

2007

Virginity and the Wholeness of the Person: The Blessed Virgin Mary as Immaculata--A Style of Life: Love Received and Love Bestowed

Elena Lugo

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lugo, Elena (2007) "Virginity and the Wholeness of the Person: The Blessed Virgin Mary as Immaculata--A Style of Life: Love Received and Love Bestowed," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 58, Article 7.

Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol58/iss1/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Studies by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

VIRGINITY—WHOLENESS OF THE PERSON

**The Blessed Virgin Mary as *Immaculata*—A
Style of Life: Love Received and Love Bestowed**

*Elena Lugo, Ph.D.**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Objectives

This presentation does not pertain to the theological debate about the permanent virginity of the Blessed Mother. Neither does it address the ecclesiastical issue regarding ministerial celibacy as linked to the ideal of virginity. Academically, on both themes, I refer myself to the experts, like you, authorities in theology and mariological studies.

Personally I can well appreciate the special splendor of Mary as Mother of God, and our mother too, in her eternal virginity. As Father Philip J. Donnelly said, the Blessed Mother's virginity is not a temporary prerogative but an integral distinction of her Motherhood of the Second Person of the Trinity, of her Immaculate Conception and, of her singular holiness in anticipation of the Redemption and in her mediation of this event for the history of salvation. Likewise I can encourage whoever opts for the priesthood or the consecrated life to cherish the personal enrichment and apostolic fruitfulness which a full imitation of Christ's style of life secures. As Father José Román Flecha testifies, evangelical celibacy is an efficient

*Elena Lugo, Ph.D., a member of the Schoenstatt Secular Institute: Sisters of Mary, teaches at Georgetown University. She is currently the Director of the Kentenich Commission on Bioethics USA / Argentina (incorporated into the Federation of Centers and Institutes of Bioethics of Personalist Inspiration—Vatican).

sign of the very presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church, and likewise in the experience of Christians who come in contact with the consecrated person.

My approach is more modest in scope and perhaps daring in its specific focus. I intend to present the implications of those aspects of a personalistic anthropology which I, as a bioethicist, usually handle, to virginity. Bioethical categories—such as person, corporeity, life, love—will help me to demonstrate that virginity is a legitimate option for contemporary life, even within a secular frame of reference. The questions I would like to address are: What does it mean to be a virginal person? How is the body experienced? How is love to be expressed fully by a person whose sexual modality excludes marital intercourse or the gift of the total self to an exclusive other?

At the end, I will indicate how personal integrity, as modeled by the Blessed Virgin Mary (the *Immaculata*), is an anthropologically sound and ethically practical ideal, and that, despite the contemporary cultural suspicion of modesty and chastity, such attributes are fundamental to the personal authenticity so treasured in our postmodern times.

B. Misconceptions Regarding Virginity

For the most part the diverse and multiple objections regarding virginity can be reduced to two: 1) that the option for virginity violates human nature, its need for interpersonal complementarity, and the deep longings for love; 2) that it fails to promote the good of society in the area of human procreation. Both misconceptions define the virginal person in negative terms, such as absence or repression of the sexual dimension proper to personhood, incapacity for giving and receiving human love, affective atrophy, and indifference toward fatherhood or motherhood.

Another current of thought which also fails to acknowledge virginity from a properly human perspective is the traditional tendency to define and compare a virginal life in relationship to married life, with the intention of bestowing on the former a status of preference and dignity over and above marriage which is, thus, at times merely tolerated for the less ascetical

Christian. Such a view is an implicit denial of the nature of personhood as an incarnated spirit inclusive of a distinct sexual dimension, and who is ultimately called to become a gift in, for, and of love in its multiple modalities.

In either case, the negative and, likewise, the apparently positive appraisal of virginity present it in isolation from personal life-experiences. For, indeed, in some individuals, virginity is distorted to become a mask for egoistical inclinations, a sign of insensitivity or incapacity to give as well as to receive human love. But in others, virginity is a voluntary gift of self to a transcendental value that also entails a life task of intersubjective communion in solicitude with fellow humans in general, and with the most vulnerable in particular.

C. Cultural Context That Encourages a Negative View of Virginity

It is widely known that our present culture encourages men and women to define life exclusively in terms of quality, understood as comfort and pleasure in material goods, and less in view of the intrinsic dignity of the person, or much less in view of a call to sanctity with its corresponding renunciations. Often, the experiences of comfort and pleasure are detached from responsibility toward one's own integrity as a person. All too often, sexual pleasure, in particular, is disconnected from love, or else love is reduced to individual gratification without a corresponding pursuit of the good of the other person within a stable relationship of exclusivity and faithfulness.

Denying the cultural relevance of transcendental values, our postmodernistic mentality is content with truth as relative to individual opinion, and with the good as equivalent to one's own preferences. Immediate satisfaction, rapid acquisition of material goods, with a corresponding loss of concern for the personal spiritual well-being, contribute to a contemporary underestimation of virginity as a style of life centered on the dignity of the whole person and open to transcendence or a life beyond mere utility and pleasure-seeking for the sake of substantial and enduring values.

The cultural context just described also includes those feministic trends which explicitly deny a distinct womanly

capacity to spiritualize human relationships, to affirm the whole person, and, most significantly for our present theme, to foster receptivity toward the divine with a corresponding inclination to silence and self-detachment as conditions for generous solicitude. Women are, in general, uncertain about their identity and specific dignity, and hence ambiguous regarding their cultural responsibility to protect and promote the values of self-renunciation for the sake of generous service to others, as inherent to the option for virginity.

II. PERSONALISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND VIRGINITY:

A BIOETHICAL APPROACH

A. Person as an Ontological Category

Fundamental to my exposition is the objective concept of person understood as a substantial mode of existence. I do not regard the person in merely functional terms descriptive of behavioral features, nor according to social consensus of historically determined formulations. Throughout the intellectual history, one can discover certain features of what it means to be a person as an objective category inclusive and compatible with the subjective experience we individually have of this one and same universal reality. I may only offer an outline of these features as they pertain to the ontological and axiological basis for virginity as a style of life enabling a person to conquer the wholeness of his/her being.

A person's being is characterized by:

1. **Individuality**, the mark of a unique and irreplaceable entity—a “who” and not a “what”; each person requires full respect for the dignity of his/her singular mode of existence.
2. **Dialogical or intersubjective interaction** with another person—without which no person reaches fullness. Each person is a gift of self and a response to the other person as gift.
3. **Interiority**, which means that each person may transcend external stimuli and return into the inner realm of autonomous deliberation, judgment and decision.

4. **Vital project**, the dynamic and gradual unfolding of the personality within space and time as a concrete and historical entity.
5. **Corporeity**, bodiliness that is integral to existence within the world and instrumental to the vital project.
6. **Sacredness**, that is, being a creature called to manifest in the world the image and resemblance of God, as Creator and dispenser of Providence. The person is the only being loved by God for his/her own sake.
7. In brief, being a person means to exist as an **incarnated spirit** created in accordance with **two distinct sexual modes—masculine and feminine—of equal dignity and in reciprocal complementarity**.

B. Immediate Ethical Implications

The inherent dignity of the person demands basic ethical considerations of universal endorsement, here briefly enumerated without a full explanation:

1. **Dignity** entitles a person to be regarded and treated always as an end or as an entity with intrinsic value and never as a means, a utility, or an object for the pleasure, possession or control of another.
2. As incarnated spirit—of feminine or masculine modality—one must preserve one's own **integrity** and respond according to one's "body-language" as a norm, while expecting others to respect this psychosomatic unity in all interpersonal exchanges.
3. The individual person flourishes in communion with others, hence love is essential to human communities. **Solidarity**, as a principle and as a virtue, is a necessary expression of our common humanity.
4. **Transcendence**, or longing for the ultimate explanation of the origin and end of human existence, corresponds to the creaturely condition and "sacred" quality of personhood, particularly acknowledged by the religious

believer. Such transcendence demands that each person be regarded as worthy of reverence and of encouragement to attain his/her highest spiritual goods. As an "ícon," each person must strive for self-possession, magnanimity in fraternal service, solicitude for the common good within just institutions. Each must also recognize his/her role as custodian of created nature and master over his/her own technological achievements, and, above all, over his/her condition as a child of God.

C. Person as Incarnated Spirit with Personal Existential Modalities

Human persons—feminine and masculine—are in reciprocal complementarity (the question of the **wholeness** of the person).

A personalistic anthropology enables us to see that the virginal person lives the full meaning of personhood while experiencing an authentic experience of corporeity, sexuality, and love. The virginal style of life never denies or represses, but rather decisively affirms the latter as essential features of personal integrity.

1. Corporeity, as the lived-reality of our body, is the visible manifestation of the inner world centered on our immortal spirit. Rather than an instrument or a resource, the body as subject—that is, distinct but not separated from body as object viewed externally—is treated, in biomedical settings and as a commercial cultural icon, as our point of contact with the surrounding world, the manifestation of our personal identity, and a key component in intersubjective communication and in religious rituals. Moreover, the body, as integral to personhood, has a language of its own which each person must recognize, interpret, and respect as an objective norm of nature. Each segment and function of our corporeity—be these impulses, sensations, or capacities of human anatomy and physiology—belong to the person as a whole. Consequently it follows that each individual ought to consciously and deliberately integrate them into his vital project. Thus the corporeal features of the person interact

with the illumination of the mind, the rectitude of the will and the nobility of the heart. As I will later emphasize, the virginal person rejoices in the body as an expression of inner and fundamental option for noble values and a symbol of a total gift of self in the service of such values.

2. The lived-experience of corporeity includes to a significant degree the awareness of one's intrinsic sexuality in its broad sense, which corresponds to masculinity and femininity as distinct modes of human existence, and in its specific sense as genital sexuality. Sexuality may not be isolated from other fundamental human experiences which are rooted in the structure and the dynamics of being a person. As dynamic, sexuality is a continuous process capable of evolving toward personal integration and maturity in intersubjective communion, but, unfortunately, also exposed to regression, stagnation and primitiveness destructive of personal integrity and interpersonal communication. A virginal person lives fully the implications of femininity or masculinity, but learns a positive sublimation of the genital sexual dimension.
3. A personalistic anthropology identifies the deep sense and value of personalized sexuality as ontological openness, receptivity and response of the person toward another person. Prof. Flecha says that the essence of sexuality is not found in the individual but in the dual mode of man and woman which makes the interpersonal encounter in full reciprocity possible. In this context, we can anticipate that sexuality is intrinsically linked to the manifestation of the intimate quality of being man or woman in one's existential being-in-the-world. Thus sexuality in its broad sense, but also in its derivative and strictly genital manifestation, constitutes a privileged dialogue in and from the depth of personal intimacy through corporal language, and, simultaneously, the most dignified way to generate a new personal life. Person as incarnated and sexualized spirit opens the own self in affirmative and receptive disposition to another person

who is thus acknowledged as a “you” and a “who,” irreplaceable in significance and in individual otherness and who, in turn, permits the “I” to be confirmed within the “you.” Virginity affirms this openness and receptivity, but with a distinct transcendental orientation.

4. Our discourse has led us to consider sexuality in the context of love between man and woman. The sexual relation ought to maintain and affirm the alterity or differences between the sexes, but likewise the mutual respect for their specific and complementary dignity. The body language inherent to the sexual dialogue of female and male reveals the intrinsic unity of intimacy and fecundity. In the next section we will address marital love in relation to virginal love. Now a word about pleasure and specifically sexual pleasure. The integration of pleasure in general and the reverential renunciation to sexual pleasure are keynotes of the wholeness of a virginal persona.
5. In his “Letter to the Families,” John Paul II (no. 12) is emphatic: the person should never become a mere object of pleasure, for that will degrade the ontological dignity of personhood which is always the end of any action, which must intend the good for the person, and never be a means to attain an extrinsic aim. Pleasure, as the classic and thomistic tradition have insisted, is a side-effect or epiphenomenon, independent of the objective good that is pursued. Sexual pleasure, within a personalistic approach, is definitively inseparable from oblation love and is bound to intensify itself as love evolves from its erotic level to a beneficent mode focused on the integral good of the beloved. Viktor Frankl has accurately described the phenomenon of sexual pleasure: “The mere satisfaction of the sexual impulse produces pleasure, the erotic relation of falling in love causes happiness, but authentic love leads to joy; pleasure is simply an affective state, happiness is more intentional or directed toward the other, but joy entails the full personal realization of self ‘as gift.’” Thus, pleasure may not become first in the hierarchy of values pertaining to sexual

intercourse, nor in any interpersonal bonding, but rather be an outcome to be gratefully and gratuitously celebrated. In principle, pleasure can be renounced at one level in order to attain another value with its own corresponding joy. In connection with this, one can understand abstinence as self-determination or self-governance in order to attain the necessary self-possession prerequisite to becoming a personal gift to another—both in marriage and in virginity.

D. Marriage and Virginity in a Reciprocity of Mutual Affirmation as a Style of Life (Not as a Mere State)

Both options have in common the ontological need of the person for oblation love, that is, to make of one's self a gift of one's own being and to receive the other in an intersubjective encounter of mutual affirmation and reverence.

1. Marriage

Most scholars view the two options in their reciprocal illumination and complementary practice. Both presuppose the personal vocation within the concrete life situation. For the most part, spiritual leaders recognize that the Christian person is called to sanctity not in terms of a distinct state, one regarded as higher in view of its perfection, but rather to a way of life that he or she must in itself sanctify and also become holy through the personal striving for perfection. The view of marriage and virginity in complementarity underlines the integration of sexuality, corporeity and personal spirituality that is possible within the individual person. Each option affirms the full sexualized corporeity, but integrates it in its corresponding manner according to the free and deliberately formulated personal project of life.

a. Marriage is a universal and ordinary fundamental value, though also a sacrament; virginity is a particular value of exceptional and supernatural qualities, but with a natural pre-condition (as shall be pointed out below). Marriage helps to appreciate virginity as a form of personal engagement in pursuit of spiritual goods that promote the well-being of many. Virginity helps to grasp the ultimate good of marital love which is the full participation in

the love of God. Marriage also allows for a certain experience of virginity insofar as marital love actualizes the full and exclusive gift of self. Chastity in married life secures the virginal quality of authentic marital love.

b. Now, we attempt to respond to our first initial question: What does it mean to be a virginal person? The virginal style of life for the Kingdom of God has a distinct charism and might be favored over marriage. Without in any way underestimating the marital vocation in view of the same Kingdom, virginity is a special call to live the plenitude of interpersonal communion which is also the ultimate end of marriage—unity with God. The virginal person in his/her capacity for love experiences an intense longing for intimacy and creativity, as is proper to all noble love, that this person admits cannot be consummated in the marital bond of a carnal gift to a human “you,” but rather in a total surrender of the incarnated—feminine/masculine—self to the person and mission of the Divine “You.”

c. Chastity, as lived in a paradigmatic way by the virginal person, is also essential for the married couple who strives for the highest form of love between the spouses—of beneficence or generous service to the good of the beloved regardless of personal sacrifice. In both cases, the person experiences corporeity and sexuality in total dependence on his/her inner and spiritual capacity to love and be loved. That is, abstinence regarding genital contact is a mode of self-determination, self-governance or self-possession in order to become a gift for the other. It ensures that loving tenderness takes precedence over the desire for self-enjoyment. For the masculine soul in the marital state, chastity provides a sense of accomplishment, while for the feminine soul in marriage, chastity implies an appreciation of her as a person.

d. In order to root virginity in the ontological character of the person, both in the married and the virginal option, let us refer to an insight from John Paul II regarding modesty. Pope John Paul II taught that: “The person in view of its dignity seeks self-possession, and no one, except God as Creator, may have property rights over a person. [Personhood] . . . belongs to itself, has a right to self-determination, hence no one may damage its independence. No one may own another person except

by way of personal consent to make a gift of self out of love. The objective inviolability of the person finds expression in the disposition toward modesty” (Spanish—*pudor* / German—*schambalfigkeit*). Modesty, inclusive of reserve in the order of bodily and sexual dimensions, is hereby seen as essential to the personal and natural defense of dignity and freedom in view of any attempt to instrumentalize self to an impersonal level of being or reduce it to an object of manipulation.

Thus, each person is able to experience in a deep sense the fundamental inviolability of his being. He is conscious of self-belongingness, of possessing an interior universe of ideas, projects, decisions, of sentiments which only God can claim. Personal uniqueness and the experience of autonomy denote personal inviolability. Hence one could speak of or interpret this fundamental and essential inviolability of the person as a natural virginity. Virginity, as shall be explained, corresponds to a style of life centered on this inner sanctuary of personhood.

e. For John Paul II, modesty is in principle an anthropological category signifying the personal inviolability that modesty as a natural virtue seeks to defend. It is a vigilant conscience in defense of the dignity of the person and a security for an authentic personal love rooted in the mutual respect of this dignity. It enables the person to react preventively against whatever and whoever might invade the inner core of intimacy and privacy. It also guides our spontaneous impulses on behalf of the good of the whole person, inclusive, of course, of one's own intimacy. Within a Christian context, the virtue of modesty protects the quasi-sacramentality of the body and facilitates the attainment of a mature and personally integrated sexual love.

f. Modesty within the personalistic approach, particularly as represented by John Paul II, helps to answer the question about how the virginal person experiences his/her body. Modesty manifests the longing for the original integrity and innocence of the human condition, but likewise, given our fallen state, protects and reaffirms the mystery of the inner person as well as enables the self to become a total gift of love. In this context modesty is a means for an authentic sublimation of the sexual impulse.

Let us now respond to the other introductory questions posed here, about how corporeity, sexuality and spirituality as lived by the virginal person can express love in full personal integrity.

2. *Virginity*

According to Josef Pieper, virginity is not a mere physical condition but a mode of behavior; it is not a mere state but a style of life determined by a personal decision. Physiological integrity and psychological wholeness are necessary elements of virginity, but are not sufficient to explain virginity as a virtue within a Christian context. It is essentially an ascetical commitment to love beyond any sexual expression in its strict marital sense and with the free determination to renounce its corresponding gratification. It entails abstinence at one level of love in order to attain love at another level.

a. A personalistic anthropology is thus open to the religious enlightenment of Christianity which views the person as an image of God. Created as image of a Trinitarian God, the person is called to interpersonal communion. God has brought man into existence out of love and has entrusted love as the fundamental aim for each and every person's life. This call is addressed to the person in his/her fundamental spiritual-corporeal unity, and is thus the ground for the nuptial/spousal significance of the body.

b. In order for virginity, as a virtue, to become properly Christian it must satisfy two additional conditions: consecration to God and His Kingdom on Earth, and an inner freedom to serve, as Christ did, the building up of this Kingdom.

Within a Christian context virginity reveals three main features which Prof. Flecha outlines as follows:

- It entails a vocation or a special inspiration for an individual person according to his/her historical and vital project of life.
- It is Christ-centered, demanding an explicit and exclusive incorporation into the person and mission of the Redeemer.
- It has its own distinct charisma since, as evangelical, virginity indicates a special presence of the Holy Spirit within the Ecclesiastical community.

c. The nuptial meaning of the body is neither reduced nor exclusively identified with the marital intimacy and the transmission of life as is proper to marriage. Nuptiality for the virginal person accentuates the spiritual orientation and vitality of personal corporeity, it calls for an act of consecration of the sexual powers in the strict sense while affirming the masculine or feminine sense of sexuality, and it guides both corporeity and sexuality in the latter sense toward the magnanimous service of other persons, according to the many charitable tasks engaged in by the consecrated person. The virginal person is called to fatherhood or motherhood toward spiritual children, according to their multiple needs for love and care. Most significantly, the virginal way of life is a journey of love in intimate and fruitful communion with God and His earthly transparencies—as the most noble founders of religious communities demonstrate.

d. Thus virginity is one realization of the fundamental human vocation to love, a response to attain the ultimate end of all persons, inclusive of the married, which is the full interpersonal union or unity with God.

1) St Paul acclaims the truth of virginity as a total gift of self for the service of the things that please the Beloved “You” within an inner unity and self-possession which frees one of distractions that might divide the inner self (I Cor. 7:32). Conquering this inner division is necessary for the fallen state of man. This unity, to be fully attained only at the time of resurrection, may be gradually realized through the progressive self-conquest of the capacity to love characteristic of the virginal option. When a person reaches maturity in the virginal life a certain atmosphere of inner freedom and peace is often experienced by those in immediate contact. Virginity is then the prophetic anticipation of the eschatological state of mankind, and, consequently, the virginal person is a sign of the truth, goodness and beauty of the heavenly kingdom already on this earthly stage.

2) The divinization while on earth of the whole psychosomatic complex permits a person to experience the fullness of the donation of self to God in love, and simultaneously

enhances intersubjective relation with a wider community. As the virginal person makes a direct and definitive gift of his/her entire being to God, he/she renounces a carnal belonging to a distinct person, but affirms a spiritual belonging to all of mankind. Thus the special significance of the virtue of chastity as equivalent to purity of body and spirit is once more stressed.

3) Chastity is not the mere freedom from particular responsibilities to a spouse and the corresponding family, but a freedom for a concentrated disponibility and detached solicitude in keeping with Divine Providence. The decision in favor of chastity within the virginal style of life, and also in the marital commitment, does not imply the absence nor the atrophy of the instinctual potencies of the body, but rather the mature integration of these impulses into a personal project of love. Chastity as the purification of the heart is a necessary component of the redemptive grace experienced by the person as incarnated-sexualized spirit, with which the natural inclination to preserve personal inviolability [modesty] can cooperate. Thus chastity is, in the best case, both divine grace and a human task to reach organic harmony as incarnated spirit and to attain the true splendor and holiness of our body.

4) Purity of heart, or a human life lived according to the longings of the spirit, contains a deep anthropological truth with two main ethical functions: a negative function traditionally identified as temperance and guidance of our concupiscence, and a positive function understood as opening the way to an ever more dignified experience of the body, inclusive of sexuality, and to a personally integrated way of being a free gift of love and communion from the subjective depth of one person to the subjective depth of the other.

The pure of heart appreciate in awe and gratitude the marvelous design and functions of the body as integral to the person, as created by God the Father, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and made into a dwelling by the Holy Spirit so that one learns to believe, to wait, and to love God in, and not

despite, one's body. Through virginity as a style of life one evangelizes the redeemed body at a time and in a culture that either objectifies and manipulates the body or reduces it to a mere source of pleasure, in neither case responding to the true language of the body as intermediary in human relations or as vehicle to humanized nature as a whole.

3. Conclusion

Virginity, then, helps us grasp the significance of earthly existence in terms of its double transcendence: first, virginity expresses the absolute uniqueness and inviolability of our personal dignity; and second, virginity realizes the personal longing for eternity and unity with a Personal God who is the end of all history, all of nature and the plenitude of love as the origin and end of human existence.

In keeping with the personalistic approach, one can say that both marriage and a virginal way of life are options for the person to live as incarnated-sexualized spirit in keeping with the call to become interpersonally a gift of love and a receptivity of love. The married person, as Father Joseph Kentenich taught, incorporates him/herself into the Mystical Body of Christ through the marital love of an intermediary—the spouse; while the virginal person renounces an exclusive bond to a person and incorporates him/herself directly into Christ. In either case, the bodily-sexual dimension is affirmed in a broad sense and given to God within marriage as a participation in the unity of Christ and the Church, and within the virginal life as a direct continuation of Christ's virginal style and redeeming mission.

III. PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS *IMMACULATA*

The formation for the virginal or celibate style of life includes education in certain human values which predispose the person to accentuate the inner life and to appreciate the spiritual goods that guarantee personal integrity. The virginal person must live out of a fundamental idea—to be as a whole person a full receptivity of Divine Love, to turn this basic idea into a value that permeates his/her thinking, willing and feeling so that in each act he/she transfers the love received.

A. Predispositions

Let us now enumerate those human values most favored by spiritual directors, such as: emotional equanimity; a disposition toward dialogue; ease in forgiving, solidarity or inclination to serve with self-detachment; acceptance of others in their originality and capacity for interpersonal collaboration; responsibility, industriousness, austerity and moderation; firmness; and last, but not least, appreciation of the natural value of silence and solitude.

B. Premier Attitude: Giving and Receiving Love

One cannot overemphasize the importance of accentuating inner attitudes toward the positive meaning or, as personalistically expressed, the “intrinsic language” of the body in all its dimensions, the sexual in particular, at all stages of the formation of the virginal person. The main attitude to be fostered is the conviction that our entire life as person is meant to be a gift of self in love and to be a receptivity of the same gift. The Blessed Mother, under the advocacy of the *Immaculata*, offers a model of what it means to receive love and project an entire existence in view of the implications of this gift.

C. Women as Advocates of the Virginal Way

Before referring to Our Lady, permit me to call upon women as special advocates of the virginal way. Fr. Kentenich described the ontological dignity of woman as such in a threefold manner: woman as “all soul, all purity, and all surrender”:

1. As “all soul,” woman longs for and seeks to foster the spiritual orientation of any human action; thus she cherishes the inner, the intimate, and protects the inviolable core of each person. She is intuitive, affective and sensitive for the inner strivings of all living beings.

2. As “all purity,” woman is receptive for truth without a mask, ultimately for the full truth inclusive of the supernatural. She longs for clarity in ideas, rectitude in intentions of the will and fidelity in the heart; thus she promotes personal wholeness in all her endeavors.

3. Being “all surrender” follows from the womanly inclination toward the spiritual and toward purity; for woman thrives to be all magnanimity and abnegated service, to be a gift of care and concern for all within her influence.

Indeed, woman has a special predisposition to image, in her feminine mode of existence, the *Immaculata*, and thus to be the cultural hope for a renewal of virginal life, not only as an option of special wholeness in the consecrated person, but also as integral to all other forms of personal fulfillment, whether in marriage or in the single life.

D. Mary, the Virgin Immaculate

In the image of Mary as the *Immaculata*, Fr. Joseph Kenenich visualized what God has done in her and what the love of God can do with our smallness in the measure that we are redeemed and divinized persons. We are not simply the product of accidents, but, rather, our existence includes a personal value and our greatness consists in being pliable instruments, bearers of the freedom of God’s children.

Let us now describe the *Immaculata* and show what her education through love can achieve in us when we open ourselves to her with a pure and receptive heart.

1. What Is Her Thinking Like?

The *Immaculata*’s concepts are clear and her images are deeply profound when interpreted and comprehended in the light of fundamental principles and the order of creation, which is captured in God’s plan regarding the Primary Cause and as manifested as Divine Providence in the order of secondary causes. Education helps us to discover the divine love that creates and cares for the universe. In the same way, it explains and justifies the reality beyond human sciences and technical interventions. For example, it guarantees that the biomedical sciences interpret life as a gift to be revered, served, protected and cared for. It motivates us to foster the culture of life, that is, to value and preserve the life of those who are not yet born, of the handicapped, of the dying, of the elderly, of the marginalized poor.

We are dealing with a coherent and consistent thinking, a thinking free of contradictions or errors in judgment; in thinking by a serene heart, insofar as one uses the senses correctly, images and ideas remain pure. The essential features of reason illumined by practical faith are availability, openness, receptivity and the reverent acceptance of reality, responsible criticism (which denounce what is false), conviction to announce the truth, and practical faith in Divine Providence.

When our reasoning is illumined in this way, it can grasp what is correct, make good use of different perspectives, and avoid polarization in fields that mutually exclude each other or are in conflict. For that, one needs personal openness, empathy and sincere benevolence—always an integral part of *Immaculata* thinking. The gifts of understanding and of knowledge enable us to place our trust in truth and in objectivity, in an order that is created not only for the intellect but also for the heart, and which opens both. The *Immaculata* is the full manifestation of this created truth.

2. What Is Her Will Like?

The *Immaculata*'s ability to make decisions shows itself as responsible autonomy, that is, a firm and imperturbable orientation toward the common good. She decides independently, according to a clearly articulated scale of values—that is to say, first the spiritual goods, then the intellectual, psychological and social goods, and finally the material goods (first the good of sanctification and then goods of satisfaction or well-being; and whenever possible these two might coincide). What we see here is the ability to judge prudently and that subordinates the concrete experiences under the lordship of objective principles.

The will of the *Immaculata* is free of all intrigue and deception, simplified through the love that corrects and purifies, free of self-seeking, power-seeking and pleasure-seeking. That is to say, looking at the good, she chooses the best or that which will contribute to the happiness and sanctification of the other, and not that which will merely please. Her will is characterized by benevolence because she knows and experiences that she is deeply loved. Benevolence is accompanied by nobility, by the

unperturbed vision of the most elevated ideals and of the longing for their embodiment, by a vision of the Supreme Good, origin of all that is good. Benevolence is accompanied by an innocence which makes it possible to perceive the brilliance of the good through the veil of weakness and defects, a goodness to which all aspire and that is expressed by striving. It is also marked by reverence, which provides a contemplative admiration and a joyful affirmation that God entrusts the good to every person. Mary's will, rooted in constant hope, is trustful, realistic, grateful, soul-filled, committed and industrious. The corresponding gifts of the Holy Spirit are Counsel and Fortitude.

3. What Are Her Feelings Like?

Regarding her feelings or the affective order, the *Immaculata* is characterized by emotions responsibly integrated in their full vitality. She possesses an emotional fullness of life that is not repressed nor ignored nor despised. On the contrary, emotions are acknowledged, affirmed and valued. They are placed at the service of the perfection of the person, and under the light of the reason and the guidance of the will.

The emotions always correspond to the status and to the vocation of a person. For example, Fr. Kentenich explained that marital love should include the spiritual and the sensual, but these must be integrated in order to secure happiness and sanctification for both partners. The Blessed Mother experienced intense emotions: happiness (Magnificat) and sorrow (Golgotha), but oriented them to the integrity of her person and at the generous service of others. In the *Immaculata* there is no disorder, disintegration, or lack of control, because she exercises her formal causality (formative-educative causality), in total dependence on God, the loving Primary Cause. She exercises a self-control and self-possession rooted in the conviction that "like an open chalice, a sacred vessel, I am bearer of a great love in which I rest, which attracts all my affection and, at the same time, makes me fruitful in loving service." Only love—which includes a feeling of reverence, of awe, and rejoices in the presence of the other being—grasps the specific value of every individuality. Therefore it is necessary to rescue

and to educate the noble function of feelings, insofar as these are components of human experiences and are open to divinization.

4. What Is Her Body Like?

The corporeality, the body, of the *Immaculata* is an integral component of her person and not an appendix, undesirable and dangerous, to the well-being of the spirit; neither is it a temporal thing which is to be discarded by a spirit longing for liberation. The limitations of space and time associated to corporeality and the material order were creatively experienced and interpreted by her, in view of the indications of Divine Providence (Bethlehem, flight into Egypt, ...). Here we are dealing with a spiritualized corporeality, far removed from concentration on the merely sentient and sensual associated with possessive and domineering egocentrism. That is to say, Mary's corporeality is an expression of and means for a spiritual energy that radiates from her presence. An atmosphere of peace emanates from her, which can be seen as the fruit of the integration and fine balance among the true, the good and the beautiful—a balance, which gives joy to the heart, illumines the reason and gives repose to the will. All of us long for this.

SUMMARY

In her thinking, deciding and feeling, through her corporeality and thanks to her exercise of a formative secondary causality, the Blessed Mother reveals how a person should be in relation to others and to things. We should call our own a clear and enlightened intellect, a balanced capacity to judge, a just and decisive will and a fine emotional sensibility.

In the person of the Blessed Mother, the sensible appetites, the spontaneity of the senses, as well as her spiritual aspirations are never directed against the objective moral order. She is free of disordered concupiscence. This means that she never gave in to what could have led to sin, and she had the ability to always respect and preserve the God-willed order of nature.

Integrity and rectitude mean harmony between the senses and the reason, between the reason and the religious goal of

our lives. Here we are dealing with the ideal of the new person to whom we are committed.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Donnelly, Philip J. "La virginidad perpetua de la madre de Dios." In *Mariologia*, ed. J. B. Carol, trans. Maria Angeles G. Careaga, 619-683. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1964.
- Flecha, José Román. *Moral de la Persona. Amor y sexualidad* (esp. 265-291). Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2002.
- Frankl, Victor. *Psicoanálisis y existencialismo de la psicoterapia a la logoterapia* (esp. 207). Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1982.
- John Paul II. *Amor y Responsabilidad* (esp.197). Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1996.
- _____. *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.
- _____. *Hombre y mujer Dios los creo* (esp.12.6). Madrid: Ediciones Cristianidad, 2000.
- Kentenich, Joseph. *Conferencias en Roma (November 24 to December 3, 1965)*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Schoenstatt, 1965.
- _____. *Pedagogía Mariana del matrimonio*. Santaiaigo, Chile: Editorial Schoenstatt, 1994.
- Lugo, Elena. "'Impulso' Conference" (held in Chile for the Schoenstatt Movement). 1999.
- Pieper, Josef. *Las virtudes fundamentales* (esp. 264). Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1995.