our mission to what God wanted from the beginning.

Hereditary sin as it applies to men and women

Men – From Adam's original sin of **not having been the defender and protector of Eve**, all men carry this “hereditary sinfulness” and, therefore, have to struggle greatly and strive diligently to become in Christ the providers, defenders & protectors of women and the Church. Defenders and protectors of Truth. They have to **strive against the desire to dominate, which** makes them “predators,” using women for their selfish desires.

A man who dominates instead of defending would raise his voice and say, “In this house, all will do what I say.” A priest may say, “this is my parish,” and impose his way by fear instead of being a father. A man's strength should only be used to serve, protect and defend, not to intimidate. Men who have not entered self-knowledge remain under the tendency of original sin and are unable to defend and protect in a godly way those God has placed in their care.

The cause of the breakdown we are experiencing in the priesthood and families is that men have not defended, protected, and provided for the Church — the bride — as fathers in union with God the Father. Two pitfalls for men are:

- 1- **To be wimpy**, unable to confront when necessary to protect.
- 2- **To abuse their strength** to dominate

One way in which the inheritance of sin is manifested is **habitual discrimination against women**. Men need to open their hearts to God to be forgiven and freed from this sin that has come down from generation to generation, no matter how subtle and hidden it may be.

These are a few examples of the lies that perpetuate this sin: To be a real man means to be sexually active; all men have other women on the side; wives must yield to their husband's desires whenever they want; girls are fun toys; women like to be pressured to have sex even when they say no; pornography hurts no one.

Lies lead to actual abuse and disrespect: Men brag about their sexual exploits; they comment on and mock women's bodies; they think it is OK among men to speak degradingly about women; it's the boy's club. But none of that is manly; those are the characteristics of unredeemed men. They are discriminatory and reduce manliness to a deeply distorted caricature. All this pierces the heart of Jesus.

Each of us should go deep and examine how we were raised. What message was given to us regarding what is true manhood and womanhood? Women: what messages did you hear being given to your brothers? How did that affect our femininity?

JPII's *The Dignity and Vocation of Women* continues:

Each man must look within himself to see whether she who was entrusted to him as a sister in humanity, as a spouse, has not become in his heart an object of adultery; to see whether she who, in different ways, is the co-subject of his existence in the world, has not become for him an "object": an object of pleasure, of exploitation. #14

Jesus enters into the concrete and historical situation of women, a situation which is weighed down by the inheritance of sin. One of the ways in which this inheritance is expressed is habitual discrimination against women in favour of men. This inheritance is rooted within women too. #14

Women – Women, by having the core **wound of not having been defended and protected, have believed the lie that they must always defend and protect themselves.** Taking on this characteristic that belongs to men, many women have become hardened, tough, harsh, fighters in a “manly” way, and seducers... thus losing characteristics of their femininity such as tenderness, nurturing, gentleness, and the ability to suffer for love.

My testimony:

As the Lord was showing me these pitfalls of men and women, He allowed me to discover a wound that remained hidden in me: My mother was impulsive and abusive in many ways, yet my father saw this and never defended me. Many years later, the Lord suddenly opened up the wounds of my feminine heart that I never knew but were affecting me still. There was a hardness that had entered my heart, and I realized that every time I meet women that have not been defended by the men in their lives, I experience anger. If I know the men, I am angry at them. They disgust me. All this came to light. I was amazed. I realized that the Holy Spirit was asking me to look at this so that my femininity, especially my tenderness, could be restored.

Perhaps you are thinking: “How can you say that women should not protect themselves? There are many situations in which they have to because no one else will” Yes, true. But, because I was not protected, my femininity was wounded, and I took the role of taking charge. So, yes, I need to protect myself, but I also need to understand how my feminine heart has been wounded and how I manifest that in different ways that are not feminine. All women are, to some degree, wounded, and God wants to restore us.

We see the wounds of the feminine heart in an extreme form in the women's liberation movement. Women come to the point of hating men, yet they become manly themselves. There may be reasons why they are angry, but their wounded hearts did not find the correct way forward. St. John Paul II warns about this danger.

JPII's *The Dignity and Vocation of Women* continues:

In the name of liberation from male "domination," **women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine "originality"**. There is a well- founded fear that if they take this path, women will not "reach fulfillment", but instead will deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness. #10

Both men and women also have wounds from mothers who lacked tenderness and gentleness. A harsh woman is a wounded woman who was hurt either by her father or husband. That harshness is passed on from generation to generation.

JPII's *The Dignity and Vocation of Women* continues:

The inheritance of 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 this path (the path of developing the gift of being woman received the day of creation). The overcoming of this evil inheritance is, generation after generation, the task of every human being, whether woman or man. For whenever man is responsible for offending a woman's personal dignity and vocation, he acts contrary to his own personal dignity and his own vocation. #10

In our formation with the *Simple Path*, we come to realize that the only way to be restored to the dignity that God created men and women to have is by digging deep into our hearts and allowing God to take us to those places that are hidden even to us and show us our wounds, sin, and tendencies. Only then can Christ transform our whole person. This is Redemption.

What we learn from Mark 6:17-28 about men and women: St. John the Baptist confronts Herod and is beheaded

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod[e] had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias[g] came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." 25 Immediately, she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was deeply grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately, the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother.

Let us look at each character of the story to discover true manhood and broken manhood and womanhood.

John the Baptist – Was a "righteous and holy man," a restored man through Christ. He knows that the behavior of kings and those in leadership deeply influences the morality of the

people, so he confronts the king's adulterous public relationship: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." He is able to defend, protect and confront evil with truth, courage, and manly strength because his zeal for the Lord casts out fear. John the Baptist's words to Herod did not change his relationship with Herodias, but by defending the truth and confronting evil, his sacrifice became one with Jesus and made him partaker of His glory.

Herod – He has power and armies, yet is a tormented and insecure man. He fears John because he knows that God is at work through him (6:20). Herod is a coward who is not willing to stand for what is right to defend and protect John, knowing that he is righteous. Herod is a people pleaser and is manipulated by Herodias. He is more concerned about looking good in front of his guests than doing what is right. "The king was exceedingly sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests, he did not want to break his word to her". (Mk 6:26)

Herodias – Is a hardened and dominating woman; therefore, her femininity has become distorted and evil. She is resentful, angry, and revengeful. She teaches her daughter the same. Satan is able to work through her as with Eve because Herod, the man, is not whom he is called to be.

Herodias' daughter – Under the influence of her mother, she gets what she wants by dancing seductively (Mk 6:22). Again, Satan uses the woman to bring forth the downfall of Herod, the man, by inciting the "delight to the eyes" (Gen.3:6). Along with Herod, the men in the audience fall as well. Seductive women become prowlers and know how to get what they want from men by awakening their lust. Satan exploits the sinful tendencies of all these actors to go against John the Baptist, a righteous man.

Our culture also incites women to be seducers. In half-time sports shows, in advertising, and in movies, we frequently see women acting like Herodias's daughter. Women are tempted by the lie that if they are not provocative, men will not care for them.

It is true that provocative women influence men. They may become popular and famous for a time, but at what price? They distort God's image in themselves and lead others to sin as well. Both become oppressed by a sinful relationship where the love for which they were created is replaced by a power play in which only Satan wins unless there is repentance.

The temptation for men is to be predators. Women are exploited, even if they are not at all seducers. Not only human trafficking but also many forms of domination and abuse, as we have already seen.

So, **both men and women need to go deep.** This is the work we should do. How much are the tendencies of sin as a man or a woman still in me? As a woman, how has seduction affected me? As a man, am I still responded driven by lust? Is this a struggle in my heart, and why? Let us take this teaching very seriously.

Men often fail to defend and protect with the pretext that there is nothing they can do. A man may feel that he would not be heard if he stands for the truth and that it may make matters worse. In many situations, it is indeed difficult to stand for the truth. It can often put a man at risk of retaliation, even death, but **by remaining silent, a man enables evil, and his manhood remains oppressed.** Men of God need to be ready to give their lives as one with Jesus.

The saints show us how to follow Jesus

The contrast between **John the Baptist and Nicodemus.**

In the Gospel, John 7:40-53, the Pharisees deny that Jesus is the Messiah because he came from Galilee. Nicodemus tries to defend Jesus but in a "wimpy" way; he lacks the courage and zeal to confront the other Pharisees with the authority of the truth:

Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” (John 7:50-51)

The Pharisees then attack Nicodemus with mockery and insult:

They replied, “Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.” (Jn 7:52)

Nicodemus then withdraws in silence.

St. Maximilian Kolbe is another great example. Like St. John the Baptist, he defended the truth. He was not paralyzed by fear; it was the Nazis who feared him. He chose martyrdom to defend an innocent man. His testimony of a redeemed man has impacted the world.

Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, was a young married man who stood firm while the clergy tried to convince him to join the Nazis. He was told that his sacrifice would not change the course of the war and would only ruin the future of his family. Every Christian is tempted in similar ways because Jesus was also. **The truth is that united with Christ; our sacrifice does make a difference.** The clergy that advised Franz acted in fear to protect themselves. Franz, instead, died a martyr. [Read his testimony on our website.](#)

Even if our sacrifice does not seem to change anything, even if no one else seems to be changed, if we act according to how God wants us to act, we are changed, transformed to participate in the divinity of Christ through our human choice. This will have a great effect though it may remain unseen to us.

How can we ask for the intercession of saints if we refuse to learn from them how to live the gospel?

For Reflection:

Women:

- How have I not been defended and protected by the men in my life?
- Did my father provide, defend and protect me?
- How have those wounds affected my femininity?
- What are my disordered tendencies and desires from the wounds caused by men?

Men:

- Did my father provide, defend and protect me?
- Have I been able to confront people in order to defend and protect others?
- Is confrontation difficult for me? Am I able to confront others with the authority of the Holy Spirit, or am I “wimpy”?
- Am I in communion with God the Father and, through this relationship leading my family as its head to the fullness of God’s plan?

For women and men. Write down:

Who am I in God’s dignity from the beginning of time (Genesis)?

Ponder the relationship of Jesus with the Father and then reflect: Who is God the Father for me? Is loving, listening, and obeying Him with trust my first priority?