

2014

Priestly Ministry

Isabell Naumann

member of Advisory Board/ Philosophy and Theology/Sydney, inaumann@cis.catholic.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity>
ISSN: 1839-0366

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright Regulations 1969
WARNING

This material has been copied and communicated to you by or on behalf of the University of Notre Dame Australia pursuant to part VB of the Copyright Act 1969 (the Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Recommended Citation

Naumann, Isabell (2014) "Priestly Ministry," *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 4. Available at: <http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity/vol4/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.



Priestly Ministry

Priestly Ministry, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Dignity of Women

Isabell Naumann

J. W. von Goethe: "The eternal feminine attracts us to the highest."

Introduction

As the topic can be approached from various aspects here we will consider it from the perspective of *mission*, of *being sent*. In this we can find a common denominator in addressing the different components - The Priest, the Virgin Mary and the Dignity of Women.

The topic will be divided into the following themes:

1. The Priest
2. Women - Dignity and Charisma
3. The Church and Women
4. The Marian Principle in the Church
5. To be a *Marian* Person (Man and Woman)
6. Conclusion

In Jesus' death and resurrection humanity was redeemed and made into a new creation, constituted by him and united through the Spirit as his own mystical body. Through the sacramental reality the life of Christ is communicated to the members of his body who, by baptism, become conformed to Christ and who, by participating in the body of the Lord through the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, share in communion with him and with each other. The structure of the body – multicultural and many-faceted, as the *sponsa circumdata varietate* (the bride dressed in many-coloured robes) [Ps 44:14] – knows diversity of members and of functions, and a variety of gifts, distributed by the Spirit, for the building up of the Church.¹

In seeking to appreciate the various gifts for the building up of the Church we will begin with the ordained priesthood.

1. The Priest – "Being Sent"

Jesus did not appoint himself (cf. Heb 5:4ff), nor did he owe his appointment to a democratic election, he understands himself as one who fulfills a mission. He knows himself to be under a divine imperative (Mk 8:31) which is the inner forum, the real source of his entire

¹ *Lumen Gentium* 7. This participation signifies that communion and unity that John Paul II called for at the threshold of the new millennium: "The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life..." Pope John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 6 January 2001 (Strathfield: St Pauls, 2001), 45, 46.

existence. He is not self-originated. He knows that he is one who has been *sent*.² Jesus' being is as such a *being-sent*, a *being-from-another* and a *being-directed-to-others*.

The fundamental structure of the Christian ministries then is also grounded in *being called to him who is himself the call of God, the 'Word'*³ and *who sends forth* for the very purpose of *service* – as expressed in the words of John Paul II: “The priesthood of bishops and priests, as well as the ministry of deacons, is not an institution that exists ‘alongside’ the laity or ‘above’ it; it is ‘for’ the laity, and precisely for this reason it possesses a ‘ministerial’ character, that is to say one of ‘service.’ Moreover, it highlights the ‘baptismal priesthood,’ the priesthood common to all the faithful... and at the same time helps it to be realized in the sacramental life.”⁴

Based on Mark 3:13-19, Joseph Ratzinger distinguishes in the call to the priesthood between *being-with-him* and *being-sent-forth*, which seems to be a paradox between inner recollection and outward, public service.⁵

“For the man who, as priest, attempts to speak to his fellow men of Christ, there is nothing of greater importance than this: to learn what being-with-him, existing in *his presence*, following him means, to hear and see him, to grasp his style of being and thinking. The actual living out of priestly existence and the attempt to prepare others for such an existence demand growth into the ability to hear him above all the static, and to see him through all the forms of this world. To do this is to live in *his presence*.”⁶

If the priest is called out *of*, separated *from*, for the very purpose of being sent *to*, then being a priest necessarily means *being-for-others*.⁷

Joseph Kentenich⁸ offers a wonderful commentary on this:

“‘Taken from among men! And to what end?’ ... for humanity – not just for the one or the other but for all men and women without exception ... that they be led into the things which are of God, educated so that they more deeply grasp their fundamental relationship to the living God, speak their inner ‘yes’ to this relationship and live it out in their practical daily lives. To put it differently, [the priest is called] to move all people – not just one or the other Catholic – to move all without exception, to use the word of Our Lord, ‘to love God with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength’ (Mk 12:30).”⁹

² J. Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” *Emmanuel* 76 (1970): 442-453 and 490-505, here 446.

³ “It is from this Christological centre that the essential features of the Christian concept turns on the mission of Christ and the Christian’s co-mission with him... these ministries are also grounded not in self-authorisation, nor in simple expediency, nor in mutual agreement... It is this concept of mission, of being-sent, which forms the core of the NT definition of the office of ministry.” Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 446, 449.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, “Holy Thursday letter to Priests,” 3, *L’Osservatore Romano* (2 April 1990). Both, “the ministerial priesthood conferred by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the common or ‘royal’ priesthood of the faithful which differ essentially and not only in degree are ordered one to another... It is not a question of relations which are merely juxtaposed, but rather of ones which are interiorly united in a kind of mutual immanence.” Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 25 March 1992, 17.

⁵ Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 448.

⁶ Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 448.

⁷ Heb 5:1. Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 449.

⁸ Father Joseph Kentenich is the founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement.

⁹ J. Kentenich, *Aus den Menschen, für die Menschen*, ed. by A. Brath (Vallendar-Schönstatt, Patris Verlag, 1970), 50.

If the priest ... is essentially an *evangelist*, a herald of the Gospel, the good news, and if the category of mission, of *being-sent*, delivers the key to the understanding of his ministry then this is weighty in the consequences it holds for the form of priestly existence: he must be a man who *lives off the Word*, who is *impregnated with the Word*, *totally at home in the Word*, and who concretely *finds in the Word the centre* about which he builds his existence.¹⁰

Cardinal Văn Thuận, who endured long imprisonment under the Communist regime in Vietnam, illustrates well the significance of this truth when he writes:

“The principal attitude required before the Word of God that speaks and communicates itself is that of listening and accepting. ‘Listen to him’ is exactly the command the Father addresses to the disciples regarding his Son. This is a listening more of the heart than of the ears. The word, in fact, bears fruit only if it finds fertile soil, that is, it falls into a ‘good and perfect heart’ (Lk 8:15). But it is not enough only to meditate on the Word of God, not enough to penetrate it with the mind, to pray with it, to draw some considerations or proposals from it.

Authentic listening to the Word is translated into obedience, into doing what the Word demands of us. We must allow ourselves to work by the Word, until we arrive at the point that it animates our entire Christian life. We must apply the Word to all the circumstances of our existence and transform it into life ... In fact, by entering us the Word of God questions our human ways of thinking and acting, and it introduces us to the new style of life inaugurated by Christ... The Gospel, in short, awakens in us a profound sense of our life – we know finally why we are alive, and it makes us hope anew. The result is that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who comes to live in us. Through the words of Scripture, the Word makes his home in us and transforms us into *verba in Verbo*, ‘word into the Word.’”¹¹

- Those *being-sent* are “not to teach their own wisdom but God’s Word” and they are “not to present God’s Word in a general and abstract fashion only, but must apply the perennial truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.”¹²
- The task of making the Word of God contemporary to our time is only possible, says Ratzinger, “if we [priests], the preachers of that Word, have first become its *contemporaries*. This is the sense of the conciliar imperative that the man who preaches the word must first have become assimilated to this word, that only in this manner can it be assimilated by others. We are dealing here with a double process of translation. We must translate ourselves there, to where the Word is, if we are to succeed in bringing the word from there, the past, to where we stand. It is only in men that the Word can become contemporary and bring what is contemporary to the crossroads of a new beginning.”¹³

¹⁰ Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 492.

¹¹ F.X. Nguyễn Văn Thuận, *Testimony of Hope: The Spiritual Exercises of John Paul II* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2000), 63-64.

¹² Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 494 (*Presbyterorum ordinis*,4).

¹³ Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 495.

The importance of this may be illustrated by Cardinal Văn Thuận’s own testimony: “When under house arrest in the village of Cay Vong, I was under police surveillance day and night, and this thought became obsessive: ‘My people... a flock without a shepherd! How can I contact my people at a time when they have most need of their pastor? The Catholic bookstores have been confiscated, the schools closed, the religious dispersed....’ I told myself, ‘I will not wait. I want to live the present moment, filling it with love, but how?’ One night a light came to me: ‘Francis, it is very simple. Do as St. Paul did when he was in prison. Write letters to the different communities.’ The following morning while it was still dark, I signalled to Quang, a seven-year-old boy who returned from Mass at 5.00AM. I said to him: ‘Tell your mother to buy old calendars for me.’ That night, once more in the dark, Quang brought me the

• The acceptance of such a mission of *being sent* implies further that he “ceases in a twofold fashion to belong to himself. He ceases to belong to himself *on behalf of the one who has sent him* as well as *on behalf of those to whom he is sent as representative...* is never an independent mediator. He does not stand in office as executor of his own purposes. Whatever other titles he may earn, this priest remains ever a vicar, a representative. As such, he never speaks or acts on his own behalf or authority, but *on the authority of and on behalf of the one who has and does represent us all* and who now desires us to represent him - Christ.”¹⁴ This may be one of the reasons why the image of the *shepherd* for the ministerial priesthood is such a compelling one.

The priest’s *being sent* and *being for others* points essentially to the engagement in an *ongoing dialogue* with those to whom he is *sent*.

Such communication presupposes an intent to and the ability of entering into *genuine dialogue* with the other, with the You, based on the conviction that “each human being has been given a specific ‘mission’ or vocation from God, and, therefore, exists in the order of grace as ‘one who is sent’ by God with a specific ‘task,’”¹⁵ a unique charism,¹⁶ a unique gift. The ‘mission’ which each individual person receives from God, says von Balthasar, is “essentially and socially oriented to all of the other ‘missions’ of all other human beings.”¹⁷

This mission becomes concrete in the context of history for it is in history where the “drama” of God’s initiative and human response is played out. In this concrete human-historical context, the individual person is called to respond to God’s offer creatively as God’s co-operator. Each person –as *imago Dei* – in her/his *distinctness* and *dignity* is uniquely addressed by God and able to give a unique answer to God - to accept God’s gift of freedom which is the ability to either affirm or deny creation and self.¹⁸ It is always the concrete human person (as man or as women) to whom God’s saving action is manifested.¹⁹ Consequently it is always this *dignity* of the human person that ought to be the foundation of any *genuine dialogue*.

calendars. Every single day in October and November of 1975 I wrote messages to my people from prison. Each morning Quang came to take the papers and bring them home so that his brothers and sisters could recopy the messages...” Nguyễn Văn Thuận, *Testimony of Hope: The Spiritual Exercises of John Paul II*, 56-57.

¹⁴ Ratzinger, “Priestly Ministry: A Search for Meaning,” 450-452. Christ “is at the centre of the action. His action pierces through our inefficiency. He remains genuinely effective Lord. This means, however, that he hold the controls in hand and that we are incapable of ever so perfectly failing that we would destroy his purposes.” See also G. Greshake, *Priestersein: Zur Theologie und Spiritualität des priesterlichen Amtes* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 153-163; S. M. Schneiders, “The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (January 1981): 76-92.

¹⁵ H. U. v. Balthasar, “On the concept of person,” *Communio* (Spring 1986), 18-26, here 18.

¹⁶ Charisma indicates a gratuitous gift emanating from the holy Spirit; and one of its essential qualities is its relationality.

¹⁷ Von Balthasar, “On the concept of person,” 18. “Humanity is not simply an aggregate of individuals, nor simply a beehive-like collective person. The Christian vision sees in the mission of Christ a universality that sums up and grounds within itself all of human personhood and the various ‘missions’ of all people.” Von Balthasar, “On the concept of person,” 18.

¹⁸ This is also beautifully expressed by Martin Buber when he writes: “Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique. It is the duty of every person ... to know ... that there has never been anyone like him/her in the world, for if there had been someone like him/her, there would have been no need for him/ her to be in the world.” M. Buber, *The Way of Man: According to the Teachings of Hasidism* (New York: Citadel Press, 1995), 16.

¹⁹ Here I presuppose that the reader is familiar with the foundational catholic concept of theological anthropology. See in particular: J. Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. by Boniface Ramsey, OP (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995); N. Sakharov, *I love therefore I am: the theological legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary

With this we turn to the concept of *mission* in regard to the *dignity* and *charism* of women.

2. Woman - Dignity and Charisma

If this dignity, as pointed out above, is the starting-point, then a woman cannot be defined by her role as wife nor by her role as mother, friend, partner, colleague, competitor, or even as cheap labour...She transcends all these roles.²⁰ “Her value does not depend on whether she fits into one or several of these roles and does justice to them. Her value is determined by the God from whom she comes and for whom she exists. That is why a woman does not exist in the end for the sake of man, nor even for the sake of the family. She finds her meaning neither in her role as devoted companion and mother nor as the worker who supplements and collaborates with the main work performed by man. She does not receive value, dignity, prestige, or position through man. In herself she has value and dignity....”²¹

Equally convinced, Pope John Paul II writes in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: “Rereading Genesis in light of the spousal symbol in the Letter to the Ephesians enables us to grasp a truth which seems to determine in an essential manner the question of women's dignity, and, subsequently, also the question of their vocation: *the dignity of women is measured by the order of love*, which is essentially the order of justice and charity. 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. 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,²² health, works, and whether she is married or single.”²²

To safeguard her dignity is not only the woman's responsibility but is also a task given to the man,²³ since, due to the anthropological truth that both are created in the image of the Trinity, they are oriented toward each other for communion and complementarity²⁴ for “they are called to exist mutually ‘one for the other.’”²⁵

Press, 2002); C.Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996); R. Cessario, *Christian Faith and The Theological Life* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996); W. Kasper, “The Position of Woman as a Problem of Theological Anthropology”, in H. Moll, ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 51-64.

²⁰ Kasper, “The Position of Woman as a Problem of Theological Anthropology,” 57.

²¹ Kasper, “The Position of Woman as a Problem of Theological Anthropology,” 57-58.

²² *Mulieris Dignitatem* 29. Stein writes: A threefold goal is “prescribed by the nature of woman: the development of her humanity, her womanhood, and her individuality. These are not separate goals, just as the nature of a particular human individual is not divided into three parts but is one: it is human nature of a specifically feminine and individual character.” E. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, The Collected Works of Edith Stein/Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Discalced Carmelite, ed. by L. Gelber and R. Leuven, OCD, Vol. 2 (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1987), 10-11.

²³ *Mulieris Dignitatem* 14. See also: John Paul II, *Papal Appeal On Behalf Of Women* (August 29, 1995).

²⁴ *Mulieris Dignitatem* 7.

²⁵ *Mulieris Dignitatem* 7. “Communion in the Trinity is complete unity and simultaneous free unfolding of the differences of the persons and their attributes.” Gisbert Greshake, *Der dreieine Gott. Eine trinitarische Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder 1997), 265. See also E. Stein regarding woman's vocation and the complementation between man and woman. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, 57-85.

In stark contrast to this stands, as Albrecht points out, the claim of a radical feminism expressed in the ideal of the completely autonomous woman who no longer finds her identity in 'partnership' or 'complementarity' with man. She is neither subordinated to man nor attached to him. This 'new woman' achieves her identity in and with herself, in a new and 'autonomous culture,' in a liberated self-esteem, and in an 'explosion of creative fantasy of a sex hitherto powerless.'²⁶

Such an assertion is incongruous with the approach taken in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, where Pope John Paul II writes: "In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to acknowledge and affirm the *true genius* of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation."²⁷ – the culture of death. Some of the consequences of a *culture of death* can only be overcome by such a counter-*culture of life*.

This resonates well with Albrecht's conviction when she highlights, in reference to J. Kentenich,²⁸ the closeness of women to the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is the love between Father and Son in the Holy Trinity; and the Spirit's function in the Church is to bind, to link and to unite. In as much as the Holy Spirit becomes effective in Mary and in women, the war-torn world has a chance to become whole again, because it is fundamentally the Spirit of God who links heaven and earth through women, creating the atmosphere²⁹ "which mediates, which is just 'there' and yet achieves what is really decisive: joining and interlacing..." Women's "primary function is therefore *receptiveness to the Spirit* as exemplified by Mary, the ability to be led and to be taken into service, without making ... [oneself] the centre of attention. In short, it is that attitude which simply is there, gathering and binding together."³⁰

The confirmation of this inevitable link sheds light on the distinctive characteristics of the "genius of women," of the feminine charisma. Some characteristics shall be mentioned here:

- Woman has the task of "redeeming" (in a sense of re-orientation) today's society, today's man and today's culture. Woman's call is that of *giving life in all spheres of life*, in other words: *motherliness*.³¹ It is an animating task and is characteristic of every woman. This is the *Charisma* which she carries into life, be it in positions within the secular world or in the Church, in scientific fields or in the family. Wherever a woman governs leads and directs, she does it as an *animator*, that is her *Charisma* and by acting in this capacity she can contribute towards the change of our present day civilization from a degraded, often brutalized and soulless society into a community which is based on respectful recognition of each others dignity and distinct roles.

²⁶ B. Albrecht: "Is there an Objective Type 'Woman'?" in H. Moll, ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 35-49, here 37. M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (London: The Women's Press, 1995).

²⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 99. John Paul II was keenly aware of the discrimination of women throughout history. Women "have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity." John Paul II, *Letter to Women* (June 29, 1995), 3. See also: John Paul II, *Papal Message On Women's Conference to Mrs. Gertrude Mongella* (May 26, 1995), 2 and 6-7.

²⁸ J. Kentenich, *Bloss Konvention?* (Vallendar: Secretariat of the League of Women, 1977), 9.

²⁹ Albrecht: "Is there an Objective Type 'Woman'?" 48-49.

³⁰ Albrecht: "Is there an Objective Type 'Woman'?" 49. See also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 46.

³¹ "There is nothing that denotes the condition of the world today more profoundly and tragically than the complete absence of the maternal attitude of mind." G. v. Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 82.

- Women are naturally inclined towards the *spiritual and personal*. But one can only speak of a *stronger inclination* on the part of woman, for man also possesses all the values which a woman has, and vice versa.
- By nature a woman has a more strongly developed *intuition* - a thinking which integrates holistically the intellectual, emotional and motivational powers of a person. As such it is integral to the particular feminine intrinsic directedness toward the totality of life and its processes. Such thinking needs to become more effective in the different spheres of Church life and society so that it penetrates all areas related to human life in style, language, symbolism, etc.³²
- Another characteristic is the greater *inclination towards contact with life*. Woman has a greater natural connection with life already from the psychological point of view. This is because she is so close to life, she is the one who nurtures life. This is true even on the purely spiritual level. Therefore, woman naturally possesses a greater ability to understand people. This ability to understand others includes taking in the rhythm of life of the other, believing in the mission and the good qualities in the person, and by kindness and understanding lending support to all that is genuine and good.³³

These are some qualities which are germinally present in woman's character - and whenever these qualities are suppressed, ignored, rejected, the charisma of woman is missing and we can speak of a one-sided underdeveloped humanity in Church and society. Women have to seek their fulfillment as woman in a harmonious fruitful integration with man based on a respectful recognition of different charismas given to each other. For that reason it is important that to the various areas of life in society in which she works woman is privileged to bring the human quality of sensitivity and concern which is uniquely hers.³⁴

3. The Church and Women

Only through openly acknowledging the *personal dignity* of women is the first step taken in promoting the full participation of women in Church life as well as in social and public life. Vatican II has expressed this clearly in the document on the Laity: "Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."³⁵

Regarding the sharing in the apostolic mission of the Church, there is no doubt that in virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, a woman -as well as a man- is made a sharer in the threefold

³² See here in particular: G. Erhard, *Zur sozialen Rolle der Frau: Das Konzept von P. Josef Kentenich in der Begegnung mit Ansätzen der Gegenwart* (Vallendar-Schönstatt: Schönstatt-Verlag, 1996), 128, 142.

³³ "The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that *God entrusts the human being to her in a special way.... A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting*, strong because of the fact that God 'entrusts the human being to her', always and in every way, even in the situations of social discrimination in which she may find herself. This awareness and this fundamental vocation speak to women of the dignity which they receive from God himself, and this makes them 'strong' and strengthens their vocation." *Mulieris Dignitatem* 30. "The Church gives thanks for all the manifestations of the feminine 'genius' which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and nations; she gives thanks for all the charismas which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the People of God, for all the victories which she owes to their faith, hope and charity: she gives thanks for all the fruits of feminine holiness." *Mulieris Dignitatem* 31.

³⁴ Kentenich, *Bloss Konvention?* See also: Helen Alvaré, *A new Feminism* (originally published in *Liguorian*, May 1997) http://campus.udayton.edu/mary//resources/new_feminism.html.

³⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 9, in Pope John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, 49.

mission of Jesus Christ, Priest, Prophet and King, and is thereby charged and given the ability to fulfill the fundamental apostolate of the Church: *evangelization*.³⁶

In her participation in the life and mission of the Church a woman cannot receive the *Sacrament of Orders*, and therefore, cannot fulfill the function proper to the ministerial priesthood.³⁷ Here is the area of *function*, not of *dignity* and *holiness*. In fact, it must be maintained: “Although the Church possesses a 'hierarchical' structure, nevertheless this structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ's members.”³⁸

*Above all the acknowledgment in theory of the active and responsible presence of woman in the Church must be realized in practice*³⁹ ... participation on diocesan and parochial Pastoral Councils as well as Diocesan Synods and particular Councils, research and theological teaching.⁴⁰

This same “discernment”, made possible and demanded from Christian women's participation in the prophetic mission of Christ and his Church, recurs with continued urgency throughout history, particularly the task of *bringing full dignity to the conjugal life and to motherhood*⁴¹, and the task of *assuring the moral dimension of culture*, the dimension, namely of a *culture worthy of the person*, of one's personal and social life.⁴²

Orientation in how to live the diverse missions in the Church – in view of the priest and the woman – out of the awareness of “being sent,” is given in the person of *Mary, the Mother of God*.

³⁶ *Christifidelis Laici*, 51.

³⁷ *Inter Insigniores* AAS 69 (1977) 98-116. Regarding women, priesthood and the universal priesthood of the people of God, see: Jean Galot, *Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 262-264, 105-128; H. U. von Balthasar, *New Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 187-98; Balthasar, H.U. von, “Women priests? A Marian Church in a fatherless and motherless culture,” *Communio* 22 (1995): 164-170; Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (Strathfield: St Pauls Publ., 2004).

³⁸ *Mulieris Dignitatem* 27. “The fact that women are not admitted to the priesthood has to be seen as a defence of the woman's specific call. Whoever interprets this exclusion as a degradation of women seems to misunderstand the role of office in the Church. It is not, of course, a right which anybody may claim; nor is it a position of power that may be coveted to improve social standing. If the priesthood were such, then it might indeed be an injustice to exclude women. But priestly ordination is not conferred for honour and privilege, but for service and sacrifice. The priest, too, has to learn from Mary, ‘a creature of courage and obedience’, who was neither priest nor bishop but always Church.” J. Burggraf, „Woman's Dignity and Function in Church and Society,” 103-114, here 113. See also von Balthasar: In distinguishing between authority (*Vollmacht*) and power (*Macht*), he “exhorts against exalting the service of bishops and priest in terms of power. It is a misunderstanding of the priesthood to propose it in terms of a power fundamentally inaccessible to women. Clericalism in the Church has indeed at times presented becoming a priest or bishop as a culmination of Church membership. But it is love, not power, which reigns in the Christian economy. Office-holders always have to look to the Marian existential form of holiness and, on the basis of this existential priesthood common to all, exercise their ministerial authority.” B. Leahy, *The Marian Profile: In the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000), 181.

³⁹ *Christifidelis Laici* 50.

⁴⁰ “Without discrimination women should be participants in the life of the Church, and also in consultation and the process of coming to decisions Women, who already hold places of great importance in transmitting the faith and offering every kind of service in the life of the Church, ought to be associated in the preparation of pastoral and missionary documents and ought to be recognized as co-operators in the mission of the church in the family, in professional life and in the civil community.” “Propositio” 47, in *Christifidelis Laici* 51.

⁴¹ *Christifidelis Laici* 51.

⁴² *Christifidelis Laici* 51.

4. The Marian Principle in the Church

Mary is so central to our faith that the Orthodox theologian Schmemmann speaks of her as “the climax, the personification, the affirmation of the ultimate destiny of all creation: that God may finally be all in all, may fill things with himself. The world is the *receptacle* of his glory, and in this it is *feminine*. Being the *icon* of the Church, *Mary* is the image and personification of the world. When God looks at his creation, the *face* of the world is *feminine*, not masculine.”⁴³

There is an intimate connection between Schmemmann’s view and von Balthasar’s concept of the *Marian Principle* in the Church. For von Balthasar at the centre of the New Testament portrait of *Mary* stands her unconditional commitment to God (Luke 1:26-56). “The *Marian fiat* is—in its perfection unequalled—the all-embracing, protective and directive form for the whole ecclesial life. It is the interior form of *communio*, insofar as this is an unlimited mutual acceptance, far more than a human ‘getting along together’ or fraternization ... that her attitude becomes foundational for the Church....”⁴⁴

Balthasar explains further: “Christ is entrusted to the hands of *Mary* at birth and at his death: this is more central than his being given into the hands of the Church in her official, public aspect. The former is the precondition for the latter. Before the masculine, official side appears in the Church, the Church as the woman, the helpmate of the Man, is already there. And it is only possible for the presbyters to exercise their office in the Church of the incarnate, crucified and risen One if they are sustained by the ‘supra-official’ Woman who cherishes and nurtures this official side: for she alone utters the yes that is necessary if the incarnation of the Word is to take place.”⁴⁵

Within this context Balthasar distinguishes a twofold way in which *Mary* personifies the Church:

To begin with, the “countenance of the Church is a *Marian* transparency to Christ; and secondly, as the mother who generated the Word from which the Church is born, and as the bride who co-operates with Christ in the event of redemption.”⁴⁶

This is beautifully described in the *Theo-Drama*: She cannot claim him [Christ] “as her own, she can only hand him on to the others, to the Church. But it is precisely in this gesture, in which *Mary* renounces her ‘I’, that her unlimited mission comes to light... her *mission*, in the feminine and creaturely mode, is to let things happen; as such it is perfectly congruent with the masculine and divine mission of the Son. Thus it is a concrete, realized *prototype of the Church*,

⁴³ A. Schmemmann, “On Mariology in Orthodoxy,” *Marian Library Studies* 1 (1970) 25-32, here 30-31. Gregory of Palmas, who speaks of *Mary* as “a created person brings together in herself all perfections, both created and uncreated, the complete realizations of the beauty of creation.” Gregory of Palamas, “In Dormitionem,” *PG, CLI*, 468. See also *Test Everything: Hold fast to what is good. An Interview with Hans Urs von Balthasar by Angelo Scola* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 81-83.

⁴⁴ H. U. von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 208. „Without Mariology Christianity is in danger of becoming inhuman. The Church becomes functionalistic, without soul, a hectic enterprise without resting place, alienated by over-planning. Because in this male-masculine world one new ideology replaces another, everything becomes polemical, critical, bitter, humourless, and ultimately boring. People desert such a church in droves.” H. U. v. Balthasar, *Klarstellungen. Zur Prüfung der Geister* (Freiburg, Herder: 1971), 72.

⁴⁵ H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* IV (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 397.

⁴⁶ Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 66; H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* III (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 352.

and *all other particular missions in the Church will be integrated into it*. Doubtless this will not be done by Mary herself but by the Spirit, who is also the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit who, in anticipation, fashioned the Mother and her consent after the pattern of the Son's 'Not my will but thine be done.'⁴⁷

Further, he highlights the interplay between the *Marian and Petrine principles*. These are the two co-extensive profiles of the Church around which the entire life of the Church revolves. Their interaction is intimately linked with the Church's own identity as a *unity of two*, Christ and his Bride: if Peter is the point of external unity then the missionary communion of the Church finds her more fundamental internal point of unity in her Marian archetype and Marian personal centre.⁴⁸

In the Holy Spirit the inter-action of the *Marian and Petrine principle* generates the existential Marian transparency of the whole life of the Church -radiating Christ to the world- and this is the *feminine Marian profile of the whole Church*. The whole Church sees in Mary what she is and what she is called to become. The People of God has a Marian profile. And this is the Church's beauty. In a certain sense, it is by re-living Mary that the Church rediscovers what she is and how she is to be: servant of the Father, Spouse of the Word, vessel of the Spirit and thus mother of all.⁴⁹

5. To be a *Marian Person* [Man and Woman]

From the above it becomes obvious that Mary as the *new woman*⁵⁰ has a unique place and mission at the centre of salvation history. The mystery of the incarnation and the redemption cannot be thought of without Mary. It is through this, her unique role, in the drama of salvation, that she becomes the exemplary model of the human person and for the human person.

Roten succinctly illustrates this when he distinguishes Mary not only as "actor in the event and process of salvation history" but also as the "recipient of salvation, and thus a redeemed

⁴⁷ H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, 352.

⁴⁸ Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 66. Theo-Drama III, 352; In this he echoes Lubac's profound insight: "Mary is figured in the Church, and the Church is figured in Mary." H. De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist, 1963), 205. See also H.U. von Balthasar, *A Short Primer for Unsettled Laymen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 88-97.

⁴⁹ Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 161-162.

Balthasar speaks of three circles of the Church's unity: Firstly, he writes of the *inner circle* of the Church. It is the '*supra-ministerial*' *Marian dimension* of the Church. Because the first cell of the Church is the Christ-Mary relationship, the inner Marian circle is the all-embracing holiness that unites us within the spousal encounter with Jesus Christ. This inner circle is the Church of the saints, where the mystery of the triune life is perfectly received, embodied, lived in communion and communicated. The *second circle* is the *Petrine ministerial or institutional one*. It too is co-extensive with the Marian in its reach. The hierarchical, institutional dimension of the Church, itself vivified by the Holy Spirit, plays a formative, nourishing role within the Bride, ensuring contact with the transcendent form-giving source of the Christ event. It is through the Eucharist, that we 'no longer live, but Christ lives in us' and we find ourselves in the bosom of the Father. Finally, the *third circle* is the *fruit of the inter-action of the Marian and Petrine principles*, the Marian profile of the Church. Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 161-162.

⁵⁰ Mary "is called the 'new' person. "New in biblical and Christian thinking, so Scheffczyk, means something that not existed so far, something that is unique and definitive. Mary as the 'new' woman does not mean she should be defined in terms of our modern conceptions. The reality of Mary cannot be expressed in socio-political terms. 'New' within the context of salvation history denotes rather 'a reality which is ever new compared with what is old and discarded; a reality which so overflowing rich that it can never become old or depleted. 'New' here means something definitive and timeless which lies beyond the claim and disposal of any particular age.' 'New' thus denotes a permanent reality which offers its wealth to any and all generations." J. Burggraf, "Woman's Dignity and Function in Church and Society," in Moll, H., ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 103-114, here 108.

creature.” This fully graced person –the *Immaculata*– is indeed both a “fully and perfectly redeemed person”⁵¹ and the “ideal of faith,” and thus is justly acclaimed as the “personal summit of the faithful. Redeeming grace was given to her in abundance, but it needed to be received in faith and lived out in obedience patterned on the *Fiat* of the Annunciation.”⁵²

The *Immaculata* not only points to a beautiful beginning that originates from God who is faithful but a beginning with the end in view (in Mary’s case the Assumption). God always envisages the whole. Although it applies in the first place to Mary it nevertheless holds a rich promise for all of us⁵³ – from Baptism, the graced beginning, to the eschatological fulfilment, the *visio beata*.

Subsequently, her role in the life of the believer is one of concretizing, as she did at the outset of the history of incarnation. She connects, brings together and –most importantly– points beyond herself – showing us how to relate to God and to others. From the Annunciation to Pentecost every reference to Mary in the New Testament is relational. By virtue of the *donum integritatis* her relationality reflects harmony, it is ordered and just. Her portrait - from her first Yes to the You until her presence at Golgotha and at Pentecost - gives evidence to a profound development in her dialog with the You: through creative interaction, through passive and active transformation transformation, through receiving and giving.⁵⁴ “Mary reserves no area of being, life, and will for herself as a private possession: instead, precisely in the total dispossession of self, in giving herself to God, she comes to the true possession of self.”⁵⁵

According to Balthasar, Mary’s interaction with God (as fulfilled in the Annunciation event) is the *exemplary event of the God-human relation* - encouraging every person to creatively participate fully in the glorious liberty of the children of God.⁵⁶

The centrality of Mary’s *fiat* reveals what is at stake in the human person’s dialogue with God: what it is to be a person, what it means “to be sent”, to have a mission and to become fruitful in that gratuitous response to God⁵⁷ – it is the integral beauty of a *Marian* person.

This integral beauty of the *Marian* person finds expression in the woman in the form of a genuine *spiritual motherhood* (as indicated above) and in the man, here in particular, in the priest in the form of a genuine *spiritual fatherhood*.

⁵¹ See K. Rahner, “The Immaculate Conception,” *Theological Investigations* I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 201-213, here 206-207 and K. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), 44-47.

⁵² Lk 1: 26-38. J. G. Roten, “Marian Devotion for the New Millennium,” *Marian Studies* 51 (2000): 52-95, here 61-62. See in this context: J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 69. See also Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, trans. B. Buby (New York: Alba House, 1992); J. G., Roten, “Marian Anthropological Dimensions,” in D. L. Schindler, ed., *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991); R. Novotny, “Making Mary’s Yes Our Own: A Study of Theological Personhood,” *Marian Studies* LVI (2005), 101-122.; I. Naumann, “Mary as the Anthropological Model in the Thought of J. Kentenich,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* LIX, I (2009): 31-47.

⁵³ Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 47-50.

⁵⁴ J. G. Roten, “Marian Light on Our Human Mystery,” in B. McGregor and T. Norris, *The Beauty of Christ: A Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 112-139.

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 70; A. López, “Mary, Certainty of our Hope,” *Communio* 35 (Summer 2008): 174-199, here 197; F. Martin, “Feminist theology: a proposal,” *Communio* 20 (Summer, 1993): 334-376, here 372-373.

⁵⁶ Rom. 8:21. Novotny, “Making Mary’s Yes Our Own: A Study of Theological Personhood,” 101-122.

⁵⁷ López “Mary, Certainty of our Hope,” 178-179. See in this context I. Naumann, “Is Mary a Manifestation of the Maternal Face of God?” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* LIX, II (2009): 273-282.

In a contemporary study, George Aschenbrenner, delineates a portrait of the 21st century priest. In that portrait he emphasises four essential qualities, which I would claim as *Marian* qualities – *contemplation, gratitude, vulnerability, and generosity*⁵⁸ – qualities which seem to be particularly pertinent within the framework of these reflections. It shall suffice to list these qualities without going into detail. They speak for themselves and may generate a renewed sense of priestly dignity, commitment and mission.

Contemplation is the ability to see beyond the surface; it is a long, loving look at the real.⁵⁹ “In a long, loving look, we realize that the real has hidden depths of being, of goodness, of beauty, and that it stretches far beyond what can be seen, heard, and felt.”⁶⁰ As such, contemplation entrances us with God in a spousal simplicity and joy.⁶¹

Gratitude ... “springs from and depends upon the all-encompassing, central contemplative focus. Rather than a superficial emotional impulse on the skin of the soul, this gratitude responds to the gradual contemplative discovery that *all* is *gift* from God’s long, loving, never-failing gaze.”⁶²

Vulnerability: “Hardly to be avoided, but not easily acknowledged in honesty, vulnerability lifts the gaze of our hearts beyond ourselves and toward others. Though vulnerability can confuse and shame us, something stirs deep within: a desire for the support, encouragement, simply the presence of others.... Weakness and inadequacy, when locked in loneliness, are intensified and dash hopes, whereas shared vulnerability is always part of genuine community, brings encouragement and throws open the window of hope.”⁶³

Generosity and Generativity: “Generosity will extend and en flesh contemplation in the challenges of daily loving service, a genuinely generous service that does not count the cost. In this way, contemplation, as it matures will transform some hearts and lead beyond the natural attractiveness of the physical to the genuine generativity of a *spiritual fatherhood*.”⁶⁴ This *spiritual fatherhood* “is a fatherhood which engenders life in others and leads them to a mature Christian life in the freedom of the children of God. Its aim is the *transformation in Christ*.”⁶⁵

For the priest, *spiritual fatherhood* translates into a genuine affirmative response to the question ‘Do you love me?’ Joseph Kentenich, while imprisoned by the National Socialists, framed it this way: “Our main vocation is not our visible occupation; our main vocation is and remains to love. Our main vocation is to love and to learn to love. I had this truth before my eyes

⁵⁸ G. Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” *Chicago Studies* 45, 2 (2006): 183-203.

⁵⁹ Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 194.

⁶⁰ Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 194-195.

⁶¹ “Celibacy, as a religious response to an invitation that is even more inspiringly religious, requires profound contemplation. Many currents in the air flow of 21st C. culture will need to be purified and transformed so that contemplation’s long, loving look may spark in human hearts the radiant glow of authentic celibacy.” Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 196-197.

⁶² Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 197.

⁶³ Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 198.

⁶⁴ Aschenbrenner, “Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture,” 200.

⁶⁵ Archbishop R. Zollitsch [President of the German Bishops Conference], *The Priest as Father, Talk given to young priests and permanent deacons in Veszprem, Hungary, 3 April 2008* (Manuscript, Schoenstatt Diocesan Priest Institute, 2008).

when I was in the bunker [solitary confinement]: By not being able to do anything [here] in the bunker I am able to love God. Perfect love is perfect freedom.”⁶⁶

This word of a saintly priest sheds light on what is truly essential: It is not the brilliance of the mind, of the intellect but the *brilliance of the heart* that makes a person [priest] a truly great person, a truly *Marian* Person.

6. Conclusion: *Hodegetria* – Mary, the guide on the way

In discussing the ecclesiology of Vatican II, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, said the following:

“The Church is not an apparatus; she is not simply an institution; neither is she only one of the usual sociological entities – she is a person. She is a Woman. She is a Mother. She is alive. The Marian understanding of the Church is the most decisive antithesis to a merely organizational and bureaucratic concept of Church. We cannot make the Church; we have *to be* the Church. It is only in the measure in which faith, above and beyond doing, forges our being, that we *are* Church and the Church is in us. Only in *being Marian* do we become the Church. Also at the beginning, the Church was not made, but born. She was born when the *fiat* emerged from the soul of Mary. This is the most profound desire of the Council: that the Church awakens in our souls. *Mary shows us the way.*”⁶⁷

In a manner of winding up these *reflections let me point to Mary as the Hodegetria – Mary, our guide on the way.*

We might be familiar with the Russian Icon, the *Mother of God of Smolensk* from the XVIth century. The icon is of the type called *Hodegetria* – “She who leads the way.” Both the Virgin and the Child are represented full face, turned toward the viewer, toward us – the object of their love and concern.

Mary, the Mother of God, is the *guide*. She is the “the most eminent member of the Church” and its model but she is also as the permanent companion and associate of Christ in his work of redemption, the Mother of the Church. And in this capacity she is *guide* and *educator* of the people of God.⁶⁸

May we ask the Virgin Mary to guide and educate us, so that, according to our unique calling –be it as priests, men or women– we continue to build up the Body of Christ.

⁶⁶ J. Kentenich, Unpublished Manuscript.

⁶⁷ J. Ratzinger, The Ecclesiology of Vatican II, *Origins* 15 (1985-86):370-376, here 376.

⁶⁸ “In her motherly love, she is concerned about her Son's sisters and brothers still on pilgrimage, in their dangers and trials, until they are brought to the happiness of their homeland.” *Lumen gentium* 62-63, 65.