



## **Of Heroines and Handmaids**

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**“I hope you find true meaning, contentment, and passion in your life. I hope you navigate the difficult times and come out with greater strength and resolve. I hope you find whatever balance you seek with your eyes wide open. And I hope that you - yes, you - have the ambition to lean in to your career and run the world. Because the world needs you to change it.”**

*SHERYL SANDBERG, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, FACEBOOK*

**“Whatever God wants.”**

*SAINT GIANNA BERETTA MOLLA*

During Richard Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, when asked to assess the impact of the French Revolution, famously quipped, "Too early to say." And though Enlai was referring to the more recent Paris students' revolts in 1968 - not *Le règne de la Terreur* two centuries prior - the misunderstanding was simply "too delicious to invite correction".<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the inadvertent wisdom of Enlai's words, we can rightly appraise the effect of the radical ideologies of Swiss-born philosopher Jean-Jacque Rousseau (1712-1778); he the inspiration to Robespierre and the blood-thirsty Jacobins; founder of the secular church; and architect of the liberal *civil religion* "used by the radicals of the French Revolution" (and persisting to this day).<sup>2</sup> Conceived during the turbulent and disordered days leading up to the *Estates General of 1789*, Rousseau's ideology is now flourishing as established - even celebrated - secular doctrine across the world. While the zealous assertions in Rousseau's writings<sup>3</sup> were considered *enlightened* by the revolutionary standards of 18<sup>th</sup> century France, in them we recognize pernicious seeds of misanthropic, anti-Christian sentiment.<sup>4</sup> We are well served to remember that the French Revolution - though launched with the noble cry of "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*" - in fact promoted the *de-Christianization* of France, popularized the use of the *guillotine*, and resulted in the *genocide* of tens of thousands<sup>5</sup> of innocent victims (including the bloody massacre of Catholic priests) all carried out with merciless efficiency and horror-filled irony by the *Committee on Public Safety*. We must never forget that evil is often disguised as

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<sup>1</sup> Chas Freeman, main interpreter for Richard Nixon during his 1972 China visit

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Wilker, *Worshipping the State, How Liberalism Became Our State Religion* (2013)

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality* (1755); *The Social Contract* (1762)

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Wilker, *Worshipping the State, How Liberalism Became Our State Religion* (2013)

<sup>5</sup> Michael R. Lynn, *Executions, the Guillotine, and the French Revolution* (2014)

good, that Satan, the “father of lies”<sup>6</sup>, “masquerades as an angel of light.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the same revolution that equated terror to virtue and justified the use of indiscriminate violence in pursuit of justice,<sup>8</sup> likewise unleashed radical ideologies that have manifested over time and have been adopted today by forces hell-bent on re-defining womanhood and deforming the family.<sup>9</sup>

Relentless depersonalization and shameless objectification - the wretched fruits of Rousseau’s perverse, yet prophetic worldview - have done great harm to society by undermining the true uniqueness, beauty, and value of women; the sacred vineyard now chokes upon the thorns and nettles<sup>10</sup> of radical egalitarianism<sup>11</sup>:

- ***Human beings are not made in the image of God.*** Man is a ‘feeling’ animal, not a ‘rational’ animal. As such, Males and Females unite fortuitously, depending on encounter, occasion, and desire.
- ***Marriage and family must be considered entirely artificial, and therefore unnecessary.*** Since the aim of sexuality is only physical desire - not the generation of offspring - heterosexuality has no privileged position. It is natural to enjoy sexual pleasure, but unnatural to care for children; motherhood and fatherhood are burdens.
- ***Women must be taken out of the home and encouraged to perform the same functions as men.*** The differences between men and women represent inequality; women must be made like men, and men must be made like women. The state must actively support the liberation of women from the bonds of marriage and the family.

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<sup>6</sup> John 8:44

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:14

<sup>8</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, *Justification of the Use of Terror* (1794)

<sup>9</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 3 (1981)

<sup>10</sup> Proverbs 24:30-31

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Wilker, *Worshipping the State, How Liberalism Became Our State Religion* (2013)

Sadly, our popular, secular culture has provoked women - under the pretense of *female empowerment* - into a headlong race to win the (historically male-dominated) prizes of this world, while unwittingly depreciating the value of the far more sacred, divine crown intended for them by God. They've traded their heavenly coronation to instead enthrone themselves upon the stools of wealth, power, honor, and pleasure<sup>12</sup>; they've made the pursuit of treasure on earth their primary goal and they've achieved it, which is to say they've achieved nothing. *For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*<sup>13</sup>

Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, shortly after he was named founding president of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in 1981, received a letter from the Fatima visionary Lucia dos Santos where she told him that Our Lady prophesied, "*The decisive battle between the kingdom of Christ and Satan will be over marriage and the family.*"<sup>14</sup> In fact, we now find ourselves suffering the outgrowth of Rousseau's radical egalitarianism: rampant materialism, extreme gender confusion, rapid moral decay, a relentless war against traditional family values,<sup>15</sup> and a "veritable culture of death...actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency."<sup>16</sup> "The future of humanity passes by way of the family"<sup>17</sup> and it can only be preserved by celebrating, protecting, and defending the true purpose and divine beauty of women. We must rejoice in the unique strength of women, according to God's divine plan and his objective truth; we must protect the purity of women from worldly forces seeking to devalue,

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<sup>12</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Prima Secundæ Partis, Question 2

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6:21

<sup>14</sup> Catholic News Agency, *Fatima visionary predicted 'final battle' would be over marriage, family*. July 8, 2016

<sup>15</sup> David Brooks, *The Nuclear Family Was A Mistake*, The Atlantic, March 2020

<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 12 (1995)

<sup>17</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 86 (1981)

demean, and objectify her; and we must defend and promote the critical role of motherhood as the remedy for our sick and fallen world.

“The earth was without form, covered in darkness; and God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light; and God saw that the light was good.”<sup>18</sup> God is creation itself, and “each of us is a masterpiece of God’s creation.”<sup>19</sup> Innate in each of us is a mysterious sense that we are created not of our own volition but by another who intended us, with deliberation and purpose. As written in the book of Psalms, “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.”<sup>20</sup> And Saint Augustine sings to God, “It is you who made me beautiful, not me myself, but you.”<sup>21</sup> The Creator of the universe, he who designed all the stars in the sky, and the sun and the moon; he who formed the highest mountains, and filled the deepest seas; it was he, the Lord God, who, with foresight and resolve, “breathed into our nostrils the breath of life.”<sup>22</sup>

Creation itself is the foundation of God’s saving plan; wishing to associate us with his creative work, God designed men and women to share in the spiritual development of one another in cooperation with his eternal love. “From the beginning he created them male and female” and God himself said to them, “be fertile and multiply.”<sup>23</sup> And what greater miracle, what greater revelation of the creative power, the infinite wisdom, and the tender love of God, than that of a child, divinely formed from the spark of conception in a mother’s womb. And in his divine plan God reserves a unique and sacred role for women. “The Lord has made everything for its purpose.”<sup>24</sup> God created Eve as the crowning of his creation<sup>25</sup>, for it was she

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 1:2-4

<sup>19</sup> Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, September 26, 2014

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 100:3

<sup>21</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book XI

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 2:7

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>24</sup> Proverbs 16:4

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 2:22

who perfected the divine masterpiece, who completed the sacred garden. And though he could have introduced Jesus Christ to our world at any time, and in any place, shape, fashion, or form, he chose to be formed in the womb of a young Jewish woman named Mary<sup>26</sup>, who humbly accepted God's invitation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Fiat."<sup>27</sup>

Women are a precious gift, uniquely designed by the hand of God to ordain his divine plan to unfold. In God's plan it is the woman - not a man, nor any other creature - who God designed to *perfect* his plan, to *complete* his work; it is the woman who has been exclusively endowed with the ability to *create* human life. "And what God hath made distinct, let not man confuse."<sup>28</sup> But confused we are, inverting the Creator's judgement to concentrate our adoration not on woman's role in the *Theo-drama*, but instead on her role in the *ego-drama*; not what *God* wants, but instead, what *she* wants.<sup>29</sup> The declaration by women is clear: I am intent on achieving the things of this, fallen and finite world; my toil for the next glorious and eternal one is but a secondary concern. *For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

There is no greater heroine, no more iconic symbol of the women's empowerment movement than that of "Fearless Girl" the bronze statue commissioned by investment behemoth State Street Global Advisors. Likewise, there is no greater symbol of worldly wealth and power than the New York Stock Exchange. With nearly \$4 trillion in assets<sup>30</sup> SSGA commands a formidable bully-pulpit and public-relations platform; "Fearless Girl" was unveiled in 2017 on the eve of International Women's Day when "the company installed a roughly 50-inch-tall bronze statue of a defiant girl in front of Wall Street's iconic charging-bull statue."<sup>31</sup> In 2021, the

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<sup>26</sup> Luke 1:31

<sup>27</sup> Luke 1:38

<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948)

<sup>29</sup> Bishop Robert Barron, *Mary, David, and the Theo-drama*, Word on Fire (2015)

<sup>30</sup> State Street Global Advisors [www.ssga.com](http://www.ssga.com)

<sup>31</sup> Bethany McLean, *The Backstory Behind That 'Fearless Girl' Statue on Wall Street*. The Atlantic, March 13, 2017

celebration of “Fearless Girl” was repeated, and SSGA built on its acclaimed campaign; this time the statue was surrounded by a broken glass ceiling, signifying women’s achievements in corporate equality. Now the ubiquitous “Fearless Girl” has become the personification of the modern woman, the epitome of the fight for gender equality, the rallying-cry for the empowerment movement. "It's been four years since Fearless Girl -- the statue of a girl standing her ground in the heart of Wall Street -- sent an immediate and unmistakable message to the world's business leaders: that having strong women in leadership matters. Since that time, countless women across the world have challenged conventional thinking -- whether it is in corporate boardrooms, Fortune 500 companies, or at the highest levels of government from the European Commission to the White House."<sup>32</sup>

With clenched fists dug firmly into her hips, head held high, and chin thrust forward, “Fearless Girl” strikes a revolutionary pose, and the intended message is unmistakable: women are not afraid to fight, to stand up to injustice, to break down barriers, and the world has been placed on notice: we’re smart, we’re strong, we’re ambitious, and we won’t back down. But with the permanent placement of “Fearless Girl” on the doorstep of the New York Stock Exchange, the object of her fight, the desire of her heart, is also obvious.

The town of Haskovo is home to fewer than 200,000 people in southeastern Bulgaria, with ancient roots and diverse history dating back millennium across Greek, Roman, and Byzantine civilizations. It is also home to the tallest statue of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus in the world.<sup>33</sup> Unveiled in 2003, the “Monument of the Holy Mother of God” soars 102 feet above the town for which the Blessed Mother serves as patroness. This statue depicts Our

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<sup>32</sup> Cyrus Taraporevala, President & CEO, State Street Global Advisors [www.ssga.com](http://www.ssga.com)

<sup>33</sup> Aleteia, *This city built the tallest statue of the Virgin Mary with Infant Jesus in the world using donations from citizens*. October 23, 2019



Lady cradling the Infant Jesus; she is quiet, modest, peaceful, her cheek pressed gently against that of her son, the incarnate God. This monument, like so many others across the world, also evokes an unmistakable message: She is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who, in the words of Dante, “so ennobled human nature that its very Creator did not disdain to share in it”<sup>34</sup>; she is the woman who was given to us from the cross by her son, “Behold your mother”<sup>35</sup>; she is *Maria, gratia plena* who, through her prayers and intercession has converted countless souls, triumphed in legendary battles, and crushed the head of the serpent. *Mary Our Mother, Our Lady of Victory, Queen of Heaven*, whose purpose in salvation history is to bring us closer to her son, Jesus Christ. And in doing so, to help us preserve the future of humanity. She is the Lord’s handmaid, and the object of her fight, the desire of her heart, is likewise obvious: “Do whatever he tells you.”<sup>36</sup>

The Creator himself chose to be created by a woman, her womb the sacred tabernacle of Jesus Christ<sup>37</sup>, her body the Ark of the New Covenant. She sacrificed her body and blood for the One who would sacrifice his body and blood for all. Woman’s deepest, most abiding identity is that of a beloved child of God, created by the *Author of life* and possessing the unique power to herself *create life*. Yet, the world’s greatest emphasis and most essential concern for a woman today is not on her sacred role as a mother, not on her extraordinary maternal beauty and strength, not on her unique ability to cooperate with the infinite creative power and heavenly intentions of God, but rather on her role as a fearless fighter for equality with men so as to maximize wealth and consolidate power in a sinful, fallen world.

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<sup>34</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso, Canto 33*

<sup>35</sup> John 19:27

<sup>36</sup> John 2:5

<sup>37</sup> Luke 1:42

The sort of liberalism sanctioned by Rousseau is unsatiable, and what begins with noble intentions - equality, empowerment, etc. - has devolved into radical egalitarianism, leading inevitably to the devaluation and objectification of women, including callous depersonalization and severe brutality. Look no further than the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), a mixed-martial arts (MMA) company based in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 2013<sup>38</sup>, the UFC added a women's category to its MMA line-up; over the past decade, talented, and beautiful women have been exploited, routinely bludgeoning each other "inside the octagon" generating untold millions for promoters and sponsors alike. With annual revenues approaching \$1 billion<sup>39</sup>, the UFC has benefitted greatly from the "empowerment" of women; the maternal gift of body and blood has been conscripted by a traveling circus of horrors where spectators, reminiscent of feverish pagans at a Roman amphitheater, shamelessly incite the scantily clad women to pulverize one-another into submission. At UFC 264 in July 2021, fighter Jessica Eye suffered a laceration so severe that the "soft tissue covering the frontal bone of the skull, or the actual bone itself"<sup>40</sup> was exposed. Separately, when fighter Cheyanne Buys broke down during her post-fight press conference after revealing her dire financial state, it prompted Dana White, President of the UFC to coldly reply, "This is one of those sports you've got to win. If you win, everything's good. If you lose, everything's bad. That's the nature of this beast."<sup>41</sup>

By far the worst form of aggression against the sanctity of women is the war against the unborn now raging across the world; in America alone an estimated 60 million innocent lives have been destroyed since the passage of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.<sup>42</sup> The carnage and suffering is

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<sup>38</sup> Juan Perez, *On This Day: Ronda Rousey Puts Women's MMA In The UFC Spotlight*, International Business Times, February 23, 2021

<sup>39</sup> Dana White, President of UFC, interview on Toronto Sports Network (TSN), December 10, 2020

<sup>40</sup> Alan Dawson, *An American UFC Fighter Kept Bleeding All Over Herself and Her Opponent When Her Head Was Split Open*, Insider, July 12, 2021

<sup>41</sup> Nasir Jabbar, *Dana White Hits Out at UFC Stars Complaining About Fighter Pay*, Sport Bible, August 7, 2021

<sup>42</sup> The Guttmacher Institute

actually much worse, as every abortion effectively “destroys two lives; the life of the baby and the conscience of the mother.”<sup>43</sup> In 2019, when the state of Georgia passed “The Heartbeat Bill”, prohibiting an abortion after a baby’s heartbeat is detected, it generated an outcry from modern day heroines - celebrities and business leaders - from across the country. Among the more outrageous testimonials was that of singer and songwriter Stevie Nicks, who said “If I had not had that abortion, I’m pretty sure there would have been no Fleetwood Mac...the purpose Fleetwood Mac was fulfilling was bigger than having children.”<sup>44</sup> American actress and talk show host Busy Phillips, who called for women across the country to share their abortion stories via the hashtag #YouKnowMe<sup>45</sup>, testified before Congress that “In the week after I shared my story on my show, women were coming up to me on the street, in the supermarket, at my gym, with tears in their eyes thanking me for my bravery.”<sup>46</sup>

We see clearly that the seeds of activism planted by Rousseau and his *confrères* long ago have produced the fruits of unintended consequences. The 18<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary cup that first contained the reasoned appeal for "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*", quickly fermented into impulsive cries for radical egalitarianism, and has now been recklessly spilled upon 21<sup>st</sup> century society. What began as a quest for equality in achieving worldly wealth, power, and honor has rapidly, and tragically become an incoherent mission for the right to commit indiscriminate violence.

There has rarely been a more powerful cultural occurrence than the contemporary “empowerment of women” movement. A popular call-to-arms widely splashed across social

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<sup>43</sup> Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Mother Teresa Calls Abortion the Greatest Threat to Peace*, Los Angeles Times, June 1, 1988

<sup>44</sup> Gina Escandon, *Celebrities Who Opened Up About Having Abortions*, SheKnows - All Things Parenting, June 5, 2021

<sup>45</sup> Valeriya Safronova, *Thousands of Women Have Shared Abortion Stories With #YouKnowMe. She Was First*. The New York Times, May 15, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Busy Phillips testimony, House Judiciary Committee on Threats to Reproductive Rights in America, June 4, 2019

media proudly declares: "Behind every successful woman is a tribe of other successful women who have her back." Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright put it more directly when she said, "There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women."<sup>47</sup>

Acknowledging the strong hint of truth in these statements, the question must be asked: For what, and for whom are you fighting, *Fearless Girl*? Are you fighting for still more worldly treasure and power? Do you fight for the freedom to brawl as a caged animal, for the right to permanently disfigure the face of another woman? Do you fight for "your body" and the justification to kill the unborn? Is the fleeting career of a celebrity truly greater than the eternal designs of God? And are these women truly models of "bravery"? Depersonalization, objectification, suffering, and violence - are these the just rewards for a tribe of strong, smart, ambitious woman? And if these are the expected outcomes of the empowerment movement, do you ever ponder, "*How heroic a movement can this really be?*"

Jesus Christ commands us to build our treasure in heaven<sup>48</sup>, but in fact "what he spoke was not condemning riches in themselves, but those who were enslaved by them."<sup>49</sup> Modern woman has been unwittingly enslaved to a fallen world in pursuit of equality with men, and in doing so has marginalized her exclusive position; she has yet to realize that to be like a man is a punishment, not a prize, that equality with men is a worldly curse, not a divine crown. Modern woman is the near-sighted cynic who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.<sup>50</sup> Be warned: *tempus fugit*. Tragedy is to reach the end of life, having achieved all one's goals,

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<sup>47</sup> Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013)

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 19:21

<sup>49</sup> Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers. Saint Thomas Aquinas. Saint Matthew: Chapter XIX, commentary by Saint John Chrysostom.

<sup>50</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892)

only to realize in desperation, as the clock ticks away, that your treasure was misplaced, and now it is too late; alas, they were the wrong goals.

But take comfort: it is never too late to change the world. “For God all things are possible.”<sup>51</sup>

Contemplate the inspiring life of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla<sup>52</sup>, a University of Milan educated pediatrician born in 1922 in Magenta, Italy. A talented and accomplished professional with a successful medical career, Gianna Beretta Molla achieved considerable worldly success, yet she treasured her role as a mother more than anything else on earth. Married at the age of 33, she was pregnant with her fourth child only six years later. When doctors spotted a tumor developing in her uterus, they recommended an abortion and a hysterectomy. Despite the risks to her own life, Gianna opted for surgery to remove the tumor and pleaded with her surgeons to preserve the life of her child. "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child, I insist on it. Save the baby." The baby's life was saved and was eventually delivered by Caesarean section. Yet the complications that persisted throughout her pregnancy foretold tragedy; one week after giving birth, and after repeated exclamations of “Jesus, I Love You. Jesus, I Love You”<sup>53</sup>, Gianna died from septic peritonitis.

And now reflect upon the great wisdom of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, the diminutive and soft-spoken Catholic nun and missionary who, at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. in 1994, surrounded by worldly and powerful politicians, bravely spoke in defense of innocent life. She told them: “The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew 19:26

<sup>52</sup> Gianna Beretta Molla, Vatican biography; Edward Pentin, *The Daughter of a Saint Speaks of Her Mother's Holiness*, National Catholic Register, September 12, 2011; *Pope Canonizes Pro-Life Heroine*, BBC News, May 16, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Saint Gianna Beretta Molla is the patron saint of mothers and the unborn. Her feast day is April 28.

war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?”<sup>54</sup>

The lives of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla and Saint Teresa of Calcutta are testaments to the selfless and sanctified defense of innocent life. And they, along with Our Blessed Mother, provide truly heroic models for all women. Humanity now calls out to the women of the world with a heartfelt and desperate plea: The world needs you to change it. Accept your glorious and divine role in the Theo-drama: be a handmaid to the Lord. Yes, you are smart, you are strong, you are ambitious, and you won't back down. For God's sake, and for the sake of humanity, devote your talent and energy to a fight that is worthy of your maternal strength and beauty.

Fight to inspire the world to celebrate motherhood, that divine prize which has been uniquely bestowed upon you; fight to protect your purity from worldly forces seeking to devalue, demean, and objectify you; fight to defend the unborn infant in the womb, the most vulnerable among us; and fight to promote the critical role that women, especially mothers, play as a remedy for our sick and fallen world. You must know in your heart - and our world must rejoice in! - the fact that you are already greater than men “through your divine maternity, always your towering emblematic attribute.”<sup>55</sup> You have been gifted with the precious ability to create life, and you have been united to God in a way known only to you in the deepest, most abiding corner of your soul. You are called to be a glorious “Warrior Queen”, not merely a “Fearless Girl”, formed by the hand of God into the sacred person of a woman. You are called to change the world! And the world needs you to change it, now more than ever.

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<sup>54</sup> Mother Teresa of Calcutta, National Prayer Breakfast Address (1994)

<sup>55</sup> Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1871)

You, the crowing of God's creation, must know that God saves the best for last, as he did at Cana<sup>56</sup>, and does so today. Our fallen world is an abyss, shrouded in darkness<sup>57</sup>; but you are stars of light, stars of God's creation. And stars, though ever-present in God's universe, are not visible during the day; stars can only be seen in the darkness. Be the bright light of God that you were uniquely designed to be! And illumine the darkness so those now lost may too find their way home. *For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

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<sup>56</sup> John 2:10

<sup>57</sup> Genesis 1:2