

"Male and Female He Created Them"

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This article is the transcript of a talk given at Human Life International's World Conference on Love, Life and the Family in Houston, Texas, in 1993.

The Bible is quite explicit: God did intend to create human beings of two different sexes, even though they shared equal metaphysical dignity, equal nobility, and the very same destiny. He clearly had His own divine plan in mind, and we ought to discover reverently what this plan is, for it will give us guidelines as to how we- men and women - should shape our lives in order to conform to our Creator's design. It would make no sense whatever to create beings that are clearly different and then have them perform absolutely identical functions. It is therefore of great importance to grasp what are the differences of structure between these two beings, so clearly complementary.

Let us recall Adam's joy upon seeing Eve: "This at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, (Gen. 2, 23), he exclaimed. God made them for each other, and intended them to live united in the holiness of matrimony: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen.2-24). Marriage is clearly meant to be the closest, the most intimate, the most personal union that can exist between two human beings.

These two beings were also meant to collaborate with each other not only in the sacred mission of bringing new human beings into the world and educating them, but also in helping each other on their way to heaven. One cannot imagine a more beautiful and more loving plan than the one God had forged for our first parents. After having created these two human creatures to his image and likeness, God invited them to become co-creators with him, and this co-creation was to be the fruit of a most intimate mutual self-donation of the spouses to each other. Indeed, the child was meant to be a fruit of their love, for love is always fruitful.

Let us briefly mention the most striking structural differences between men and women - and let us remark emphatically that these differences were meant – not to separate them, not to divide them- but to bring them closer together; for these differences - far from being antithetical –are enriching and complementary differences.

Clarity and precision of intellect are typical characteristics of the human male; fascination with intellectual queries, and with all sorts of problems that call for a solution. Each intellectual difficulty is for man an obstacle to be conquered; every riddle electrifies him. Far from packing in front of problems, man experiences a sort of fascination which marshalls all his powers, and admirably coordinates them. Hence his proverbial "objectively"; his marked preference for what is abstract, theoretical, impersonal, non-living. He delights in directing his attention into the world of "ideas", hypotheses, theories. Moreover, a man has a better control than a woman over his emotions; in certain domains, he has fewer emotions to control, and is talented at keeping them at bay when concentrating on objective difficulties.

Moreover, man is characterized by a constant drive toward activities of all sorts; to act, to do, to mend, to repair, to direct, to invent, to experiment; for this reason, it is often more difficult for man than for

woman to be purely contemplative; every novel experience triggers in him a flow of ideas which, in turn, are likely to lead beyond themselves. Is it surprising that all great discoverers and inventors in mathematics, science and technology have been men? When absorbed by theoretical problems, a man's mind travels freely in uncharted spheres to be conquered, while his heart and his emotions are totally in background. Men have also been the great "creators" in the history of the world: great generals, great mathematicians, great scientists, great writers, great musicians, great architects, great painters and sculptors. It is tempting at this point to declare the male sex is definitely superior to the female one.

This talent for leadership, for action, clearly marks him out for the priesthood.

Man's physical strength is superior to that of women; for this reason, men have also been the great killers of mankind: whether in war or in hunting. (This was true until abortion –alas- was legalized; now women collaborate with men in butchering the unborn, and seem to try to catch up with them.)

But according to the divine plan, this physical strength, prowess, and noble courage were given to men not only to act as providers for their family, but also as protectors of those who- weaker than they were- were confided to their care. Chivalry is a banner under which all men are called upon to march.

In woman, on the other hand, the heart is in the foreground; as a matter of fact, she is characterized (as my late husband writes), by a remarkable meld of heart and mind; for her mind works best when it is animated by her heart, and to her apply particularly the profound words of the great French writer Pascal: "Le Coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait pas". (The heart has its reasons that reason does not know of.) This should not be interpreted to mean that woman is less intelligent than man; but she clearly has a different type of intelligence: less analytic, less systematic, less geared toward abstraction, but more intuitive, richer in nuances, and more likely to embrace a whole situation instead of concentrating on just one of its facets. Indeed, woman is usually more geared toward the concrete than toward the abstract; more toward the personal than toward the impersonal (hence her love for babies); more toward the living than the non-living; she is drawn to the whole (body and soul, mind and heart), and usually shuns dissecting things and reducing them to their parts. A little girl playing with a doll would not dream of cutting her up, to see "what is inside"; a boy can be so puzzled by a toy that he has no peace until he has discovered "how it works" which in many cases, means to rip it open and destroy it. In women, the human has absolute precedence over the non-human. Woman is characterized by a rich receptivity (a far cry from passivity) which essentially implies a synchronization and collaboration with others, a willingness to give herself, to open herself to those she trusts, and to let herself be fecundated. This is beautifully expressed and symbolized in the sexual sphere; for objectively, while it is in fact- the husband who give his wife a living seed and she "only" receives it; nevertheless we say: "she gave herself to him".

In saying: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy Word", the holy Virgin shed light on the greatness and sublimity of receptivity; in His eternal wisdom, God had decided that these sublime words, should be an indispensable condition for the incarnation of the Saviour of mankind to take place.

The crucial importance of receptivity is also strikingly expressed by the fact that a woman when fecundated by a living seed, (which is so tiny that is invisible to the human eye), gives back to her husband a human being made to God's image and likeness. There is a total discrepancy between what she receives and what she gives back: namely, a human person made to God's image and likeness; let us not forget that God creates the soul in the female body.

Being essentially receptive, in the deepest sense of this term, woman was not meant to exercise priestly functions; but she is called upon to be mother to a priest; for every priest must have a mother: starting with the Priest par excellence: Christ himself. Clearly one cannot be mother and son simultaneously.

This structural characteristic has nothing to do with a question of inferiority or superiority; as Mother Teresa of Calcutta put it: "There was one person fully entitled to say: "this is my body; this is my blood"; and this person, -the Holy Virgin, - was not called to the priesthood". For woman is essentially mother, and by this we do not limit ourselves to biological maternity-sublime and important as it is; let us not forget that consecrated virgins-like a mother Teresa of Calcutta-are the most motherly of all mothers, and have the most children.

Whereas very few men are called to become priests, all women are called upon to be mothers. For independently of whether or not a woman has children of her own flesh, she is called upon to give herself, to protect what is weak (hence the abomination of abortion), to nurture, to let her tenderness flow toward what is helpless and weak; basically, maternity is the willingness to suffer so that another person may live.

Woman has a greater sensitivity than her male counterpart, and less control over her emotions; hence she cries more easily than man does. Far from being an expression of weakness, tears- when they are called for- express beautifully the unity which exists between body and soul; the soul is saddened; the body sheds tears; for woman in particularly "unified"; her body and her soul synchronize in a special way; she functions best as a whole.

Woman tends to manifest her emotions, and is not ashamed of them. She easily "feels herself into others", (hence the words of The Holy Virgin at Cana: "they have no more wine"-a typical female remark), and for that reason, often knows others better than men do, for she is gifted with a greater empathy. Because of her sensitivity, she usually worries more than a man does, and has a greater sense of "compassion". (From the Latin: to suffer with.)

While physically weaker than man, she is often more resilient than he is; the number of widows is much greater than the number of widowers.

Chesterton remarks (and rightly so) that whereas men talk about a topic, and at the end of a long conversation often do not recall who has said what-woman talk to each other, remaining aware at all times of the attitudes and responses of their partners, conscious of their facial expression, of their clothing and their idiosyncrasies.

What we have said should suffice to indicate the beauty and depth of the divine plan in creating two different genders. What a noble and enriching mission they have toward each other; how desperately they need each other in order for them to enrich their humanity, and live it in all its plenitude.

But alas, this plan was tragically jeopardized by original sin. We should never stop grieving over its dreadful consequences: first and foremost, because man was separated from God. But this terrible separation-which is at present not out theme-was also going to have dramatic human consequences. And this is the theme to which we shall dedicate much of this talk: for a common sin creates a chasm between the sinners, and Adam and Eve were to discover that this abyss was so profound that they could not- by their unaided efforts- span it.

Genesis tells us that both Adam and Eve were severely punished: but apart from the chastisements which they fully shared, Adam was condemned to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow (a penalty which Eve usually shares with him); while she was made subject to her husband, condemned to bear her children in pain, and to give birth in anguish. These are clearly burdens, which she alone carries.

The sweet union which up to original sin, had united Adam to his wife, was now severely compromised. For man's revolt against God had the inevitable consequences that the very structure of both Adam and Eve was thwarted and distorted; moreover their bodies started revolting against their souls which, up to that time, had given their bodies their cue.

The noble male characteristic outlined above, now tended to degenerate; man's strength and prowess became exposed to the danger of brutality; his vitality could now be poisoned by coarseness and callousness; his protective instinct and chivalrous quality threatened to be stifled and turned into sheer egotism. Now that he was officially given dominion over Eve, he became exposed to the temptation of abusing his position of authority, and of using it, not for the good of his spouse, but for his own selfish interest and advantage. Instead of looking up to Eve as a great gift of God, he now knew the temptation of looking down upon her, as responsible for his fall, and as inferior to him. (This depressing thought was given a cynical expression by the French writer Paul Valerieu: "God created man and, finding him not sufficiently alone, gave him a female companion to make him feel his solitude more keenly". (French Quotations, p. 383)

And alas, Eve's body which up to now Adam had approached with trembling reverence, suddenly appeared to him as an object of pleasure, capable of satisfying the craving of his flesh which, now, arose in him independently of love. Concupiscence had made its entry into this world and with it its sad cortege of vices.

Alas, Eve suffered similar deformations: her sensitivity which had been given to her to feel herself into others, to understand and love them, now became thwarted, and she became exposed to the temptation of turning toward herself, of feeling sorry for herself, of catering to herself. How easily now can female sensitively degenerate into languishing sentimentality, -a perverse, self-centered enjoyment of one's feeling, -instead of realizing that these feelings should be other -directed, and benefit them.

How easily can she now become over-concerned about trivialities; how often can her noble and sensitive heart now misguide her, because instead of collaborating with her intellect, it is now exposed to the temptation to dethrone reason and follow blind, irrational feelings. Eve now knew the temptation of admiring her own charm, and contemplating herself with refined vanity; she who, up to then, knew that the beauty God had endowed her with, was destined to be given to her spouse for his joy, now became tempted by narcissism. She now realized that her charm could be used to "capture" the human male, and dominate him in a refined manner. Hence the expression "she is his mistress".

Our first parents lost sight of the true meaning of spousal love and consequently of sex as an expression of this love. They lost sight of the greatness of the mission that man and women have toward each other. The two sexes became potential rivals and enemies.

We could go on and on: because in fact, there is not a single male or female trait that, in some way, has not been damaged by original sin.

Alas, from now on, the sweet confidence which existed between our first parents was replaced by mistrust: and because they no longer fully trusted each other, they were now exposed to the temptation of playing deceptive games: he to conquer her; she to defend herself with the female tools of craftiness and duplicity.

It can be said that one of the dreadful consequences of original sin - surprisingly rarely mentioned - is that from this moment on, Adam was tempted to look at Eve from the outside, registering all her weaknesses and faults, and in some way nailing her on these faults: "Frailty, thy name is woman" - strikingly expresses this - while losing sight of her true being, and of her true mission. And Eve paid him back with interest by viewing her husband as domineering, callous, selfish, pleasure - seeking and impure.

Truly, they were now both ousted from the earthly paradise of the loving adoration of their Creator, and of the sweetness of mutual self-donation in the enjoyment of a love that flew from the source of all love: God himself.

In the secular society in which we now live, the characteristics which are mostly praised and valued are success, accomplishments, fame, money, power, creativity. These "secular" trump-cards are encapsulated in the words: "self-made man"; whether we think of a Ross Perot or a Donald Trump, these men are admired because they made it, because they command an immense fortune, because they seem to be embodiments of worldly success. Everybody knows their names; and deep down, very many men yearn to follow in their footsteps; they are role models!

Hand in hand with an overestimation of male accomplishments, we find a systematic denigration of female accomplishments: child-bearing, child-rearing, domestic tasks. This over-estimation of accomplishments is a clear consequence of original sin.

The feminist revolution can be explained by the fact that-according to its philosophy-men have monopolized these "trumps", and, for this reason, dominate the world; consequently the female sex was bound to be totally relegated to the background, and denied its "right" to take its place under the sun. This is the warp and woof of Simone de Beauvoir's famous book: *The Second Sex*. The female liberation movement aims, therefore, at breaking the bonds which have tied women to Kirche, Kueche and Kindern (church, kitchen and children), and give her a chance of entering into the "real", valuable, objective world-a world in which they can finally compete with men and prove to them that they are just as good as their male counterparts. Feminists who, according to Chesterton, dislike female characteristics look down upon sacrifice, self-giving, compassion, tenderness, and view these noble traits as characteristics that the selfish male has purposely nurtured in women in order to keep them under his thumb.

What these misguided females totally overlook - blinded as they are by their endorsement of radical secularism - is that if these male accomplishments (success, fame, power, money, etc) are so highly praised in our society - and there is no denying this fact-it is because since original sin we are all exposed to the temptation of gauging a person's value according to his exterior accomplishments, and no longer according to what he is as a person. We tend to elevate them into absolutes (and death reveals them to be tragic absolutes, for they all end in smoke and dust), and we totally lose sight of the unum necessaries, the one thing necessary: to love God and our neighbor in God. The tragedy of radical feminists is that having chosen to compete with men - they necessarily end not by being a male counterpart but a male-counterfeit.

In both *The Trojan Horse in the City of God*, and *the Devastated Vineyard*, my late husband has deplored the fact that so-called "modern man" has lost the sense of the supernatural: that is, this message of divine love which finds its most sublime manifestation in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity: the God-Man in whom lives all the plenitudes of the divinity and who chose to come to this earth as a helpless babe born of a woman. As St. Augustine put it: the festering wound of pride, which was original sin, could only be cured by the humility of the God-man who being divine by nature, did not shun to take the shape of a slave. And the same St. Augustine tells us that whereas he found very many admirable virtues in the pagan world, he could in it, find no trace of either humility or true charity. For these are virtues which can blossom in the human soul only through the personal revelation of God, and imply a confrontation between man's nothingness and God's absoluteness, between infinite poverty and infinite love.

But secularism has now veiled the sublime beauty of revelation, and it necessarily follows that what weak-sighted men now perceive as "important", are the deceitful goods which appeal to their pride and concupiscence: power and money.

The picture is dark. And yet, we hope to succeed in showing that sad as the actual state of the world is, hopeless as it looks when viewed without faith, there is hope because humans, wounded while distorted by sin, were not fundamentally corrupted, (as Luther claimed), and because God never abandons those who turn to Him with boundless confidence.

True, human nature has been wounded; true, the world in which we now live is cursed with stories of fornication, adulteries, wife-bashing, divorces, abandoned children, crimes, sexual perversions, and, alas, abortion. Television screens show what man has made of himself and to himself: is it surprising that despair is rampant in our society and that people escape into alcohol and drugs?

But even though the relationship existing between men and women seems to be gravely jeopardized, nevertheless, true human love can be resuscitated from the ruins of our contemporary civilization, true spousal love - and its noble fruits, children - can blossom once again, provided we put our trust in God, collaborate with his grace and try- with his help - to re-build the devastated city in which we currently find ourselves.

In this last work, *The Laws*, Plato deplores the "hardness of the human heart"; but noble and great as Plato was, he could not heal this ugly disease; he diagnosed the sickness; he could not offer the ultimate cure because he did not know that the Creator of the Universe was a person whose name is love. In *Ezechiel*, on the contrary, we find the following petition: " Take away our heart of stone, o Lord, and replace it with a heart of flesh". And in the New Testament, we have received the unfathomable gift of the Incarnation: God becoming man, a God in whom inhabits all the plenitudes of the divinity, and who, simultaneously, has a human heart, a heart that can suffer, and that can be wounded, identical to us in all things excepts sin.

Surprisingly enough, the heart has been neglected and even denigrated by many philosophers (there are a few notable exceptions). I say that this is surprising because, it should be obvious that the heart can be called the real delft of the person. When we love another person, we say to him; "I give you my heart"; when that person is incapable of loving, we say "he has no heart". In the Old Testament, we are told that we should give God our heart (" Da mihi cor tuum"). Christ tells us that He is "gentle and humble of heart"; we pray "that our heart may become like unto his". And in the Catholic prayer life, we are blessed with a sublime Litany of the Heart of Jesus.

If the role of the heart is so prominent in religious life, why is it that so little attention has been paid to it in philosophical writings?

Aristotle, for example, claims that man is superior to animal because of his intellect and will; whereas feelings, he adds, are experiences which he shares with them.

Granted that an animal can feel cold, hungry, thirsty, can feel pleasure and pain, this fact does not justify Aristotle's claim; it just shows that there are some feelings that man and animals share. As a matter of fact, the word "feeling" is equivocal, (as DVH has strikingly shown in his book on the Heart). There are very different types of feelings such as "bodily" feelings, which are experienced in the body and located in it, and could be termed "voices" of the body, the body "speaks" to us through these feelings, and informs us about its condition. And it is true that animals share these feelings, even though it should be obvious that when they are experienced by human beings, they receive a totally new character.

In the framework of this lecture, we can skip purely psychic feelings which animals can also experience, such as listlessness caused by fatigue or disease, or the hilarity, which usually accompanies the drinking of alcoholic beverages.

But bodily feelings are such that we need not know their causes in order to experience them. No awareness of the chemistry of the human body is necessary in order to feel hunger. This striking characteristic is inconceivable when we turn to "spiritual" feelings, such as anger, jealousy, envy, love, admiration, veneration, esteem.

In such cases, it is impossible to experience these feelings without being conscious of the object which motivates them; for they are responses directed toward this object, and cannot arise independently of an awareness of the object or person toward whom this admiration is directed.

Some of these feeling are morally evil, and for this reason should be "disavowed" by man's free will; some of them are noble and good, and should be sanctioned by our will so that they can truly become ours. These feelings clearly presuppose our intellect (we must know what motivates them); and they call for collaboration with our will, for if good and noble, they should be freely sanctioned; and if they are evil, they should be disavowed-i.e. "decapitated" by an act of the will.

We therefore see that, in feelings such as mercy, compassion, love, veneration: we find a trinity- which we do not find when the intellect is functioning alone (for example in solving a mathematical problem), or when the will collaborates with our intellect without involving the heart (for example, when we carry out a practical decision). Viewed in this light, it is clear that spiritual feelings should be given a privileged place in human life, for they implicate all of man's spiritual faculties.

St. Augustine tells us that in order to know a person all we do is to inquire what he loves: " tell me what you love, and I will tell you who you are".

Why then should feelings be constantly denigrated; why is it that in our spiritual life, we are so often told that "we should beware of our feelings", that spiritual life is not based on "feelings", but should be based on reason and will alone?

This widespread distrust of the heart is understandable: first and foremost, it is much easier for our fallen nature to nurture evil feelings than good ones. Moreover, our feelings can be a rich source of illusion, and lead us into tragic dead ends.

But man's intellect too has been affected by original sin, and we all tend to forget that not only are there sins of intellect, but that the most grievous of all sins- the sin of pride -, is a sin that originates in man's mind, and not in man's heart. It was the sin of Lucifer: "Non Serviam". (I shall not serve). In this terrible sin, we find both the intellect recognizing God to be God, and a perverse will refusing to submit to his loving power. Or let us think of the fearful words of Nietzsche in this book: "Thus speaks Zarathustra: 'If there were gods, how could I stand not to be god'", and on this arbitrary and subjective basis, Nietzsche draws the conclusion that God does not exist. Motivated by his tragic metaphysical arrogance, Nietzsche commands his will to decree the non-existence of God, who stands in the way of his own aggrandizement; for, he tells us, his atheism is a "matter of taste", not of arguments.

Therefore we cannot-as some intellectuals tend to do -always put the blame on the heart, and make it responsible for all our moral aberrations. To counteract this danger, Kierkegaard wrote: "Oh!, the sins of passion and of the heart, how much nearer to salvation than the sins of reason". (Journal, 1852, p.215). (Maybe we should say, "less far" rather than "much nearer".)

The point we are urging is that it is unfair to gauge what is best in the intellect with what is worse in the heart (cf. Father Foley's article in the Homiletic and Pastoral Review, November 1991). We should either take the intellect at its worst, (that is when it refuses to submit to truth), and then compare it with the heart at its worst, when it lets itself be ruled by deplorable passions and goes rough-shod over the demands of reason (in which case they are both pretty bad); or take the intellect at its best (when it submits to truth), and the heart at its best when it gives itself completely and totally to God in loving adoration; in which case, both are marvelous gifts of God. But in the latter case, let it be remarked, once again, that the heart seems to have an edge over the intellect, because whereas we need not love in order to know, we must know in order to love, and therefore the heart necessarily involves the intellect whereas the reverse is not true.

This being so, why has it usually been treated as a step-child? Why has it not been given its rightful place in the human soul, which is an image of the Trinity?

There are additional reasons: first of all we cannot command affective responses the way we control our will. We can will an action, and, if no exterior obstacle intervenes, we can carry it out. We cannot, by a sheer act of will, command love, compassion, mercy, contrition.

This is true indeed, but it does not mean that our feelings are totally outside the range of our freedom: for, granted that they arise spontaneously, we should (as mentioned above) sanction freely those that deserve to be sanctioned and disavow those which are evil.

Moreover, there is a great deal that we can do indirectly to nurture noble and good feelings, and discourage the growth of evil ones: for example, our prayer life, the books that we read, the people that we associate with etc, are bound to have an effect on the feelings which arise in us. A person who watches pornographic shows, reads Playboy, and revels in impure thoughts, should not be surprised if she is constantly the prey of temptation of the flesh; a person who never disavows his pride should not be surprised if he is overwhelmed by feelings of hatred and revenge toward those who happen to humiliate him.

The fact that many undesirable feelings crop up in us without our assent, and that good feelings cannot be commanded by a sheer act of will, teach us a much needed lesson of humility: the fact that so many ugly feelings arise in us is a consequence of original sin, and should remind us of our frailty and sinfulness; moreover, the fact that our heart can be purified only in collaborating with God, once again, teaches us not only humility, ("without me, you can do nothing") but also the fact that man is most himself – not when he asserts his independence- but when he freely collaborates with his infinitely good and loving Creator.

This is why two commandments on which rest the whole law and the prophets: the love of God, and the love of neighbor can be commanded; for, to quote St. Paul, " I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4-13). Many persons have rebelled against these two key commandments on the grounds that "one is not bound to do what is beyond one's reach", but the Christian answer is that even though we cannot grant to ourselves the plenitude of love, nevertheless, we can lay its foundation, and we can will to do deeds of love, while praying ceaselessly (Ephes. 6-18); that our hearts may become like the heart of Christ-*for-nax ardens caritatis*-. We must take the first steps in obedience, and when God, in his own good time, decides to set our hearts on fire with his divine love, we shall know that this ardor is exclusively his gift, and not the fruit of our own merits, and this awareness will make us abound in gratitude. Then we shall be able to pray with St. Paul, and say: "For the love of Christ controls (presses) us. (II Cor. V.14) (*Caritas Christi Urget Nos*). Then we shall be deigned to have our hearts set on fire for our brothers. But arid obedience is usually the way leading to this liberation (that is to this transformation) of our hearts of stone into a heart of flesh.

I have said that " feelings" have usually been looked down upon by thinkers and spiritual directors. And "feelings" are –as we well know- the very special prerogative of women; in other words, the denigration of feelings often goes hand in hand with the denigration of female sex, and with the unproved assumption-widespread among machos- that men are superior to women. For men have the reputation of being the "rational" one, the objective ones: those whom one can trust to make a sound decision because they do not allow their feelings to meddle in, and rebel against the legitimate supremacy of the mind.

But granted that women can be misguided by their feelings, we should not forget that- as we saw there are plenty of cases, in which men are misguided by their mind, (and, alas, the history of philosophy testifies eloquently to this undeniable fact). Let me quote once again the great French thinker Pascal: "*Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point.*" (The heart has its reasons which reason does not know of). A noble heart can "feel" certain things, which will escape the attention of a narrowly analytic mind, always menaced to find itself imprisoned in the straight- jacket of purely geometrical thinking.

In case of conflict between one's intellect and one's heart, we cannot assume a priori that the mind is right and the heart wrong; we should rather raise the question: "which one is right?" A faculty intellect (dominated by pride) should definitely not be followed; but neither should we follow a heart animated by dangerous passions. A simple woman "feels" that abortion is a crime, even though she might not be able to marshal arguments to counteract the intellectual "smart alecks" who claim that " a woman has a right to do what she pleases with her own body, for it is hers". In such a case, she is right and they are wrong.

Let us now turn to the great, all-important mission that men have toward woman, and vice versa. Let us, first, mention the mission that men have toward women in this particular domain. They should, firmly and gently, help them to beware of certain dangers, which are inherent in the affective sphere. These dangers are- among others- the temptation of allowing the heart to usurp the legitimate role that should

be played by the intellect and the will. There are questions which can be answered only by the use of one's intellectual faculties, and in which the heart should remain silent because it is not competent to pass judgement. When a person examines whether or not he should follow the teaching of God and His church, the intellect unequivocally answers: "yes", even though the heart might rebel. "To feel" that an action is morally right, against the teaching of the Church and with total disrespect toward the dictates of one's mind, can and does lead to all sorts of grave moral aberrations. Our fallen nature is extremely tricky, and it is easy enough to talk ourselves into "feeling" that certain actions are legitimate because we wish them to be so, and we can talk our heart into "feeling" that they are morally right. (For example, to feel that it is all right to break the moral law in order to please a person that we love.)

Women (and not only women) can be inclined to believe that enthusiasm for a particular virtue guarantees the possession of that virtue. I have known people who could speak about obedience with tears of emotion, but who rarely- if ever- subjected themselves to others.

Both men and women can fall prey to the widespread illusion that deeply felt affective response cannot change and is a guaranteed possession. Let us recall the noble, lovable Saint Peter who said to Christ: "If everyone were to abandon you, I would never abandon you; I will lay down my life for you"; at that moment, he "felt" heroic. And soon afterwards, he denied his master.

This tragic fall does not indicate that St. Peter was not absolutely sincere in asserting that he would be ready to lay down his life for Christ; he fully meant what he said; but he lacked humility. He should have remembered the words of Christ: "without me, you can do nothing", and humbly begged for the grace of perseverance in the hour of trial. He should have prayed: "Lord I love you; help my lack of love".

Husbands will often accuse their wives of suffering from a hypertrophy of the heart; and it cannot be denied that this is a widespread danger in the female sex. But a hypertrophy of the heart, far from meaning "too much heart" (for we can never love too much), rather refers to a distorted affectivity. The whole question is therefore one of the purification of human heart, and there is no doubt that one of the beautiful missions that husbands often have toward their wives, is to help them purify their affectivity, so that the female heart becomes what God had meant it to be. It is precisely because the heart is so central in our human and religious life, that it is exposed to so many dangers; "corruption optima pessima".

But women too have a great mission to perform toward their husbands. In order to shed light on this thesis, let me distinguish between two different types of affectivity: one of them being what my late husband called "energized, or dynamic" affectivity: referring to a sort of ebullient manifestation of one's feelings. Enthusiasm can bring people to shouting, dancing, crying, applauding wildly; violent feelings can lead to rage, cursing, fist-fighting, banging of doors, and the like. This type of affectivity, although valid in some cases, is often dangerous for it can be likened to a raging river which ruptures dams, leads out of its bed, and creates disasters. When this evil type of affectivity runs out of control, it often leads to crimes, and the criminal usually will excuse himself by saying: "my feelings were stronger than I; I could not help it". For when a person has allowed these waves of emotion to dominate his soul, and has never trained himself to disavow illegitimate ones, they will inevitably pile up in him, and all of a sudden erupt like burning lava coming out of a crater.

There is a very different type of affectivity which my husband calls "tender" affectivity: love, mercy, compassion, tenderness, are positive expressions of this type of affectivity; but, like the first, it also has

its negative counterpart. Sentimentality, touchiness, pitying self-centeredness, effeminacy, and murmuring, whining, whimpering; all of these feelings are derived from a tender affectivity which has derailed because instead of being other-directed it has become self-centered.

Two examples will illustrate this danger: one is found in the life of St. Therese of Lisieux prior to her 13th birthday. In her autobiography, she tells us that she was so over-sensitive that she was constantly breaking into tears, and then would cry because she had cried. She was miraculously "cured" of this serious weakness on Christmas night, just before her birthday, and from this moment on, her extreme sensitivity became so purified that it was exclusively put at the service of love. Because she had ardently prayed for a cure and had learned that "without Christ she could do nothing", she was totally liberated from this fault.

The second example is borrowed from literature, and is so powerfully described that it deserves to be mentioned. We are thinking of Mrs. Gummidge in Dickens's *David Copperfield*. She was a widow that the kind-hearted Mr. Peggotty has taken into his boathouse, after the death of her husband. This woman felt so sorry for herself that she spent much of her day whining, and repeating the following words: " I am a lone.. creature", and then succumbed to fits of crying. This depressing self-centeredness will be overcome only much later in the story, when Peggotty's niece, little Emily, was seduced by a young man from a good family; this drama shook Mrs. Gummidge out of her self-pity and liberated her from the shackles of her self-centeredness.

Even though every generalization is fraught with gander, we might venture to say that energized affectivity is more prevalent among men than among women (in both its positive and negative form); it is rare that women laugh as boisterously as some men can. Violent crimes triggered by uncontrolled rage, are more frequent among men than among women, and for this reason, there are many more men than women in jails.

On the other hand, tender affectivity (although certainly not the exclusive prerogative of women), is certainly more widespread among the female sex than among men. Not only is this a well-known fact, but whereas women dare show their tender affectivity, most men shun to do so. As a matter of fact, they seem to dread any manifestation of their "tender" affectivity, (particularly the noble one); they hate to shed tears in front of others; they tend to conceal their most noble emotions; but they are in no way ashamed to give free reign to their dynamic affectivity: cursing, shouting, raging; they do not hesitate to give expression to what is brutal in them; but they shy away from manifesting what is soft, kind and tender in their souls. For this reason many women are tempted to say, "men have no heart", or that their heart is "atrophied", or that they are hard-hearted, but this is –to our mind- a very superficial interpretation, and betrays a lack of understanding of the male psyche.

It is not true to claim that most men are callous, and are incapable of "tender" affectivity. But it is true that wishing to keep themselves under control a symbol of their masculinity- they actually fear their tender affectivity, and for this reason conceal it and even repress it.

Indeed, whereas both intellect and will give us a feeling of greatness and power, this is not true of our heart, which makes us aware of our vulnerability, and most men dread showing how vulnerable they truly are.

It is the heart that rejoices, it is the heart that suffers, it is the heart that can be wounded; it is the heart that is pierced by sorrow, or overflows with joy; our heart can be broken.

Let us recall the sublime words of the Cantic of Canticles: "Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love". (5) And because we cannot control our heart the way we can control our will, and men like to feel strong and dread to show weakness and vulnerability, they shy away from "tender" affectivity, even though deep down, these feelings are slumbering in their souls. How unfair it would be to claim that because men do not manifest their tender feelings as openly as women do, that they have no such feelings.

As noble and tender affectivity can only, as we saw, come to full bloom in alliance with God's loving grace, it calls for a type of receptivity and collaboration which is easier for women than for men to achieve; for not only is the feminine nature receptive in the deepest sense of this term, but women are not afraid of acknowledging that they are moved, or sad, or wounded.

It is in the domain of "tender" affectivity that women have a beautiful and important mission toward men: they should "mother" them into trusting their heart, teach them lovingly not to feel ashamed of what is most noble and beautiful in them; encourage them patiently to give expression to what is best in them, while making them understand that the expression of their affective "nakedness" will be received with reverent love.

The more perfect a man becomes, the more will he be able to reveal his heart. This is a lesson that the God-Man himself teaches the male sex: He cried over Jerusalem, and He cried at Lazarus's tomb, even though he knew that he could resurrect him.

When men manifest noble tender affectivity, they are particularly beautiful and lovable; I wish they knew it. Let us meditate for a moment on the beauty of St. Peter's bitter tears of contrition upon realizing that he had denied the one whom he loved; let us recall the moving passages of letters of St. Paul in which he compares himself to a woman, let us remember his readiness to sacrifice himself for his Jewish brothers (Rom.9-3); let us recall that he urges us to "weep with those who weep". (Rom. 12-25) "...to widen our heart" (II Cor. 6-13). And what about St. Francis of Assisi, who cried because "Love was so little loved"; what about a St. Francis of Sales whose heart was so tender that every sorrow found a deep echo in him.

What a beautiful and reciprocal mission men and women have toward each other: true love wants the best for the beloved; and the best that one can wish for a loved one is that his heart might be transformed so that it will reflect the heart of the God-man- *fornax ardens caritatis*.

Beautiful will consist- not in intellectual speculation- but in the loving contemplation of God's infinite perfection; then our transformed and purified hearts will be on fire in adoring a God who is Love. It is therefore proper that we should end this talk with the prayer:

FAC COR MEUN SECUNDUM COR TUUM.

Dr. Alice Von Hildebrand was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1923. She received her doctoral degree in philosophy from Fordham University, where she studied under Dietrich Von Hildebrand. There she mastered his thought, collaborated with him and subsequently became his wife. Her thirty-seven year teaching was connected to Hunter College in New York; and included the positions of lecturer, instructor, assistant professor and professor, prior to her retirement from teaching in 1984.

Dr. Von Hildebrand is a noted author and philosopher who has published many works on her own, and also in conjunction with her husband. Most notable among these: "Greek Culture: The Adventure of the Human Spirit"; "Introduction to a Philosophy of Religion"; "The Art of Living; Morality and Situation Ethics"; and "By Love Refined". She has written and lectured extensively on women's issues throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and Europe. She is proficient in six languages and is listed in five different categories of Who's Who Publications. Her remarkable accomplishments include the Newman Club's "William O'Brien Award" and the "Doctor Honoris Causis" Award from Franciscan University of Steubenville. Doctor Von Hildebrand has completed another book entitled "By Grief Refined: Letters to a Widow", a consoling look into the difficult state of widowhood.