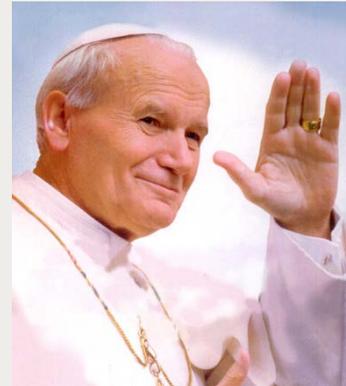


**FORMING THE HEARTS FOR LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY:
ENFLESHING THE LEGACY OF JOHN PAUL II**
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By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand ... "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.¹ "Love and Responsibility can never be separated, for Love is enfolded in the responsible choices of the human heart,"² says our Mother Foundress. What is love? St Augustine, tells us, "What do you mean by love? ... It is that which enables us to be loving. What do we love? A good that words cannot describe a good that is for ever giving, a good that is the Creator of all good. Delight in him from whom you have received everything that delights you."³ There are so many different definitions of love, so many manifestations of love, we need only look towards Christ on the Cross to see the fullness of love, the true meaning of love...The dictionary defines love as, "a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person, a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend, sexual passion or desire, a person toward whom love is felt; beloved person; sweetheart, a love affair; an intensely amorous incident; amour, affectionate concern for the well-being of others: the love of one's neighbor, strong predilection, enthusiasm, or liking for anything: her love of books and the benevolent affection of God for His creatures, or the reverent affection due from them to God."⁴ It is evident that the dictionary indicates there are many ways that one can seemingly define love. But of all these things what is love? Although love may include some of these things, we understand love to be different and more sublime. "God who created man out of love also calls him to love - the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love."⁵



"God's love for us is fundamental for our lives, and it raises important questions about who God is and who we are. In considering this, we immediately find ourselves hampered by a problem of language. Today, the term "love" has become one of the most frequently used and misused of words, a word to which we attach quite different meanings."⁶ In his book *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla, who would later become Servant of God John Paul II wrote, "Love is never something ready made, something merely 'given' to man and woman, it is always at the same time a 'task' which they are set. Love should be seen as something which in a sense never is but is always only 'becoming', and what it becomes depends upon the contribution of both persons and the depth of their commitment."⁷

"Love is always a mutual relationship between persons."⁸ John Paul II writes more extensively about love between a man and a woman, in doing so he details elements of love such as attraction, desire and goodwill. "The first element in the general analysis of love is the element of attraction."⁹ Love between two people, man and woman, often times begins with attraction, usually physical attraction, yet we hear of those times when two people grow so deeply in love with each other's hearts that physical attraction can be almost irrelevant, "genuinely 'cultivated' love."¹⁰ "Desire too belongs to the very essence of the love which springs up between man and woman."¹¹ He goes on to say, "this results from the fact that the human person is a limited being, not self sufficient and therefore - putting it in the most objective way - needs other beings."¹² We need others, we need to be around others, socialize, love and be loved. When referring to love as goodwill he emphasizes, "Love is the fullest realization of the possibilities inherent in man. The potential inherent in the person is most fully actualized through love. The person finds in love the greatest possible fullness of being, of objective existence of the person to its fullest."¹³ There are in effect many ways to define love, particularly because in modern times the idea, meaning and words of love have been distorted and so the true meaning of love lost. Love is not a mere emotion, "emotion can develop and adapt itself to the shape which a man consciously wills. The integration of love requires the individual consciously and by acts of will to impose a shape on all the material that sensual and emotional reactions provide."¹⁴ It is not

selfish, it is not egotistical, and it is not self-centered, it “cannot be merely a matter of ‘consuming’ sympathy;¹⁵” but rather “by its very nature not unilateral but bilateral, something ‘between’ two persons, something shared... it is a force which joins and unites.¹⁶”

“We were created out of love, and we were created to know love, to live by love, and to communicate it in such a powerful way that it will give life.¹⁷” God the Father out of sheer love created mankind, to share in His love and when it was evident that mankind had gone astray, He gave of Himself for their salvation. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...¹⁸” he gave His only begotten son...., “and the Word was made flesh.”¹⁹ Later Pope John Paul II would write in his Letters to Families, “The love which the apostle Paul celebrates in the *First Letter to the Corinthians* – the love which is “patient” and “kind,” and “endures all things” is certainly a demanding love. But this is precisely the source of its beauty: by the very fact that it is demanding, it builds up the true good of man and allows it to radiate to others...²⁰” It is fitting here to remind ourselves of the exact words the Saint Paul writes in the New Testament, “Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn’t selfish or quick tempered. It doesn’t keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting.... For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love.²¹” Love demands our all, love demands all we have including our very lives, the greatest example being that of Christ on the Cross – here we see the highest demands and price of love. “For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly...but God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.²²” Christ freely chose to save us, to save mankind by His death. He shows us that love demands action, demands more than just the words but a free choice out of and for love. “Man longs for love more than for freedom – freedom is the means and love the end.²³”

One of the most inspiring dimensions of love is its freedom...love is free, it must be free. “Freedom exists for the sake of love...love commits freedom and imbues it with that to which the will is naturally attracted – goodness.²⁴” Love does not impose itself; a person can not tell another that they must let them do something for them because they love them. Love does not bribe or blackmail nor does it bind a heart, except to love. The human heart is free to choose to love, free to love as much or as little as it desires, it is free to love who and what it wants yet it must be accountable and responsible for the choices it makes... “Love...is essentially a creation of human free will,²⁵” we are free to choose. We are free to choose to love God, to love others and to love all things created by God. However, this freedom does not necessarily imply that we choose to do what is best for us, more convenient for us but rather what is best for those we love, what would give the most glory to God...it is a total surrender for the good of another, for love of another, for love of God. “His ability to discover the truth gives man the possibility of self-determination, of deciding for himself the character and direction of his own actions, and that is what freedom means.²⁶” In his book, *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love*, Edward Sri says, “that while on the natural and physical level it is impossible, in the order of love a person can do so by choosing to limit his freedom and uniting his will to the one he loves. In other words, because of his love, a person may actually desire to give up his own free will and bind it to the other person.²⁷” We are free; we need only remember to make our choices according to the truth definitions of freedom...having been given this freedom, why do we choose to bind ourselves? Why do we not freely make responsible choices? Why do we keep ourselves from reaching the fullness of freedom? The fullness of love?

What is responsibility? As John Paul II explains, “there exists in love a particular responsibility – the responsibility for a person who is drawn into the closest possible partnership in the life and activity of another, and becomes in a sense the property of whoever benefits from this gift of self.²⁸” The dictionary defines it as, “the state or fact of being responsible, an instance of being responsible: The responsibility for this mess is your, a particular burden of obligation upon one who is responsible: the responsibilities of authority, a person or thing for which one is responsible...²⁹” The Catechism of the Catholic Church says several things about responsibility in particular regarding its importance to sin, one must take responsibility for one’s own actions, it states “freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary.³⁰” Furthermore it goes on to say, “Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed.³¹” In the Gospel of Matthew we have an example of how Jesus asks us concretely to use with responsibility the gifts he has given us in the Parable of the Talents... “It will be as when a man who was

going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possession to them. To one he gave five talents; to another two, to a third, one...³² The one that received five responsibly used them and produced five more and the one that received two did the same but the one who received one instead of putting it to work he simply was irresponsible by hiding the talent. This parable clearly shows us how there is a demand of the Lord to use the talents the gifts he has given us. Love is demanding and the gifts we receive demand from us to use them wisely for the good of others. Love is a gift and this gift we are to give to others, pass it on. Love can never stay barren; its nature is to be fruitful, to give life. John Paul II wrote, "there exists in love a particular responsibility - the responsibility for a person...It follows that one also has a responsibility for one's own love...³³" He emphasizes that "the greater the feeling of responsibility for the person the more true love there is."³⁴ Our love, our actions should be one that reflect the responsibility of our lives as Catholic men and women, as people of God. John Paul II ... is a believer in our own greatness as human beings. Only the human being can love, and only the person is able to bring into this world another person capable of yet more love. It is this *capacity* of man to love – and to bring love into the world – that gives us our 'natural' splendor.³⁵ He believed and taught that man is capable of the heights of love for which he was created for, to love as God has loved, to love to the extreme. And it is this capacity to love, to be responsible for the choices of our actions that gives us this splendor, the splendor of God's own life in us. We contemplate this truth in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. He is the splendor of the Father and at the same time he is the image of the new Adam. When we contemplate Jesus we are looking at the splendor of our humanity - enflashed, He is the One that reveals to us our dignity and identity as adopted sons and daughters of the Father. It is through him that we learn and this is what JP II meant when he spoke about "man's natural splendor." We were created out of love, to love and to be loved and this is our splendor.

We must know and perform our actions knowing that everything has a consequence - good or bad. Every choice of love will bring about a response, an action, an emotion - a reaction from another. Every choice of love that is rejected or neglected also has a consequence, a hurt heart, a bruised heart, sentiment or feeling and therefore requires reparation. Once an action of a lack of love has been done and a consequence retorted, one to make things right must repair. An example, if one asks a friend out of love to allow her to dye her hair, the other knowing it is a bad idea agrees and the hair turns out green. The friend out of love should feel the need to repair and possibly pay for her friend to have her hair fixed. This is a simple example that can be applied to bigger more important matters of the human heart. It has taken much time to process this topic and decide what to write or say or simply explain what the Church already teaches...love and responsibility.... Thinking about these two words one necessarily thinks of Mary - she who so deeply loved, who so wanted to please and glorify God, and who manifested this love through her actions. When the angel of the Lord appeared to her, she did not wait and think, or doubt, or decide that she would do something about it later - no instead she immediately got up and went, "During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth."³⁶ She embraced the mission entrusted to her by God and responsibly took action to fulfill it. Imagine if she had waited and decided to do something later, or spent so much time thinking about what to do and never really doing anything - what would have become of us? Where would we be? The choice of action is the responsibility in practice. The choice to act is a conscious decision to embrace a task, a mission, a way of life and therefore acting accordingly to fulfill this task, mission or way of life. For example, one cannot decide to be a teacher and at the same time decide not to go to school. The mere decision to be a teacher implies the act of going to school, of being prepared and of fulfilling the act of teaching. One can also use the example of a family; one cannot decide to start a family and then not want to live out the demands of having a family, demands that are physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual all at the same time. A mother has to give birth, this entails physical demands...she has to feed, bath, rock to sleep and love that child. She can not decide to do it later or wait until she feels up to it.... a responsible mother acts "in haste."³⁷ This is true also of a father, a father has to be there for his wife to love and support her and the child. Saint Joseph who married Mary, when the angel appeared to him as he pondered what the angel had said, he also acted - he did not wait to see if it was true or how things should be, he was not a spectator but rather a player, he responsibly took action in the plan of God.

"God is love."³⁸ Enflashed by our actions, by the way we live our lives, the "choices we make,"³⁹ we have the capacity to decide for love, we must decide for love. Before we go on let us consider the concept of

enfleshment. What does it mean to en flesh love? To en flesh means to make concrete acts of love, concrete choices of love, to live love...“no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends...this I command you: love one another.”⁴⁰ Jesus himself teaches us that concrete actions not just mere words express love. The power of his “enfleshing love” was so great that it brought about the Person of the Incarnate Son, God made man. In this, we who live this awesome charism of love can bring the greatest love of all, the love of God to those who do not yet know love, His love. Before we can be vessels of this love, channels of this love we must know love, know God, know the charism we are called to live, to en flesh. To know this we must gain knowledge of God, of His Church, learn from His examples, the examples of Our Blessed Mother and lastly, even if they seem little and insignificant, learn from the examples we are to one another. This necessarily entails responsibility. We must be responsible for our actions, for our choices, for the example we are to others. Brothers and sisters our greatest responsibility is keeping our hearts open to love, to God for, “if that love of God finds no obstacle to its divine ardors and no foe to resist it, it will make none but sweet and delightful impressions upon the heart.”⁴¹ These impressions made on our hearts can then inspire and guide us to touch others with the love of God. We must learn to receive from the Heart of Jesus, we must allow Him to show us to love like He did...”

JPII tells us that “love is demanding,⁴² love requires certain things. We must therefore, be responsible of how we live out love, of how we make love concrete in our lives and thru us to others. “Only the one who is able to be demanding with himself in the name of love can also demand love from others. Love is demanding. It makes demands in all human situations; it is even more demanding in the case of those who are open to the Gospel. Is this not what Christ proclaims in “his” commandment?”⁴³ Just as God is demanding of us...God demands without ever forcing Himself on us, without making us do something or ever love Him, we are always free to choose... love is demanding. “In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us, we also must love one another.”⁴⁴ Love demands responsibility, love demands action, love demands love... love requires love. Our actions should reflect our choice of love, our response to love...our saying yes to love. This is true of any vocation in life, husband and wife, parents and children, friends, religious life and God...what we choose to do or not do is a reflection of our love. Our actions show a glimpse of where our hearts are, so that if we choose love, respond in love, and act in love - then the love that dwells in our hearts is evident. “If anyone says, I love God, but hate’s his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”⁴⁵ As religious women this is of the utmost importance being that by what we do and/or say others will form an opinion or a sentiment towards God. A child who witnesses his or her parents always fighting or not getting along grows up with a distorted idea/image of love and later in life perpetuates this distortion...we cannot let this happen. “Nowadays people need to rediscover this demanding love, for it is the truly firm foundation of the family, a foundation able to “endure all things.”⁴⁶ Saint Maximilian Kolbe always said, “Only love creates.” “Love is of it very nature creative and constructive.”⁴⁷

Everything is subordinate to love, Venerable John Henry Newman tells us, “thus God’s power, indeed, is infinite, but it is still subordinate to his wisdom and his justice, his justice, again, is infinite, but it, too, is subordinate to his love; and his love, in turn, is infinite, but it is subordinate to his incommunicable sanctity.”⁴⁸ Fear not, these demands are not impossible; they are actually very simple...it is choosing/doing/responding to the littlest of things in and with love and as we grow we can then choose/do and respond to the greatest of things in and with love. “Let us be deeply convinced that this *love is the greatest of all* (cf. 1 Cor 13:13), and let us believe that it is really capable of triumphing over everything that is not love.”⁴⁹ We need only give ourselves totally to love, with love and for love... “Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.”⁵⁰ “What is important is not so much individual actions (whether selfish or altruistic), as the radical acceptance of the understanding of man as a person who “finds himself” by making a sincere gift of self. A gift is, obviously, “for others.”⁵¹ Brothers and Sisters, now is the time to set things straight to have the truth about love revealed...”Here we arrive at the true “grandeur” of love: We each have the capacity to create, to give birth – to give new life to others – both physically, in the form of children, and spiritually, in a legacy of inspired friends and neighbors.”⁵² The choice is the gift, the free will...the response is responsible love, and it is the action in through and for love, for God who is love. “Love

between persons is essentially a creation of human free will.⁵³ Brothers and sisters these choices, these actions of love are how we en flesh the legacy our spiritual father Servant of God John Paul II left behind. It is by studying his teachings and applying them according to our vocations in our lives and therefore truly becoming witnesses to love. It sounds difficult, but is it? Can we truly look at our lives, at any particular circumstance and opt with reason not to choose love? A time when truly love was just not an option....maybe during an argument, a disagreement, that particular person who so rubs you the wrong way - was it impossible to choose love, simply for love of God? Is there ever a circumstance so great that one cannot choose love?

"In an age of vigorous individualism ... our modern world emphasizes not self-giving love, but self-getting love, which focuses on what I get out of a relationship. Why should I go outside myself to find happiness? Why would I ever want to give up my autonomy and commit myself to someone else in this radical way? Why would I want to limit my freedom to do whatever I want with my life? These are the questions people ask today.⁵⁴"

How do we move from selfish love to self forgetting love? We do so by living the fundamental reality of our lives...to do everything in the perfection of love and embracing fully the responsibilities of our vocations...We have to embrace our proper vocations, we have to live what is proper for our vocations, if I am a wife and mother, then with my whole heart, with all the love I am capable of, I am to be a wife and a mother. Not a woman looking to fulfill all my needs and desires above those of my husband and children. "The great danger for family life, in the midst of any society whose idols are pleasure, comfort and independence, lies in the fact that people close their hearts and become selfish.⁵⁵" I could not ask a child to wait to eat because I am busy taking a relaxing bubble bath, do we see how ridiculous this could be? This attitude and the like propel us into a world where I come first, I come second and third and then maybe I have a little time left for you, this is not a total self-giving of love. Should not the love of a wife and mother for her husband and children be greater than her desire to relax? Should not a husband's desire to protect and provide for his wife and children are greater than his desire to hang out with friends having a beer and or watching a football game? It should be this way; God intended it to be this way, so is it not? Because of the distortion of true love, because it is easier to watch out for myself than to possibly have to give up a pleasure to help another. What would our life be like if Jesus had come simply to do what was easiest for Him? The cross was hard, painful, humiliating, would it not have been easier for Him not to go through all of that, He who could have chosen any path, chose to suffer out of love. He chose to bear all things, with the greatest of pains and discomforts for us....out of love for us....love we did not and do not deserve...but nonetheless love He wants to give us freely. This same reality applies to all persons, to every vocation. "In fact, where we find fulfillment in life? - in living our relationships well. But to live our relationships well, we must often make sacrifices, surrendering our own will to serve the good of others.⁵⁶" This we can see clearly in the lives of the saints. They chose to give themselves to other; they chose oblation love and complete self-giving out of love for God and all men.

John Paul II forgave the man who tried to take his life, is this not a great act of love? This man of God, yet a mortal man like you and I acted in and out of love, we should look to his example during the moments of difficulties. How did John Paul II get to this point? How is it that he was able to forgive in such a way? Prayer filled much of his daily life, prayer opens our hearts to the graces and love of God, prayer allows us to see things from a different perspective and love. Love for God and responsibility, the responsibility to be a witness of love to all those to whom he was a shepherd. It was faith, "faith is the womb that conceives this new life...⁵⁷" faith is what leads us to love... love and responsibility that prompted Servant of God John Paul II to act in such a way. Just as it should be love that moves us... today's world is lead by selfish impulses, lead by the conceptualized idea of love; show the world, to be those beacons of light amidst the darkness. Today's humanity needs us, who will show them the love of God not by words but by actions? Who will show them the capacity of love of the human heart? Who will show them that it is ok to give all of yourself for love expecting and receiving nothing in return? Who will show them that love is possible? That love is kind? That love is real? That love has a face? That love is Jesus? Love is a *thing* that fills our emptiness, our holes. This is how love creates - because it is some*thing* that makes new things in the human person. Evil is the absence of good, and love is the good itself... St. John of the Cross says, "In the evening of life, we will be judged on

love alone.⁵⁸

One could argue that John Paul II was a well-educated man and therefore knew how to act and live accordingly with his vocation and sure this is true however it takes a particular relationship with God, a particular love to reach the heights of love obtained by JP II, "it is a mutual exchange of love, and it is in this exchange that God reveals himself. He reveals himself in the measure in which we love him, not according to our learning..."⁵⁹ Of course what we know is important, we must have adequate knowledge of God and His Church but it is from our relationship with Him that flows wisdom. It is from our prayer life that stems the love we share with others. "He becomes, as it were, their very soul and their innermost life. His Spirit abides in the depths of their spirit, enlightening, encouraging, and directing all the inner resources that they possess."⁶⁰ In our prayer our hearts are expanded. The more we pray the more we come to know love and the more we come to know love - the more our hearts expand to receive this love and to be channels of this love to others... love is diffusive it does not stay still but it gives itself. To be love in the world we have to know love, God is love therefore we have to come to know God. To know Him on a personal level, to "look up God as a Father, who is unceasingly communicating to them his thoughts and desires, and it is by these thoughts and desires that they live."⁶¹ It is our responsibility to get to know God, to receive His love and become channels through which that love can be communicated. "Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your own weakness."⁶² Brothers and sisters, rather than spending three hours on the couch watching television, we should spend at least one in adoration getting to know God. This then becomes our responsible action, to adore our Lord and be instruments for the salvation of souls; an action such as this enfleshes love and responsibility. It is certain that God will ask one thing of us when we reach heaven, how much have you loved? "Love can supply for length of years. Jesus, because He is Eternal, regards not the time but only the love."⁶³

In the past days, the opportunity to see and be around much corn has presented itself and as knowledge about this corn was acquired, a connection arose. A stalk of corn grows about ten feet in height, after all this effort it bears at most two good ears of corn. Our lives are like this stalk of corn, we have to put forth effort, maximum effort to bear fruit - even if it is only one good piece of fruit. This effort is the responsibility of love...this effort are the choices we make... The hearts of founders and foundresses are like these fields of corn, so much effort is put into bearing one maybe two good pieces of love, so their hearts necessarily have to be fields so as to yield many pieces of love to bring God's love to humanity... "Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired."⁶⁴ To love like this we need to understand that love demands the Cross. Love incarnate was crucified on the cross and by being so brought the fruit of eternal life for all men. The sufferings of the cross were necessary for our redemption. Suffering brings forth life. Just as the grain of wheat (corn) has to first die in order to be fruitful "...unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."⁶⁵ In the same way love, if it does not go through the crucible, the fire of suffering it will stay barren but if its open to the cross it will bare great fruits in the hearts of all men. This is the story of the life of every saint and of every founder or foundress open to fulfill out of love their mission to give life and fruits of love in the heart of the Church it is the story of every Christian willing to love responsibly.

This family, the family of the Pierced Hearts is called to be this face of Jesus. Our brother priests, deacons and seminarians by virtue of their call bring Christ to the world. The lay members of the family, they who reach the ends of the world, in every sector and way of life give witness to love. By their actions, actions done in and out of love they, can bring someone to wonder what is so different in this person? What is it that they have that allows them to act so kindly, so lovingly day in and day out? Always remember, "Love attracts love..."⁶⁶ If one nonbeliever is touched in this way, that person may begin to believe and be brought back to the love of the Father. Is it clear how important our actions are? How instrumental or detrimental they can be to a person? It is not about the words, but it is about our example. "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."⁶⁷ This reality also applies to consecrated life, to the sisters, they who have been called to a greater communion with God. They who have been so deeply moved by the love of God, ordinary things are seen in a new light, the light of God. They who in, albeit small degree,

understand the love of the Trinity. The Father and His love for the Son, the Son and His love for the Father and the love that gushes forth from this mutual exchange from love; the Holy Spirit. We need to see with the eyes of our hearts, the love of God for us, our love for God and the fruits of this give-and-take of love. In the words of our Mother Foundress,

"...we should never conform ourselves to anything less than forming our hearts to grow to the great heights of love- a love to the extreme only afterwards, and as a consequence, (since there are the different expressions and the different faces and forms of love) will all the other virtues develop. Is not love that which produces humility? Is not love the motor behind purity? Is not love the font of self-donation? Is not love the strength behind meekness and the measure of justice? Is not love the origin of mercy and the reason for patience? Is not love the only one that creates all the good in our hearts? That is why, sisters, with great ardor we must incessantly look to break through the narrowness of our hearts and widen them to welcome this kind of love."⁶⁸

The heart of Jesus is the love of God, Jesus is love. How does the Eucharist show us responsible love? It is faithful and always there. It is silent and loving in the midst of abuse, constant, humble, meek... And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: 'The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Love: It signifies Love, It produces love."⁶⁹ The Eucharist is the greatest act of love; it is the love that keeps on giving. It not only reminds us of the ultimate act of love, that is dying for those you love but in and through that love becomes the actual body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to us faithfully out of love. The love we were created to receive and return, the love for which he sent Jesus to show us how to love, out of this love to show us His mercy and redeem us. We receive this heart and by our example bring it to the world, showing others how by our example they too can bring this heart of Jesus to others; creating a civilization of love.

"Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna (cf. *Jn* 6:31-33). The ancient world had dimly perceived that man's real food—what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the *Logos*, eternal wisdom: this same *Logos* now truly becomes food for us—as love. The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood."⁷⁰

"...hearing and loving the Word of the Lord in such a way as to be applicable to the real-life situations of people today. The Word of God determines a call, creates communion and sends forth into mission, so that what is received might be given as a gift to others."⁷¹ This is what we are to do, hear and love the Word of God, open our hearts to receive everything He wants to communicate to us for we know He wants to give us everything. We must receive these gifts, talents, graces and put them to use -responsibly- having as our ultimate goal the glory of God, the salvation of souls, making God known, visible to those who do not yet see. Love for any vocation has to be willing to endure any and all sacrifices necessary; love has to be willing to suffer... "Juxta crucem cum maria"⁷² (at the foot of the Cross with Mary) is love and responsibility, in simple words it is that love is beautiful, faithful and willing to stand thru every trial for the good of all..... walking the path of love is not an easy one, for we will encounter many trials and tribulations, crosses that strengthen us, bring us closer to God, that teach us how to trust in Him, His love and mercy. Trusting in Him, we open ourselves allow Him to work in us, giving us the graces we most need so that then He may work through us. "For nothing is impossible with God,"⁷³ "we can do all things through Him,"⁷⁴ we need only look to Him and know that together with Him we can do all things, we can overcome the greatest of obstacles and we can learn to love. Our example for this and for all things is Mary, she who trusted totally in Him, in His designs...

How do we grow in love for God? How do we learn to responsibly en flesh this love? St. Augustine tells us, "To spend much time in prayer is to knock with a persistent and holy fervor at the door of the one whom we beseech."⁷⁵ He is stressing for us the importance of prayer, for prayer is how we grow closer to God, prayer is

a way in which we can come to know God, to know Him who is love...to know love. And when we know God we can give Him to others, give His love to others. It becomes a cycle of love...God pours forth His love into our hearts, we through our actions give this love to others, who touched by love praise and give glory to God. "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God."⁷⁶

Surrender is the answer, surrender to God, to His plans and designs for our lives. This surrender necessarily implies trust, how much do we really trust Him? Should we not trust Him totally and completely? Do we trust Him enough to submit everything to His divine will? Do we have this faith? These are questions we should be asking ourselves and trying to truly live. We are complex being, but this complexity reduced to its basic elements can make our lives simpler.

"We are dealing with the deepest and most incomprehensible of things when we are dealing with the human spirit, with the human mind. How can the human mind be won to truth, to faith, to loyalty to God? How is it possible for us to come to God, to surrender to him our whole intellect, our whole will? ... God alone knows the working of the human soul; and God, who knows, who has made us, has thought out his plan."⁷⁷

"Before you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart."⁷⁸ We need to listen to Him, He knows us better than we could ever really know ourselves and by working at this surrender we are responsibly putting into practice all that we as Christians claim to live. We are surrendering to love, allowing ourselves to be submerged in love, filled with love until it overflows into our daily lives. "Little things are indeed little, but to be faithful in little things is a great thing."⁷⁹ Yes, brothers and sisters, being faithful in the smallest of things is the sign of this surrender, this dependence on God to guide our lives; to show us how to live in love. We must, "...allow the love of God to reign there in peace."⁸⁰ Trusting in Him means being at peace, it means being willing to receive anything and everything He wishes to give us.

"He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. *Jn* 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. *Jn* 19:34)."⁸¹ Other than Jesus Christ himself, our greatest example of love or all these things we have talked about is Mary the Mother of God.

The Blessed Virgin Mary teaches us how to relate to God, she shows us the kind of loving and responsible actions we are to have, that we are to enflesh. However, let us focus on Mary, Our Blessed Virgin Mother, who she is in the life of the Church and how she is to be our model. The Holy Father begins by describing Mary as "the first disciple, who willingly put herself at the service of God's plan by the total gift of self; a gift of love, a reception of love, a giving of love - a cycle of love. Every mission begins with the attitude expressed by Mary at the Annunciation: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word' (*Lk* 1:38)."⁸² In many if not all of John Paul II writings, Mary is clearly presented as our model. We should look to her as a Mother, as one in complete "union with Christ,"⁸³ and "open to the Spirit"⁸⁴; she is the one we are "called to take for ourselves, loving her and imitating her in the radical manner"⁸⁵ proper to our vocation, thus "experiencing in return her special motherly love."⁸⁶ Mary becomes our model, for all mankind, in the Annunciation; here we can see her complete and total trust in the Father and His designs, receiving first to then give life, should we not then live our lives this way?; in complete trust and abandonment to Him who is our loving Father? In that instant, she becomes the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, making clear to religious, in particular consecrated women the importance of spousal receptivity, her spousal receptivity and consequently for us who are to imitate her. We are to be spouses of God, receptive to His word, teachings and promptings of the Holy Spirit so as to give life as Mary did. We are all to be like Mary, obedient, trusting, faithful, prayerful, loving, motherly, bold, courageous, strong, steadfast and yet tender, soft, and docile. We are to be strong, bold and courageous, like Mary who stood at the foot of the cross, to go where we may never have been before even afraid but brave enough to trust in He who entrusts us with His work. Willing to go forth, cost what may, to fulfill the will of the Lord...this takes courage! However, in this culminating of this fulfillment, we must always be submissive and faithful...to Him. Symbols of love, the love of the Church, the love of God in a world in need of love... How do we live like this? How do we live like Mary? I believe two things are necessary, the first prayer, having an intimate prayer life with the

Lord. Did not the Angel Gabriel appear to Mary while she was in prayer? We, too, must pray to God and to her...asking them both for all the graces we need to live out our particular vocations, in a particular way asking her to give us hearts like hers... Second, simply by keeping our hearts always turned towards the Lord...keeping them open to receive and docile to allow Him to use us as His instruments. We are called to be witnesses of love, of God's love in today's world... and so let us be who we are to be.

Our charism calls us, the Servants to be Mary's in the world, to be her image and presence, to be spiritual mothers, to bear fruit, give life and in particular in the life of the Church, this means to be receptive to God, to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to the cries of the Heart of Christ... Christ established the Church, the New Covenant, but was it not Mary who sustained this life? Who sat with the Apostles, nurturing them through prayer, showing them, by her example, to wait on the Lord, to wait for the Holy Spirit, to trust in His words, teachings, to know that He is faithful... She who kept all things in the silence of her heart, was she not the one, not teach because Christ himself taught them, but to show them how to live it, to listen to their hearts, the dwelling place Christ prepared for Himself on Calvary? In my head, this is similar to taking a class, you can listen to the professor and truly understand the concepts, yet not really grasp how to apply them to your life and although the Apostles had Christ as their teacher, human as they were, were probably consumed with so much awe, so much so that there is a possibility that after His death they were disoriented and not sure what to do next. This is the moment when Mary's role is, possibly most important, she lived, simply lived and by her example showed them how to live, how to trust...during such a crucial moment of salvation history. It is clear then that the Marian principle came before the Petrine principle to prepare the Church. She served the Apostles, the Petrine principle, she helped them, guided them...served them who fulfilled the establishment of the Church that Christ began; she was at their disposal, at their service but above all sustained them in prayer. The Holy Father talks about the Church as Bride, being attentive to her Bridegroom, ready to accept his gift and in Mary "the aspect of spousal receptivity."⁸⁷ How through this "spousal receptivity," the Church, gives life. He explains that consecrated life has been and is mostly seen in terms of Mary...Virgin and Bride, expressing "their spiritual fruitfulness by becoming receptive to the Word."⁸⁸ Consecrated women have a particular role in the life of the Church, called to be "signs of God's tender love towards the human race,"⁸⁹ thus like Mary embracing all of humanity.

In apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* written by Servant of God John Paul II in the Marian year, he again presents Mary, the Mother of God, the Theotokos, emphasizing how she is our model. She is the one whom we should look to, to be who God created us to be, she teaches us that "to serve is to reign."⁹⁰ The letter goes on to say how simply being a person means striving towards self-realization and this can only be achieved "through a sincere gift of self."⁹¹ "If this happens, a special bond is established between me and this other person: the bond of a *common good* and of a common aim. This special bond does not mean merely that we both seek a common good, it also unites the persons involved internally, and so constitutes the essential core round which any love must grow."⁹²

Love is an exclusive reality of the human heart. "Love in essence is always seeking to be given away..."⁹³ "Love is exclusively the portion of human persons."⁹⁴ This next quote I found in the book, *I believe in Love*, based on the teachings or spirituality of St. Therese of Lisieux, "if you have been loved like this, you must love in return, give love for Love. 'I have loved you, you must love. I have given you my Heart without reserve, in order to have your heart without reserve; I have put no limit on my love, you must put no limits on yours.'⁹⁵"

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- ¹ Deus Caritas Est #12
 - ² Mother Adela quotes
 - ³ Divine Office, Sermo 21, 1-4: CCL 41, 276-278, pg. 550
 - ⁴ www.dictionary.com
 - ⁵ CCC #1604
 - ⁶ Deus Caritas Est, #2
 - ⁷ Love and Responsibility, pg.139
 - ⁸ Love and Responsibility, pg.73
 - ⁹ Love and Responsibility, pg.74
 - ¹⁰ Love and Responsibility, pg.78
 - ¹¹ Love and Responsibility, pg.80
 - ¹² ibid
 - ¹³ Love and Responsibility, pg.82
 - ¹⁴ Love and Responsibility, pg.153
 - ¹⁵ Love and Responsibility, pg.93
 - ¹⁶ Love and Responsibility, pg.85
 - ¹⁷ Mother Adela, *Love is the Essence and Vocation of the Human Heart*
 - ¹⁸ John 3:16
 - ¹⁹ John 1:14
 - ²⁰ Pope John Paul II, in his 1994 Letter to Families
 - ²¹ 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13
 - ²² Romans 5: 6-9
 - ²³ Love and Responsibility, pg.136
 - ²⁴ Love and Responsibility, pg.135
 - ²⁵ Love and Responsibility, pg.51
 - ²⁶ Love and Responsibility, pg.115
 - ²⁷ Men, Women and the Mystery of Love, pg. 60
 - ²⁸ Love and Responsibility, pg.130
 - ²⁹ www.dictionary.com
 - ³⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1734
 - ³¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1781
 - ³² Matthew 25:14-15
 - ³³ Love and Responsibility, pg. 130
 - ³⁴ Love and Responsibility, pg. 131
 - ³⁵ Love and Responsibility, pg. 1
 - ³⁶ Luke 1: 39
 - ³⁷ Luke 1: 39
 - ³⁸ John 4:8
 - ³⁹ Letter from Mother Adela on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, June 19, 2009
 - ⁴⁰ John 15:13-17
 - ⁴¹ ibid
 - ⁴² Pope John Paul II, in his 1994 Letter to Families, #14
 - ⁴³ ibid
 - ⁴⁴ 1 John 4:9-11
 - ⁴⁵ 1 John 4: 20-21
 - ⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II, in his 1994 Letter to Families,#14
 - ⁴⁷ Love and Responsibility, pg. 93
 - ⁴⁸ Magnificat meditation, August 25, 2009, pg. 351
 - ⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II, Letter to Families, #5
 - ⁵⁰ 1 John 4:9
 - ⁵¹ Pope John Paul II, Letter to Families, #5
 - ⁵² http://www.catholicculture.com/jp2_on_l&r.pdf
 - ⁵³ Love and Responsibility, pg. 51
 - ⁵⁴ Men, Women and the Mystery of Love, pg. 63
 - ⁵⁵ www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/p/pope_john_paul_ii.html
 - ⁵⁶ ibid
 - ⁵⁷ Divine office 5th week of Easter (Monday), pg. 825
 - ⁵⁸ <http://northernplainsanglicans.blogspot.com/2009/04/st-john-of-cross-drawing-of-crucifixion.html>
 - ⁵⁹ Dom Augustin Guillerand, O. Cart, Magnificat, September 2009

⁶⁰ Dom Augustin Guillerand, O. Cart, Magnificat, September 2009
⁶¹ ibid
⁶² <http://www.ewtn.com/MotherTeresa/words.htm>
⁶³ www.littleflower.org
⁶⁴ www.ewtn.com/MotherTeresa/words.htm
⁶⁵ John 12:24
⁶⁶ www.littleflower.org
⁶⁷ John 13:35
⁶⁸ The Charism of Love to the Extreme, Mother Adela
⁶⁹ Jesus Our Eucharistic Love, p. 5
⁷⁰ Deus Caritas Est, #13
⁷¹ Instrumentum Laboris #4
⁷² Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady, pg. 27
⁷³ Luke 1:37
⁷⁴ Phillipians 4:13
⁷⁵ Divine office, pg. 412
⁷⁶ 1 John 4:7
⁷⁷ Dom Anscar Vonier, O.S.B., Magnificat September 2009
⁷⁸ www.ewtn.com/MotherTeresa/words.htm
⁷⁹ www.ewtn.com/MotherTeresa/words.htm
⁸⁰ Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade, S.J., Magnificat September 2009
⁸¹ Deus Caritas Est #7
⁸² Vita Consecrata No. 18
⁸³ ibid
⁸⁴ ibid
⁸⁵ ibid
⁸⁶ ibid
⁸⁷ Vita Consecrata No. 34
⁸⁸ ibid
⁸⁹ Vita Consecrata No. 57
⁹⁰ Mulieris Dignitatem no. 5
⁹¹ Ibid, no. 7
⁹² Love and Responsibility, pg. 28
⁹³ Mother Adela quotes
⁹⁴ Love and Responsibility, pg. 28
⁹⁵ I Believe in Love, pg. 7

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