

III. FEMININE VOCATIONS

What formation does woman's soul yearn for? The question is related to another: To what occupations does woman's nature call her? It is not our concern here to compile statistical data to demonstrate the vocations in which contemporary woman is engaged. (She is engaged in nearly all of them.) Rather, our intent is to discover woman's genuine inclinations. In doing so, statistics are of little help. A presentation of numbers involved in particular vocations does grade the inclinations and talents concerned; even so, it can inform only clumsily regarding the success of the various activities. Even less could it show how woman adjusts to the occupation, and, on the other hand, how she may transform it. We must here limit ourselves to that which nature and destiny demand in true feminine vocations. But it is necessary to cite concrete examples. Therefore, we shall attempt to show how woman can function in marriage, in religious life, and in various professions in conformity with her nature.

According to Genesis, woman was placed by man's side so that he would not be alone but would have a helpmate who suits him; she will primarily fulfill her vocation as spouse in making his concerns her own. Normally, we understand "his concerns" to mean his profession. The woman's participation in her husband's profession can be performed in various ways. In the first place, it will be her duty to shape their home life so that it does not hinder, but rather furthers, his professional work. If his work is in the home, she must see to it that disturbances are kept as far away from him as possible; if his work is away from the home, she must be sure that the home affords appropriate relaxation and recovery when he returns to it. There can be immediate participation in the performance of direct help; indeed, this happens frequently in modern marriages between people of similar or related professional training, or at least with those of congenial interests. In former times this was the case to a large extent, generally in country life but also frequently in business enterprise (especially in those on a

small scale), in doctor's households, and also very prominently in those of Protestant pastors.

"Man's concerns," however, does not only refer to the purely objective content of his work but also to the procurement of his family's livelihood—the "battle for existence." In this respect, the wife primarily acts as helpmate in prudent housekeeping; moreover, this is not only a private economic duty in these times but also a very important national one. But possibly more nowadays than in former times, both husband and wife will work. Therein arises the difficult problem of the double vocation: there is danger that her work outside of the home will so take over that finally it can make it impossible for her to be the heart of the family and the soul of the home, which must always remain her essential duty.

But the woman who "suits" man as helpmate does not only participate in his work; she complements him, counteracting the dangers of his specifically masculine nature. It is her business to ensure to the best of her ability that he is not totally absorbed in his professional work, that he does not permit his humanity to become stunted, and that he does not neglect his family duties as father. She will be better able to do so the more she herself is mature as a personality; and it is vital here that she does not lose herself in association with her husband but, on the contrary, cultivates her own gifts and powers.

Her mission as mother relates closely to her mission as spouse, only here she must primarily care for the children and bring them to development. She must guide and then gradually withdraw to attain, in face of the mature human being, the role of a companion. This demands, on the one hand, an even more refined gift of sympathy because it is necessary to comprehend the dispositions and faculties of which the young people themselves are as yet unaware; she has to feel her way towards that which wishes to become, but which as yet does not exist. On the other hand, the possibility of influence is greater. The youthful soul is still in the formative stage and declares itself more easily and openly because it does not offer resistance to extraneous influences. However, all this increases the mother's responsibility.

In order to develop to the highest level the humanity specific to husband and children, woman requires the attitude of selfless service. She cannot consider others as her property nor as means for her own purposes; on the contrary, she must consider others as gifts entrusted to her, and she can only do so when she also sees them as God's creatures towards whom she has a holy duty to fulfill. Surely, the development of their God-given nature is a holy task. Of even higher degree is their spiritual development, and we have seen that it is woman's supernatural vocation to enkindle, in the hearts of husband and children, the sparks of love for God or, once enkindled, to fan them into greater brightness. This will come about only if she considers and prepares herself as God's instrument. How this can be will be considered at a later time.

It would not be difficult to mention women in the most diverse professions who have achieved excellence, but this would not prove that their occupations were specifically feminine ones. Not every woman is a pure embodiment of feminine nature. Individualities are not simply variations of feminine nature but are often approximations of masculine nature and qualify, thereby, for an occupation not regarded as specifically feminine. If the care and development of human life and humanity are women's specific duty, so the specifically feminine vocations will be those in which such efforts are possible outside of marriage as well. I do not wish to enter here into the question of domestic service because here it is not a question of specifically feminine work, and in many respects it produces tasks other than those which the woman of the house must fulfill. It is more important to clarify the significance of occupations outside of the household, occupations which were denied women for some time and have only become available for women gradually through the struggles of the feminist movement.

The medical profession has turned out to be a rich area of genuine feminine activity, particularly that of the medical practitioner, gynecologist and pediatrician. There have been severe objections to the admission of women into this profession: a young lady may encounter many things in her medical studies which would otherwise be kept away from her; a serious objection has

been that the studies make extraordinary demands of bodily strength and nervous energy, and professional practice even more. Indeed, professional practice requires a particular physical and spiritual constitution, as well as the professional zeal necessary for the assumption of the difficulties unique to that profession. Such misgivings are dispelled when these stipulations are respected. Of course, one will always be grateful to encounter the untroubled, innocent beauty which moves us, and which is completely unaware of the seamy side of human nature. Today it is hardly possible, but in former times how many women who were so protected in their innocence until marriage were suddenly robbed of all their ideals, in the cruelest manner, in marriage itself! In this respect, could one not say that the matter-of-fact and objective, scientific approach is still one of the most accepted methods, if not the absolutely best one, to become acquainted with natural data? Since most women are obliged to come to grips with these data, should not individual women who have the calling and opportunity make all sacrifices in order to fulfill this calling and stand by their sisters' side?

Experience indicates that this has happened in large degree. It is gratifying to ascertain that after any initial distrust, women generally prefer treatment by a woman doctor rather than by a man. I believe that this is conditioned not only by the patient's modesty but even more so by the specifically feminine manner of empathy which has beneficial effects. The human being, especially the invalid, needs sympathy in his total condition. The widespread method of modern specialization does not satisfy this need in treating a limb or organ while disregarding the rest of the person, even though the specific treatment is pertinent. (Also, in many cases, specialization is not the best method because most illnesses are illnesses of the total human being even if they are manifested in only one organ; the patient needs treatment in his individual peculiarity as a whole organism.) Counteracting this abstract procedure, the specifically feminine attitude is oriented towards the concrete and whole person. The woman doctor has only to exercise courage in following her natural inspiration and liberating herself whenever necessary from methods learned and practiced according to

rule. (Of course, it must not be denied that it often happens as well with masculine specialists, although not generally—in earlier times the house doctor typified this total approach.) It is not only a question of summoning up the patience to listen to much which is absolutely irrelevant to the subject. The intent must be to understand correctly the whole human situation, the spiritual need which is often greater than the corporal one, and perhaps to intervene helpfully not only by medical means but also as a mother or a sister.

So conceived, the medical profession is a truly charitable one and belongs together with other social professions. These professions have been developed for the most part only in recent years, and they are specifically feminine vocations as rightfully as the housewife's. In all such vocations, it is a matter of actions which are truly maternal in the care of a large "family": parishioners, the poor or sick of a rural parish or of a municipal precinct, the inmates of a prison, endangered or neglected youth. There is always the potentiality, and basically the necessity, of understanding and helping the whole person whether one initially encounters these human beings to care for them in bodily sickness or to assist them financially, or to give them legal counsel. Demands here on the power of love are even greater than in one's own family: the natural bond is lacking, the number of people in need is greater, and preponderantly there are people who repel rather than attract by their disposition and frame of mind.

In this type of work more than others, it will be shown that normal psychic power does not suffice in carrying out the tasks noted above. It must be sustained by Christ's power and love. And where it is so supported it will never stop at mere attendance to natural humanity; but, on the contrary, it will always aim at the same time towards the supernatural goal of winning these human beings for God.

We have already touched on the subject of woman's vocation as teacher and educator in our discussion of women's education. First of all, this seems to be easier and more agreeable than the social vocations because, generally, it is involved with natural,

formative human material and because its direct task is intellectual and spiritual formation. But now, in the present period of economic hardship, the work of teacher and educator is hardly successful, least of all in the *Volksschule*,⁵ if it does not attempt to counteract the spiritual crisis already burdening many children due to unbearable family conditions. Consequently, education is faced with grave difficulties when its influence is thwarted by the home and other disruptive elements outside of the school.

Where there is a sound family life and where the parents, especially the mother, really fulfill their vocation, the school's task will easily be one of wise restraint; it will not have much more to do than to reinforce the child's upbringing at home. But this is not the typical situation today. The destruction of family life has placed a greater responsibility on the school. Thus, it is correct if formation today is again considered as education's essential duty, and teaching as the method to achieve that goal.

This consideration poses the challenge to so develop teaching that it can form the students and yet, at the same time, allow them as much spontaneity as is possible and desirable. Certainly, the right educational format is not to be found everywhere; yet it is in this sense that the practical reorganization of schools and the present curricula were instituted. The old system did not promote educational work. The tendency to make teaching material into an encyclopedic panorama of all contemporary knowledge resulted in an informational overload; the efforts of both teachers and students were concentrated on the acquisition and transmission of factual knowledge.

The personal element in teaching declined in importance. Teachers became specialists and paid less attention to a broad human and personal contact. Such impersonality was little adapted to the educational goal and to feminine nature. Consequently, present changes are more capable of meeting the needs of the feminine student. Moreover, the admission of women to the university has made it possible for them to enter on teaching careers, which has had a definite influence on the formation and education of young girls.

In many instances today, we find beneficial relations between teacher and student. Boarding schools have always produced relationships which outlast the school period and remain decisive for life. This is true in other teaching situations, and many mothers would be highly gratified were their children to seek their confidence and guidance as readily as they do the teacher's. Of course, such a strong possibility of influence requires high responsibility and implies grave danger if it falls into the hands of an inept personality. The woman who looks to her vocation for fulfillment of her entire life will be endangered if she ties young people to herself wrongfully. (This is analogous to the spouse and mother who try to fetter their family in the same disastrous way).

It is good and beautiful that sincere affection develops naturally on the part of teacher and student. However, a wholesome effect is endangered if either one loses sight of intellectual and spiritual freedom or of the educational goal in itself, i.e., humanity developed most perfectly in the natural and supernatural sense. This can be found again only when the teaching vocation is understood as entrusted by God, and the student's personality is taken up in light of the educational mission.

We are familiar with women's services in youth work and education, and in welfare for the poor, the sick, and those at risk. Let us also refer to the women occupied in communal or national administration and in the Parliament as "mothers of the people." All of us, at one time or another, have observed that many people contact such women every day with the most diverse requests, either in person or by mail; they are searching out the promising areas for authentic women's work other than official duties immediately available. Certainly, there is danger of gratification being sought for a conceited ego, lust for power, or personal ambition. But one can benefit in the hands of the right woman: she can be at one's disposal to prevent various difficulties and to guide to legitimate possibilities.

But legislative and administrative functions also require direct feminine collaboration. Women are needed to deliberate, resolve, and initiate laws in matters which are primarily their

concerns (like legal protection for women, youth welfare, etc.). Also, the theoretical perspective does not always coincide with human need, but the right woman knows how to identify with the concrete human condition rather than to proceed in a mere abstract and formal way. Of course, general and formal perspectives cannot be disregarded either, and, therefore, a collaboration of men and women can be especially fruitful here.

It would be a huge task, one not easily performed, to describe the valuable achievements of women in the arts and sciences, and to show as well how the specifically feminine approach can bear fruit. This is not feasible within our format. Yet it would be comparatively simple to present the scientific disciplines and art forms which are in particular accordance with woman's nature. Moreover, worthwhile research could examine how extensively within the traditional method the purely technical treatments of subject matter are accepted as standard. Perhaps such investigation could measure the impact of the masculine contribution to this development; also, whether and how fully the feminine mode might work as a fruitful complement.

Corresponding to the areas of the discipline, distinction should be made between unique research, subordinate work, and academic instruction. Epoch-making achievements by women are relatively scarce, and this may be explained in terms of woman's nature. Yet, the feminine gifts of empathy and adjustment enable her to participate, understand, and stimulate; she does so outstandingly as an assistant worker, interpreter, and teacher.

Certainly, there is an entire range of vocations which can be practised effectively by women, but these are not specifically feminine activities which require or allow their real nature. In such vocations—in the factory, office, etc.—it would always be good for women that they be ready momentarily to stand by another person's side: through sharing, helping, and promoting, they can preserve their true womanliness. They always have opportunities to do so beyond the professional work itself—in their place of work, home, or community.

This requires an intense spiritual stamina as compared to the passive state of daily mechanical work; but this stamina perishes in the long run if not refreshed by the eternal wellspring. Thus can we understand the need for feminine vitality to have its roots in eternal grounds. This is true not only for consecration to God by observing the solemn duty of assisting at Mass, but for all fields of authentic women's work.

Now let us consider if and how religious life is an authentic feminine activity. We are not concerned here with the outside activity which most of the congregations in recent times have as special goals: care of the sick, education, etc. Either in or out of a religious order, these are not new types of women's work. Rather, we shall question how the activity of the religious differs from that of her secular colleague in the profession. Also to be considered is that specific function of religious life unparalleled in feminine activity: prayer and sacrifice.

Here we find as truth everything epitomized by the word of the psalmist: *opera mea regi*—all that I do is done for the King. The nun has bestowed herself and her whole life to Christ the King. By her vow of chastity, her heart and entire life are consecrated to Him and every human tie relinquished. By her vow of obedience, her own will is renounced: now she cannot do anything else but what the Lord commands her; she must be ready for every undertaking that He asks of her, executing everything in His service.

The man as well does all this freely as member of a religious order. Is this a case where sex difference plays no role? Or is this a state for which the male or female species is more fitted? Can differentiation be seen in actual performance? The consummate surrender of the whole person is necessarily the same for both because it is the unique substance of the religious life. The way to perfection of individual nature is loving devotion and surrender to God who is love. This surrender also represents the highest fulfillment of all feminine aspirations concerning their vocation. Correctly speaking, it is the highest fulfillment of our human vocation; but this is felt more vividly and sought more directly by the woman because it is in accordance with her specific nature.

It could be said in this regard that the same basic attitude of the man who chooses surrender to God and the search for perfection as the way and meaning of life resembles that of the woman. Masculine nature is not necessarily revealed by this except that certain masculine types resemble that of women. Rather, this would seem more to indicate an expansion toward full humanity over the limits of the masculine species.

What follows necessarily out of bridal love for Christ is also similar for both: that one makes His business one's own; above all, that means one is drawn into divine love. Compelled by His love and exercising spiritual maternity, one strives to win human beings for God, to carry Him into souls, to beget and secure His children. This might happen occasionally through the teaching word, ministering of sacraments, immediate spiritual direction—the uniquely priestly way—or through prayer and offering.

But along with these essentially feminine aspects of the spirit of religious, there are others which can be regarded as specifically masculine. Surrender to God is simultaneously a loving abandonment and a compliant obedience. It means to walk in service to the Lord. This could be to act as His proxy, to command, to teach, to direct in His name. To make God's teachings one's own is not only to win a share of His love; it also means that one fights against His enemies for His kingdom. All of this corresponds to masculine nature; and, insofar as this is also realized in the life of the woman consecrated to God, it can be said of her as well that she seems like the male species or transcends the limits of her own. Ordinarily, one might best resolve the question in this way: with the monk or friar, the type of "another Christ" predominates; with the nun, it is the "Spouse of Christ".

Yet our task is to inquire if this is only a falling short of the ideal or if a principal demarcation does exist. To begin with, it is solely a question of demonstrating that we can consider the particular character of the religious life as in accordance to authentic women's work.

IV. WOMEN'S LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY

Woman's destiny stems from eternity. She must be mindful of eternity to define her vocation in this world. If she complies with her vocation, she achieves her destiny in eternal life.

"God created man in His image; male and female He created them." When He put humanity into the world, not as a single but as a dual species, there had to be a different meaning of life for each species as well as a mutual one. Both were formed according to God's image. Each finite creature can reflect only a fraction of the divine nature; thus, in the diversity of His creatures, God's infinite unity and oneness appear to be broken into an effulgence of manifold rays. Just so, the male and female species imitate the divine prototype in different ways.

Augustine⁶ and Thomas⁷ and those following in their traditions find a likeness of the Trinity in the human spirit. Although perceived in many ways, it is accepted by most that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are rendered back in being, knowledge, and love. Divine wisdom was incarnated as Person in the Son; love came as Person in the Spirit. The intellect is predominant in masculine nature; on the other hand in woman's nature, it is the emotions. We can thus understand why a particular association is constantly being made between woman's nature and the Holy Spirit.

Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is deity, we find it again in woman's destiny as "Mother of the Living". The Spirit goes out of itself and enters into the creature as the begetting and perfecting fruitfulness of God; just so does woman bring forth new life from her life and helps the child to a most perfect development when he or she attains an autonomous existence. So do we also find the Holy Spirit in all works of womanly love and compassion, inasmuch as it is the Holy Spirit, as Father of the poor, consoler and helper, who heals the wounded, warms the numb, refreshes the thirsty, and bestows all good gifts. In womanly purity and gentleness, we find mirrored the spirit which cleanses the defiled and makes pliant the unbending; it abounds not only in those who may be already pure and gentle but also in those women who want to spread purity and

gentleness about themselves. This "gracious spirit" wants nothing else than to be divine light streaming out as a serving love; nothing is more contrary to it than vanity that looks out for itself, and desire that likes to amass for itself. That is why the foremost sin of pride, in which vanity and desire coincide, is a falling-off from the spirit of love and a defection from feminine nature itself.

Yet, "*Quod Heva tristis abstulit, tu reddis almo germine.*"⁸ The pure image of feminine nature stands before our eyes in the *Immaculata*, the Virgin. She was the perfect temple, in which the Holy Spirit took up his dwelling and deposited as his gift the fullness of grace. She wanted nothing else than to be the handmaid of the Lord, the gate through which He could make His entry into humanity; for it was not through herself but through her "gracious offspring" that she was to restore for us our lost salvation.

As Mother of God and mother of all God's children, she is exalted above all creatures on the throne of glory; maternity itself is glorified through her. As Virgin, she manifests an incomparable beauty pleasing to God, along with the fruitfulness of virginal purity. As Queen, she evidences the conquering power of a serving love and of purity intact. Every woman who wants to fulfill her destiny must look to Mary as ideal.

The most pure virgin is the only one safeguarded from every stain of sin. Except for her, no one embodies feminine nature in its original purity. Every other woman has something in herself inherited from Eve, and she must search for the way from Eve to Mary. There is a bit of defiance in each woman which does not want to humble itself under any sovereignty. In each, there is something of that desire which reaches for forbidden fruit. And she is hindered by both these tendencies in what we clearly recognize as woman's work.

The girl must learn from youth, through a basic upbringing or conditions of life, to adapt, to deny herself, and to make sacrifices; otherwise, she will enter into marriage with longings for undisturbed good fortune and the execution of all her wishes. At first, she will not learn correctly how to curb herself should she find her spouse disposed to her wishes; she will test how far her control goes,

and when she reaches its limits, conflicts will arise. This leads to rupture or to mutual exhaustion if her sensibility and inner make-up are not reversed. Such a woman will not find right relationships with her children either, that is, if she does not decline from the outset to take upon herself the burdens of motherhood. Indeed, it will be a question of whether to occupy herself with them or not depending on her mood. She is apt to pamper them or to treat them severely at the wrong time and to make selfish demands of them. In short, instead of paving their way and encouraging them, she is likely to arouse their resistance and inhibit their development.

But natural forces can counteract the mother's duties even when she amply indicates a genuine intention for good family life, a spirit of self-sacrifice and of inner growth: if her husband's character and lifestyle make a peaceful coexistence impossible; if her children reveal dangerous tendencies which are unlikely to yield to education; if even economic need steps into the picture. Then, almost immediately, her strength of body and nerves are consumed and her soul ceases to develop under its burden if ever new power from an inexhaustible source is not directed to it.

This inexhaustible source of power is the grace of God. It depends only on knowing one's way and going to this source again and again. There is always a way open to each of the faithful: the way of prayer. Whoever sincerely believes in the words "Ask and you shall receive," is given consolation and courage to persevere in every need. Even if it is not the immediate help which, to some extent, the person conceives of and desires, help does come.

For every Catholic there lies ready an immeasurable treasure: the proximity of the Lord in the holy sacrifice and in the most holy sacrament of the altar. Whoever is imbued with a lively faith in Christ present in the tabernacle, whoever knows that a friend awaits here constantly—always with the time, patience, and sympathy to listen to complaints, petitions, and problems, with counsel and help in all things—this person cannot remain desolate and forsaken even under the greatest difficulties. He always has a refuge where quietude and peace can again be found.

And whoever is penetrated by the meaning of the sacrifice of the Mass, it were as if he had grown into Christ's redemptive action. The small and great offerings asked of him daily are no longer compulsory, inflicted, overwhelming burdens. Rather, they become true sacrifices, freely and joyfully offered, through which he wins a share in the work of redemption as a co-suffering member of the Mystical Body of Christ. Thoughts of the power of redemptive action, as it works invisibly and mysteriously, can always renew the one who offers up to it all pains and sufferings, even personal weaknesses and impotency: if one's natural powers vis-à-vis one's duties break down; if one's bodily strength and nerves are no longer a match for the work; if even in the best of intentions, one is misunderstood by one's neighbor; if word and example prove powerless to tear a precious soul free from the path of unbelief and sin.

In all instances where sin was committed through one's own fault and the danger of being cut off from the stream of grace exists, there comes the possibility of an inner restoration through the sacrament of penance: one can be freed always from the burden of the past and, as one newborn, face the future. Moreover, faith is strengthened through communion with persons who keep a right vision of the eternal lodestar, those still living, and those already entered into glory who have the power to help; perhaps this is a particular power for an actual need because they stood the test themselves in similar difficulties.

These are all means at the command of each Catholic. There is an additional source of grace for the wife and mother: *the sacrament of marriage*. The union into which she has entered is consecrated and hallowed. She is to be one with the man placed by her side as the Church is one with Christ, its mystical head. This image of the apostle⁹ signifies more than an image. When the bride gives her consent at the wedding before the witnessing priest, she becomes a special organ in the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Church subsists on the life of grace streaming from Christ, its head, which it transmits to ever new members in perpetual fruitfulness. So is the woman—as a visible symbol of the Church—called to increase the number of God's children by

imparting natural life and the life of grace. She is, in consequence, an essential organ of the fruitfulness of the Church. She is strengthened by grace for her vocation, as long as she does her utmost to remain a living member of the Church and to lead a married life in the sense of the Church. And even with an unworthy spouse who makes her life an ordeal, even in this terrible distortion of the marriage ideal, the woman will be able to persevere in the marriage bond if she still honors the metaphor of the mystical life. She will stand firmly before the souls of her children, guarding the life of grace begun in them by holy baptism.

To the nun, in place of the marriage sacrament, the liturgy of *virginal consecration* is granted as a particular means of grace for the strengthening of her vocation; at the least, it is the solemn vow by which she is wedded to the Lord for always. By partaking in this ceremony, she receives the blessing by which to live as the *Spouse of Christ*: to waive freely all things in which worldly people see their happiness—material goods, husband and children, and freedom to form their lives at their own discretion. If the married woman is obliged to be subject to her husband as to the Lord, so is the nun obliged to honor her legitimate superior as Christ's proxy and to accept her directive as promulgated by the divine will.

In certain ways, the Lord also grants her His love and care in visible form and intervenes by worldly means: in the paternal, maternal, and sisterly love which she finds in the order as family; she, in turn, must reciprocate by sharing in all communal possessions, enterprises, and destinies. However, all of these visible aids must always be seen in light of the invisible. The Lord himself is the one to whom she belongs and at whose side she is exalted: the graces she wins are the inexhaustible treasury of merit which the divine *Spouse* generously grants her—for herself and those for whom she intercedes. The endeavors and destinies which now become her own are occasions for the kingdom of God: feast days of the Church and spiritual works of mercy are her joys, by which she is motivated to employ her strength; opposition to Christ's kingship and the power of sin are her sorrows, against which she takes up arms.

Should she live in a strictly enclosed monastery, should her task be the solemn praise of God, she is removed in definite ways from worldly life into the community of angels and saints singing the eternal Sanctus. Or, identified by her holy habit as a servant of the Lord, she walks with her guardian angel by her side, bringing divine love in her compassionate service to the needy and distressed. Perhaps, hidden from all human eyes, she intercedes for endangered souls by expiatory prayer and vicarious works of reparation in God. Of course, this does not include all members in the order, but whoever has ascended to this height has already been granted a foretaste of the *visio beatifica*. But it does belong to the supernatural powers of mind and soul that one can detach self from worldly matters in order to live transcendently; this is a power bestowed only through grace, a strength which must be endlessly renewed by inexhaustible asceticism.

We have raised the question concerning the principal differences between the nun and the priest, between woman's consecration as the *Spouse of Christ* and the man's as a proxy of Christ. I believe that bridal love in man or in woman is the foundation of surrender to the Lord wherever it is purely and freely observed. And that person within the order who does not join the priesthood as his calling (i.e., the lay brother), the more purely he finds this attitude, the more deeply he will advance in the interior life. But this obligation does exist for the priest: he must teach, judge, and fight for the Lord in His place; he must make certain again and again that he is abandoning himself to intimate communion with Him. And if the bridal outlook should decline, it is humanly conceivable that it is still bound to be preserved if intercession for the Lord really take place in His spirit.

This can, perhaps, lead us to the mysterious fact that God has not called women to the priesthood. On the one hand, this may be understood as punishment inasmuch as it was woman who first resisted the divine will. However, on the other hand, this can be considered as a special privilege of grace: that the Lord will never allow His consecrated bride to stray from His side; that all power in

His kingdom be due her, not through a delegated authority but through a loving union with Him. This is a symbol of that most intimate community of love into which He entered with a human being, union with His Mother.

We have become familiar with the special aids to grace with which the Church can supply the married woman and the nun toward realization of their vocations. Now we face the question especially important for our time: How might it be possible for the unmarried woman to fulfill her destiny apart from life in the convent? Without doubt, her state is particularly difficult. On the one hand, she may have had to renounce marriage and motherhood, not of her own free will but rather compelled by circumstances, even though a natural longing for the happiness of family life is still alive in her. Only with difficulty can she be totally absorbed in the occupation which she has chosen even if it is suited to her natural bent and talents; this is true more than ever if the work is undertaken, perhaps even with reluctance, only to make a living. Or, on the other hand, she has been drawn towards virginal life since her youth; moreover, the model of the religious order seemed to be most in accordance with this, but existing circumstances prevented her from fulfilling this wish.

In both instances, the danger exists that she views her life as a failure, that her soul becomes stunted and embittered, that it does not provide the strength for her to function fruitfully as a woman. Moreover, it would seem that she lacks the aid to grace provided by the other feminine vocations. To operate merely by natural strength under a lifestyle in conflict with one's own nature can hardly be achieved without doing injury to both nature and soul. At best, this can be endured only with weary resignation; but usually, it is met with bitterness and rebellion against one's "fate" or by flight into a world of illusion. That which is not personally chosen and made one's own, freely and joyfully, can be accomplished only by the woman who sees God's will at work in the force of circumstances and aims at nothing else than to harmonize her own will with the divine. But whoever makes her will captive to God in this way can be certain of a special guidance in grace.

It may be considered as the direct sign of a special calling when one is pulled out of the course apparently given by birth and upbringing, or one personally hoped and striven for, and then thrown into an entirely different path. This calling is for a personal mission which does not stand firmly outlined in advance, with its track already traced out and cleared; rather, it is revealed step by step. And here it may be that the unique strengthening needed for the duties of such a life is found by the woman going her own way rather than in the communal life of consecrated liturgy. It is particularly important in this matter to watch carefully for signs showing one's path. Above all, this requires that everything be done in one's own power to stay in God's presence, i.e., that one uses the means of grace at the disposal of every Christian.

It is most important that the Holy Eucharist becomes life's focal point: that the Eucharistic Savior is the center of existence; that every day is received from His hand and laid back therein; that the day's happenings are deliberated with Him. In this way, God is given the best opportunity to be heard in the heart, to form the soul, and to make its faculties clear-sighted and alert for the supernatural. It then comes about of itself that one sees the problems of one's own life with God's eyes and that one learns to resolve them in His spirit. For this, a peaceful and clear-headed consideration of exterior facts and events must emerge. Whoever lives in the strong faith that nothing happens without the knowledge and will of God is not easily disconcerted by astonishing occurrences or upset by the hardest of blows. He will stay quiet and face the facts clearly; he will discover the right guidelines for his practical behavior in the overall situation.

Moreover, life with the Eucharistic Savior induces the soul to be lifted out of the narrowness of its individual, personal orbit. The concerns of the Lord and His kingdom become the soul's concerns, precisely as for those consecrated to him in a religious order; and, to the same degree, the small and large needs of individual existence lose importance. Those who know how to create ever new life out of the eternal source experience freedom and joyfulness: the great events of the cosmic drama concerning the fall

of man and redemption are renewed again and again in the life of the Church and in each human soul. And this will be permitted to happen again and again in the struggle of light over all darkness.

Those who attain the freedom of these heights and expansive views have outgrown what is usually called "happiness" and "unhappiness." They may have to fight hard for worldly existence, may lack the support of a warm family life or, correspondingly, of the human community which sustains and supports—but lonely and joyless they can no longer be. Those who live with Holy Church and its liturgy, i.e., as authentic Catholics, can never be lonely: they find themselves embedded in the great human community; everywhere, all are united as brothers and sisters in the depths of their hearts. And because streams of living water flow from all those who live in God's hand, they exert a mysterious magnetic appeal on thirsty souls. Without aspiring to it, they must become guides of other persons striving to the light; they must practice spiritual maternity, begetting and drawing sons and daughters nearer to the kingdom of God.

The history of the Church reveals that many persons, men and women, went this way "in the world." And, obviously, they are especially needed in our modern era. The modern pagan frequently finds every religious habit suspect and does not want to hear about any teaching of faith. This individual can scarcely even approach the supernatural life other than through persons he considers his worldly equal: those who perhaps practice the same profession, have strong common interests with the people of this world, and yet possess a mysterious power which comes from elsewhere.

A factor not yet mentioned is that in the lives of persons who have taken such an extraordinary path, we find, nevertheless, a general method: that of ascertaining God's will. This comes from obedience shown to a visible proxy of God—a priestly director. According to everything which we learn from personal experience and the history of salvation, the Lord's method is to form persons through other persons. Just as the child is assigned to the care and upbringing of an adult for its natural development, so also is the

life of grace propagated through human mediation. Persons are used as instruments to awaken and nurture the divine spark. Thus, natural and supernatural factors reveal that even in the life of grace, "it is not good that the man should be alone."

Yet, at the same time, there is danger of self-deception: the spirit's clear glance is dimmed by the heart's wishes; consequently, a person is often confounded by mistaking for God's will that which suits his own inclination. In order to defend oneself from this danger, it is good to make decisions by submitting oneself to calm, unbiased judgment rather than by just following one's inner prompting. Another fact to be considered is that judgment in one's own affairs tends to be less certain and reliable than it is for others.

Along with these natural circumstances, there are connections to another order which doubtlessly have an even stronger effect. Each individual familiar with the interior life knows that it is precisely those called by God to achieve the extraordinary who must also pass through extraordinary tests. These are not only worldly difficulties and needs but rather spiritual suffering and temptations even harder to endure—that which mystical theology terms "the dark night of the soul." Although the purity of the will is not sullied, the soul falls into the utmost anxiety and confusion: it loses the taste for the practices of piety; it is tempted by skepticism and hostility towards ecclesiastical directives; it reaches the danger of considering its path to be a wrong one; it fears that it might be irrevocably lost.

Previous experience teaches that, in order not to lose the right way in the midst of such spiritual dangers, there is no better protection than obedience toward an enlightened religious director. It is a *mysterious* fact that obedience is efficacious against the powers of darkness—as is God's unique mercy in placing such a guide at the side of an afflicted soul—but it is a *fact*. God is not bound to this manner of mediation, but, for unfathomable reasons, He has so committed himself to us; similarly, He has also provided particular ways of intercessory grace, although His possibilities in working our salvation are endless. Inner and outer guidance must always go hand and hand on one's journey; for that reason, whoever

finds the right spiritual director will allow himself, for his own good, to be led by God's guidance rather than by his own arbitrariness. To what functions this may destine individual persons only life itself can prove.

A few typical possibilities have been sketched in my statements concerning women's work. The inquiry directed throughout can be summarized thus: only by drawing from the eternal source of power can woman perform the functions to which she is called by nature and destiny. On the other hand, each woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfill her vocation, no matter if it is in marriage, in a religious order, or in a worldly profession.

Chapter IV

Fundamental Principles of Women's Education¹

Our entire educational system has been in a state of crisis for decades. Continuous calls for reform are being made everywhere. Although some important guidelines have emerged from the confusion of diverse efforts, one feels as though in the midst of preparatory experiments rather than a peaceful, efficient evolution.

Women's education is part of this general crisis, and it also has its own unique problems. A final solution will be possible only in conjunction with a reform of the entire German educational system. Today, even if we try to consider women's education separately, we must do so in considering it in its relation to the problem as a whole. Women's education, although a special case, involves, in fact, the entire range of educational reform.

I. CONCEPT OF EDUCATION²

Should we look for the cause of the crisis which has shaken the old system, we would do well to search for it in the *concept of education* basic to that system, a concept which we today consider as having failed. The "old system" is essentially a child of the Enlightenment. (I am thinking here of the elementary and high schools and the teachers' colleges. Humanistic secondary schools, universities, seminaries for priests, and other vocational schools have evolved from another foundation, but they show—due to practical