

God's Plan for Women

(Recommended to run on Mother's Day)

During the month of May, we turn our eyes to the person of the Virgin Mary and to the gift of motherhood. These two objects of our contemplation are wonderfully complementary because in Our Lady, we find a beautiful truth revealed: that all women are called to be mothers.

It should always be a cause of wonder to us that Mary is both Virgin and Mother simultaneously. In the natural order, this is impossible. And yet we find revealed in Mary what is true for every woman after her, that God has established a new order of fruitfulness for the human race, a fruitfulness that comes not from biology but from grace.

For women, this spiritual fruitfulness is called spiritual motherhood. All women, by virtue of being a woman, are capable of the tremendous fruitfulness of spiritual motherhood, even if a woman never bears her own children. How much we can praise God for His infinite mercy in making it possible for every woman to be *truly a mother* even if we are not married, are experiencing infertility, or have taken a vow of chastity. For women who are biological mothers, their vocation is elevated through this truth as well, for she is called to be a spiritual mother to her children. A spiritual mother does not just meet the natural needs of those entrusted to her care, but above all, she strives to raise her children as saints, leading them and nurturing them in the life of holiness. The beauty of spiritual motherhood is that it extends outward beyond the woman and her immediate circle into the whole world, opening a woman up to carry in her heart the needs of the whole world and those whom God sends her way.

Our world today tells us that women find their fulfillment through high-paying careers, “finding yourself,” and freeing themselves from the bonds of motherhood. God’s invitation to women is different. The Church tells us that true fulfillment for both men and women comes only through a complete gift of self for the sake of another. The Second Vatican Council states, “...man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for himself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”¹ Ironically, the very thing that the world seeks – “finding yourself” – only happens when we give ourselves away, entrusting ourselves in love to sacred bonds of communion with other human beings. For men, this means that a man’s deepest fulfillment comes through fatherhood. For women, this means, above all, motherhood.

When a woman gives herself away for the sake of another (spiritual motherhood), she becomes an icon of God Himself, who *is* self-giving love. So we find in a woman’s capacity for spiritual motherhood one of the deepest sources of her personal dignity. She is created in the image of God, called to love and give herself, as God himself loves and gives. The good news is that every woman is created for this, whether or not she is married or bears children. Women of the Church, let us take the hand of Mary, Virgin and Mother, especially through the Rosary, and ask her to obtain for us a great flourishing of our spiritual motherhood so that we may be, as she is, a vessel of maternal love for the world. To learn more about the dignity and vocation of women, read Pope St. John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, available on the Vatican website.
~Meghan Cokeley, Director, Office for the New Evangelization, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 24