“I invite you dear sisters to reflect carefully on what it means to speak of the genius of womanhood”

- John Paul II -
Acknowledgments: To my amazing husband Jonathan, for your constant encouragement, love and support, I could not have done any of this if it was not for you. Thanks especially for the countless times you stepped in to help with the children and the housework to make this project possible. You are the most amazing man I know.

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CONTENTS:

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................. 4
2. How to use the resource ......................................................................................... 6
3. Part 1: An invitation ............................................................................................. 7
4. Part 2: She shall be called woman ...................................................................... 17
5. Part 3: An answer, not a problem ...................................................................... 25
6. Part 4: The feminine genius ............................................................................... 35
Dear Sister in Christ,

What a journey we are on together. It’s the journey to discover our deepest and truest identity as beloved daughters of God. There are many obstacles we face on this journey. Words spoken, events, people, disappointments, rejections...the list, as I am sure you have experienced, can go on and on. Life’s trials can cause us to doubt our value, our worth and our dignity. Just as the first woman Eve came to doubt the goodness of God’s gift and her place in the world, we too can live our lives with a loss of trust, living from a place of insecurity, comparison, competitiveness, pain and fear.

However, there is good news. The truth is that you do not have to live your life in this way. You were created by a great and loving God who wants you to discover and experience freedom, peace, truth and love. The consequence of sin and the subsequent wounding in our relationships with God, ourselves and with others is overcome by the redemptive love of Jesus Christ. It is in and through relationship with Him that you can experience the fullness of life and the truth of your origin, identity and destiny.

John Paul II was a person who knew, valued and promoted the potential of women. He saw a great need for women to take their place in the life of the Church and society. Without the presence of women, he said, society is deeply impoverished and dehumanized.
Seeing the need for the influence and giftedness of women in all spheres of life, John Paul II devoted much of his pontificate to championing women and encouraging them to embrace the unique gifts of femininity. It was these gifts and qualities that he came to call the feminine genius.

THE GENIUS PROJECT is a four-part DVD resource which extends the invitation which John Paul II initiated. It’s an invitation to embark on a journey of discovery. A journey into your heart to reflect on what it means to speak of the genius of womanhood, the deeper meaning of your existence and your purpose in life.

I pray that God’s Spirit would guide you and release you to be all that He intended you to be.

With love and in the heart of Blessed Mother Mary,

Karen Doyle  xxx
How to use the resource:

THE GENIUS PROJECT is a four-part DVD resource that explores aspects of John Paul II’s teaching on Mulieris Dignitatum and the feminine genius.

The use of the DVD and the Discussion Guide work together as a resource ideal for small group work or retreat inputs as well as personal reflection.

The Beloved Daughter Catholic Women’s Prayer Journal is an ideal personal companion for The Genius Project Resource. The journal contains 6 weeks of personal reflection on prayer, femininity, the vocation and mission of womanhood.
An Invitation

Part 1
Creative Story:

When I was young and impressionable, and that was some time ago now my grandfather said to me, “Don’t get confused Beverly, we are not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” And it always stayed with me.

Because life is indeed a journey, a movement from one thing toward another. Right from the moment of our conception every one of us is taking this journey- it is the point of life really. Our lives are a constant journey of transformation. Yet in the busyness and the compulsiveness of day to day activity we forget, oh how we forget, the sacred potential of our lives, we miss all of those little encounters which could, if we took notice, shape us into something so beautiful, something that could actually be a gift to the world.

It is all an invitation really. Life is an invitation. An invitation to become WHO we are supposed to be. My invitation came in the form of a book, many many years ago written by a consecrated man in Rome... Blessed John Paul the Second.

I remember reading it for the first time and something went off inside of me. In his letter he answered so many of my deep questions about life. Who am I really? What does it mean to be a woman? What should I be doing with my life? How can I be happy?

I didn’t realise at the time but those questions were an invitation, and for me John Paul II’s writings were an invitation, an invitation to discover what it really means to be a woman, a woman created in God’s image, His likeness.

We all come into this world a beloved child. First, a beloved child of God, and then the beloved daughter of our parents. We don’t need to be or to do anything to be loved, other than just be....but sadly that doesn’t last long. Very soon we learn that our value lies not in whom we are but in what we do,
what we have, how we look, who we know, what we earn, and..we get lost somehow, and one day we come to the realization that we are in fact LOST, we are far from home, from our spiritual home, that inner place of deep peace, security, contentment, but that is where the journey actually begins.

POINTS TO PONDER:

• Are there any aspects of this creative story you can relate to?

• Spend some time reflecting on the pace of your life. It is often said that we make time for those things which are important. How are you making the time and space for prayer and how could you make more of this time during the coming week? What concrete steps could you take to make this happen?

• Can you identify which invitations came across your path in the past week? How did you respond to those invitations?

“Learning to be still is the first step towards entering into his presence, engaging with his peace and learning to hear his voice.”

Mother Teresa
RECAP:

These are some of the great questions of life:

*Who am I?*
*Where am I going?*
*What should I be doing with my life?*

In our consumerist and fast-paced culture we don’t often find time to reflect on these ultimate questions of our life. But when we do slow our lives down for long enough we connect with the truth that we are indeed spiritual beings on a journey, a journey of discovering what it really means to be a human person.

Have you ever considered that the answers to the deepest questions of your heart may have their origin and answer deep in the fact that you have been created in God’s image and likeness? If an artwork reveals something about the artist then surely, if we are God’s work of art, knowing the artist who brought us into being may help us to better know ourselves.

Right from the moment you were conceived in the secret place of your mother’s womb, God knew you and he wanted you to exist and to exist very deliberately and specifically as a woman. The fact that you were created and born female was no accident. Your womanhood and the gift of your femininity is something that God delights in, and He wants to see it expressed joyfully and purposefully in and through the way that you live your life.

Someone who offered women an understanding of their femininity as truly vocational was John Paul II. Elected as pope shortly after the peak of the sexual revolution and the feminist liberation movement, John Paul II was deeply aware of the new challenges within the modern world. He was also particularly focused upon the impact these would have on the human person. While recognising these challenges he also saw the need to
communicate the age old truths of the Church in new and engaging ways. One of the ways he chose to engage women more fully was to extend an invitation to them. It was an invitation to all women to reflect with him on what it means to be created as a woman in light of God’s original plan.

More than 20 twenty years ago John Paul II extended this invitation in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatum*: Mulieris being latin for women and dignitatum for dignity. As such, the subtitle to the letter was, On the Vocation and Dignity of Women. John Paul II begins *Mulieris Dignitatum* with the closing statement from the council fathers at the end of the Second Vatican Council. He quotes:

“The hour is coming in fact it has come when the dignity of women is being acknowledged in its fullness. An hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, a power and an effect never to have been achieved before. That is why, at this moment in history when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation that women filled with a spirit of the gospel will do so much to aid humanity in not falling.”

This forms the essence of what John Paul II wished to communicate. It was a desire that women play a central, crucial, irreplaceable role in the world. He calls on all of us as women to embrace our giftedness. To embrace what might also be termed our specific genius, and offer it as a gift to the world.

John Paul II speaks of women becoming the fashioners of peace. However, it might be fair to say that a woman cannot bring peace to others until she is at peace with herself. This inner peace, this sense of well-being, the sense of our being loved, has its source in a relationship of communion with God himself, since that is what we are made for.
NOTES:
GROUP DISCUSSION:

John Paul II offered women an understanding of their womanhood and femininity as truly vocational.

1. Have there been times in your life where rather than feeling that your womanhood was a vocation you have been told in some way that it was a problem?

2. What do you feel about the idea that womanhood might be a vocation in itself? Are you encouraged, excited, challenged, unsure?

3. In what ways, in your life at the moment, is your womanhood vocational?

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4. In what ways could you more deeply embrace the idea of womanhood as vocation? In what circumstances or relationships could you bring this vocation more fully to life?

5. Read once again the closing statement from the Council Fathers we shared above. What strikes you about it, what connects with you? What resonates with you?

6. How do you think it might be possible to become women of the Gospel? What two or three steps could you take to make it more of a reality?

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God gives each and every woman unique gifts, talents, qualities, attributes, strengths, and graces.

7. What do you perceive as your unique gifts and qualities?

8. In what ways, however great or small, could you, “...aid humanity in not falling”, by nurturing and developing these qualities?
Weekly Challenge:

Carving out time for silence and solitude is essential if we are to become women of the Gospel. To become the women we were created to be and to receive the love of God and be changed at a deep level by that love we need to make a serious and ongoing commitment to prayer no matter how busy or crazy our lives may be at certain times.

To be filled with the Gospel and to become women of the Gospel, we must spend time with the Gospel. We must allow it to penetrate our way of thinking, feeling and responding because the values of the Gospel are very different to the values of the world.

Spend some time reading the Gospels and compare the values presented by Christ with those of the world in which we live.

In what ways might you possibly have absorbed the world’s values at the expense of the Gospels values? This might include attitudes to status, possessions, success, perfection or beauty.

“Women reconcile men with life and above all, we beseech you, watch carefully over the future of our race. Hold back the hand of man, who, in a moment of folly, might attempt to destroy human civilization... women of the entire universe...you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for you to save the peace of the world.”

John Paul II
She Shall Be Called Woman

Part 2
Creative Story:

I hadn’t given much thought to what it means to be a woman. It was something I just didn’t think about. But being married really changed that. It caused me to think about who I was, and what it means to be a woman in relation to this man who I had promised I would spend the rest of my life with. It’s really something all women should think about, regardless of whether they get married or not. Because we are called to be in relationship with other people.

Relationships are really what give our lives meaning and context, whether that be romantic or not. But somehow we often fall down. We don’t really know how to relate, how to come alongside another person. How to accept and work with our differences. I found this especially true when it came to marriage, and that relationship with between a man and a woman.

After ten years of marriage I look back and I reflect on how much we have both changed for the better I think! I do wish though that back then I’d known much of what I do now. But I guess that’s the journey of life. Constantly growing, learning and changing.

It was shortly after our honeymoon that I distinctly remember coming to the realisation that my husband was not perfect, and nor was I. That we were actually different in many ways. And those things that were endearing when we dated had become immensely irritating. He was a man and he saw the world through those eyes, and I was a woman and I saw the world differently.

It was a while before we woke up and realised that our differences were not really the problem. It was in how we were perceiving them. Instead of being obstacles to be overcome, we began to discover that our differences were actually complementary. That we could be stronger because of these differences.
It’s funny, because I grew up in a time when we were told there were no differences between men and women. They were just, well, socially constructed ideas and labels that were imposed upon us. But it couldn’t be further from the truth. And despite being Christian and attending church, I too realised I’d been affected by these ideas. And these ideas were now impacting my marriage.

That was when I decided to go back and discover God’s original plan for man and woman. And it was in doing that, that everything changed.

POINTS TO PONDER:

• What aspects of this creative story can you relate to?

• Did anything particularly resonate with you in terms of your relationships with the men you are called to come alongside, husbands, father, brother, priest, friend, work colleagues?

“God created them in his image and likeness, in the image and likeness of God he created them, man and woman.”

*Genesis 1:27*
RECAP:

The call to authentic femininity has its foundations in God’s original plan. His desire for the dignity and vocation of women was intended from the very beginning. Throughout the Gospel Christ continually points us to the beginning, to the original experience of relationship, life and love prior to sin entering the world.

In the Gospel of Matthew (19:3) Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees who seek an answer to the question as to why it was that Moses allowed divorce. To this complex question Jesus responds;

“...it is because of your hardness of hearts that this was allowed to happen but in the beginning this was not so.”

In the beginning God’s intention was for man and woman to live in a relationship of complementarity and not in competition, manipulation and even the violence that marks so many relationships between men and women today.

In God’s original plan, man and woman were, right from the beginning, created to share in the intimate life of God himself. Created as complementary partners, with equal dignity and worth, man and woman were designed to reflect the imago dei, the image and likeness of God. Created to reflect the imago dei man and woman are called to do so in their unique, yet complementary ways. Ways that are no greater or less than each other in value. They are simply different.

In seeking to have better and more fulfilling relationships with the men in our lives it is crucial we understand what it means to come alongside as friend, helpmate and complementary partner. This concept of complementarity is central to understanding much of John Paul II’s insights into the human person and relationships between men and women.
The word helpmate does not mean domestic slave! The original Hebrew translation is actually rather poignant and beautiful. Helpmate translates as spiritual or divine aid. In this context it refers not so much to the providing of a practical help as to providing a relational and spiritual help. In this understanding man and the woman discover, through their deep relationship of love, service and spiritual intimacy, more fully what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. In their mutual relationship they discover more about each other but also about themselves.

In Genesis 2:18-25 we discover the way in which woman was called into existence. After, naming all the creatures, Adam, in a sense, realised that there was no one like him in all creation. God recognized that it was not good for the man to be alone, that man needed to exist in relationship with another person, a person who was different yet equal in dignity. After creating the woman God presents her to the man and he to her, as gift, each to and for the other.

"Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her "fulfillment" as a person, her dignity and vocation, according to the richness of the femininity which she received on the day of creation and which she inherits as an expression of the "image and likeness of God" that is specifically hers."

John Paul II Mulieris Dignitatem n10
GROUP DISCUSSION:

In the beginning God created man and woman to be each other’s companion, friend, and complementary partner. But in a fallen world this is not always our experience.

1. Describe your experience of relationships between men and women in your life so far.

2. What have been the best and worst examples of relationship you have observed?

3. Discuss the statement, “Sameness does not mean equality and difference does not mean inequality.”

4. What are the unique and complementary gifts of femininity that women can bring to relationships with the men in their life?

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John Paul II offers us a totally different perspective on where we will find happiness. He says we will never experience the peace, the freedom, the fulfilment or the happiness we long for when we seek our own ends. But rather we will only ever experience this when we seek to make a sincere gift of ourselves in love to another person.

5. In what ways can you or do you seek to make a gift of yourself in love to those whom you are in relationship with?

6. Is there anything in your relationships; behaviours, attitudes, actions which you would like to change, continue, or begin?

7. What could you let go of (tasks, beliefs, time wasters) that might free you up to make more of a gift of yourself to others?

8. How do you seek to come alongside and support the man/men in your life?
Weekly Challenge:

Becoming women of the Gospel means learning to partner alongside the men in our life. They may be a husband, son, brother, friend, work college, priest or friend.

This week make a point of being aware of your interactions with men. In what ways do you empower them, complement them?
An Answer, Not a Problem

Part 3
Creative Story:

I have lived so much of my life feeling like I was a problem. That I was too much, or that I wasn’t enough. My mum was really young when she fell pregnant with me, and at that time she didn’t really want to be having a baby. Maybe it started there, who knows. But right from when I was really young I’ve always felt this way.

And then every experience I had reinforced it in my head, that I was a problem. To the point where I held back. Held back who I was in my relationships, in what I wanted to do with my life, from getting out there and meeting people and you know, just living life. I think the first time I ever felt okay was when I was drawn into a sisterhood of other women. Women who helped me see that I was okay, actually not only okay, but that I was actually needed. They really liked me for who I was. There were things about me, these girls said, that made their life better. My gifts, my talents, my sense of humour. My story was something they actually wanted to know about. To share in and encourage.

My mum was really impacted by the feminist movement, and the idea that there aren’t any real differences between men and women. But being around this group of women showed me that there is a huge difference, and that difference is not only okay, but that it’s really good.

Over time I’ve come to realise that far from being a problem, I am like every woman is, an answer. There are so many problems in this world. And being around this group of women has helped me to see that being a woman is in fact a gift.

The experiences of my life, my gifts and talents, my story, can all be a gift if I choose to offer it as one. And I have found that the more I’m open to embracing and offering these qualities that make me a woman, and that make me uniquely me, the more comfortable I am in my skin.
And the more fulfilled I actually feel. It doesn’t matter if you’re a tomboy or a girly girl, or somewhere in the middle. We will all be female in a different way.

But what we do share are the qualities of femininity, and these qualities I have come to realise are desperately needed in this world.

POINTS TO PONDER:

• What aspects of this creative story can you relate to?
• In what ways do you feel that you, your womanhood, has been or is a problem?

Enmity: The enmity that is spoken of in Genesis 3 refers to a state of hostility, war, opposition and discord that marks the relationship between Satan and the woman.
RECAP:

It seems that one of the greatest challenges facing women is a nagging self doubt. It’s a belief that somehow there is something fundamentally wrong with them. That their femininity is somehow flawed. It’s a feeling that their womanhood is somehow not enough or it is too much or that it attracts the wrong kind of attention or not enough attention at all! Many women live their lives afraid. They are afraid of their femininity and the attributes of womanhood, afraid to be who God created them to be.

These fears, this self-doubt, even self-hatred are the consequence of original sin and the choice of the first man and woman to break covenant with the One who created them. This choice brings about a rupture in relationships on three levels. It ruptures their internal relationship with themselves as individuals, then their relationship with God and finally their relationship with one another as man and woman. As a result of this original sin, this original rupture in relationship, we too, experience the discord, competition and dominance that are its inheritance. Scripture makes it clear that the wages of sin are death. Death and the culture of death which pervades much of modern life has flowed into human and divine relationship since that first rupture but thankfully, in Christ, this is not the end of the story.

The Protoevangelium

Scripture scholars and also John Paul II refer to a section in Genesis Chapter 3 as the proto-evanganelium. It’s a term that suggests hidden in the tragedy of the fall is the seed of the Gospel, the evangelium, the good news. It suggests that in fact it will be a woman who will play a critical role in God’s redemptive plan for humanity. We see this of course through the role of Mary who is the second Eve. Where the first Eve said no to trusting God in the depths of her being, Mary the second Eve, in the annunciation and her fiat, said a resounding yes! Through Mary’s receptiveness to Christ she played an inestimable role because of her womanhood, in salvation history. Mary’s womanhood was not a problem or a limitation. It was a divine solution for a wounded humanity.
Since the beginning women have played a vital role in human history. In Genesis Chapter 3 we see that the first woman, often referred to as the mother of all living, was the one who was approached by the serpent and it was through her choice and subsequent rejection of God’s gift that sin entered the world. Have you considered that she was approached not because she was considered the weaker but in fact because the serpent, the father of all lies, knew of her potential strength? That is a very important distinction.

In the proto-evangelium we hear of God placing an enmity between the evil one and the woman. The attack on the first woman and indeed every women to date is so strong because she is the guardian of life. Every woman has such incredible potential and Satan knows this. Life comes into the world through woman.

**Called to be an answer**

John Paul II strongly advocated that it is women who play a crucial role in transforming a culture of death into a culture of life and love. In this way women and their femininity are an answer to so many of the problems that beset the world. He called on women to promote a new feminism, which is grounded in a call to be authentically pro-woman and a call to reawaken in women the gifts and resources which are unique to being a woman. Resources and gifts described as John Paul II as enormously rich and vital to humanizing culture.

“In transforming culture so that it supports life women occupy a place which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a new feminism. One that rejects the temptation of imitating models of male domination in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of life in society.”

 John Paul II
Evangelium Vitae, n 99
NOTES:
GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. How does this enmity of the evil one impact your life today? When you really stop and reflect, what whispers or lies do you hear from him most often?

2. What steps can you take to resist the evil one? What practical things do you think you could so that would begin to weaken or limit his impact upon your life?

3. In what ways do you think that women can harden their hearts against their own nature and vocation?

4. Have there been times in your life where you have done this, reflect on the reasons why you may have done so?

5. In what ways have you sought to deny aspects of your femininity or adopted masculine qualities?

6. In what ways can you cultivate the gifts your femininity? What practical things could you start doing to celebrate and strengthen the gift of womanhood in your life?

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“In Mary, Eve discovers the nature of the true dignity of woman, of feminine humanity. This discovery must reach the heart of every woman and shape her vocation and her life.”

John Paul II MD, n 11
John Paul II offers us a paradigm shift in our thinking. Instead of seeing ourselves as a problem, he invites us to see ourselves and our womanhood and the gifts of femininity as an answer. In this new vision womanhood becomes an answer to so many of the problems that beset our culture.

7. In what ways can women be this answer that John Paul II speaks of?

8. How could you promote the new feminism that John Paul II speaks of?

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9. John Paul II called on women to be the first promoters of their true dignity and then that of others. In what ways can you promote your own dignity?

10. Are there areas in your life which need attention? Are there areas that are really holding you back from living the fullness of who you really are as a beloved daughter and as an unrepeatable woman made in God’s image? What needs to change?

11. Think of concrete ways in which you can promote the dignity of those who you do life with?

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“In the eyes of his contemporaries Christ became a promoter of women’s true dignity and the vocation corresponding to this dignity.”

John Paul II MD n12
Weekly Challenge:

Just as Eve was tempted by the evil one, we can expect that we too will be tempted. This week make time to reflect on the ways in which your womanhood has been undermined by attacks from the evil one. These may be subtle or more obvious but wherever you hear the voice of condemnation, guilt, blame, insecurity or comparison, it is not from God.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten your mind to these lies. They work to undermine your womanhood and sense of self. Ask the Lord to strengthen you with a deep sense of your value and dignity as his beloved daughter.

The birth of Christ is the fulfilment of the proto-evangelium and marks a turning point in the history of salvation and the beginning of the new covenant. Throughout the Gospels we see again and again that Christ makes all things new. He continually restored and made new the dignity of women. Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and he can restore to you your sense of value, worth and dignity. All you have to do is ask and step out upon the road of deeper relationship with Him through silence, prayer, scripture and the sacraments.

Spend some time this week reflecting on Jesus’ encounters with the women in the Gospels and in prayer ask that Christ would restore, heal, and bring peace to any wounded areas in your femininity and sense of worth and dignity.
The Genius of Womanhood

Part 4
The Genius Project- Discussion Guide

Creative Story:

Only a few years ago my mother passed away. She was an amazing and very generous woman. She taught me so much. She gave me the gift of life and showed me how to be a woman of God and I will always be grateful to her for that.

Even though I haven’t had a physical mother for the past few years God did send me a spiritual one, Betty, the old lady next door. She was so nurturing, so kind and gentle, so full of grace, this grace was so attractive, alluring almost. She took me under her wing and picked up where my mother left off.

One of the most life changing moments I had with her was sitting in my bedroom one day. I was grappling with the sadness in my heart and it seemed as though I would never move beyond this point in time. She could see I was at a cross-road and that I had a choice to make. I could choose to go down the path of anger, bitterness and resentment and believe me I was tempted, I felt so justified. But at the same time I was aware there was another way.

Betty always had the most gentle way of challenging me. And this particular day she reminded me that my heart is so important and that in life there is so much that can close a heart down. Grief, hurt and disappointment, has a way of robbing the heart of its joy, its peace and life. She also said that once you have grieved you must fight for your heart for it to stay open.

She reminded me of Blessed Mother Mary. And, that like her I needed to keep my heart open. Open to God, open to life, open to others. She told me the story of the Annunciation, the story of when Mary was approached by the angel Gabriel and was asked to be the Mother of God’s beloved son.
Betty said Mary actually had a choice, Mary could have said no but despite fear and uncertainty she said Yes. She opened her heart to God and through her and her yes the saviour of the world was born.

On this particular day Betty, so sensitive of my grief reminded me that I too had a choice - a choice to choose life...and that is what I did.

POINTS TO PONDER:

• What aspects of this creative story can you relate to?
• Who are the spiritual mothers in your life?
• Through Mary’s fiat, her yes, salvation was made possible for all humankind. Imagine what God could do through your YES!

“The Church sees in Mary the highest expression of the “feminine genius” and she finds in her a source of constant inspiration.”

John Paul II, Letter to Women n 10.
RECAP:

Previously we looked at the culture of death that pervades much of modern life. It’s a culture in which human life and love are devalued. But as guardians of the heart and protectors of life women hold a particular key in transforming a culture of death into a culture of life and love. But in order to do this women need to know what it is they have to offer, what it is that makes them unique.

The theology of womanhood which John Paul II promoted centres around the spiritual qualities of womanhood. These qualities, referred to as the feminine genius emerge from a woman’s physical capacity to nurture, sustain, and bring forth life. While this capacity may not be actualised in every woman it is the ability to do so which structures a woman’s personality in a distinct way. A way which makes her more person-centred. She sees the human person with the eyes of the heart and senses their true value as human beings.

John Paul II never advocated for a one-size-fits-all definition of femininity. He did not believe in a single way of being a woman but rather, that each woman would manifest these spiritual qualities in her own unique way.

Receptivity, sensitivity, generosity and maternity are some of the key spiritual qualities of womanhood that John Paul II identified. These are the core qualities which are so vital to aid humanity in not falling. As we unpack these qualities it is important to keep in mind that when women are not filled with a spirit of the Gospel there is also an unredeemed side to these qualities.

“Objective realities reveal something not just biological about her inner and real form. The body is an outward expression of inner qualities.”

John Paul II
GROUP DISCUSSION:

RECEPTIVITY:
The quality of receptivity lies at the heart of the feminine genius. This receptivity is not a passive state but rather an active receiving of the gifts of life and love.

1. What struck you in the DVD about this quality of receptivity?

2. In order for our lives to be receptive our hearts must first be receptive before God, since our heart is foundational to our receptive nature. What is the current state of your heart? Do you feel your heart is open before God or are there barriers/hurt/pain/unforgiveness that are preventing you from fully receiving his word and love?

3. In life there is a danger that when we are hurt our hearts can become hard. Mother Mary had every reason to have her heart hardened by the circumstances of her life but she continued to actively say YES to God. In keeping her heart open she was able to be filled with the love of God and make his love present to those she encountered. How do you keep your heart open before God and how do you make his love present to those around you?

4. We are called to receive the Word of God into our hearts and then give birth to life and love in our places of living. In what ways do you receive the word of God?

5. How do you or can you give birth to life and love in your marriage, family, community, workplace?

“...The bridegroom is the one who loves. The bride is loved; it is she who receives love, in order to love in return.”

John Paul II MD n 29
SENSITIVITY:
1. What happens when women seek to deny the qualities of receptivity, sensitivity, generosity and maternity, qualities that constitute their essential richness?

2. Why is the quality of sensitivity so vital to a culture of life and love?

3. Describe the ways in which this quality is devalued in our culture and what we can do to place more value on it?

4. How do you nurture those around you with the gift of sensitivity?

5. Describe a time in your own life where you have experienced the power of the gift of sensitivity from another woman.

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“Women see others in their greatness and their limitations; they try to go out to them and help them.”

John Paul II Letter to women n 12.
GENEROSITY:

1. How do the qualities of receptivity and sensitivity in turn give rise to a spirit of generosity?

2. What situations are you being called to be generous in?

3. John Paul II constantly points women to mother Mary as the perfect example of womanhood. In her we see that through her generous YES, her fiat, the saviour of the world was born. How does Mary inspire you? What particular aspect of her life has an impact on you?

4. What situations are you called to say YES to?

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MATERNITY:
1. How is motherhood the vocation of every woman? And how do you realise your maternity in the stage of life you are currently in?

2. Before we can give we must receive. Identify and describe the women who spiritually mother you. If you do not have anyone think of some older women who you could approach or build relationship with.

3. How do you spiritually mother other women in your life?

4. From your own life journey what would be your three pearls of wisdom for the girls who walk after you?

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“Mary sheds light on womanhood. Women by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement.”

John Paul II Redemptoris Mater n 46
Weekly Challenge:

Receptivity, the foundation for the feminine genius, is a quality which takes a great deal of cultivation. To be receptive we need to create time and space for the Lord to come and dwell.

Make it a priority this week to really make time to be alone with the Lord; to cultivate the ability to hear, listen and meditate on the word of God.

In addition to this make time for the sacraments. God gave us the sacraments to nourish us and if we are going to nurture others we must allow ourselves to be formed by Christ. Christ waits for us in the sacraments, to delight in us, to heal us, to strengthen us, and to send us out to a world in need of his love.

We can only live in an awareness of God’s great love for us when we cultivate a life of deep personal prayer. When you commit yourself to a daily life of prayer you become a channel of peace for others, and that is what will aid humanity in not falling.
The Genius Project- Discussion Guide

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