

Matt Libra

## **IMAGO DEI IN MALE AND FEMALE: CONSIDERING MASCULINE AND FEMININE IDENTITY WITH EDITH STEIN AND JOHN PAUL II**

Is it not striking to consider the truth that God made man in His own image? If God created man in His image as male and female, then He is telling us something about Himself and something about ourselves through the masculine and feminine identity He gives us. Yet, so often in this day in age one hears about the ugliness of the poverty of man, the pain caused to others for the sake of one's own pleasure or whim. It becomes a fearful thing to consider what God may be like if man is His image. What many men and women *do* has clouded who men and women really *are*, and it is difficult to discern what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman.

When Michelangelo looked at a block of marble, he saw within it an image and used his skills and tools to remove the pieces of stone that obscured the image he saw obscured underneath. This method, called *ablatio*, can help us to rediscover who man is created to be in *imago Dei*. By removing secondary aspects concerning what man *does*, we can focus our attention on who man *is*, the image he was always created to be.

The three “tools” that will guide our present work are an examination of what God reveals to us in some key Scriptural texts; the reflections of St. Theresa Benedicta by the Cross, known to most as Edith Stein; and the teachings of Pope John Paul II. With their help we endeavor to rediscover the *imago Dei* in the masculine and feminine identity and what it means to be a man and woman.

## 1. Scripture

Then God said: "Let us make man  
in our image, after our likeness..."  
God created man in his image;  
in the divine image he created him;  
male and female he created them.<sup>1</sup>

In the first creation account, sometimes referred to as the "Elohists" tradition because the name used for God in these passages is Elohim (אֱלֹהִים), God creates man, male and female on the sixth day. Elohim, the Supreme God, creates mankind (*adam*, אָדָם) according to His own "image" (*tselem*, צֶלֶם) and "likeness" (*demuth*, דְמוּת). Here, at the very beginning of Genesis the first key words relating to the image of God are revealed. To better understand what *tselem* and *demuth* mean, and what their differences are, it is helpful to have recourse to more than just lexical definitions.

Moses Maimonides, one of the ancient authorities of Jewish tradition, explains that *tselem* is not an indication that God is some sort of corporeal being (as man is) but that man images God in something other than bodily form.

The term *tselem* [...] signifies the specific form, viz., that which constitutes the essence of a thing, whereby the thing is what it is; the reality of a thing in so far as it is that particular being. In man the "form" is that constituent which gives him human perception: and on account of this intellectual perception the term *tselem* is employed in the sentences "In the *tselem* of God he created him".<sup>2</sup>

So *tselem* indicates an internal quality in man, not his external characteristics.<sup>3</sup> According to Rabbi Bemporad, *tselem* is used seventy-nine times in the Hebrew Bible, but only used four times in the Torah (Genesis 1:26, 27; 5:3; 9:6), which highlights its significance here. Man's ability to reason, his intellectual capacity, separates him from the animals and it is what properly makes him an image of the Supreme God, Elohim.

<sup>1</sup> *The New American Bible*, New York 2004, Genesis 1:26-27.

<sup>2</sup> M. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/gfp/index.htm> (13 April 2010) Chapter 1 Book 1.

<sup>3</sup> J. Bemporad, *Jewish Exegesis of Imago Dei*, at Imago Dei Seminar, Angelicum University, Rome (9 December 2009).

But the parallelism with the word *demuth* is important in purifying the language, the second word (*demuth*) qualifies the first (*tselem*).<sup>4</sup> Maimonides states that

the resemblance [likeness/*demuth*] indicated in these passages does not refer to the figure and shape, but to some abstract idea... As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, viz., intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compare – though only apparently, not in truth – to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ.<sup>5</sup>

*Demuth* then emphasizes man's similitude to God is not connected to corporality or sense powers, but precisely in that intangible power of the intellect which unites him with God and which the rest of creation lacks.

A Jewish understanding of man's creation in the *image* and *likeness* of God indicates that He is not corporeal, but that it is in man's intellect that God's *image* and *likeness* are found. St. Augustine confirms this Jewish exegesis, "All who understand the Scriptures spiritually have learned to understand by those terms, not bodily members, but spiritual powers... When man is said to have been made to the image of God, these words refer to the interior man, where reason and intellect reside".<sup>6</sup> This is the power which surpasses the rest of creation. Further, Augustine states that being created in the *image* of God means that man's origin is from God and *likeness* signifies that man does not merely participate in the likeness of God but is "so like him that it fully and perfectly embodies his nature".<sup>7</sup> Here again likeness reinforces image: man's likeness to God is his spiritual nature. But that is not to say that just this one aspect of man likens him to God; what God *does* is part and parcel of Who He *is*. The spiritual nature encompasses the whole man, his intellect that goes together with his physical, social, and historical dimensions.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> M. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, cit., Chapter 1 Book 1.

<sup>6</sup> Saint Augustine (care of) Fathers of the Church Series, *Saint Augustine on Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees; And, On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis, an Unfinished Book*, Washington 1991, Vol. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 184–185.

<sup>8</sup> International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome 2004, Paragraph 9.

St. Thomas Aquinas also contributes some clarifying thoughts about *image* and *likeness*. *Likeness*, he says, is more general than *image*, acting as a preamble to *image* and expressing the perfection of the *image*.<sup>9</sup> Every *image* is a *likeness*, but not every *likeness* is an *image*. Man is created in the image of God and so is like God; creation is like God in that it exists, but it is not God's image. In the *Summa* Aquinas explains that man is the image of God analogically. He means to indicate that man is not the exact image of God but nevertheless made to His image by his intellectual nature.<sup>10</sup> A further key insight that Aquinas takes up after Augustine is the use of the plural "let us make man in *our* image." "[I]n man there exists the image of God, both as regards the Divine Nature and as regards the Trinity of Persons; for also in God Himself there is one Nature in Three persons".<sup>11</sup> For Aquinas, man is made in the image of God as Trinity which indicates man is made as a person, and a person who is in communion with other persons.

This brief examination of *tselem* and *demuth* with Jewish exegetes, a Father of the Church and a Scholastic theologian, have shown that man is the image of God as a plural ("our"/"them") which we believe to be Trinity (three distinct Persons), yet One ("God"/"man"). In addition *image* indicates a rational person possessing intellective powers and *likeness* reinforces the fact that man does not image God as though He were corporeal, but in that intangible intellective or spiritual nature in bodily form. The next key words that must needs be examined are also contained in the above verse, "male and female he created them".

Man (*adam*, אָדָם) is created by *Elohim* as male (*zachar*, זָכָר) and female (*naqebah*, נִקְבָּה). *Zachar* simply indicates biological maleness, and *naqebah*, biological femaleness, whereas *adam* signifies human beings in general. When the text speaks of man/*adam* as both *zachar* and *naqebah*, it reveals that that the *tselem* of God is reflected equally in both male and female. Genesis 5:2 confirms this same position: "he created them male and female. When they were created, he blessed them and named them 'man.'" Differentiated sexually, man as male and female share a common dignity – intentionally created different, yet revealing the very same image of God.

<sup>9</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas*, London 1920, ST I, q.93, a.9.

<sup>10</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., ST I, q.93, a.1 ad 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, ST I, q.93, a.5.

Pondering the Scriptures, it gradually becomes clear that there is unity in man even with this difference of male and female, just as there is a unity in God despite His Self-identified plurality (“Let *Us* make...”, “*Our* image”). Rabbi Bemporad points out that *tselem* is often associated with function, and *Elohim* in Genesis is clearly connected to being the Creator.<sup>12</sup> It follows then that if God is Creator, part of man’s identity is to be a creator. Genesis 5:3 supports this saying, “Adam was one hundred and thirty years old when he begot a son in his likeness, after his image; and he named him Seth.” In the act of procreating, man creates new life and passes on the image and likeness he received to his posterity. The dignity that God bestowed on man in creating him in His image suggests that all humanity is equal: male and female, even including future generations and extending to all mankind even though each person is distinct from all others (cf. Genesis 9:5-6). “It is a gift to be created in the divine image, but it is an even greater gift to let us know we were created in the divine image”<sup>13</sup>

The LORD God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone.  
I will make a suitable partner for him”...  
The LORD God then built up into a woman  
the rib that he had taken from the man.  
When he brought her to the man, the man said:  
“This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;  
This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for  
out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken”<sup>14</sup>

In the second account of creation, often referred to as the “Yahwist” account, the words are slightly different. We will dwell on them only briefly in order to get a fuller sense of what is meant by “man” and “woman” and their common dignity despite their clear distinction. In addition to the word *Elohim*, the second account of creation uses the word “YHWH” (יְהוָה), which indicates God specifically as the One God of the Jewish people, the Eternal and Self-existing LORD.

Verse eighteen uses the same word for man as the “Elohists” account: *adam*. But it is interesting to note that we are now introduced to a new relation-

<sup>12</sup> J. Bemporad, *Jewish Exegesis of Imago Dei*, cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> *The New American Bible*, cit., Genesis 2:18, 22–23.

ship within man, that of a suitable partner (*‘eser cenegro*, עֶסֶר צְנֵגְרוֹ). The *‘eser cenegro* is the counterpart or mate that makes man good, ordered, complete, balanced and integrated (*tov*, טוֹב). The *‘eser cenegro* then indicates a co-unity within man (*adam*) as a whole.

Further along in verse twenty-two, the *‘eser cenegro* is identified as woman (*ishshah*, אִשָּׁה). In verse twenty-three *ish* (אִישׁ) is used to designate man instead of *adam*. The root of the word *ishshah* is *ish*. Linked etymologically as well as by YHWH’s own design, woman as *‘eser cenegro*, the complementary nature of man as male and female, here in the “Yahwist” account reinforces the equal dignity and difference that was found in the “Elohistic” account. In both accounts male and female are other than one another, but equally connected and united in relation to God. Here, man as *ish* reveals the image of God as an individual man, husband. *Ishshah* further identifies woman as wife, child-bearer, an individual woman. These are not descriptive terms that speak only of the duties of male and female, but definitive terms that are linked with the identity of man as male and female.

Distinct from *zachar* and *naqebah* which only indicate male and female sexually, *ish* and *ishshah* reveal something more about what it means to be male and female. The individual man in the image of God is husband and he is father. Each individual woman is created as man’s *‘eser cenegro*, she is wife and mother. This co-unity of the sexes, and the corresponding identity that are built into their nature as male and female provides the proper balance (*tov*) that YHWH desired when he created man as male and female.

From this overview of a few Old Testament texts relating to man as the image of God we have discovered that man is the *imago Dei* through his intellectual and spiritual faculties. From this that man receives his great dignity, but that is not all. Though the *imago Dei* is not something corporeal, the creation of man as both male and female, in the body, tells us something about the true image of God. The proper understanding of who man *is* is wrapped up in the mystery of who God *is*.<sup>15</sup> Man as male and female reflect that there is real distinction and at the same time real union within God. Male and female are part of a co-unity that is ordered in relation with God and this brings good order to man. Further, the texts which show that man is created in the image of God reveal constituent parts of the identity of male and female. Man is first in relation to God Who created him, then in rela-

<sup>15</sup> International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, cit., Paragraph 7.

tion to his *éser cenegro*, as a part of what it means to be man. Explicitly each male is husband and father, and likewise every female is wife and mother. These roles are part of the nature of what it means to be male and female as revealed in the Scriptures.

Before moving on to viewing man as male and female through the eyes of Edith Stein and John Paul II, one cannot leave an examination of the Scriptures without saying something about Jesus Christ. After the fall of man to sin, what we have left is a broken or distorted image of God in man. Jesus comes to reveal the Father. He is the true image of God, Son of God and wholly man. We must see what the New Testament tells us about Jesus and the image of God even if we take only a brief glance.

He is the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation<sup>16</sup>

After the fall of Adam and Eve sin entered the world and the image of God in man became distorted in His creatures, but not destroyed. When Jesus enters the human scene God becomes man; He shows man Who God is, and who man was meant to be. Surely if there is any true image of God, it is to be found in Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup> The Greek word used for image, which is the same word used in Septuagint (LXX) version of the Genesis verses examined earlier, is *eikon* (εἰκών). When used in the LXX, *eikon* is dominantly used as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *tselem* meaning representation, reproduction, or figure.<sup>18</sup> *Eikon*

...not only implies the likeness of a copy to a model, but derives from an earlier reality, it implies a relation of dependency and of origination; and possessing to some extent the same "form," it resembles its precursor... Man is crowned with glory. He is sharply distinguished from the animals created before him; he rules the earth, probably because of his faculties of intelligence and volition.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *The New American Bible*, New York 2004, Colossians 1:15.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. The second verse of the great Corpus Christi hymn, *Adoro Te Devote* by St. Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>18</sup> C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. J. D. Ernest. Vol. 1. Peabody 1994.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 416.



To be created in the image of God is the glorification of man and at the same time shows man's dependence on God. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul shows the continuity of understanding between the Old and New Testaments. Intelligence is again considered to be one of the main qualities of how man is the image of God. The idea of dependency also correlates to the Old Testament; it is God Who creates, man is dependent on Him as a son is to his father.

Yet there is more, Jesus is not solely an *eikon* of God as man, He Himself is God in the form of man. "Here *eikon* means not so much resemblance as derivation and participation; it is not so much the likeness of a copy to its model, but the revelation and, as it were, emanation of the prototype... Christ manifests the Father".<sup>20</sup> The rich significance in the word *eikon* urges one to see that Jesus, God and man, both reveals to man Who the Father is and who man was always meant to be as the image of God. How man is called to be this *eikon* of God is further emphasized with the word *firstborn* (πρωτότοκος).

As *firstborn*, Jesus associates man with Himself as the consummate Image of God and Son of God.<sup>21</sup> In Jesus, what was implicit in the Old Testament is made explicit. Man in relation to God is revealed as a fellow heir, a son of God with Jesus Christ. Celsas Spicq speaks of this well when he says:

The *eikon* takes on ontological meaning, because the person-image achieves a new spiritual state, we might even say a transformation of his being, which – as a living portrait – will share the glorious condition of the resurrected Son... [The] Son of God, the firstborn of a multitude of brethren, having assimilated himself to the likeness of our human nature, passes on to us the conformity to his own "exemplary" filiation, by means of which we are authentic sons of God, "of his race", and his heirs.<sup>22</sup>

Spicq's comments on the understanding of *eikon* in the New Testament show the high calling of man as a son of God and brother of Christ, the definitive Image of God.

Christ's association with man as brothers, sons of the One Father, makes unambiguous who man *is*, who he is called to be as *imago Dei*. The New Testament makes it clear, that what was said of man in the Old Testament was

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 417–418.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Romans 8:29 "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers".

<sup>22</sup> C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, cit., 419.



never erased or taken away. In Christ, fallen man is restored fully as *imago Dei* “being clothed with the new man who is [continually] being renewed unto [full] knowledge after the image of his Creator”.<sup>23</sup> Jesus, associating man so closely with Himself, puts priority on two aspects of who man is: son and brother, daughter and sister.

This brief Scriptural glance has pointed us to who man is as male and female created in the image of God according to Revelation. Man is not the image of God by his actions or what he can *do*, but who he was created to *be*. Firmly grounded in a Scriptural basis of who man is, we can now move forward to see what Edith Stein and John Paul II say about the identity of man as male and female.

## 2. Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta by the Cross)

The reflections of Edith Stein come from the perspective of a female intellectual writing in the midst of the pre-World War II feminist movement. She was raised Jewish, made a conscious decision to be an atheist, eventually converted to Roman Catholicism, and entered a Carmelite convent in Germany. She was influenced early on by her mother who ran a large business, her own interests in women’s issues, studying philosophy under Edmund Husserl, and the spiritual writings of Ignatius of Loyola, Thomas Aquinas, and Cardinal John Henry Newman. A common thread runs through Edith’s diverse life experiences: her uncompromising desire for truth. Her practical nature and intellectual prowess never let her rush to extreme conclusions, but kept her firmly grounded in the search for truth. This is perhaps what makes her writings so helpful; she really wanted to get to the bottom of each issue she tackled.

Her writings on women are insightful and direct in expression. Writing “On the Separate Vocations of Man and Woman According to Nature and Grace”, she too begins with Scripture. Looking at the first creation account in Genesis she says that male and female “are given the threefold vocation: they are to be the image of God, bring forth posterity, and be masters over the earth. [But what,] it is not said here [is] that this threefold vocation is to be effected in different ways by man and woman”.<sup>24</sup> Our primary interest is to explore what Stein says about the vocation of male and female to be the

<sup>23</sup> Colossians 3:10 as translated by M. Libra.

<sup>24</sup> E. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, ed. L. Gelber, R. Leuven, Washington, D.C. 1987, p. 59.

image of God. The insight she gleans from Genesis 1:27 is to highlight the feminine singularity – that women are different from men, that there exists an intrinsic feminine value.<sup>25</sup> It seems fairly obvious to say that women and men are different, but the central point is they image the same Reality (God), only in different ways.

Stein uses the second creation account (Genesis 2:7ff) to further her understanding of the first account: woman is created as *‘eser cenegro*. “One can think here of a mirror in which man is able to look upon his own nature... But one can also think of a counterpart, a *pendant*, so that, indeed, they do resemble each other, yet not entirely, but rather, that they complement each other as one hand does the other”.<sup>26</sup> Man as male and female complement one another in such a way that their unique singularity, which necessarily differentiates them, is how they image God and how they can see themselves as true images of the One God. If anyone were to deny this, and treat male and female as though they were identical, it would be a denial of part of who God is and who man (*adam*) is.

With this basis, Stein then proceeds to address the feminine singularity.

The complementary relationship of man and woman appears clearly in the original order of nature: man’s primary vocation appears to be that of ruler and the paternal vocation secondary (not subordinate to his vocation as ruler but an integral part of it); woman’s primary vocation is maternal: her role as ruler is secondary and included in a certain way in her maternal vocation.<sup>27</sup>

The feminine singularity is woman’s maternal vocation. Yet, she sees that the complement of the sexes actually highlights the true value of each sex. Therefore, to talk about feminine singularity she must also describe the corresponding male value.

“Man was called by his original God-given vocation to be master of the created world”.<sup>28</sup> Man is meant to understand, possess, enjoy, and participate in creation by his purposeful activity. This is what it means to be master and ruler. Stein concludes that “*fatherhood* appears as an original calling of man

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 247.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 69.

assigned to him along with his special vocation”.<sup>29</sup> This means not only to be part of procreation and satisfying his sexual desires, but also to help shape and educate his children. Fatherhood entails being a presence with, protecting and providing for others, which is part of the integral makeup of what it means to be male.

What man does follows from who he is. In her “Ethos of Women’s Professions”, Stein points out that man’s “nature is or should be a co-determining factor for the selection and formation of his vocation”.<sup>30</sup> Applying what Stein says about the fatherhood, it seems to be the case that in all of what he does man should express his being a master of creation and father in whatever occupation he should take up. “Man can fulfill his most noble vocation which is to be the image of God only if he seeks to develop his powers by subordinating himself humbly to God’s guidance”.<sup>31</sup> First and foremost, man’s identity is wrapped up in his relationship to God, who is Father of all. However, what is said about man as father remains incomplete and not fully understandable without the feminine complement.

Woman as *‘eser cenegro* is “named as *companion* and *helpmate*... This signifies that we are to consider the life of the initial human pair as the most intimate community of love, that their faculties were in perfect harmony as within one single being”.<sup>32</sup> Woman stands as an equal at man’s side “to master the earth and to care for offspring. But her body and soul are fashioned less to fight and to conquer than to cherish, guard and preserve”.<sup>33</sup> Here is where one begins to see the divine beauty in the complementary nature of male and female. To use an analogy, man is suited and oriented to building a house that will provide stability and shelter, safety and comfort for his family. Woman is geared toward making that house a home, a pleasant place to live, a place where those who dwell there thrive, a place where all is right in the world.

Having noted that it is man’s vocation to be father, Stein harmonizes his role with respect to woman. “The clear and irrevocable word of Scripture declares what daily experience teaches from the beginning of the world: woman is destined to be wife and mother. Both physically and spiritually she

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 72.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, p. 60.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 72.

is endowed for this purpose”.<sup>34</sup> This is what it means to be *‘eser cenegro*. It is not just a physical difference between male and female that constitutes their nature and complementary role with one another. Their spiritual properties are created as male and female and as male and female they are the image of God – not as some hermaphroditic being possessing no real and specific sexual or spiritual identity.

Stein sees the “particular destiny” of woman to be companion and mother.<sup>35</sup> She does not mean by this any menial or restrictive significance. To be wife and mother is essential to the feminine vocation; it is the feminine singularity – precisely that which makes her different from man and which he cannot know except in and through her.

*To be a companion*, that means to be support and mainstay, and to be able to be so, a woman herself must stand firmly; however, this is possible only if inwardly everything is in right order and rests in equilibrium. *To be a mother* is to nourish and protect true humanity and bring it to development. But again, this necessitates that she possess true humanity herself, and that she is clear as to what it means; otherwise, she cannot lead others to it.<sup>36</sup>

There is a specific value in woman that man does not possess. Yet, Stein insists that this feminine singularity does not inherently retain a clear, balanced (*tov*) equilibrium, but only together in complement with the masculine counterpart.

Stein employs psychological insights as well to illustrate this complementary nature of male and female. She observes, “man appears more *objective*: it is natural for him to dedicate his faculties to a discipline... [but] through submission to a discipline, man easily experiences a *one-sided development*”.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile,

*woman’s attitude is personal*... she is happily involved with her total being in what she does; then, she has particular interest for the living, concrete person, and indeed as much for her own personal life and personal affairs for those of other persons... In woman, there lives a natural drive towards *totality* and *self-containment*... she herself

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 249.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 247.

would like to become a *complete human being*, one who is fully developed in every way; and she would like to help others to become so.<sup>38</sup>

On the one hand, woman's feminine singularity, typified as being companion and mother, draws the masculine towards his fuller development, keeps him from getting locked into too narrow a focus. On the other hand, without the objectivity and discipline of the masculine influence, woman holds a bias "to secure her own personal importance by which she may busy herself and others; also, it is an inability to endure criticism which is experienced as an attack on her person... [and] *an excessive interest in others*".<sup>39</sup> The objectivity that the masculine brings to the table is the "antidote" to the feminine "hyper-individuality," while the female draws the male into a deeper realization of the true humanity in each person. The "human being in whom God's image is developed most purely" is a whole person.<sup>40</sup>

Both male (*zachar*) and female (*naqebah*) are needed to express the full meaning of man (*adam*) created in the image of God. The complementary nature of the masculine and feminine brings man to a full development, helping him to become who he was meant to be. But for this to happen the man must be authentically male, the woman authentically female.

Stein further describes authentic femininity saying, "the *intrinsic value of woman* consists essentially in *exceptional receptivity for God's work in the soul*"<sup>41</sup>, the characteristic value of woman is *motherliness*.<sup>42</sup> A woman is more keen to the interior movements within her own soul and perceptive to those movements within others. As a mother she can help the other notice and develop the sense for what God is doing so they might follow Him. She does this by being who she is as woman: companion and mother. Whether a woman becomes a doctor, lawyer, scholar, teacher, nurse or housemaid,

...basically the same spiritual attitude which the wife and mother need is needed here also, except that it is extended to a wider working circle and mostly to a changing area of people; for that reason, the perspective is detached from the vital bond of blood relationship and more highly elevated on the spiritual level.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 250.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 249.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 253.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 258.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 48.

This is what some refer to as “spiritual motherhood.” But one might say, how can a woman with no children still be a mother?

Stein responds to this using the religious vocation to virginity as her example. “The motive, principle, and end of the religious life is to make an absolute gift of self to God in a self-forgetting love, to end one’s own life in order to make room for God’s life.”<sup>44</sup> Given to just anyone, this surrender becomes perverted, but when a woman hands herself over to God so fully, He takes that offering and pours His love out through that woman and she becomes “a *handmaid of the Lord* everywhere.”<sup>45</sup> A woman who lives out her virginity in the religious life “must be the faithful and maternal steward of the souls entrusted to her care.”<sup>46</sup>

Following the example of Mary, the female religious becomes a “Spouse of Christ” and her feminine nature becomes fruitful in this spiritual motherhood.<sup>47</sup> The upshot of it all is that no matter what a woman does, she never ceases to be – nor should she be afraid to be – who she is as a feminine person. On the grander, spiritual level, the female identity of mother bears fruit in cooperation with her Lord. “Women’s maternal work is linked to Christ’s redeeming mission, and cannot be accomplished without His grace.”<sup>48</sup> Anything that separates a woman from her maternity is detrimental to her identity.

“This maternal gift is joined to that of companion. It is her gift and happiness to share the life of another human being.”<sup>49</sup> When woman is a companion, she strengthens both herself and the other. For as she acts so as to “interest herself empathetically in areas of knowledge far from her own concerns and to which she would not pay heed if it were not that a personal interest drew her into contact with [others]”<sup>50</sup> it helps form the other and broadens her own knowledge. In this light, Edith Stein sees the feminine value of wife and mother to be vital to the needs of humanity today; this is the feminism which she espouses.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>46</sup> D. Traflet, *The Theme of Physical and Spiritual Motherhood in the Life and Work of Edith Stein*, Rome 1998, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> E. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, cit., p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> D. Traflet, *The Theme of Physical and Spiritual Motherhood in the Life and Work of Edith Stein*, cit., p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> E. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, cit., p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p. 44.

As motherhood is essential to the female, so fatherhood is part of the essence of male identity. To be companion and mother is intrinsic to feminine singularity. In the image of God, masculinity and femininity are not complete as separate entities, but are complementary to one another. The complementary nature of male and female is what is able to express full humanity which most purely reflects the image of God in man.

### 3. John Paul II

Karol Wojtyła grew up while World War II, fascism, and communism dominated the political and geographical scene in Europe. During this time he gave up his aspirations in theatre to become a quarry worker by day so that he could be a seminarian by night. He was intimately acquainted with human suffering and exploitation, but was also caught up with the beauty of the human person. Later, as bishop of Krakow, he would ponder the human person through a philosophical and theological lens. The fruit of this reflection yielded an abundant harvest, when in 1978, he was elected Pope John Paul II and began a series of catecheses on the theology of the body. His writings cover a wide range of topics concerning the human person, love, and sexuality, but for our purposes here we are limiting our discussion to what he says about man as male and female.

In the thought of John Paul II, the ability to reason separates man from all other creatures and this “determines the distinctive character of a person”.<sup>51</sup> Personhood in man reflects the Divine Persons which are the Holy Trinity; man as male and female is meant to reflect this Divine image. John Paul II elucidates this notion clearly:

The fact that man ‘created as man and woman’ is the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that man and woman, created as a ‘unity of the two’ in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, New York 1981, p. 22. Cf. also John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15.10.1988), 6.

<sup>52</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 7.



Here we have John Paul II's essential components of man as the *imago Dei*: personhood (which entails reason and freedom), male and female in communion, and love. The verses from Genesis where God speaks of Himself as a unity and a plurality come quickly to mind. Personhood and communion (*communio*) of the sexes are essential to man as *imago Dei* because to be a person necessarily means to be in relation to others, like the Holy Trinity.

It is clear that both male and female image God because they are persons. Yet, John Paul II states that “man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion”.<sup>53</sup> This is what *communio* means. Male to the exclusion of female, or female without the complement of male, is not an adequate image of God. The masculine and the feminine are made to be together, so much so that “sexual difference (being male and female) belongs ontologically to the *imago Dei* in man”.<sup>54</sup> Personhood and *communio* are linked in the *imago Dei*, and the link is love.

To be in communion with another person means that “love for a person must consist in affirmation that the person has a value higher than that of an object for consumption or use”.<sup>55</sup> It means that a person is not a means to be used, but an end, a good in themselves. Love, for John Paul II, depends on man's “willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good”.<sup>56</sup> Communion in the image of God is complementary, not a one-sided taking from the other but rather a going together in the same direction.

*Communio* involves love that is freely given, but what is to be freely given? For John Paul II, it is one's very self.

A woman is capable of truly making a gift of herself only if she fully believes in the value of her person and in the value as a person of the man to whom she gives herself. And a man is capable of fully accepting a woman's gift of herself only if he is fully conscious of the magnitude of the gift – which he cannot be unless he affirms the value of

<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Boston 1997, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> B. Sibley, *Man and Woman as Imago Dei in the Thought of John Paul II*, Rome 2001, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, cit., p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

her person. Realization of the value of the gift awakens the need to show gratitude and to reciprocate in ways that would match its value.<sup>57</sup>

The value of the gift is the person themselves. The Father does not give the Son some *thing*, but He gives Himself fully to the Son in His divine Paternity and is not diminished because of it. Instead His gift of love elicits love in the Son, Who forever loves the Father in His divine Filiation. From Their gift of Self to One Another proceeds the eternal Spiration of love in the Holy Spirit. The gift of self is not lessened by giving but rather increased; love is the only adequate response to love freely given. When “God created man in His own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love”<sup>58</sup>

Love is not only possible, but necessary in the communion of persons. Love is self-gift, and in the mutual exchange of persons, love is integral to make room for real communion, just as it is in the Holy Trinity. “Man ‘became the image and likeness’ of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning”<sup>59</sup>

Like Edith Stein, John Paul II notes a mutual harmony between male and female which he calls complementarity.<sup>60</sup> He cites the text in Genesis 2:18-25 where God takes the rib of Adam to create woman, and points out “the essential equality of man and woman from the point of view of their humanity”.<sup>61</sup> Woman is the suitable partner for Adam, the one with whom he no longer felt “alone.” There is an old Jewish midrash which illustrates complementarity, difference and equality together. The story goes that God did not take woman from man’s feet so that she would be below and subordinate to him, nor from his head that she would be above and domineer over him. Rather, she was taken from his side that she might be equal with him. In fact, she was taken from his rib, which is next to man’s heart and usually protects his heart, so that she might stand beside him and through her presence man’s heart might not grow hard to God. Woman, in her femininity, offers her own unique dimension to humanity, which is different than what man can offer. John Paul II

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22.11.1981), 11.

<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, cit., p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p. 69.

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, cit., 6.

adds even more emphasis, “man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist ‘side by side’ or ‘together,’ but they are also called to *exist mutually ‘one for the other’*”.<sup>62</sup>

Man and woman are to be suitable helpers (*‘eser cenegro*) to one another. There is a “*certain likeness* between the union of the divine Persons and the union of God’s children in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self”.<sup>63</sup> In giving of his very self to the other, man exists for the other, freely offering himself to the other precisely because that other is a person. John Paul II continues, “The model for this interpretation of the person is God Himself as Trinity, as communion of Persons. To say that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist ‘for’ others, to become a gift”.<sup>64</sup> Love, self-gift, is intrinsic to the *communio* of male and female, if man is to reveal the *imago Dei*.

Personhood means that man possesses both reason and freedom, and we have seen how love is essential to the communion between man and woman. All this is necessary to being human, now we must look at what John Paul II says about characteristics of male and female. Complete self-giving love between man and woman is most often expressed in the marriage bond. “By means of the body, the human person is husband and wife”.<sup>65</sup> When man and wife offer themselves to each other in a sincere gift of self, seeing in the other the suitable helper, their love bears fruit in children.

The mystery of femininity is manifested and revealed by means of motherhood... The woman stands before the man as a mother, the subject of the new human life that is conceived and develops in her, and from her is born into the world. Likewise, the mystery of man’s masculinity, that is, the generative and fatherly meaning of his body, is also thoroughly revealed.<sup>66</sup>

This seems to affirm that when femininity and masculinity become fruitful, motherhood and fatherhood are discovered. Motherhood and fatherhood

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, cit., p. 81.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

are rooted in the existing person, they are part of what it means to be female and what it means to be male.

A woman conceives through a man's gift of self to her, and she discovers who she is from giving herself with a special openness to life that is implied in motherhood.<sup>67</sup> Motherhood intensifies within woman the ability to attend to *another person*, which extends beyond her own physical children.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile man remains "outside" the process of pregnancy and "in many ways he has to learn his own 'fatherhood' from the mother".<sup>69</sup> Woman's unique gift of femininity, expressed in being wife and mother, allows her to develop within man fatherhood, which brings him to a fuller realization of his own identity. The complementarity of man and woman helps them to become who they are.<sup>70</sup>

Certainly physical offspring carries with it a new role, but parenthood is more than just biological for John Paul II. "Maternity manifests this constitution internally, as the particular potentiality of the female organism".<sup>71</sup> As a woman, it is part of who she is to be mother, even before she bears children physically. The father or mother is also a person, and this carries with it a deeper significance than a mere role<sup>72</sup>; fatherhood and motherhood are part of the identity of a person.

*Spiritual paternity and maternity are characteristics indicative of mature parenthood in man and woman... Spiritual parenthood as a sign of the inner maturity of the person is the goal which in diverse ways all human beings, men and women alike, are called to seek, within or outside matrimony... the spiritual parenthood of which God is the prototype takes shape in them.*<sup>73</sup>

Here, the question comes to a head: is it really even possible to speak of parenthood apart from biological parenthood, or is this just an optimistic idea to fit those who do not bear children physically into a mold that we ourselves designed?

This question is answered in two ways. First, it is hoped that through the reading thus far, one can see that paternity and maternity are part of the mas-

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, cit., 18.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>70</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, cit., 17.

<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, cit., p. 81.

<sup>72</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, cit., p. 260.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 260–261.

culine and feminine identity, not a secondary feature. Even if a person, such as a priest, should choose to remain celibate, he does not cease to be who he is as a man. “The priest’s human personality is at the very heart of a fruitful priesthood; it is the human bridge that connects others with Jesus Christ”.<sup>74</sup> Fr. John Cihak summarizes John Paul II’s thought succinctly.

[There are] four relational dimensions of manhood [which] are son, brother, husband and father. The first two dimensions (son and brother) are necessary preparations for manhood and the last two (husband and father) bring about the fulfillment of manhood. In other words, a man must be a good son, then a good brother, then a good husband and then a good father to become a good man and attain his fulfillment as man. All four together are necessary to attain mature manhood, and never is any dimension left behind.<sup>75</sup>

All that it means to be masculine is inherent within each male person. The same is true of femininity and the female person. Should he not have biological children it does not mean that a man is not a father; he does not lose that dimension of masculinity. It does mean, though, that fatherhood takes a different form.

This leads us to a second consideration, what does it mean to say there are different forms of paternity or maternity? This must be understood in the context of analogy: animals have a mother and a father, but we do not speak of their parenthood in the same way as we do in humans, except by way of anthropomorphism. The same is true of “antitypical” human parenthood in relation to the original “type.”

All ‘generating’ among creatures finds its primary model in the generating which in God is completely divine, that is, spiritual. All ‘generating’ in the created world is to be likened to this absolute and uncreated model...human ‘fatherhood’ and ‘motherhood,’ bears within itself a likeness to, or analogy with the divine ‘generating’ and with that ‘fatherhood’ which in God is ‘totally different’ – that is, completely spiritual and divine in essence.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> J. Cihak, “The Blessed Virgin Mary’s Role in the Celibate Priest’s Spousal and Paternal Love”, in [http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2009/jcihak\\_maryandpriests1\\_july09.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2009/jcihak_maryandpriests1_july09.asp) [4.7.2010]. Cf. Perhaps the most well-known passage from *Pastores dabo vobis*, 43.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, cit., 8.

The spiritual fatherhood of God is the starting point, He is the Type. Biological paternity or maternity is one way that man images God, the antitype which says something of the type but not everything. Man receives all he is, his entire identity in relation to God; mysteriously, at the same moment, man's identity reveals something about Who God is. The danger here is to confuse the type with the antitype, or simply to forget that man is nothing without God.<sup>77</sup>

Now virginity and celibacy can be brought into the discussion. John Paul II insists that such continence is *for the sake of the kingdom of heaven*; it is a giving up of the temporal to give oneself exclusively to God. John Paul II points to the reality of spiritual fruitfulness which is exemplified most notably in Mary's virginal maternity and Joseph's spiritual paternity.<sup>78</sup> "The marriage of Mary and Joseph...conceals within itself, at the same time, the mystery of the perfect communion of persons, of the man and the woman in the conjugal pact, and also the mystery of that singular continence for the kingdom of heaven".<sup>79</sup> Their marriage is "conjugal" even in continence in that it expressed the *total giving of self to the other*.<sup>80</sup> Their spousal relationship possessed the complementary of all that it means to be man and woman, and bore fruit in Holy Spirit when the Word became flesh in their marriage. There can be no purer image of spiritual parenthood than this.

While one must recognize the authenticity and value of spiritual parenthood, it does not in any way diminish the value of biological parenthood.

Conjugal love which finds its expression in continence for the kingdom of heaven must lead in its normal development to paternity or maternity in a spiritual sense ...in a way analogous to conjugal love, which matures in physical paternity and maternity, and in this way confirms itself as conjugal love. For its part, physical procreation also fully responds to its meaning only if it is completed by paternity and maternity in the spirit, whose expression and fruit is all the educative work of the parents in regard to the children born of their conjugal corporeal union.<sup>81</sup>

Understood in this way, marriage and continence complement each other and actually bring about a fuller understanding of what it means to be father

<sup>77</sup> *The New American Bible*, John 15:5.

<sup>78</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, cit., p. 268.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 268.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 277.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 278.

and mother. Both image the Divine paternity and maternity of God in a way that would be lacking without the other. According to John Paul II, it is not only possible for a non-biological parenthood to exist, but it is necessary to understand full meaning of parenthood.

Personhood, the *communio* of male and female which essentially involves self-giving love, and parenthood are how male and female reflect the *imago Dei* in the conception of John Paul II. Man reflects the image of God in his body; to be female is to be wife and mother; to be male is to be husband and father. Paternity and maternity are expressed in man in bearing biological children as well as through spiritual paternity and maternity. Both expressions of paternity and maternity are valid because they are complementary to what it means to be created male and female in the *imago Dei*.

#### 4. Connecting thoughts

The purpose of this paper is to say something of who man is as male and female. Individualism and secularism are dominant ideologies in modern culture. They highlight the seemingly endless possibility of what man can do, what he can achieve when he sets his mind to something. Personal success and productivity are prized. At the same time it is increasingly forgotten that man does not exist without God. Pursuing one's desires, even at the exploitation of another has become a common habit. The reality of relational interdependence with others in a community is neglected in favor of autonomy. What man can *do* has become more important than who he *is*.

There is more to man than this. That is why we used Scripture as the starting point for our understanding of who man is. Understanding who man is as male and female governs how we act. In our examination of Scripture, the thought of Edith Stein, and the writings of John Paul II, a real continuity and agreement exists in their description of man, male and female, as *imago Dei*.

Man is the image of God as He truly is in all His fullness, the Holy Trinity. There is only one God, and this is the belief we profess in the Creed. In the mystery of undivided unity, there is real distinction in God, the three Divine Persons. They are distinct in relation, one in essence. So we can say that God *is* Father, God *is* Son, and God *is* Holy Spirit. Three persons but one God, and man is made in this image. Man is who he is in *relation*. In this way we can say that every man *is* son, brother, husband, father; and that every woman *is* daughter, sister, wife, and mother.



Right from the beginning of Scripture it is implied that man exists as a son in relation to God, implicitly in the Old Testament, explicit in the New. Man is dependent on God as his Father, the One Who brings him into this world and gives him his bodily form. Because of the divine paternity of God man exists as the *imago Dei*, as son (or daughter) of God. This dimension of man is made explicit in the revelation of Jesus Christ, come in the flesh; man *is* son of God. Jesus is the firstborn Son of God (Colossians 1:15), come to renew man in the image of God (Colossians 3:10) and to make them His brothers (Romans 8:29). There can be no mistaking that God intends men and women to share divine filiation in relation to the Father according to the Scriptures.

Man as son or daughter is dependent. A son does not and cannot exist without the Father. This is the fundamental dimension of man's being; man is first of all in relation to God. Dependence as a son or daughter does not mean that man is kept down in some pitiful existence like a slave, but that they are provided for, and share in all that is of the Father. They receive the spiritual and intellectual capacity which separates them from the rest of creation. They share in His estate and are His heirs, with whom He wishes to share His own divine life. This happens most radically in Baptism, where God's own life is infused into the soul along with the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity that allow the soul a foretaste of eternal life in heaven. The Father loves the son and the son learns what it is to love from the love he receives from the Father.

What is more, Jesus confirms another dimension of who man is in the *imago Dei*, brother and sister. When He became human flesh and blood, He united Himself to our humanity in a way that – wondrously and even shockingly – brings us up to His level. He came in our likeness (Philippians 2:7) so He could share all that was ours, even our condemnation. He would not stand by to watch us destroy ourselves in sin, but He stood with and for us. A brother or sister is not alone.

To be a brother or sister means to share a common life and inheritance with others as equal. It is sharing in the sorrow and joy of another. It is a being *with*, not over, against, or instead of another. Whereas sonship involves a love for the Father Who gave us all we have and are, “brotherly love” is tender affection for our fellow man, an active concern for others. Being a brother or sister does not mean that we cease to be individuals, but it does mean that we exist as a part of a community that is bigger than just ourselves. When Jesus came as our brother, He revealed that He is not the sole recipient of the Father's love; He wanted to share it with each of us. In the same way we are to share the love we receive with others.

Above, we did not speak about what Edith Stein and John Paul II say concerning man as son and brother or woman as daughter and sister specifically. It is implied by their emphasis on male and female as husband and wife. One cannot be a husband or wife without first being son or daughter. The distinction between male and female is not emphasized in these first two primary dimensions of man, but in the more mature dimensions of personhood the difference between the masculine and feminine characteristics of man are key.

Man as husband and woman as wife are not the invention of these twentieth-century figures; it has been there from the very beginning. Man (*ish*) is husband who leaves his father and mother so as to cleave to his wife (*ishshah*).<sup>82</sup> These words hold within them the meaning that man is more than just being male, man *is* husband; woman is more than just being female sexually, she *is* wife. They are in relation to one another, and they bring a completeness (*tov*) to one another. Stein's insight into the unique feminine singularity of woman as a companion converges with John Paul II's conviction that communion requires self-giving love.

To be wife means to share intimate communion with "her man"<sup>83</sup>, which involves mutual self-giving. A wife is the support for her husband; she teaches him to love by giving herself to him totally and freely. She cherishes, guards, and preserves this love. To the husband is given the task of subduing the earth and of giving his life for the sake of his bride.<sup>84</sup> This mutual gift of self and intimate union of male and female is most powerfully expressed in marital union. Husband and wife share a uniquely close intimacy, a more intense communion than any other male-female relationship. They are totally *for* the other, holding nothing back; they are with this other even to the exclusion of all others. This does not eliminate their identity as son/daughter, in which they are first in relation to God, nor their identity as brother/sister, through which they care for the needs of all others. But the totality of sharing and giving in the husband wife relationship is unique; it is only for this one other.

Yet, the married life is not the only way this total self-giving communion can be lived. There is also the virginal, celibate life lived for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. A woman *is* wife when she becomes the spouse of Christ through the total giving of herself to Him perpetually. Likewise a man *is* husband when he gives himself over completely for the Church as Christ

<sup>82</sup> *The New American Bible*, cit., Genesis 2:24.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, 2:23.

<sup>84</sup> *The New American Bible*, cit., Ephesians 5:25-27.

did. This is a true, spiritual, spousal union that is dependent upon Christ. Without Christ as the animating principle, virginity and celibacy for their own sake would lack the potency of total gift for the other that is achieved in marital union.

Finally, paternity and maternity express who man is when the spousal relationship is fructified. Here we see the complementarity of male and female. She cannot be mother without him, and he is not a father except in union with her. Femininity is fully revealed in motherhood; this is who she is created to *be*. Motherhood entails openness to life that the woman nourishes and brings to development. The mother not only bears children but also helps them grow so that they might become a whole person. When a woman embraces her motherhood she is able to teach the man what it means to be father.

Fatherhood is expressed when the man gives himself fully to his wife in an act of self-donation that initiates new life. Fatherhood cannot mean only the siring of offspring, but must include the care and education of the children as well. A father does not abandon his own, but fends for them, providing space for his family, his children, to grow to full development always in communion with their mother who is his *'eser cenegro*, his wife.

In the same way that being husband and wife is proper to every man and woman, so paternity and maternity have a spiritual dimension. Their parenthood is truly realized when they beget or nourish life in the soul of any person. This spiritual fatherhood and motherhood are based on the fruitfulness of Christ's redeeming act, which bestows life in a truer and more fecund manner than anything we know here on earth.

Being a man or woman created in the image of God does not have to do so much with personality or physical characteristics; it is part of one's identity. A man could have a short temper or a tranquil disposition; he could work in the math department, drive a garbage truck, teach at daycare, or become a priest. These roles are not essential to his being male. But every man *is* a son, brother, husband, and father. A woman could be bossy or compliant, a social butterfly or a wallflower; she could be a stay at home mom, a nun, teach elementary school, become the head of state, or an Indy car racer. These characteristics may reflect her personality, but are secondary to being female. What is primary is her personhood; every woman *is* a daughter, sister, wife and mother.

Anything that sacrifices the identity of male and female destroys the *imago Dei* in man. Everything that affirms and enhances the identity of male and female strengthens the *imago Dei* – for fuller self-realization of the person and to the glory of the Holy Trinity.