

Woman as Eucharistic Being: The Genius of the Feminine

A Eucharistic being is a person who offers his life actively through a lifting up of self and all life around them to the Eternal Father in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The masculine manifestation of Eucharistic life consists in man's particular disposition to love in a sacrificial surrender of the self for the sake of creating new life. For the feminine, the Eucharistic life also contains the dimension of sacrifice, but it is something that is first received. Herein lies the particular Eucharistic life for woman, namely, that she is the receiver of God's life who in turn diffuses it to the world in an emanation of sacrificial love.

The gift of God offered to humanity is participation in the Divine Life, true and eternal communion with God forever and ever. But humanity must receive the gift from God. It is the quintessential act of humanity, to receive God. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, was "fashioned by the same Spirit and sees without realizing it that the most fruitful activity of the human person is to be able to receive God." (The Wellspring of Worship, Jean Corbon, 1988, 21)

Woman is endowed with a particular capacity for accepting the human being in his concrete form. Even this singular feature which prepares her for motherhood, not only physically but also emotionally, psychologically and spiritually, is inherent in the plan of God who entrusted the human being to woman in an altogether special way, (cf. St. John Paul II, *Angelus*, July 23) for through her maternal instinct, she frees man and woman to mature into a vessel for God to dwell within them.

"The Bible exalts woman as the preeminent instrument of spiritual receptivity in human nature."

- It is woman who receives the promise of salvation at the Annunciation
- It is woman to whom the Resurrected Christ first appears
- It is woman who is the first believer of the Resurrection
- It is woman who is adorned with the Sun and represents the Church
- It is woman who represents the Heavenly Jerusalem
- It is woman who typifies the image of the Church
- It is woman who gives flesh and blood to the Son of God without man

Therefore, it is woman who personifies most perfectly the religious dimension of human nature which is to receive God. It can be said that the goal of the Christian life is to make every human being a mother in order to give birth to Christ Jesus in the soul. "Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit who brings about the miraculous birth of Christ in the depth of the soul." (Corbon, 35) This is the way of the Christian to healing, to wholeness, to eternal life. The Birth of Jesus Christ is the perfect type of the charism every woman is called to manifest in the hearts of men and women, to give birth to God in ruined souls (Corbon, 35). That is precisely why St. Paul expresses his spiritual fatherhood in maternal terms: "I must go through all the pain of childbirth." (Gal. 4:19)

Therefore, the particular charism of woman as a Eucharistic being is to receive God who once He makes His dwelling within the soul can enable woman to become wellsprings of sacrificial love. All this occurs in the act of worship that is Eucharist. If it is man who offers himself as a sacrifice to God, it is woman who receives the efficacy of that sacrifice from God and diffuses anew into the heart of man. Man is ontologically linked to Jesus Christ. Woman is ontologically linked to the Holy Spirit. Man represents the lamb of sacrifice. Woman represents the altar which receives the sacrifice and on which the sacrifice is offered. Woman is the prayer, the *Orant*, the one who becomes prayer—that is communion with God, intimacy with the Lord. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus typifies this woman-Orant. The scene is familiar to you. Jesus said to Martha, "Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42) To sit and listen to God is a gift that comes more easily and readily to woman because she is the receiver. Man is the sacrificer—the priest who mediates between God and humanity. Woman is the Orant, the Prayer, who represents all humanity that is innately religious, but now infused with God's Spirit, receives the Gift of God, the efficacy of the Sacrifice of Christ, and returns it to God thereby making a pure and perfect offering and total gift of self. Furthermore, as mother, she covers all life with her maternal protection (Our Lady). And then she takes life as she encounters it and lifts it up to the Father in the Eucharist. She is, as it were, a collaborator with the work of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies all. That is why all humanity, man and woman, must embrace motherhood, for all are called to participate the Prayerful offering of life to God in and through the Eucharist. (Corbon, 37) Woman completes the sacrificial act of man and reciprocates it. Woman and man are intrinsically connected, created by God as a likeness to Himself, refracting His glory most brilliantly when they are in communion. God's design of man and woman is truly a marvel realized and perfect in our worship of Eucharist. To be a Eucharistic being, the woman must delve deeply into the mystery of Christ by imitating the Blessed Virgin Mary and being the one who prays and receives diffuses all grace through her worship and life.

