

IF YOU ONLY KNEW THE GIFT OF GOD!

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A dialogue of love: to lead into the truth of the feminine gift

The topic of my presentation comes from a passage of the Gospel of St. John 4:10, from a dialogue between Jesus' Heart and a woman's heart, the Samaritan woman. A true dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas or opinions. In its deepest essence, as the Second Vatican Council teaches us in Lumen Gentium 13, is always an **"exchange of gifts,"** an exchange of the gift of each other, of each other's heart. At the center of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman we hear Jesus saying to her: *"If you only knew the Gift of God..."* Jesus spoke directly to her heart, very simple yet very profound and piercing words: ***If you only knew the gift of God...!***

With that statement and with the power of His love, Jesus was calling her to go out into the deep, presenting a fundamental reality like an ocean before her eyes that would awaken many fundamental questions that required also many fundamental answers: *If you only knew the gift.....Do you know who you are? Do you know you are a gift? Do you know what the gift is that you possess? Do you know that your gift comes from God? Do you understand the essence of the gift, and its deepest meaning, thus to make of this gift also your most sublime task, your greatest mission and the most authentic path to self realization?* Dear sisters, "if we only knew the gift of God."

Today, Jesus comes to encounter each one of us, women at the well of our own realities, and He desires to have a profound dialogue with our hearts. He is asking each one of us if we know that we are a gift of the Father's Heart, *because only if we know that we are a gift, we can choose to freely give ourselves to others: to live as a gift... and to freely and wisely give it.* ***Jesus is asking us if we know the gift of our feminine heart, if we know the truth about our dignity, vocation and mission.*** He is asking each one of us if we really know the gift of our human and feminine heart, *if we know that our greatest dignity and vocation is to love, and to transform humanity through the logic, order, wisdom, power, creativity and fecundity of love manifested particularly in the feminine heart.*

Jesus is here and will be later really present in the Holy Eucharistic to have an encounter of love with each of us and it is my greatest desire that we will be able to exclaim at the end of our dialogue at the well the same words of St. John in his first letter, chapter 4: ***"We have come to believe in God's love!"***

and that this encounter with Jesus' Heart will change in some way the direction of our hearts and lives, as our Holy Father Benedict explains in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: ***“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”***. This is exactly what happened to the Samaritan woman.

Do we know the gift which we have received from God?

Dear women at the well, the greatest gift we have received from God is our capacity to know his love, to be loved, and our capacity to love. *Love is the essence and vocation of the human heart, love is our greatest dignity, our greatest gift, and our most sublime task, love is our true happiness....*

In his book *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla reminded us of a truth somehow forgotten in our post-modern era, and of a truth that has in some ways been rejected or ridiculed... a truth that reveals the greatness of the human heart: *“Love is exclusively the portion of human persons.” It is a capacity “inherent in human beings and is bound up with their freedom and will.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*,1).* Love is the reason for our creation: we are loved...and because we are loved we exist... love is the reason for our existence. Love is also a capacity given to the human heart because we were created in the image of and likeness of God who is love. Only the human person can make choices of love and for love. *We were created out of love, and we were created to know love, to live by love, to be capable of choosing love, to give ourselves for love, to make of our lives a free and sincere gift of self, to freely and generously communicate love in such a powerful way that it will beget life.* As Saint Maximilian Kolbe always said, *“Only love creates. Only love begets life. Only love is fruitful” ... only love can change the world...and our own personal world. We are capable of love, and loving to the extreme, because as the Catechism teaches, we are capable of God; we are capable of freely choosing to live according to our dignity as children of God, created in His image and likeness.* This is our gift! This is our vocation! This is our task! *“Love is now no longer a mere command, it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us” (DCE,1)*

Women’s vocation to love: the sincere gift of self

In *Gadium et Spes* 24, the Council teaches us that ***“the human person, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self.”***

The greatness of our hearts is found in the capacity to love with the particular **gift of our feminine heart, or genius as St John Paul II called it, which means the capacities, dispositions, potentialities and creativity proper to the gift of our feminine heart.** *The greatness and dignity of women is found in the capacity to place ourselves as a generous, sincere, unreserved, free and total gift at the service of others.* We can only be truly who we are by loving with the capacities and *proper characteristics of our feminine hearts (receptivity, openness, nurturing, guarding, developing, investing our whole being for life, simple and total donation...attentiveness to needs, deep and piercing gazing of the human heart, capacity to postpone ourselves for a greater good...in this resides the authentic beauty of the feminine heart).*



Our total self-realization as women can only be fully accomplished when we understand ourselves to be loved by God, to be the apple of his eyes, to be protected and cared by our loving Father! and therefore we understand ourselves *to be a gift of love and service to others, to those entrusted to our care.* This is the most **profound vocation** of the human heart, therefore, of women: ***A vocation is always an***

orientation of the human heart to find the fullness of love and to dedicate oneself to the service of love. A vocation will always imply the free and total response to love, the total giving and surrender of self for the cause of the Beloved and to find the full realization of self in this free and total donation of self. A vocation is a fundamental decision to make of our lives a sincere and total gift of self. This is our greatest dignity! This is our greatest freedom.... Being a person means striving towards self-realization, which only be achieved "through a sincere gift of self." (GS 24)... We are fully realized as women when we make of our lives a gift, a gift to others, when we become a gift, totally, sincerely, completely given, as a free choice.... "no one takes my life, I give it freely."(Jn 10). "only who loses his life will find it...."(Mt 10)

Saint John Paul II teaches us: "Goodness, beauty and love are diffusive of itself... this is logic of love (logic of the gift), of living according to what is good, living in truth in love. If we accept this logic which is written in our hearts, our lives truly become a gift." (Letter to the Families, 10) Let us remember, that Love is something that cannot be sold or bought, only freely given!

The dignity of women: measured by the order of love

"The dignity of women can only be measured by the order of love." (MD, 29) Men and women were created to love; men and women have the vocation to love proper to their own gifts and characteristics:



feminine and masculine. But it is women who, in a certain sense, says JP II, *have the vocation and mission to teach men to discover, understand and put into practice the vocation to love.* Because in Genesis, after God created man, he had no one to love... and created woman: At last, I can finally love!

In the Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem, Blessed John Paul II told us: *"In God's eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root."* (29) This is because of our inherent gift of motherhood... we were created *to simply be a home, a sanctuary and cradle of life in our inner being, to receive the other with joy and*

generosity. Our whole being is a home, a special place where love can be received, guarded, where it can grow, be nurtured, and become fruitful.

We are to be a living memory and to remind others of the primacy of love... we are to be teachers of the priority of the human person, of all that is truly human and to create a more humane world... functioning at all levels in the order of love, in the truth of the dignity of each person, of the necessary structures that need to be created to foster and protect, to elevate and sustain, develop the human person in its totality... .

Women have the particular vocation to reveal and to remind others, to enable others to see the human person in the order and logic of love. Women have the calling, by the gift of reciprocity and complementarity, *to call forth men to put their masculine hearts and potentialities, to place their love into action, thus to build a home in their families and in societies where the person can find a dwelling place... where he can grow in love, and where love can be cultivated and love can form and elevate the human person to its highest capacities...* where the person can grow in wisdom, grace and stature before God and men (Lk 2). Women are to call forth in men the greatest capacity to give themselves in their own vocation to love... and to be free from fear and to receive in the home of their hearts the Mother and the Child. *What a calling! What a dignity!*

The feminine heart is to be a living memory of the order and primacy of love, because in a particular way *it has been entrusted with the care of the human person*. Certainly, every human being is entrusted to each and every other human being, but *in a special way the human being is entrusted to women*. This is precisely because the woman, *in virtue of her special gift of motherhood, is seen to have a specific sensitivity towards the human person and all that constitutes the individual's true welfare, beginning with the fundamental value of life*. Women in particular are called to teach others the priority of love... the primacy of the human person, the attentiveness to the needs of others...to help them grow in the



generous acceptance and expansion of the heart to embrace others. *"In our feminine heart is written the readiness to accept others, to receive, to nurture, to allow them to grow, to sustain them, to give our lives for them".... We are to be a living memory of the readiness to open our whole life to receive life, even to give our lives for others to have it...to make of our hearts a home...to serve and to build a home, to provide and to protect... Women have the particular mission to remind humanity of the essence and dignity of the human person.... the primacy of the human*

person!. Women are to be living memories of the fact that *"to love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually."* (LF, 10) *That for love nothing is impossible... and that love is greater than death, that nothing can sweep it always or hinder it if we are good custodians of the gift of love.*

In his letter to Women in 1995, JPII told us: *"It is necessary to bring about the full truth about women. Necessary emphasis should be placed on the "genius of women", not only by considering great and famous women of the past or present, but also those ordinary women who reveal the gift of their womanhood by placing themselves at the service of others in their everyday lives. For in giving themselves to others each day women fulfill their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts. They see them independently of various ideological or political systems. They see others in their greatness and limitations; they try to go out to them and help them. In this way the basic plan of the Creator takes flesh in the history of humanity and there is constantly revealed, in the variety of vocations, that beauty-not merely physical, but above all spiritual-which God bestowed from the very beginning on all, and in a particular way on women."*

That beauty that God bestowed particularly on women. Song of Songs: How beautiful you are... 7.7

In different apparitions of Our Lady, the children speak of the beauty of Our Lady as "not possible to describe," "never have they seen such a beauty"... one of those privileged children, one day moved deeply by the contemplation of her beauty, asked Her: *"Mother, Why are you so beautiful?" And Our Lady responded: "Because I love"*. In that simple response, Our Lady gave us women the most powerful response about the gift of our feminine heart, the truth about the true beauty of women: love.... Our Lady simply and purely, totally and freely, generously and completely, loves... gives Herself totally to the Lord with a spousal, unconditional and undivided love and gives herself to us in the totality of her maternal love. Everything in Her Heart is simply and purely love. In the beauty of Our Lady's face, in the beauty and purity of Our Lady's Heart, in the truth, transparency and goodness of Her words, her gestures, her smile and actions, we women find the most luminous mirror of the dignity and vocation of women... the truth about who we are,



who we are to become.... *The true feminine identity is revealed in the beauty of our Lady's Heart.* As JP II taught us in MD 11: *"Mary is the new beginning of the dignity and vocation of women, of each and every woman... the full revelation of the dignity of woman, of the feminine humanity, of the feminine heart."* All that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is good, all that is perfect and full of grace in the feminine heart, is what we contemplate in Mary's Heart.



Since I was a little child, I had a deep calling to contemplate Our Lady in **Her images...** I have always loved images and statues of Our Lady.... I remember spending so much time before her and one day, one of my classmates asked me: why do you keep on looking at Her? In the simplicity of the heart of a child, I responded: *because I can learn how I am supposed to be!* And from that simple yet profound contemplation, I used to write on all my notebooks, as a motto of life: *"Mother, may whoever sees me be able to see you"*.

I simply discovered by a grace of the Spirit, a profound truth that I would like so much to communicate to you, dear women: ***Our Lady is the most luminous mirror of the authentic feminine heart:***

She is our Model, Our Mirror, Our path of Holiness, our Mother and Teacher, Formator of our human feminine heart... She is the Heart that can teach us to love as Jesus has loved us; She is the one who can teach us the true beauty of the human and feminine heart...She is the one that can lead us to discover what pure, oblation and generous spousal and maternal love is; She is the one who can teach us to live in simplicity and serenity the potency of love that resides in our hearts....She can teach us to be teachers of peace, formators of virtue, guides in a world wounded by selfishness and self-centeredness; to be Guardians of the Gospel, witnesses to the transforming power of love. She can teach us to keep and guard in our hearts the gift we have received, to make of our hearts a fruitful soil where the seed of the Word can be planted and give abundant fruit. She can teach us to be ardent apostles that go across the mountains of our families, society, and world, filled with the life of Christ...to communicate it freely to others.... She can teach us to be women of God... to assent with total freedom and generosity, giving our "personal I," the sincere gift of ourselves to God and to those whom God has entrusted to our care and love....

She can teach us to be women of integrity, peace, order, serenity, strength, courage, joy, truthfulness, rectitude, perseverance, tenderness, discretion, respect, honesty, nobility, maturity, docility, meekness, abnegation, wisdom, patience, fortitude, humility, promptitude, diligence, poverty of heart, authenticity, determination, justice, hope, charity, faith, purity of intention, words and actions... women of silence and reflection, women of trust and accountability, women of prayer, women of faith...women of responsibility, creativity and excellence, of understanding and goodness, of abnegation and loyalty; women of reconciliation, builders of bridges, builders of a new civilization where love of God, and love of neighbor is the primacy and the foundation. Our Lady can teach us to be transparent, grateful, simple and joyful women of service and of sincerity, of modesty and integrity... of stable and permanent choices and commitments... feminine hearts that are firmly rooted and grounded in love...love that hopes all things, that endures all things, bears all things and believes all things.... Only this type of love conquers all things...and transforms humanity. Only this love is the one that Our Lady's Immaculate Heart promised that will triumph!!

If we only knew the gift of God.... We have received the gift of being women...of having a feminine heart called to love and to make of this gift a sincere gift to others... One day, also before an image of Our Lady, I realized I had been given such a gift.... ***Because I am a woman, I could be like Mary!*** I can be a living image and presence of Our Lady's Heart! What a gift...we can be like Mary...! I can have a heart

like Hers, a feminine heart like Our Lady's, and give my life totally, sincerely, freely, to love with a heart like Our Lady's. To fully and deeply live the gift of the feminine heart, I must pray:

Give me your Heart, oh Mother, that I may undividedly and unconditionally love Christ as you have loved Him; that I may gaze and contemplate the Mysteries of His Heart with the luminous eyes of your Heart; that I may adore Him in the Eucharist, with the same love, reverence, amazement and humility of your Heart. *Give me your Heart, oh Mother,* that I may attentively listen to His Word and carefully keep it and treasure it, as you, oh Mother; that I may follow Him and walk with Him in total freedom and poverty of heart, as you, oh Mary. That I may give Him the total obedience of intellect and will so as to actively cooperate in the fulfillment of His Holy and Loving Will.

Give me your Heart, oh Mother, that I may pray unceasingly and that I may pray with my heart, trusting like you in the power of prayer to open fountains of grace and mercy for all. That I may be, like you, oh Mother, totally available, with a servant's heart, to serve Him and to cooperate in realizing His perfect and loving designs. Give me your Heart, Oh Mother! That I may allow my heart to be pierced, like the pelican, to be opened and expanded so as to make of my life a gift, a sincere gift, a pure gift of self, without preserving or retaining anything...but giving all and giving it unconditionally, like you, oh Mother. *Give me your Heart, oh Mother,* that I may remain always faithful to Christ...at all times and at all costs, especially when fidelity may require the sufferings of the Cross... when to choose love may mean to be crucified with Him.



Give me your Heart, oh Mother, that I may concretely build and sustain my family life, to be an example of love and unconditional service, attentive to all the needs, as you O Mother, cared for the Holy Family. That I may be always ready to go in haste, across the mountains of humanity to bring the life of Christ to many... as you did, oh Mother. *Give me your Heart, oh Mother,* that I may be totally available to serve...to embrace any mission entrusted to my hands to proclaim the power and Splendor of the Gospel; and that I may be consumed by the same missionary zeal to let many hearts know of your love. Give me your heart, oh Mother, that I may embrace the needs and sufferings of all, with the same generosity, wisdom and abnegation of your Heart...

*Give me your Heart, oh Mother...*so I can make of my life, a sincere gift... a total gift, a pure gift, an unconditional gift...simply a gift...that I may place my feminine genius, the gift of the feminine, spousal and maternal potentialities of my heart, "my feminine I," as an offering of love for Christ, my spouse, my family, my children...and to all humanity.

Give me your Heart, oh Mother, that I may simply and humbly reflect your image; that I may be transfigured in your Immaculate goodness, truth and beauty... Give me your Heart, that I may communicate your maternal presence, that I may be your hard working hands... your simple and humble service... your serene smile to a suffering world.

Give me your Heart, oh Mother, that I may have the pure and piercing wisdom of your undivided love and fidelity, of your obedience to God's will... give me your heart! to learn the virtues of feminine love, oblation and dedication, Give me your Heart, that I may learn the Mysteries of God's love in the School of your Heart. Give me your Heart so I can walk the path of holiness, the holiness of my vocation and state in life. Give me your Heart, that I may be a living image and presence of your Heart, in the heart of the church and in the heart of the world.

Conclusion

To be a woman is our gift but also our loving and most demanding task. As St John Paul quoted from the Second Vatican Council, in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 1: ***"the hour has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness...the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved."***

This statement reveals so much to my heart about what the Lord desires and expects of us at this specific time in history since the key point to fulfill our mission at this hour is also explained in the same quote: ***"women imbued with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid humanity in not falling."*** Women imbued with the spirit of the Gospel like the Blessed Mother! Women who, with Her, are in turn **guardians of the Gospel message!**

Let us be women in the fullness of our feminine genius, let us remind all humanity that our greatest dignity and vocation is the calling to love and to give our lives at the service of others. Let us contribute with our prayers, sacrifices, mission at the service of life, serving society to create a better world and to build a new civilization of love. Let us help Our Lady to bring forth the so longed for Triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, the triumph of love.

May Her Immaculate Heart triumph in our hearts by making us be the gift that we were intended to be and give it freely to the world!!!

