



# **The Exodus Bride:**

## A Companion Guide

Written by:

Endow

*And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me”; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son.’”*

**EXODUS 4:22-23**



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*The Exodus Bride: A Companion Guide*

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# GETTING STARTED

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## **What is Exodus 90? Why Should Your Family Go Through This?**

Welcome to the Exodus 90 Wives' journey written by the women of Endow. You are receiving this message as the wife or significant other of a man who has signed up for Exodus 90. While some men are great at communicating with their wives about what they are doing and why, we have found that many men and their wives have struggled to communicate details and expectations for the journey they are both about to begin.

In order to help with this problem, Exodus 90 has partnered with Endow (an organization dedicated to educating women in the Tradition of the Church), to bring you a weekly meditation that will cover both the practical survival aspects of supporting a man through Exodus 90 and that will also help with the spiritual challenges of this journey.

Before diving in, we would like to make sure you know what Exodus 90 is, and everything it entails.

“Exodus 90 is a ninety-day spiritual exercise for men based on Christ’s roadmap to freedom: prayer, asceticism, and fraternity. It aids in the liberation of men so that they can be free to love and serve their families and the Church as God calls them.”

These spiritual exercises are all centered on three tenets: men are expected to make a daily holy hour, meet with a team of men weekly, and engage in the following list of ascetical practices:

## vii WELCOME

- Take short, cold showers.
- Practice regular, intense exercise.
- Get a full night's sleep (at least seven hours is recommended).
- Abstain from alcohol.
- Abstain from desserts and sweets.
- Abstain from eating between meals.
- Abstain from soda or sweet drinks (white milk, black coffee, and black tea are permissible).
- Abstain from television, movies, or televised sports.
- Abstain from video games.
- Abstain from non-essential material purchases.
- Only listen to music that lifts the soul to God.
- Only use the computer for work, school, or essential tasks (e.g., paying bills).
- Only use mobile devices for essential communications; cut out non-essential texting, app, and internet use.
- Take Wednesdays and Fridays as days of fasting. (Abstain from meat and only eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.)

As you can see, this is a serious list. But to be clear, this spiritual exercise is for men only (more on that to come—soon—we promise). Although the disciplines of the journey are just for men, the actions of our husbands and fathers do affect the whole family and will be an adjustment for everyone.

The first step, for both husbands and wives, is to realize that this spiritual exercise is an investment in your whole family. While it does cost the whole family something, it also pays back in much greater returns.

Second, both husbands and wives need to realize that you cannot be his accountability partner. He must be committed and responsible. You are a support, but you are not in charge. He needs his team of other men—on the same journey—to keep him accountable. Also, he is an adult. Allow yourself to trust both your husband and the group, and don't nag or criticize.

Third, make a plan for how you will handle important 'feasts' in your family. Discuss how he will participate if birthdays or anniversaries fall during his journey through Exodus 90. Take into consideration how the whole family might be affected by his celebrating or not—keeping in mind that this penance is his to take up, not the whole family's. Think through how you will replace the time you once spent together watching movies, enjoying a glass of wine, or other pleasurable things he is about to offer up for your family. Where possible, be proactive about how you might both profit from these new experiences together.

Before Exodus 90 begins, ask him to share his written "Why" statement and discuss whether or not this is the best thing for your family right now. Then, make your plans for handling feasts and spending time together as a family. Blessings to you and your family as your husband begins his Exodus.



**WEEK 1**

# **Family Unity**



# WEEK 1: FAMILY UNITY

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Week one has arrived. Your husband's eyes are about to be opened to just how deep into the slavery of Egypt man has fallen. He will begin to realize the strength of the chains binding him, and your family will begin to pursue a new routine as you adjust to the demands of his spiritual exercises. You may soon begin to wonder—is this all really worth it?

Whatever your husband's goal for this journey is, it ultimately boils down to overcoming the chains of sin. Whatever his particular struggle, rooting out attachments will be good for your family. You need to believe in this truth.

Exodus 90 is one of over 25 spiritual exercises that Exodus Inc. currently offers to men. Every Exodus spiritual exercise is about helping men to live their lives in a holier way. At Endow, we try to do the same for women. When you talk to an Endow woman, you will hear of the beautiful encouragement that each Endow study offers. When a husband and a wife simultaneously grow closer to God, they naturally grow beautifully closer to each other. Through God's grace, it will be so for you too.

As your husband receives spiritual guidance from the Exodus scriptures and reflections written specifically for men, you will have your own spiritual guidance from the same daily Exodus scriptures along with unique weekly reflections written specifically for women. This guide is a resource for you, not a set of requirements. If you desire to walk closely with your husband through this time of purification, then the exact scriptures that he is reading each day will be emailed to

you each day if you have signed up at [exodus90.com/wives](http://exodus90.com/wives). If you just want something once a week, these reflections are here to guide you at that pace. During our weekly reflections, we will be using the writings of St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, (On the Dignity of Women). Along with these you will receive reflections for you on your own role in marriage and practical advice for supporting your husband in his quest to root out sin. The time is come. Let's begin.

*...Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God. What makes man like God is the fact that - unlike the whole world of other living creatures, including those endowed with senses (*animalia*) - man is also a rational being (*animal rationale*).[23] Thanks to this property, man and woman are able to "dominate" the other creatures of the visible world (cf. Gen 1:28).*

*The second description of the creation of man (cf. Gen 2:18-25) makes use of different language to express the truth about the creation of man, and especially of woman. In a sense the language is less precise, and, one might say, more descriptive and metaphorical, closer to the language of the myths known at the time. Nevertheless, we find no essential contradiction between the two texts. The text of Gen 2:18-25 helps us to understand better what we find in the concise passage of Gen 1:27-28. At the same time, if it is read together with the latter, it helps us to understand even more profoundly the fundamental truth which it contains concerning man created as man and woman in the image and likeness of God.*

In the description found in Gen 2:1 8-25, the woman is created by God "from the rib" of the man and is placed at his side as another "I", as the companion of the man, who is alone in the surrounding world of living creatures and who finds in none of them a "helper" suitable for himself. Called into existence in this way, the woman is immediately recognized by the man as "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones" (cf. Gen 2:23) and for this very reason she is called "woman". In biblical language this name indicates her essential identity with regard to man - *'is-'issah* - something which unfortunately modern languages in general are unable to express: "She shall be called woman (*'issah*) because she was taken out of man (*'is*)": Gen 2:23.

The biblical text provides sufficient bases for recognizing the essential equality of man and woman from the point of view of their humanity.[24] From the very beginning, both are persons, unlike the other living beings in the world about them. *The woman is another "I" in a common humanity.* From the very beginning they appear as a "unity of the two", and this signifies that the original solitude is overcome, the solitude in which man does not find "a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:20). Is it only a question here of a "helper" in activity, in "subduing the earth" (cf. Gen 1: 28)? Certainly it is a matter of a life's companion, with whom, as a wife, the man can unite himself, becoming with her "one flesh" and for this reason leaving "his father and his mother" (cf. Gen 2: 24). Thus in the same context as the creation of man and woman, the biblical account speaks of God's *instituting marriage*

as an indispensable condition for the transmission of life to new generations, the transmission of life to which marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordered: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28) (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 6)

In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope St. John Paul II reminds us of that familiar story of Adam and Eve in the garden, pointing out how they were originally created as a "unity of the two" (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7). Sadly, this original unity was broken by sin. First, the relationship between God and man was severed. Second, sin shattered the unity of the person. Third, it destroyed the unity of male and female, and, as a consequence, relationships with others and with nature.

In engaging in Exodus 90, your husband is attempting to restore this unity. Through prayer, the foundation of his exercises, he will ask God for the grace to heal his own disordered desires. Through the ascetical practices, he has a concrete plan for establishing discipline in his life. This discipline is the self-control of the original unity.

Regardless of whether your relationship is one of his explicit goals, the work he does during Exodus 90 will help to restore this unity in his relationship with you and with his family. Each unity builds the other; know that in supporting his efforts, you will certainly benefit. Exodus 90 is a way for him to become a better man—more in line with who he is meant to be. If you let it, it will help him to become a better spouse as well.

With this in mind, examine your attitude. Remember that this is hard for him, even though he chose it. Are you bitter toward

him for the time this is taking? Are there small adjustments you can talk with him about that would help?

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week, pray/journal about all of the ways you and your husband uniquely contribute to your family. How is your role as wife and mother manifestly distinct from his role as husband and father?

Work as a couple to discuss quick, meatless protein meal options (including ingredients such as cheese, peanut butter, tuna, salmon, beans, and the like) that you can use to work together in preparing meals on his meatless days.

**WEEK 2**

# Communication



## WEEK 2: COMMUNICATION

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Your family has been in Exodus 90 mode for just over a full week now—just long enough to feel the friction of the change, but not long enough to have established new habits to replace the old ones. Accept that this is hard, and annoying, and frustrating all at the same time. Realize that no matter how annoying this may be for you, this is the good work of rooting out sin and cultivating virtue. It's the hard work of change, but it is so worth it. As difficult as it is for you, know that it is even harder for your husband. Remember that, and cast out discouragement and embrace the difficulties.

7. ...For every individual is made in the image of God, insofar as he or she is a rational and free creature capable of knowing God and loving him. Moreover, we read that man cannot exist "alone" (cf. Gen 2:18); he can exist only as a "unity of the two", and therefore *in relation to another human person*. It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other "I". This is a prelude to the definitive self-revelation of the Triune God: a living unity in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of the Bible this is not yet stated directly. The whole Old Testament is mainly concerned with revealing the truth about the oneness and unity of God. Within this fundamental truth about God the



New Testament will reveal the inscrutable mystery of God's inner life. God, who allows himself to be known by human beings through Christ, is the *unity of the Trinity*: unity in communion. In this way new light is also thrown on man's image and likeness to God, spoken of in the Book of Genesis. The fact that man "created as man and woman" is the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that 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. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God through the unity of the divinity, exist as persons through the inscrutable divine relationship. Only in this way can we understand the truth that God in himself is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:16).

*The image and likeness of God in man*, created as man and woman (in the analogy that can be presumed between Creator and creature), thus also expresses the "unity of the two" in a common humanity. This "unity of the two", which is a sign of interpersonal communion, *shows that the creation of man* is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion ("*communio*"). This likeness is a quality of the personal being of both man and woman, and is also a call and a task. The foundation of the whole *human "ethos"* is rooted in the image and likeness of God which the human being bears within himself from the beginning. Both the Old and New Testament will develop that

"ethos", which reaches its apex in the *commandment of love*.<sup>[25]</sup>

In the "unity of the two", man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist "side by side" or "together", but they are also called *to exist mutually "one for the other"*.

This also explains the meaning of the "help" spoken of in Genesis 2:18-25: "I will make him a *helper fit for him*". The biblical context enables us to understand this in the sense that the woman must "help" the man - and in his turn he must help her - first of all by the very fact of their "being human persons". In a certain sense this enables man and woman to discover their humanity ever anew and to confirm its whole meaning. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7)

As we read today, there is a necessity that man and woman are at the selfless service of each other. They make a gift of self to each other as they put themselves at the service of one another out of love. Exodus is a process of forming men to understand and live this reality for the good of the family more and more each day. Be patient. For Exodus men, this will be lived out for you and the family first spiritually, soon to take deep root in the man. Later, the physical expression will not only spring forth, but spring forth in a lasting manner. That is, so long as your husband continues to live the Christian life in its fullness; a life of prayer, asceticism, and fraternity.

Exodus men need a fraternity to remain faithful and encouraged to live out their vocations with great holiness. We women need support too. While it's still early in the program,

take time to meet or gather with the other families in your husband's fraternity. Consider encouraging and helping the men plan a barbeque or a pot luck that will bring the families together. Such dinners are not just permissible, but encouraged throughout the time of Exodus 90, especially on Sundays. Getting to know the other wives and families going through this can help you all to work together and encourage each other as you open yourselves to God's graces. Getting to know the men in your husband's fraternity can also help you to trust that his fraternity is going to hold him accountable to the disciplines.

This is also a great time to troubleshoot your pain points—is there something that isn't working? Have a conversation with your husband about how your family can adjust its routine to bring the greatest fruit to everyone. Try to brainstorm other ways you can help him to replace the things he's missing. Ask the other families for ideas if you are struggling, or just try something new. Find ways to get outdoors more as a family, to play games, to read or do puzzles together instead of watching a nighttime movie. The changing of a family routine can be one of the harder things to endure. But consider, if your family could be happier, holier, closer, more present to each other, and fuller of life, would you be willing to make the changes?

Finally, remember that many of the sacrifices of Exodus 90 are aimed at cutting out things that interfere with relationships. You will naturally fill in some of the time with things that build relationships, but also remember that your husband does need time to be alone with our Lord, as we all do. Give him the space to adjust to this new 'normal.' Try to find a balance between replacing television, computer,

and phone time with family time and time with God. This is important for both you and your husband. Don't neglect to find time for yourself to spend in silence with the Lord. Whether that looks like 20 minutes a day or a holy hour once a week, communicate your spiritual needs to your husband and work together to find a solution to make alone time with God happen for each of you. Overcoming this often-challenging difficulty will return abundant graces for your family.

All of these things are practical tips from women who are experienced Exodus Wives. But what's the top tip experienced Exodus Wives can give to the wives of new Exodus Men? To keep communicating your feelings to your husband. Exodus is supposed to promote UNITY in families, not division. Give yourself the time to adjust and to accept that sometimes hard things are good things. Every family's journey is going to look a little bit different, and that's okay. Just remember that the ultimate goal is freedom.

### **FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week, examine your heart. What are you most frustrated with at this point? Is it something you should bring to your husband that an adjustment would fix? Or is it something you can die to yourself about, accepting the sacrifice? There is no one right answer here. Pray, and give yourself the time to know which one it is before acting either way.

**WEEK 3**

# **The Women of Exodus**



# WEEK 3: THE WOMEN OF EXODUS

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Throughout his Exodus 90 experience, your husband is spending time with the people of Israel; they are very close to leaving slavery in Egypt—narrowly escaping Pharaoh's army—to then spend 40 years wandering in the desert before they finally reach the edges of the Promised Land. It's a hard journey, one that contains special wisdom for your husband as he also journeys from slavery to freedom.

As wives, we can take our cue from the women of Exodus—the key women who make all the events possible. Think back to the second chapter of the book of Exodus that we read in week one. There, we find that Pharaoh has grown afraid of the number and potential power of his Hebrew slaves. In order to control their numbers, he first orders the midwives to kill the male babies born to the Hebrews. When the midwives deceive him because they realize the evil of this command, he then orders all of his people to participate in these evil murders. Realizing that it is no longer safe to have a child, a Levite woman:

... conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could hide him no longer she took for him a basket made of bulrushes, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river's brink. And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him. Now the daughter of Pharaoh came

down to bathe at the river, and her maidens walked beside the river; she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it. When she opened it she saw the child; and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son; and she named him Moses. (Exodus 2:2-10)

These three key women of the book of Exodus cooperate to save this chosen child for the mission that God has prepared for him. All three are here nameless, but all three act decisively and without hesitation for the good of this child who has come into their care. Their actions get just a short mention, but they are essential to God's plan—without them, the drama of Exodus would never have taken place.

During your husband's journey through Exodus, this humble though courageous and actively supportive role modeled for you here, is the very role you are called to play. Though it can be tempting to try to either participate in his journey in the same way, or in a parallel way (i.e., a women's version of Exodus 90), your role during this time is much simpler. You are there to support, to enable, and to help.

.... To be human means to be called to interpersonal

communion. The text of Genesis 2:18-25 shows that marriage is the first and, in a sense, the fundamental dimension of this call. But it is not the only one. The whole of human history unfolds within the context of this call. In this history, on the basis of the principle of mutually being "for" the other, in interpersonal "communion", there develops in humanity itself, in accordance with God's will, the integration of *what is "masculine" and what is "feminine"*. ...

This truth also has to do with *the history of salvation*. ... "The Lord Jesus, when he prayed to the Father 'that all may be one ... as we are one' (Jn 17: 21-22), opened up vistas closed to human reason. For he implied *a certain likeness* between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God's children in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self". [26]

... Being a person means striving towards self-realization (the Council text speaks of self-discovery), which can only be achieved *"through a sincere gift of self"*. The model for this interpretation of the person is God himself as Trinity, as a communion of Persons. To say that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist "for" others, to become a gift. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7)

Does this mean that the role of one who supports, enables, and helps is always your role in your relationship? The answer is complicated—in some ways yes, and in some ways no. But



before you write this off as an old-school view of gender roles, allow us, your fellow Exodus Wives, to continue to explain this through ongoing bits of wisdom from the Church. Rest assured that it's not because we don't think you can do it, or that it's too hard for us women. On the contrary, it stems from the reality that though men and women are equal, they are not the same—which means that the same practices and actions which benefit men may not have the same effects for women. Consider once more the verse above from the second chapter of Exodus. The supportive role that these three women played in salvation history changed history forever. Not because they sat back and did nothing, rather because they chose with courage and humility to play an active, supportive role. This is the very role you are called to play.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

In prayer this week, share with the Lord your desires and concerns both about your role as active support and your husband's role as the spiritual head of your family. Then give yourself time to hear from the Lord his loving responses to both your desires and concerns.

**WEEK 4**

# Complementarity



## WEEK 4: COMPLEMENTARITY

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“Do you have Exodus 90 for women?” is one of the most frequent questions the Exodus 90 team is asked. The answer is a little bit surprising. Originally, the answer was ‘no’ because the men of Exodus 90 didn’t feel like they themselves could write a parallel spiritual exercise for women.

Soon, this answer found a number of women who could attempt to write it. About this time a devout religious sister came to Exodus asking for a spiritual exercise for women. When they responded with, “You can write it Sister,” she took the response seriously. Approaching her superior and a few fellow sisters, prayer over a women’s version of Exodus 90 began. After months of discernment, the sisters brought forth a very surprising, “No.” This wasn’t just a “no” to these particular sisters writing this, it was a “no” to a women’s version of Exodus 90 being the right solution for women at all. To summarize their answer: the sisters said ‘no’ because they do not believe this is the kind of spiritual exercise that will best help women to grow spiritually. Women are different from men, so they need something different. And not just a different list of ascetical practices and meditations, but a different approach, a different kind of spiritual exercise.

This story challenges us as women. Our modern culture has taught us that we can do anything men can do. It has drilled this gender neutrality into our heads to the point where we don’t even notice it. In addition, in today’s instant gratification culture, we don’t like being told “no.” But as men and women our bodies are different, our personalities are different, the

way we relate to our Heavenly Father is different, so why, then, would our spiritual approach be the same? Once we accept this reality, the question changes. Instead of, "Can I as a woman do Exodus 90?", the question becomes, "What can I, as a woman, do to better my spiritual life?"

Because your husband is doing this epic thing, it is normal to feel motivated to do something extra as well. This is where we return to the Women of Exodus and also to *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

In our times the question of "women's rights" has taken on new significance in the broad context of the rights of the human person. *The biblical and evangelical message* sheds light on this cause, which is the object of much attention today, by *safeguarding the truth about the "unity" of the "two"*, that is to say the truth about that dignity and vocation that result from the specific diversity and personal originality of man and woman. Consequently, even the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words "He shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16) must not under any condition lead to the "masculinization" of women. 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 fulfilment", but instead will *deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness*. It is indeed an enormous richness. In the biblical description, the words of the first man at the sight of the woman who had been created

are words of admiration and enchantment, words which fill the whole history of man on earth.

The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different. Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her "fulfilment" as a person, her dignity and vocation, on the basis of these resources, according to the richness of the femininity which she received on the day of creation and which she inherits as an expression of the "image and likeness of God" that is specifically hers. *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 overcoming of this evil inheritance is, generation after generation, the task of every human being, whether woman or man. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 10)

As the man travels his Exodus journey, our role is that of supporter, caregiver, and comforter, just as he, when his wife travels the epic journey of pregnancy and early motherhood, is the supporter, caregiver, and comforter. When one member of the union is undergoing a challenge, the other must be a steady rock. Right now, his work is that of sacrifice, prayer and growth; your work is to offer the support that you, and only you, as the woman in his life, can give. Failing in this role will make your husband's work for greater family unity in Christ much harder, if not impossible.

According to the Church, our marriages have formed us into a union of two. As St. John Paul II puts it in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: "Man cannot exist 'alone' (Cf Genesis 2:18);

he can only exist as a 'unity of the two', and therefore in relation to another human person. It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to another 'I' . . ." (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7). This relationship is both beautiful and fragile because Satan is always at work to divide it in any way he can. And he will succeed if we let him.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week, surrender both in prayer and in action. Allow your husband to take up Exodus 90 for you and your family, without your feeling guilt or resentment towards his spiritual work. If any guilt or resentment attempts to linger, ask the Lord to console your heart in prayer.

**WEEK 5**

# Original Unity



# WEEK 5: ORIGINAL UNITY

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In Genesis, there are two distinct accounts of creation. Each account reveals unique truths about humanity and the world that God created. In the first story, male and female are created together and revealed as man, showing us, as St. John Paul II says, that “man is a person, man and woman equally so” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 6). In the second story man is created first, and “the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18). Then God forms the birds of the air and the beasts of the field but still “there was not found a helper that was fit for him” (Genesis 2:20). So God puts man into a deep sleep and takes one of his ribs—not from his foot that he may rule her, nor his head, that she may rule him, but from his side, that she may be his equal—and from it fashions woman. When the man awakes, he is overjoyed “at last” to find “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23).

From this account, St. John Paul II reflects that:

The calling of woman into existence at man's side as “a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18) in the “unity of the two”, provides the visible world of creatures with particular conditions so that “the love of God may be poured into the hearts” of the beings created in his image. When the author of the Letter to the Ephesians calls Christ “the Bridegroom” and the Church “the Bride”, he indirectly confirms through this analogy *the truth about woman as bride*. The Bridegroom is the one who loves. The Bride is loved: *it is she who receives love, in order to love in return. ...*



Only a person can love and only a person can be loved. This statement is primarily ontological in nature, and it gives rise to an ethical affirmation. Love is an ontological and ethical requirement of the person. The person must be loved, since love alone corresponds to what the person is. This explains *the commandment of love*, known already in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18) and placed by Christ at the very center of the Gospel "ethos" (cf. Mt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-34). This also explains the *primacy of love* expressed by Saint Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians: "the greatest of these is love" (cf. 13:13).

... When we say that the woman is the one who receives love in order to love in return, this refers not only or above all to the specific spousal relationship of marriage. It means something more universal, based on the very fact of her being a woman within all the interpersonal relationships which, in the most varied ways, shape society and structure the interaction between all persons - men and women. In this broad and diversified context, *a woman represents a particular value by the fact that she is a human person*, and, at the same time, this particular person, *by the fact of her femininity*. This concerns each and every woman, independently of the cultural context in which she lives, and independently of her spiritual, psychological and physical characteristics, as for example, age, education, health, work, and whether she is married or single. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 29)

This is the relationship we are striving for in our marriages, this unity of persons, where we each recognize that the other

is ‘another I.’ Though clearly this ‘another I’ is not the same as my ‘I’, we can each appreciate and rejoice in the other, sharing our life and work with the other. This was God’s original plan—we were free, but united in our freedom. We were a unity in communion, just as God is a unity of three persons in communion. As St. John Paul II puts it, “in the ‘unity of the two’ man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist ‘side by side’ or ‘together,’ but they are also called to exist mutually ‘one for the other’” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7). This is how our relationships were meant to be. But, as we all know, sin crept into the picture, making unity a goal of our relationships, rather than a given reality.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

As you enter into prayer this week, remember the moments when you first discovered your husband as an ‘other I’ distinct from all other ‘I’s. Then consider how you recognize your spouse as ‘another I’ today, in spite of your physical and spiritual differences. Lastly pray for the grace to continue to remember the unique gift of this person who also ‘sees’ you distinctly from all others—so distinctly that he is choosing to embrace sacrifices for you.

**WEEK 6**

# **The Threefold Break**



# WEEK 6: THE THREEFOLD BREAK

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Today we return to the garden of Eden, where we remember the devastating effect that sin had on the created world. In some ways, we are all too aware of the effects of sin. We see its effects in ourselves, our husbands, and even our young children. And yet, in some ways we are blind to it because it is just so customary.

We cannot really imagine what life would look like without sin. We cannot imagine that original unity that Adam and Eve experienced because of how deeply sin pervades our lives. And yet, through reflecting on God's revelation, we can catch a glimpse of this paradise, enough to help us strive towards that unity.

In going back to Genesis, St. John Paul II helps us to understand how deeply this original sin affected our lives. He points out that sin divides the three major relations we have: with God, with others, and with ourselves. This break in all our relations affects men and women alike.

The final break in unity is that between human beings and God. This is the break felt most acutely, as Adam and Eve no longer have the supernatural life of God within them. As their descendants, we no longer walk with him in the Garden, constantly aware of his presence within us.

This brings us to the second break. We are made to live in community. We are created as relational beings, a fact shown so beautifully in our creation story. The unity in duality

is broken, and all of our relationships with others suffer. Satan would love nothing more than for your husband's Exodus struggles to divide your family, defeating the whole purpose of the disciplines he has taken up. Although your husband's Exodus may seem to be aimed only at repairing his relationship with his own body and with God, it was also created to repair his relationship with others, especially with his family. If it is not doing that, you should both be engaging in serious reflection about why and what can be done to remedy the situation today.

Thirdly, original sin started a war within ourselves. In some ways, this break is the hardest to grasp. We cannot fathom the harmony of body and soul that Adam and Eve felt in the garden. Think of all the countless temptations and struggles we encounter in a day, from the struggle to get out of bed at the appointed time to the difficulty we have in eating the proper amount of food. These conflicts are a constant part of our days. In his Exodus program, your husband is striving to begin to repair that relationship with himself. Though we wives are not explicitly working through the Exodus 90 spiritual exercise, we are being asked to stand strong against the lies of any resentment and to support our husbands in their efforts towards internal healing.

...It can be said, paradoxically, that the sin presented in the third chapter of Genesis confirms the truth about the image and likeness of God in man, since this truth means freedom, that is, man's use of free will by choosing good or his abuse of it by choosing evil, against the will of God. In its essence, however, sin is a negation of God as Creator in his relationship to man, and of what God wills for man, from the beginning

and for ever. 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. 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,[29] 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 ("*communio personarum*") as well as in regard to the external world, to nature.

These words are confirmed generation after generation. They do not mean *that the image and the likeness of God in the human being*, whether woman or man, has been destroyed by sin; they mean rather that it has been "obscured"[30] and in a sense "diminished". Sin in fact "diminishes" man, as the Second Vatican Council also recalls.[31] 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. This unity corresponds to the profound truth concerning all intelligent creatures and in particular concerning man, who among all the creatures of

the visible world was *elevated* from the beginning through the eternal choice of God in Jesus: "He chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world, ... He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (*Eph 1:4-6*). ... (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 9)

The good news in all of this is that God does not leave us in this condition of brokenness. Instead, by sending his Son, we are given a path to restore the unity of all three relationships. But, as it is said in Genesis, we will have to work to regain that unity, constantly struggling against the consequences of our sin.

This is ultimately what your husband's journey in Exodus and all of your own reflection on *Mulieris Dignitatem* comes down to. Each of you, through your distinct and diverse role, through 'existing mutually one for the other' is striving to bring into balance the relationships that were broken by the fall.

### **FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week pray for your husband as he battles against man's inherited tendency towards sin. Try to encourage him, especially this week at the halfway point, by creatively helping him get together with his fraternity for a fraternity outing of some sort, or by helping him make time for something he really enjoys doing with the family. Then, be vulnerable with the Lord in prayer. Ask Him to encourage and support you in your efforts to encourage and support your husband.

**WEEK 7**

**Domination?**





# WEEK 7: DOMINATION?

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Your husband is now deep in the midst of the desert, past the midpoint of his journey. He is fighting the good fight, and so are you. As we get deeper into *Mulieris Dignitatem*, we begin to see more and more of how the fall affected our well-being as women.

Today, St. John Paul II takes us to the heart of the problem, digging into the further consequences of sin that specifically fall upon the woman. In Genesis, we see how God addresses the woman, telling her the specific consequence of her sin, that "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

... Therefore 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 the stability of that fundamental equality* which the man and the woman possess in the "unity of the two": and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman, whereas only the equality resulting from their dignity as persons can give to their mutual relationship the character of an authentic "*communio personarum*". While the violation of this equality, which is both a gift and a right deriving from God

the Creator, involves an element to the disadvantage of the woman, at the same time it also diminishes the true dignity of the man. Here we touch upon *an extremely sensitive point in the dimension of that "ethos"* which was originally inscribed by the Creator in the very creation of both of them in his own image and likeness.

This statement in Genesis 3:16 is of great significance. It implies a reference to the mutual relationship of man and woman in marriage. It refers to the desire born in the atmosphere of spousal love whereby the woman's "sincere gift of self" is responded to and matched 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"*. But 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. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 10)

We see here that the woman's focus is still on the man, her 'other', though not in the same way, but his focus has become power over and control of his 'other'.

Take a minute to let this sink in. Think of all the ages of through human history where this struggle has led to the devaluing of women. Women have lived with this threat throughout all of history, including our own times. Although we live in an unprecedented time of freedom, where the value of women is often recognized in many areas, we still see all around us this struggle between men and women. We also can recognize this desire and fear that are simultaneously present in our hearts. Think of how this struggle is present in your own marriage—how possessive you can be, how thoughtless or insensitive he can be. Sin puts us all into slavery.

As you proceed along this journey, both personally and in your spousal relationship, work towards the “spousal love whereby the woman's ‘sincere gift of self’ is responded to and matched by a corresponding ‘gift’ on the part of the husband” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 10). It is here that vocations thrive. It is here where families overflow with grace. It is here where peace and joy are found in the holiness of life ordered rightly.

### FOR THIS WEEK:

Recognize that Exodus 90 is a ‘gift of self’ from your husband to you and your family. In your prayer this week, consider how you are giving of yourself throughout these days. Then ask our Lord to reveal to you the ways in which he has given you the grace to give of yourself in times when you may not have previously recognized these gifts of self. Praise God for these moments of grace.

**WEEK 8**

# **Motherhood**



# WEEK 8: MOTHERHOOD

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Our culture likes to focus more on the equality of men and women than on our differences, often confusing equality and sameness. As modern women, it's hard for us to hear that our punishment for sin is different from men's. It seems unfair. And, in many ways, it is. St. John Paul II acknowledges this in his reflection on the problem—women receive the greater punishment.

However, there is a saving grace. Although women receive the greater punishment, they also receive the greater gift—motherhood. Through this gift, we have the key to redemption. Because of our femininity, we retained the ability to live for another. We retained in our bodies the constant reminder that we are meant to be a 'gift' to others.

Through motherhood, we are given a physical reminder of how giving oneself to another—through sex, pregnancy, childbirth, and through the years of nurturing a child—can bring the fulfillment of her person.

As St. John Paul II puts it:

...Motherhood is the fruit of the marriage union of a man and woman, of that biblical "knowledge" which corresponds to the "union of the two in one flesh" (cf. Gen 2:24). This brings about - on the woman's part - a special "gift of self", as an expression of that spousal love whereby the two are united to each other so closely that they become "one flesh". Biblical "knowledge" is achieved in accordance with the truth

of the person only when the mutual self-giving is not distorted either by the desire of the man to become the "master" of his wife ("he shall rule over you") or by the woman remaining closed within her own instincts ("your desire shall be for your husband": Gen 3:16).

This *mutual gift of the person in marriage* opens to the gift of a new life, a *new human being*, who is also a person in the likeness of his parents. Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part". In this openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman "discovers herself through a sincere gift of self". The gift of interior readiness to accept the child and bring it into the world is linked to the marriage union, which - as mentioned earlier - should constitute a special moment in the mutual self-giving both by the woman and the man. According to the Bible, the conception and birth of a new human being are accompanied by the following words of the woman: "*I have brought a man into being with the help of the Lord*" (Gen 4:1). This exclamation of Eve, the "mother of all the living" is repeated every time a new human being comes into the world. It expresses the woman's joy and awareness that she is sharing in the great mystery of eternal generation. The spouses share in the creative power of God! (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 18)

Our current culture belittles and devalues the role of a mother, but in truth, it holds the key to a woman's humanity—the key to re-discovering our need to give ourselves away in order to become truly human. This gift of self is what makes us fully human.

In many ways, this is the man's goal in Exodus; to embrace the disciplines so that they may help him give of himself, to draw him out of himself, and to remind him of his existence "for the other." You, as a woman, whether or not you have children, do not need the same reminders; being a woman, you already exist for the other in a way that he will never be able to replicate. This does not mean that women have no struggles with sin or relationships. As we saw earlier, the effects of original sin affect us all. Unfortunately, we as a culture—us women included—have spent a lot of time belittling the role that we women play.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week, take time to reflect on how you, as a woman, naturally exist for the other, and sense your role to teach others how to exist for the other. Then beg the Lord to show you the gift of your womanhood in a new and deeper way. If you come across any past or current wounds you may have surrounding what it means to be a woman, invite Christ in to begin a process of healing through his gentle words of truth, dignity, and life.

**WEEK 9**

# **Fruits of Love**





# WEEK 9: FRUITS OF LOVE

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Every human being has a mother, and learns from a mother. It is an inescapable fact; St. John Paul II observes that “the history of every human being passes through the threshold of a woman’s motherhood; crossing it conditions ‘the revealing of the sons of God’” (cf Romans 8:19) (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 19). This is not just a fact of human existence, but a beautiful revelation of our personality. Each of us is shaped by the woman who gives us birth and by the women who ‘mother’ us spiritually throughout our lives. The relationship of mother to child reveals each to themselves and to the other, and it can also show us the beauty of our creation as children of God.

Furthermore, whether spiritually or physically, each woman has within her the capacity to become a mother, as “motherhood is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 18). When we develop this capacity, we become the person God calls us to be, recovering through self-giving the relationships lost in the fall.

Men do not have this same capacity. Instead, they are dependent on their mothers and their wives to help them learn this self-giving. As St. John Paul II notes, “in many ways he has to learn his own ‘fatherhood’ from the mother” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 18).

... Motherhood has been introduced into the order of the Covenant that God made with humanity in

Jesus Christ. Each and every time that *motherhood* is repeated in human history, it is always *related to the Covenant* which God established with the human race through the motherhood of the Mother of God.

Does not Jesus bear witness to this reality when he answers the exclamation of that woman in the crowd who blessed him for Mary's motherhood: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!"? Jesus replies: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (*Lk* 11:27-28). Jesus confirms the meaning of motherhood in reference to the body, but at the same time he indicates an even deeper meaning, which is connected with the order of the spirit: it is a sign of the Covenant with God who "is spirit" (*Jn* 4: 24). This is true above all for the motherhood of the Mother of God. *The motherhood* of every woman, understood in the light of the Gospel, is similarly not only "of flesh and blood": it expresses a profound "*listening to the word of the living God*" and a readiness to "safeguard" this Word, which is "the word of eternal life" (cf. *Jn* 6:68). For it is precisely those born of earthly mothers, the sons and daughters of the human race, who receive from the Son of God the power to become "children of God" (*Jn* 1:12). A dimension of the New Covenant in Christ's blood enters into human parenthood, making it a reality and a task for "new creatures" (cf. *2 Cor* 5: 17). The history of every human being passes through the threshold of a woman's motherhood; crossing it conditions "the revelation of the children of God" (cf. *Rom* 8: 19).

"When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, *she no longer remembers the anguish*, for joy that a child is born into the world" (Jn 16: 21). The first part of Christ's words refers to the "pangs of childbirth" which belong to the heritage of original sin; at the same time these words indicate *the link that exists between the woman's motherhood and the Paschal Mystery*. For this mystery also includes the Mother's sorrow at the foot of the Cross - the Mother who through faith shares in the amazing mystery of her Son's "self-emptying": "This is perhaps the deepest 'kenosis' of faith in human history".[40] ...

But the words of the Gospel about the woman who suffers when the time comes for her to give birth to her child, immediately afterwards express joy: it is "*the joy that a child is born into the world*". This joy too is referred to the Paschal Mystery, to the joy which is communicated to the Apostles on *the day of Christ's Resurrection*: "So you have sorrow now" (these words were said the day before the Passion); "but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (Jn 16: 22-23). (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 19)

Think of it this way: a physical mother endures much pain and suffering. She suffers in pregnancy—abstaining from possibly harmful substances, enduring curious or judgmental glances, and bearing with the difficulties of her growing body's accommodation of her infant for nine months. Then, she suffers the acute pains of labor bringing the new life into the world. But it doesn't end there. After her child is born

she suffers emotionally, often struggling with and worrying about her children throughout their lives. The very difficult undertaking of bringing new life into the world and caring for it makes it very clear, “that God entrusts the human being to [women] in a special way” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 30). In all this is revealed our strength as women.

Our husbands will never experience this level of responsiveness and internal sacrifice. They must find external ways to give of themselves. However, their observance of your suffering, either for physical or for spiritual children, can teach them how to give, how to suffer. In many ways, Exodus 90 is possibly the greatest physical and spiritual sacrifice your husband has chosen to undertake for your family. He is physically giving of himself in a way that has likely never before been asked of him. And he is spiritually committed to do what it takes for the good of those he loves to draw closer to our Lord at a whole new level. Though he may never before have voluntarily suffered this much for you and your family, he has seen you suffer in the care of others and learned from you how to respond with selfless love. And this is likely true whether you know it or not.

Fatherhood comes with its own beautiful gifts. Your husband has a unique role to play in your family, just as you do. Recognizing that we can each learn from the other and contribute to our families in unique ways can stretch us all to become the people we were created to be, building the unity in duality that will reveal God to the world.

**FOR THIS WEEK:** Every woman is a mother, either physically or spiritually. How is your motherhood a part of who you are?

Do you value your own motherhood? Why or why not? How has your husband learned his fatherhood, physical or spiritual from your motherhood? Take these questions to prayer with you this week. Share your answers with our all-good Father, and give him the time to encourage your motherhood with his truth and goodness.

**WEEK 10**

# **Mutual Subjection**



# WEEK 10: MUTUAL SUBJECTION

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Your husband is in one of the hardest parts of Exodus 90 right now. The scripture is repetitive, the disciplines stale or worse, annoying, the temptation to quit is present, there are 70 days behind him but still 20 long days to go. If there ever was a time to affirm and support your husband, this is likely it. As you go to do so, keep in mind that Day 91 is not a finish line. If your husband continues to meet with his fraternity and live a life of prayer and asceticism (though to a lesser degree than in Exodus 90) after Day 90 he will continue to develop as a better man before God and for your family. This is the promise of Christ to all of us who choose to live the Christian life in its fulness, the hard and narrow way. However, if his fraternity disbands After the 90th day, what will guide him afterwards? What structure will be there to help him continue living this holier life for you and your family? What will be a strong enough rail to keep him from returning to the habits he's worked so hard to leave behind? As hard as this all may sound to us wives now, know that living the Christian life isn't about living Exodus 90 all the time. Lent is a season, so is Easter. Your husband is living a season like lent well right now. A season to live like Easter is possible, even with some prayer and ascetic disciplines. In fact, it's the best way to live Easter. All the glory and joy, none of the gluttony and self-service. This is all to say, a little support right now, may be very beneficial for your husband. And if you need support as well, be sure to make that need known.

Today, St. John Paul II takes us to another part of the Bible, a hard part of the Bible for many modern women, Ephesians chapter 5. Here St. Paul writes, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ..." (Ephesians 5:22-23, 25)

The author of the Letter to the Ephesians sees no contradiction between an exhortation formulated in this way and the words: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife" (5:22-23). The author knows that this way of speaking, so profoundly rooted in the customs and religious tradition of the time, is to be understood and carried out in a new way: as a "*mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ*" (cf. Eph 5:21). This is especially true because the husband is called the "head" of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church; he is so in order to give "himself up for her" (Eph 5:25), and giving himself up for her means giving up even his own life. However, whereas in the relationship between Christ and the Church the subjection is only on the part of the Church, in the relationship between husband and wife the "subjection" is not one-sided but mutual.

... However, the awareness that in marriage there is mutual "subjection of the spouses out of reverence for Christ", and not just that of the wife to the husband, must gradually establish itself in hearts, consciences, behaviour and customs. This is a call which from that time onwards, does not cease to challenge



succeeding generations; it is a call which people have to accept ever anew. Saint Paul not only wrote: "In Christ Jesus... there is no more man or woman", but also wrote: "There is no more slave or freeman". ... (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 24)

Sometimes it's good to acknowledge the hard things in the Bible and let the Lord's words sink in. As modern women, we often either wish to take charge, to be all and do all, or we think we need to follow St. Paul's teaching to the letter and meet all our husband's requests, no matter what they are. It's hard to see the relationship of love that Christ is calling both husbands and wives to live in.

St. Paul's words are just as difficult for men to hear as they are for women, if not harder. While men throughout history have used this passage as a justification to mistreat their wives, in reality, this passage clearly gives a task to both men and women. Men are also called to subject themselves to their wives. Both are called to a mutual subjection "out of reverence for Christ." As St. John Paul II points out, "this is especially true because the husband is called to be the 'head' of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church; he is so in order to give 'himself up for her' (Ephesians 5:25), and giving himself up for her means giving up even his own life" (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 24).

As women, we often take for granted our roles within our families. We give, we serve, we sacrifice without thinking about it. It is part of who we are. Whether we have children or not, we take care of those around us. For men, service to others is not as natural. That is why St. John Paul II says "the awareness that in marriage there is mutual subjection of the

spouses ‘out of reverence for Christ,’ and not just that of the wife to the husband, must gradually establish itself in hearts, consciences, behavior and customs” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 24). Throughout your husband’s Exodus, he is reorienting himself to this service of love. Part of the challenge of Exodus for women is allowing our husbands to love us as Christ loves the Church—to lay down his ‘life,’ his temptations and desires, for us. Exodus is there to help your husband reorient his priorities to God and your family, giving both of you a chance to examine how these challenging words from St. Paul are being lived out in your home.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

This week, take time in prayer to meditate on St. Paul’s words to the Ephesians. What stands out to you in your own marriage? Do you tend more to accept or bristle at the idea of being subject to your husband? What does mutual subjection mean to you? Share your thoughts and answers with the perfect spouse, Jesus Christ. Then ask him to bring truth, clarity, and freedom to your understanding of mutual subjection as you rest with him in prayer.

**WEEK 11**

**Receive**



# WEEK 11: RECEIVE

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As St. John Paul II continues his reflection on Ephesians 5, he joins the metaphor of Christ, the true Bridegroom, and his Church, the Bride, to our human marriage relationships. He reminds us that Christ, the true Bridegroom, is the one that human bridegrooms are called to imitate, as simple and as difficult as that may be.

But what does it mean for our husbands to imitate him as *Bridegroom*? St. John Paul II boldly states, "The Bridegroom is the one who loves. The Bride is loved: it is she who receives love, in order to love in return" (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 29). This is so crystal clear when looking at Christ and the Church, but in our human relationships, this idea gets muddled. Yet, when we look at the physical sign of the act of marriage (sex), the man gives, and the woman receives.

It is harder for us to accept this reality spiritually and emotionally though. As women we are so good at giving; it is almost second nature to us. We give our bodies and our attention and our lives daily. The hard part for us is to receive. We as women have to allow our husbands to love us, allow them to give to us and to our children. We have to allow them to take the lead, to give to us. We even have to avoid the temptation to lead our husbands to lead, rejecting that so prevalent and sneaky thought that causes us to inadvertently take control.

When Mary responds to the words of the heavenly messenger with her "fiat", she who is "full of grace"

feels the need to express her personal relationship to the gift that has been revealed to her, saying: "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord*" (Lk 1:38). This statement should not be deprived of its profound meaning, nor should it be diminished by artificially removing it from the overall context of the event and from the full content of the truth revealed about God and man. In the expression "handmaid of the Lord", one senses Mary's complete awareness of being a creature of God. The word "handmaid", near the end of the Annunciation dialogue, is inscribed throughout the whole history of the Mother and the Son. In fact, this Son, who is the true and consubstantial "Son of the Most High", will often say of himself, especially at the culminating moment of his mission: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45).

At all times Christ is aware of being "the servant of the Lord" according to the prophecy of *Isaiah* (cf. Is 42:1; 49:3, 6; 52:13) which includes the essential content of his messianic mission, namely, his awareness of being the Redeemer of the world. From the first moment of her divine motherhood, of her union with the Son whom "the Father sent into the world, that the world might be saved through him" (cf. Jn 3:17), *Mary takes her place within Christ's messianic service*. [20] It is precisely this service which constitutes the very foundation of that Kingdom in which "to serve ... means to reign".[21] Christ, the "Servant of the Lord", will show all people the royal dignity of service, the dignity which is joined in the closest possible way to the vocation of every person.

... The dignity of every human being and the vocation corresponding to that dignity find their definitive measure in *union with God*. Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation. For no human being, male or female, created in the image and likeness of God, can *in any* way attain fulfilment apart from this image and likeness. (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 5)

Mary's service is a response to and participation in God's action. Her Fiat is a response to God first leading the way through the message of an angel. Above all the great works and actions of Mary, the Mother of God, her greatest action, her most world changing ability, is receiving.

It can be so hard to receive. Often we receive things we didn't expect or want. We would rather be in control and obtain the things we really 'need.' We think we know what is best, and we wish to manipulate it into existence. However, we know this is not truly receiving the gift of the other. It is not the fiat that Mary gave in her acceptance of the gift of our Lord, even though she did not fully understand.

However, when we look at how the true Bridegroom "has given himself," we know that this gift of himself from our husband is the best gift we can receive. Ephesians 5 is calling us to receive this gift, so that we too might be made holy, might partake in the 'mutual submission' to one another that Christ desires for us.

This journey through Exodus 90 is giving your spouse a path to giving as the true Bridegroom did, to "become a sincere gift

in the most complete and radical way” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 25). It may not be the gift you were expecting or looking for, but in receiving it, you are contributing to the restoration of your marital relationship to the beauty and harmony God intended.

**FOR THIS WEEK:**

Even if your husband is struggling to live out all the Exodus disciplines right now, be willing to see his successes and their positive impact on your family. With that in mind, take the following questions into your time of prayer this week. How are you receiving the gift of Exodus from your husband? How are you loving him in return? How can you encourage him this week by the ways you receive his gift?

**WEEK 12**

# **Mary as Our Guide**





# WEEK 12: MARY AS OUR GUIDE

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We began our reflections with the women in the Exodus and Genesis narratives, but we cannot stop there, for we know that the story does not end there. For God, in his wisdom, gives us Mary, the woman “who represents the humanity which belongs to all human beings, both men and women” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 4).

In her “*fiat*,” let it be done to me, Mary shows us the epitome of femininity, the epitome of humanity. She shows us the perfect response to God. In her, we see where we ought to be, not as a task, but in hopefulness. Mary was given this gift because she was “full of grace.” We know that we, too, can receive the grace to say ‘yes’ to God’s call for us. It is not something that we can earn, but is something we can ask for and receive.

In response to this gift, Mary exclaims, “he who is mighty has done great things for me” (cf Luke 1:49). As St John Paul II points out:

In the tradition of faith and of Christian reflection throughout the ages, *the coupling Adam-Christ* is often linked with that of *Eve-Mary*. If Mary is described also as the “new Eve”, what are the meanings of this analogy? Certainly there are many. Particularly noteworthy is the meaning which sees Mary as the full revelation of all that is included in the biblical word “woman”: a revelation commensurate with the mystery of the Redemption. *Mary* means, in a sense,

a going beyond the limit spoken of in the Book of Genesis (3: 16) and a return to that "beginning" in which one finds the "woman" as she was intended to be in *creation*, and therefore in the eternal mind of God: in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity. Mary is "the new beginning" of the *dignity and vocation of women*, of each and every woman.[37]

... "He who is mighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49). These words certainly refer to the conception of her Son, who is the "Son of the Most High" (Lk1:32), the "holy one" of God; but they can also signify *the discovery of her own feminine humanity. He "has done great things for me": this is the discovery of all the richness and personal resources of femininity, all the eternal originality of the "woman", just as God wanted her to be, a person for her own sake, who discovers herself "by means of a sincere gift of self".*

*This discovery is connected with a clear awareness of God's gift, of his generosity. From the very "beginning" sin had obscured this awareness, in a sense had stifled it, as is shown in the words of the first temptation by the "father of lies" (cf. Genesis 3:1-5)... (Mulieris Dignitatem 11)*

We live in a world marked by sin. You have likely seen this quite clearly in the past weeks as your family has struggled alongside thousands of others through this time of spiritual exercise. There have certainly been moments of grace, but likely also moments of deep awareness of your own and your husband's weaknesses as human beings. Both the graces and the awareness have come from God's generosity, and

both show us who we are. In all of this, the hope is that you have discovered God's personal love for you—in your unique femininity, in your marriage, and in your family.

Throughout this journey, your role has been to say “let it be done,” so that the grace of God can flow through you and through the efforts of your husband. Throughout this time, both of you have learned, but in different ways, the meaning of the phrase “to serve . . . means to reign” (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 5). You have both spent the time in service to one another, living out your vocations as husband and wife to their fullest extent. As you continue to the end of this journey, keep close to Mary, taking her example as a guide for your own thoughts, words, and actions. Strive to fully experience her ‘*fiat*’ as you live the final weeks of this exercise.

### FOR THIS WEEK:

As you enter into prayer this week, answer this question in the presence of the Holy Spirit. How have you seen God's generosity to you throughout this Exodus journey? Then turn to the Magnificat, found in Luke 1:46-55, and pray with Mary the words she spoke to the angel that changed her family and the family of God forever.

#### **Mary's Magnificat**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.

(Luke 1:46-55)

**WEEK 13**

# **Death and Resurrection**



# WEEK 13: DEATH AND RESURRECTION

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The weight of this 13th week is real. There is much to lose this week, and still much out there to be gained that is likely willed by God to be gained not in one week, 40 days, 90 days, or even 365 days. Holiness is a life's pursuit. Thankfully, it is a worthy pursuit that bears fruit continuously for those who stay faithful to it. Consider the gifts that have been gained thus far. Then, consider all the more that the Lord has in store for you down the road.

... We find ourselves at the very heart of the Paschal Mystery, which completely reveals the spousal love of God. Christ is the Bridegroom because "he has given himself": his body has been "given", his blood has been "poured out" (cf. *Lk 22:19-20*). In this way "he loved them to the end" (*Jn 13:1*). The "sincere gift" contained in the Sacrifice of the Cross gives definitive prominence to the spousal meaning of God's love. As the Redeemer of the world, Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. *The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.* The Eucharist makes present and realizes anew in a sacramental manner the redemptive act of Christ, who "creates" the Church, his body. Christ is united with this "body" as the bridegroom with the bride. All this is contained in the Letter to the Ephesians. The perennial "unity of the two" that exists between man and woman from the very "beginning" is introduced into this "great mystery" of Christ and of

the Church.

Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine". It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption. It is *the Eucharist* above all that expresses *the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride*. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "*in persona Christi*", is performed by a man. ... (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 26)

Christ is the Bridegroom because he has given himself. This is what it means to be a Bridegroom, 'loving to the end.' It is this gift of himself on the Cross that 'gives definitive prominence to the spousal meaning of God's love.'

As you reflect on the events of Holy Week, let these thoughts sink in. Christ died to show us how much he loves us. He loves us in that unique way that a husband loves his wife, in that pure, total, and fruitful way that the love of husband and wife was meant to be from the beginning. He submitted to the most agonizing suffering to prove beyond any possible doubt his love for us, and all of us, as his body the Church, are meant to receive this love.

We must strive to receive as Mary did—becoming docile, submissive, pondering in our hearts, and sharing the gifts we have received with those around us. We receive by loving him,

standing at the foot of the cross with Mary, sharing in the suffering of the one we love. Then we can open our hearts to the vulnerability of our relationships, allowing ourselves to be wounded by love.

We enter into the silence of the tomb, allowing this time of waiting to change us. We allow this whole journey to change us, to help us grow into the women, wives, and mothers we are meant to be.

This week, listen, reflect, and receive. A great gift is being given to you and to the world. His sacrifice is not attractive. The events are not warm and cozy as the one who loves is put to death. It seems as though he has been separated from us. But we know his death leads to his resurrection, and so we accept, as Mary did, that he must embrace his cross. Look at your husband's arduous journey. We are all called to imitate our Lord, and your husband is striving to do this. His sacrifices have not been attractive, these past months have not been warm and cozy, and on some days it might have felt as though he was separating himself from you and your family, but he has learned how to die to himself. Do you trust in the promises of Christ? That those who lose their lives for his sake will find it? (Matthew 16:25).

### **FOR THIS WEEK:**

New life is coming to your family. The even better news is that this is not the end of your husband's life in Christ and his life of sacrifice for you and your family, but the beginning. Pray again today that your husband and his fraternity see the 91st day not as an end point to Exodus but as a starting point to the rest of their lives, living for the glory of God and the good of their families.





# Appendix

# HOW TO PRAY A HOLY HOUR

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A holy hour is a period of time set apart for God. It is a time of confidence with the Lord; a time to put yourself before the Lord and allow him to love and lead you. It is a time to allow yourself to be conformed to Christ.

**5 minutes – Opening Prayer:** This is a time of verbal prayer before the Lord, giving him praise and asking his mercy.

**15 minutes – Spiritual Reading:** This will likely consist of your daily Exodus 90 reflection (Daily Bearings, Scripture, and Reflection)

**20 minutes – Silent Prayer:** This is set aside time to dialogue with the Lord. Bring before him whatever is on your mind and heart. This will often be fueled by questions from the day's reflection. Honestly share with the Lord your thoughts and concerns. Then, and most importantly, give the Lord the space to respond and yourself the silence to listen.

**15 minutes – Intercession:** Pray for your own deliverance, for your family, your fraternity, the Church, and any other prayers you may have.

**5 minutes – Thanksgiving:** We have much to be thankful for each day. Consistent acknowledgment of God's gifts and graces brings a greater sense of appreciation and joy into life. Make a prayer of praise and thanksgiving before the Lord.

**Close by asking,** Our Lady and your chosen saints to intercede for you throughout the day, just as you would ask your brothers to pray for you.

# NIGHTLY EXAMEN

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A nightly examen is a way to review our actions throughout the day, acknowledge where we responded to God's grace, and where we chose to do otherwise.

*"St. Ignatius of Loyola thought that the examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible. One of the few rules of prayer that Ignatius made for the Jesuit order was the requirement that Jesuits practice the examen twice daily—at noon and at the end of the day. It's a habit that Jesuits, and many other Christians, practice to this day."\**

During Exodus 90, the examen is to be practiced at the end of each day. The following is a simplified form of how to perform a nightly examen.

**1. Call to mind God's presence with you.** God is right there with you through the good and the bad.

**2. Review the graces of the day.** Go through the day slowly, acknowledging the many blessings you received from the Lord. (Did you see the sun today? That is a blessing. Did you take a breath today? That is a blessing.)

**3. Acknowledge your sins and shortcomings.** Name the times and places that you failed to accept the grace the Lord was giving you. Thoroughness is important here.

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\*"The Daily Examen," IgnatianSpirituality.com (Loyola Press), [www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen) (accessed December 11, 2018).

**4. Make a resolve and call upon the Lord.** Determine not to commit the same sins again the next day. Then, beg the Lord for perfect contrition and the graces you need to live completely for him, especially in the moments you know you are weakest.

**5. Be filled with hope and joy.** The Lord is pleased by your commitment to freedom, to your family, to ongoing conversion, and to him. He desires your holiness even more than you do. Rest peacefully knowing that God is with you.

# NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The Council's Message to Women (December 8, 1965); AAS 58 (1966), 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 8; 9; 60.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "*Apostolicam actuositatem*," 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pius XII, Address to Italian Women (October 21, 1945): AAS 37 (1945) 284-295; Address to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (April 24, 1952), AAS 44 (1952), 420-424; Address to the participants in the XIV International Meeting of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (September 29, 1957): AAS 49 (1957), 906-922.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter "*Pacem in Terris*" (April 11, 1963); AAS 55 (1963), 267-268.

<sup>6</sup> Proclamation of St. Teresa of Jesus as a "Doctor of the Universal Church" (September 27, 1970): AAS 62 (1970), 590-596; Proclamation of St. Catherine of Siena as a "Doctor of the Universal Church" (October 4, 1970): AAS 62 (1970), 673-678.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. MS 65 (1973), 284f.

<sup>8</sup> Paul VI, Address to participants at the National Meeting of the Centro Italiano Femminile (December 6, 1976): "*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*," XIV (1976), 1017.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Mater*" (March 25, 1987), 46: AAS 79 (1987), 424f.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*" 1.

<sup>11</sup> An illustration of the anthropological and theological

significance of the "beginning" can be seen in the first part of the Wednesday General Audience Addresses dedicated to the "Theology of the Body," beginning September 5, 1979: *"Insegnamenti II,"* 2 (1979), 234-236.

<sup>12</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et spes," 22.

<sup>13</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate," 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum," 2.

<sup>16</sup> Already according to the Fathers of the Church the first revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament took place in the Annunciation. One reads in a homily attributed to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus: "You, O Mary, are resplendent with light in the sublime spiritual kingdom! In you the Father, who is without beginning and whose power has covered you, is glorified. In you the Son, whom you bore in the flesh, is adored. In you the Holy Spirit, who has brought about in your womb the birth of the great King, is celebrated. And it is thanks to you, O Full of grace, that the holy and consubstantial Trinity has been able to be known in the world" (*Hom. 2 in Annuntiat. Virg. Mariae*: PG 10, 1169). Cf. also St. Andrew of Crete, *In Annuntiat. B. Mariae*: PG 97, 909.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate," 2.

<sup>18</sup> The theological doctrine on the Mother of God (Theotokos), held by many Fathers of the Church, and clarified and defined at the Council of Ephesus (DS 251) and at the Council of Chalcedon (DS 301), has been stated

again by the Second Vatican Council in Chapter VIII of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 52-69. Cf. Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Mater*," 4, 31-32 and the Notes 9, 78-83: loc. cit., 365, 402-404.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Mater*," 7-11 and the texts of the Fathers cited in Note 21: loc. cit., 367-373.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 39-41: loc. cit., 412-418.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 36.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. St. Irenaeus, "*Adv. haer.*" V, 6, 1; V, 16, 2-3: 5. Ch. 153, 72-81 and 216-221; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De hom. op.* 16: PG 44, 180; *In Cant Cant. hom.* 2: PG 44, 805-808; St. Augustine, *In Ps.* 4, 8: CCL 38, 17.

<sup>23</sup> "Persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia": Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis*, III: PL 64, 1343; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, art. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Among the Fathers of the Church who affirm the fundamental equality of man and woman before God cf. Origen, *In Iesu nave* IX, 9: PG 12, 878; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1, 4: S. Ch. 70, 128-131; St. Augustine, *Sermo* 51, II, 3: PL 38, 334-335.

<sup>25</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa states: "God is above all love and the fount of love. The great John says this: 'Love is of God' and 'God is love' (1 *Jn* 4:7-8). The Creator has impressed this character also on us. 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (*Jn* 13:35). Therefore, if this is not present, all the image becomes disfigured" (*De hom op.* 5: PG 44, 137).

<sup>26</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 24.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Num* 23:19; *Hos* 11:9; *Is* 40:18; 46:5; cf. also Fourth Lateran Council (DS 806).

<sup>28</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 13.

<sup>29</sup> "Diabolic" from the Greek "dia-ballo" = "I divide, separate, slander."

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Origen, *In Gen. hom.* 13, 4: PG 12, 234; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De virg.* 12: S. Ch. 119, 404-419; *De beat.* VI: PG 44, 1272.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 13.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> It is precisely by appealing to the divine law that the Fathers of the fourth century strongly react against the discrimination still in effect with regard to women in the customs and the civil legislation of their time. Cf. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 37, 6: PG 36, 290; St. Jerome, "*Ad Oceanum*" ep. 77, 3: PL 22, 691; St. Ambrose, "*De instit. virg.*" III, 16: PL 16, 309; St. Augustine, *Sermo* 132, 2: PL 38, 735; *Sermo* 392, 4: PL 39, 1711.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III 23, 7: S. Ch. 211, 462-465; V, 21, 1: S. Ch. 153, 260-265; St. Epiphanius, *Panar.* III, 2, 78: PG 42, 728-729; St. Augustine, *Enarr.* in Ps. 103, S. 4, 6: CCL 40, 1525.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. St. Justin, "*Dial. cum Tryph.*" 100: PG 6, 709712; St. Irenaeus, "*Adv. haer.*" III, 22, 4: S. Ch. 211, 438-445; v, 19, 1: S. Ch. 153, 248-251; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "*Catech.*" 12, 15: PG 33, 741; St. John Chrysostom, "*In Ps.*" 44, 7: PG 55, 193; St. John Damascene, "*Hom. 2 in dorm.*" B.V.M. 3: S. Ch. 80, 130-135; Hesychius, *Sermo* 5 in *Deiparam*; PG 93, 1464f.; Tertullian, "*De carne Christi*" 17: CCL 2, 904f.; St. Jerome, "*Epist.*" 22, 21: PL 22, 408; St. Augustine, "*Sermo*" 51, 2-3: PL 38, 335; "*Sermo*" 232, 2: PL 38, 1108; J. H. Newman, "*A Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*," Longmans, London 1865; M.



J. Scheeben, "*Handbuch der Katholischen Dogmatik*," V/1 (Freiburg 1954), 243-266; v/2 (Freiburg 1954), 306-499.

<sup>36</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*" 22.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. St. Ambrose, "*De instit. virg.*" V, 33: PL 16, 313.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Rabanus Maurus, "*De vita beatae Mariae Magdalenae*," XXVII: "Salvator...ascensionis suae eam (=Mariam Magdalenam) ad apostolos instituit apostolam" (PL 112, 1474). "Facta est Apostolorum Apostola per hoc quod ei committitur ut resurrectionem dominicam discipulis annuntiet": St. Thomas Aquinas, "*In Ioannem Evangelistam Expositio*," c. XX, L. III 6 ("Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Comment. in Matthaeum et Ioannem Evangelistas"), Ed. Parmen. X, 629.

<sup>39</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 24.

<sup>40</sup> Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Mater*," 18: loc. cit., 383.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 24.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Wednesday General Audience Addresses, April 7 and 21, 1982: "Insegnamenti" V, 1, (1982), 1126-1131 and 1175-1179.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 63; St. Ambrose, In Lc II, 7: S. Ch. 45, 74; De instit. virg. XIV, 87-89: PL 16, 326-327; St. Cyril of Alexandria, Hom. 4: PG 77, 996; St. Isidore of Seville, "Allegoriae" 139: PL 83, 117.

<sup>44</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 63.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 64. Concerning the relation Mary-Church which

continuously recurs in the reflection of the Fathers of the Church and of the entire Christian Tradition, cf. Encyclical Letter "Redemptoris Mater," 42-44 and Notes 117-127: loc. cit., 418-422. Cf. also: Clement of Alexandria, "Paed". 1, 6: S. Ch. 70, 186f.; St. Ambrose, "In Lc" II, 7: "S. Ch." 45, 74; St. Augustine, "Sermo" 192, 2: PL 38, 1012; "Sermo" 195, 2: PL 38, 1018; "Sermo" 25, 8: PL 46, 938; St. Leo the Great, "Sermo" 25, 5: PL 54, 211; "Sermo" 26, 2: PL 54, 213; St. Bede the Venerable, "In Lc" I, 2: PL 92, 330. "Both mothers--writes Isaac of Stella, disciple of St. Bernard--both virgins, both conceive through the work of the Holy Spirit...Mary...has given birth in body to her Head; the Church...gives to this Head her body. The one and the other are mothers of Christ: but neither of the two begets him entirely without the other. Properly for that reason...that which is said in general of the virgin mother Church is understood especially of the virgin mother Mary; and that which is said in a special way of the virgin mother Mary must be attributed in general to the virgin mother Church; and all that is said about one of the two can be understood without distinction of one from the other" (*Sermo* 51, 7-8: S. Ch. 339, 202-205).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. for example, Hos 1:2; 2:16-18; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8; Is 50:1; 54:5-8.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Col 3:18; 1 Pt 3:1-6; Tit 2:4-5; Eph 5:22-24; 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration Concerning the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood "*Inter Insigniores*" (October 15, 1976): A, 45, 69 (1977), 98- 116.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 10.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 18-29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 65; cf. also 63; cf. Encyclical Letter "Redemptoris

Mater," 2-6; loc. cit., 362-367.

<sup>55</sup> "This Marian profile is also--even perhaps more so-- fundamental and characteristic for the Church as is the apostolic and Petrine profile to which it is profoundly united. ...The Marian dimension of the Church is antecedent to that of the Petrine, without being in any way divided from it or being less complementary. Mary Immaculate precedes all others, including obviously Peter himself and the Apostles. This is so, not only because Peter and the Apostles, being born of the human race under the burden of sin, form part of the Church which is 'holy from out of sinners,' but also because their triple function has no other purpose except to form the Church in line with the ideal of sanctity already programmed and prefigured in Mary. A contemporary theologian has rightly stated that Mary is 'Queen of the Apostles without any pretensions to apostolic powers: she has other and greater powers' (H. U. von Balthasar, "Neue Klarstellungen")." *Address to the Cardinal and Prelates of the Roman Curia* (December 22, 1987); "L'Osservatore Romano," December 23, 1987.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. St. Augustine, "*De Trinitate*," L. VIII, VII, 10-X, 14: CCL 50, 284-291.

<sup>59</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 24.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. in the Appendix to the works of St. Ambrose, "*In Apoc.*" IV, 3-4: PL 17, 876; St. Augustine, "*De symb. ad. catech. sermo*" IV: PL 40, 661.

<sup>61</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "*Gaudium et spes*," 10.

[62] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "*Lumen gentium*," 36.

[63] Cf. *ibid.*, 63.