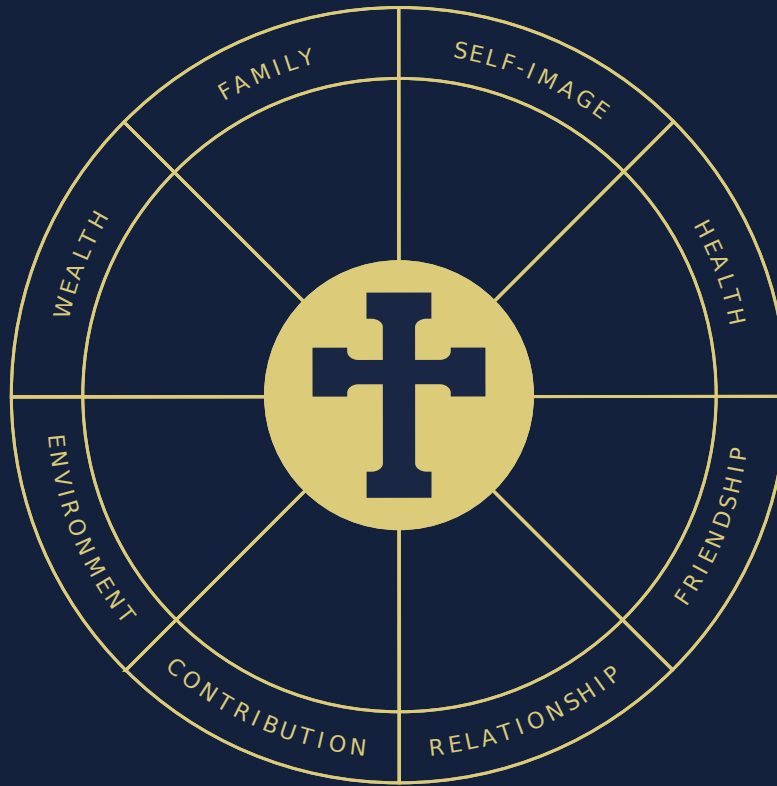


CATHOLIC COMPANION



CLASS ONE

Design a Life of Purpose

A Catholic Companion to The New Woman Masterclass



"You were made for such a time as this."

THE WOMAN SCHOOL · CATHOLIC FEMININE FORMATION

CLASS 1 · DESIGN A LIFE OF PURPOSE

A Catholic Overview

How the four lessons work together — and what the Church has always called this.

Class 1 is January Donovan's invitation to design a life of purpose. In Catholic terms, this is an invitation into *vocation* — the gift of yourself, freely given, in the season God has placed you. The four lessons that follow trace the arc of becoming who you already are in God: receiving your purpose, claiming your dignity, discerning your desires, and honoring the wounds that have shaped you.

LESSON 1 Know Your Why

You were made for such a time as this. The Church has held this from the beginning: before you were knit together, God consecrated you (Jeremiah 1:5). What John Paul II calls the *feminine genius* — woman's irreplaceable capacity to receive, perceive the person, and call out greatness — is not motivational language. It is anthropology. Your purpose is received, not invented.

LESSON 2 What Women Deserve

Every woman deserves peace, respect, intimate love, meaningful work. The Catholic word for this is *dignity* — given to you in creation (CCC 357), not earned. Yet living in your dignity is the daily work of grace, what St. Augustine named: *God who created you without you will not save you without you*. The renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2) is the lifelong project.

LESSON 3 Discover Your Desires

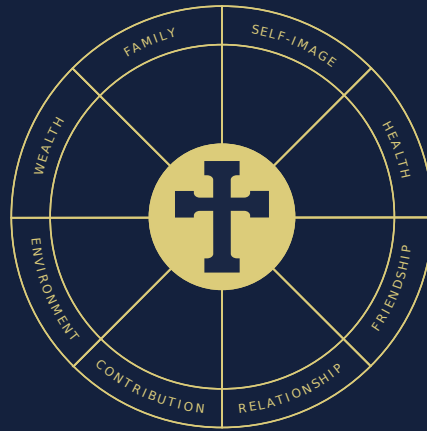
Your desires reveal your purpose. Catholic tradition has held this from Augustine's restless heart to Thérèse's *my vocation is love* — desire is the engine of the soul, planted by God to draw you home. The work is not to suppress desire (a puritanical distortion the Church has spent centuries correcting) but to *order* it toward its true end, which is God Himself.

LESSON 4 Honor Your Wounds

The final lesson opens onto the most distinctly Catholic teaching of the class — *redemptive suffering*. Pope John Paul II wrote in *Salvifici Doloris* that each person, in her suffering, can become a sharer in the saving work of Christ. Your wounds, joined to His, are not waste. They are seed.

*What January calls a life of purpose, the Church has always called **vocation**.*

May this class be a beginning.



CLASS ONE · LESSON ONE

Know Your Why

You were made for such a time as this.



*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I consecrated you."*

JEREMIAH 1:5

CLASS 1 · DESIGN A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Know Your Why

You were made for such a time as this.

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

— JEREMIAH 1:5

January teaches that you were made for such a time as this — that your purpose is irreplaceable, and that the world is incomplete without your contribution. This is not a slogan. It is the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church, rooted in Scripture and confirmed by every saint who has ever lived.

In this Companion, we go beneath the lesson into the truth that gives it weight. You will find that what January teaches is not an idea but a reality the Church has always known: *you were thought of by God before time began, and the season you are in is part of His plan.*

"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

ST. AUGUSTINE · CONFESSIONS

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

Why You Were Made

The world treats purpose as something you build. The Church teaches that purpose is something you receive — and then spend a lifetime answering.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you." — John 15:16

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance for us to walk in." — Ephesians 2:10

The Greek word translated *workmanship* in this passage from St. Paul is *poiēma* — the same root as our word *poem*. Before any season, any wound, any choice you have made, you were a poem in the mind of God. He composed you. The longing for purpose you feel is not a problem to solve but a homing signal — it is your soul recognizing that you were made for something.

The Feminine Genius

In 1988, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the women of the Church called *Mulieris Dignitatem* — *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*. In it, he gave a name to what January calls your irreplaceability: he called it the **feminine genius**.

The feminine genius is not a personality type, a season of life, or a list of strengths. It is the truth that woman, in her very being, has a unique capacity to *receive*, to *nurture*, to *perceive the person*, and to *call out greatness* in others. The world does not have a category for this. It tries to make woman either smaller — a passive object — or louder — a man with different anatomy. The Church says: she is neither. She is herself, and what she carries cannot be replicated by anyone else.

This is why January's teaching that *no one else can fulfill your purpose* is not motivational language. It is anthropology. The Catechism teaches that *being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone* (CCC 357). The *someone* you are was willed into being for this exact moment in history. The hole your absence leaves cannot be filled by another woman — only by you.

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

Three Types of Purpose

January teaches three types of purpose: seasonal, arena, and legacy. Each one has a Catholic name.

SEASONAL PURPOSE

is what the Church calls your *state in life*. The Catechism says, *All Christ's faithful are called to embrace the way of holiness... according to their personal vocation* (CCC 2013). Whether you are single, married, a mother, a widow, in school, or in the late season of life — God's will for you is not somewhere else. It is here, in this season, embraced in faith.

ARENA PURPOSE

is what St. Paul calls your *charisms* — the particular gifts the Holy Spirit has given you for the building up of the Church and the world. *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them* (1 Corinthians 12:4). Your gifts in friendship, marriage, work, or contribution are not random talents. They are entrustments.

LEGACY PURPOSE

is your participation in the *Communion of Saints*. You are not building a personal legacy. You are joining a story that began before you and will continue after you, and what you do in love now becomes part of the eternal weight of glory. As St. Thérèse of Lisieux wrote, *I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth*.



TIME WITH THE WORD

*From St. Catherine of Siena
Doctor of the Church*

*"Be who God meant you to be,
and you will set the world on fire."*

GO DEEPER

Questions for Prayer

These prompts are not journaling exercises. They are questions for prayer. Sit with them. You may want to bring them to Adoration, to a confessor, or to a trusted spiritual mother.

01 The Church teaches that your purpose was given before you existed (Jeremiah 1:5). Where in your life have you been treating purpose as something you must *earn* rather than something God has already *entrusted* to you?

02 St. Paul says God has prepared good works in advance for you to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). What good work in your current season are you avoiding because it feels too small, too hidden, or too inconvenient?

03 The feminine genius is woman's gift to *receive*, to *perceive the person*, and to *call out greatness* in others. Which of these does your soul recognize as your particular charism right now?

04 If you knew, with certainty, that God had placed you in this exact season for a reason — what would change tomorrow?

CLOSING PRAYER

A Prayer for Purpose

*Lord, You knew me before You formed me.
You called me by name before I drew my first breath.
You set this season of my life within the providence of Your love,
and the place I stand on now is holy ground.*

*Forgive me for the hours I have spent
trying to become someone You did not make me to be.
Forgive me for the mediocrity I have called humility,
and the silence I have called peace.*

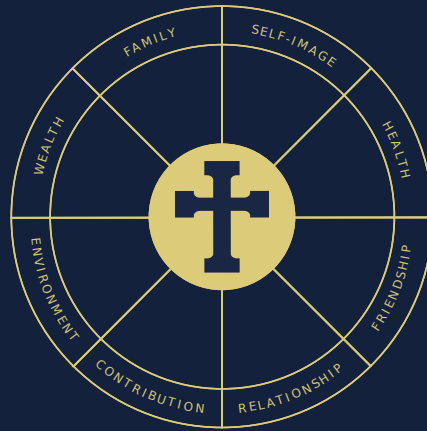
*Show me the work You have prepared for me to walk in.
Make me brave enough to take the next small step,
and faithful enough to stay
when the road is hidden.*

*Through the intercession of the Mother of God,
who said yes to a purpose she did not yet understand,
and through the prayers of all the women saints
who have gone before me —
may I become who You created me to be,
for such a time as this.*

Amen.

A PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Bring this lesson into prayer using the Examen. Each evening, ask: *Where today did I sense God calling me to my purpose? Where did I resist it?*



CLASS ONE · LESSON TWO

What Women Deserve

What is owed to a daughter of the King.



*"You have made her a little lower than the angels,
and crowned her with glory and honor."*

PSALM 8:5

CLASS 1 · DESIGN A LIFE OF PURPOSE

What Women Deserve

What is owed to a daughter of the King.

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*"What is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the angels,
and crowned him with glory and honor."*

— PSALM 8:4-5

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January teaches that you deserve a beautiful life — peace of mind, respected friendships, intimate love, work that fulfills your potential. Catholics sometimes flinch at this language. We are taught, rightly, that we cannot earn salvation, and *deserving* can sound like the language of entitlement.

But the Church has always held a deeper teaching: there is a *dignity* that is yours by virtue of your creation. You did not earn it. You cannot lose it. *And to live as if it does not exist is not humility — it is a betrayal of the gift God gave you when He called you into being.*

"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love."

ST. JOHN PAUL II · REDEMPTOR HOMINIS

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

The Dignity That Is Yours

The world treats *deserving* as something you negotiate — a list of grievances, a demand for what the universe owes you. The Church teaches something stranger and more beautiful. You do not deserve dignity because you earned it. You possess dignity because you were *made*.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." — Genesis 1:27

This single verse is the foundation of every Catholic claim about the human person. The Catechism teaches: *Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession, and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons* (CCC 357).

Read that again. Dignity is not what you earn from God. It is what He has already given you, sealed into the very fact of your being. The list January places before you — to be loved, respected, safe, valued, free to flourish — is not a list of entitlements. It is a description of what is *fitting* to a daughter of God. These are not things you negotiate for. They are the conditions in which a soul made for Him is meant to live.

And Yet — You Must Work for It

January's second teaching is the Catholic balance: *just because you deserve it does not mean you do not have to work for it*. This too is the Church's word. St. Augustine said it precisely: *God who created you without you will not save you without you*. Your dignity is given. Living in it is your daily work.

This is what theologians call *co-operation with grace* — God acts first, and your *yes* makes the gift effective. The peace, the friendships, the meaningful work, the loving marriage — all of these are given as possibilities by God, and made real through your daily, faithful, often hidden labor in His grace.

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

The Renewing of Your Mind

January teaches that you can rewire what you believe you deserve through neuroplasticity — by writing, reciting, repeating, and retreating into silence. The Church has known this work for two thousand years. She calls it *metanoia* — the renewal of the mind.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." — Romans 12:2

What St. Paul calls *renewing* is the same work January describes — the slow, patient labor of replacing old beliefs with true ones. The Catholic woman has particular help in this work. She is not changing her mind alone. Each Sacrament is a moment of renewal: Baptism washes the old story; Confession lifts the lies that have lodged in the heart; the Eucharist puts Christ Himself within her, making her capable of beliefs she could not hold on her own.

The three roadblocks January names — that we were not *taught*, not *trained to work*, and live in *distraction* — have ancient Catholic names: ignorance, sloth, and the noise of the world. The remedies are also ancient: study, discipline, and silence. The Catholic woman who would change what she believes she deserves must spend time with the Word, take responsibility for her formation, and make space for God to speak.



TIME WITH THE WORD

From *Mulieris Dignitatem*
Pope John Paul II, 1988

"The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different. Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her fulfillment as a person, her dignity and vocation, on the basis of these resources, 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."

GO DEEPER

Questions for Prayer

These prompts are not journaling exercises. They are questions for prayer. Sit with them. You may want to bring them to Adoration, to a confessor, or to a trusted spiritual mother.

- 01** The Catechism teaches that your dignity is given, not earned (CCC 357). Where in your life have you been living as if your dignity were *conditional* — earned by performance, approval, or success?

- 02** St. Augustine said: *God who created you without you will not save you without you.* Where is God waiting for your *yes* — your daily, faithful labor — to make a gift He has already given truly real in your life?

- 03** What is one limiting belief about what you deserve that you suspect was *inherited* rather than chosen — passed down from family, culture, or wound? What would the truth, spoken in God's voice over you, sound like instead?

- 04** St. Paul says we are renewed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2). If you committed to one daily practice — Adoration, the Rosary, lectio, the Examen — that would slowly form a new mind in you, what would it be?

CLOSING PRAYER

A Prayer for Renewed Dignity

*Father, You knit me together in my mother's womb
and crowned me with glory and honor
before I knew Your name.*

*You have given me a dignity I did not earn
and could not lose,
the dignity of being Your daughter.*

*Forgive me for the years I have lived
as if I had to earn what You had already given.*

*Forgive me for shrinking from the goodness
You laid out for my life,
calling my smallness humility
when it was, in truth, unbelief.*

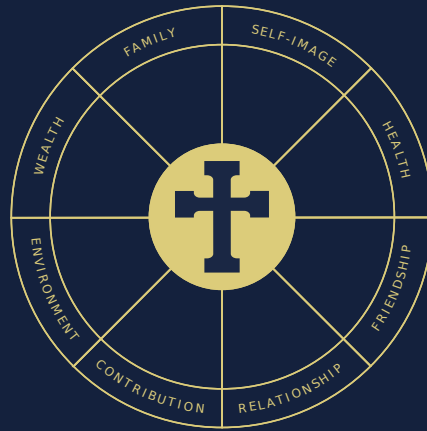
Renew my mind, O Lord.

*Replace every lie with Your true word over me.
Make me a woman who knows what she has been given,
and who works, in Your grace,
to live in it fully —
for my own sanctification,
for the good of my family,
and for the building of Your kingdom.*

Amen.

A PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Bring one limiting belief about what you deserve to Confession this week. Speak it aloud as the lie it is. Receive absolution. Then write the truth God speaks in its place — and recite it daily until you believe it.



CLASS ONE · LESSON THREE

Discover Your Desires

The longings that lead you home.



*"Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

PSALM 37:4

CLASS 1 · DESIGN A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Discover Your Desires

The longings that lead you home.

*"Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

— PSALM 37:4

January teaches that your desires are sacred — that they reveal your purpose, your calling, your irreplaceable contribution. She names two cultural errors: the hedonism that tells you to *indulge whatever you feel*, and what she calls the *religious extreme* that says all desires are unholy and must be abandoned.

Here is what you may not have been told: the second of those errors is *not Catholic*. It is a puritanical distortion the Church has spent centuries correcting. The Catholic tradition has always taught that desire is the *engine of the soul* — given by God, planted in our hearts as a homing signal toward Him. Augustine, Aquinas, Ignatius, Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Thérèse — every saint and Doctor of the Church wrote of holy desire.

"Great souls have great desires."

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX · STORY OF A SOUL

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

The Theology of Holy Desire

The Catechism opens with this line: *The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself* (CCC 27). Desire is not the problem. Desire is the proof. Your soul is restless because it was made for Someone, and your every smaller longing — for a good marriage, meaningful work, beauty, peace — is a downstream tributary of that great river that runs toward God.

"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." — St. Augustine

St. Thomas Aquinas devoted nearly thirty questions of his *Summa Theologiae* to the passions and desires — not to suppress them, but to teach how they are ordered. Desire, for Thomas, is the response of the soul to perceived good. The work of the spiritual life is not to silence desire but to *order it* — to purify what is mixed, mature what is immature, and aim every longing at its true end, which is God.

When January says you must *study your desires*, she is naming what Ignatian spirituality calls *discernment of spirits*. Not every desire is from God. Some come from the world, some from wounds, some from the enemy of our nature. The Catholic woman learns to read her desires the way a navigator reads stars — noticing which ones bring peace, which ones bring agitation, which ones lead her toward love and which away from it.

Mary's Magnificat — The First Holy Desire

The first words of the Mother of God in the Gospel of Luke are the words of a woman whose desire is fully ordered: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior* (Luke 1:46–47). She is not without desire. She is full of it. But every longing in her is aimed home. This is the model. Not absence of desire — *desire perfectly directed*.

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

Ordering, Not Suppressing

January names three roadblocks to discovering your desires: that we are not born with mature desires, that we have not been trained to mature them, and that culture promotes disordered ones. Catholic tradition agrees on all three — and gives them names.

IMMATURE DESIRES

What January calls *infancy*, the Church calls *concupiscence* — the disorder of appetite that remains in us after baptism. It is not sin in itself. It is the inner pull toward lesser goods over greater ones, easily corrected by grace and discipline. Every saint had to grow through it. So will you.

UNTRAINED DESIRES

What January calls *no proper training*, the Church calls *the need for formation*. St. Ignatius wrote the Spiritual Exercises precisely so that any person — with no theological background — could learn to read her own desires and test them against the Spirit of God. Spiritual direction, lectio divina, and the Examen are the Church's training tools.

DISORDERED CULTURE

What January names as *a culture that promotes disordered desires*, the Church has been teaching for two thousand years. The world will sell you longings that cannot satisfy you. The Sacraments — especially the Eucharist — are the antidote: they re-tune your desire to its true food.



TIME WITH THE WORD

From *Story of a Soul*
St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church

"To love is to give everything, and to give oneself. I will go to the end of the earth... I will be a missionary in every land, in every age... My vocation, at last I have found it. My vocation is love."

She wrote this from the cloister, with no platform, no public ministry, in the final months of her life. Her vast desire — to be everything for everyone — was fulfilled in the smallness of love. Yours can be too.

GO DEEPER

Questions for Prayer

These prompts are not journaling exercises. They are questions for prayer. Sit with them. You may want to bring them to Adoration, to a confessor, or to a trusted spiritual mother.

- 01** St. Augustine taught that every smaller desire is a tributary of the soul's longing for God. What is one desire of your heart right now — however ordinary — that, if you traced it back, points to something *eternal* rather than something passing?

- 02** Have you been taught — by family, religion, or culture — that your desires are *selfish, dangerous, or unholy*? How would your prayer life change if you believed, with the Catechism, that the desire for God is written in your heart by God Himself (CCC 27)?

- 03** Take one of your strongest current desires. Walk it through Ignatian discernment: *When I imagine fulfilling this, do I feel deep peace or restless agitation? Does it draw me toward love and God, or away?* What does the answer tell you?

- 04** St. Thérèse said: *My vocation is love*. If you stripped your desires down to their deepest layer, what would you say is the love you were made to give? Where in your life is that love currently being asked of you, in small, hidden ways?

CLOSING PRAYER

A Prayer for Holy Desire

*Lord, You wrote the desire for You
into the deep places of my heart
before I knew Your name.*

*Every longing I have ever felt
for love, for beauty, for meaning, for home —
is a smaller current of the great river
that flows toward You.*

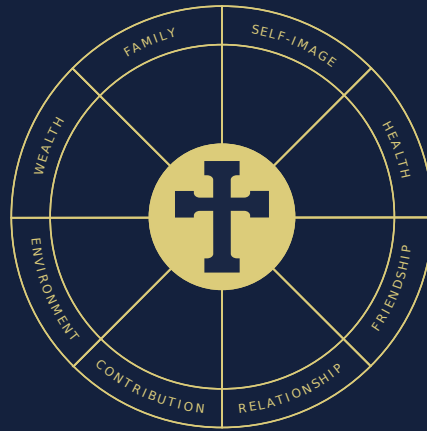
*Forgive me for the desires I have buried
because I was told they were dangerous.
Forgive me for the desires I have indulged
because I forgot they were sacred.
Teach me, like Mary,
to magnify You with everything I want.*

*Give me the courage to name my deepest desires before You.
Give me the wisdom to test them by Your Spirit.
Give me the patience to let You order them
into the shape of my vocation —
until, with St. Thérèse, I can say:
my vocation, at last I have found it.
My vocation is love.*

Amen.

A PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Each evening, examine one desire you felt strongly that day. Ask: *Where did this come from? Where does it lead? Does it bring me closer to love or further from it?* Write nothing. Just notice. Over a week, patterns will emerge.



CLASS ONE · LESSON FOUR

Honor Your Wounds

By His wounds we are healed.



*"He was wounded for our transgressions,
and with his stripes we are healed."*

ISAIAH 53:5

CLASS 1 · DESIGN A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Honor Your Wounds

By His wounds we are healed.

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*"He was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed."*

— ISAIAH 53:5

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January teaches that your wounds, when honored rather than buried, become the compass to your contribution. This is true. And it is the doorway to one of the most distinctive teachings of the Catholic Church — a teaching that no self-help framework, no secular psychology, and no other faith tradition holds in the same way.

Christianity does not flee from suffering. It enters it. The center of our faith is a man on a cross. The cross is not a picture of defeat. It is a picture of love that goes all the way down — and rises. Your wounds, joined to His, are not waste. They are seed.

"In suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace."

ST. JOHN PAUL II · SALVIFICI DOLORIS

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

Redemptive Suffering

In 1984, Pope John Paul II — a man who had suffered the loss of his mother, brother, father, and entire community by his early twenties, lived through Nazi occupation and Communist oppression, and had recently survived an assassination attempt — wrote an apostolic letter called *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*. He wrote it not as a theologian but as a survivor. And he wrote one of the most beautiful sentences in Catholic teaching:

"Each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ." — *Salvifici Doloris* 19

Read that slowly. The pain you carry is not just yours. It can become a participation in the saving work of Christ Himself. St. Paul says it without flinching: *I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church* (Colossians 1:24).

Christ's suffering on the cross was infinitely sufficient. Nothing was lacking in it. But Paul's strange phrase points to a mystery: Christ chose to leave a place at the cross for you. When you take your suffering — the betrayal, the loss, the chronic pain, the wound that will not heal — and offer it to Him, He takes it up into His own. It becomes part of the work of salvation. It becomes *salvific*.

This Changes Everything

January teaches that your wounds can be the compass to your contribution. The Catholic teaching is more radical still: your wounds, offered to Christ, become the locus of your most powerful intercession. The hours you spent in the dark, when nothing seemed to be redeemed — those hours, given to Him, were not wasted. They were the deepest work of your life. Souls were saved by what you endured. You will not know whom, in this life. The Church calls this the *communion of saints*: your suffering, joined to the suffering of every faithful soul across history, is woven into the salvation of the world.

THE CATHOLIC DEPTH

Mary at the Foot of the Cross

Of all the witnesses of human suffering, the Church gives one particular place to the Mother of God. She is, in the title given her by tradition, *Mater Dolorosa* — Our Lady of Sorrows. She lost everything a woman can lose: her child, taken in violence; her son, taken in injustice; her own heart, pierced by what the prophet Simeon foretold (*a sword shall pierce through your own soul also*, Luke 2:35).

And yet she stayed. *Stabat Mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrimosa* — the sorrowing Mother stood beside the cross, weeping. She did not flee. She did not curse. She did not numb. She let the pain hurt. And by her presence, by her unfled grief, she became — in the Church's belief — a mother to every wounded soul who would ever look at the cross.

When you are tempted to flee your wound, look at her. Stay. The pain does not have the last word. But you cannot move past it until you stand in it long enough to let grace meet you there. Mary's faithfulness in suffering is not a model of stoicism. It is a model of love that does not abandon its post.



TIME WITH THE WORD

From *Salvifici Doloris*
Pope John Paul II, 1984

"Suffering is, in itself, an experience of evil. But Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation. By His suffering on the Cross, Christ reached the very roots of evil... He has linked it to love, to that love which... brings forth good even from evil, bringing forth good even from suffering, just as the supreme good of the Redemption of the world was drawn from the Cross of Christ."

GO DEEPER**Questions for Prayer**

These prompts are not journaling exercises. They are questions for prayer. Some may bring tears. That is the work, not an interruption of it. You may want to bring these to Adoration or to a confessor.

- 01** Name one wound you carry that you have not yet *offered* to Christ. Not buried. Not managed. *Offered*. What has stopped you?

- 02** St. Paul says he *completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions* (Colossians 1:24). If your hardest current suffering could be joined to His and become an intercession, who in your life would you want to offer it for?

- 03** Mary stood beside the cross. She did not flee, curse, or numb. Where in your life are you fleeing a wound — through busyness, distraction, anger, or denial — that the Lord may be asking you to *stand in* long enough for grace to meet you?

- 04** Look back at one wound from your past that has been at least partially redeemed. What good has God brought from it that could not have been brought any other way? What does that tell you about the wound you are carrying now?

CLOSING PRAYER

An Offering of Wounds

*Lord Jesus, who bore in Your body
every wound the world could give —
betrayal, abandonment,
the silence of God,
the cruelty of those You loved —
and turned each one into a fountain of grace:*

*I come to You with my own wounds.
The ones I have not yet been able to name.
The ones I have buried because I could not carry them.
The ones that still bleed.*

*I do not ask You to take them away.
I ask only that You take them up.
Make them part of Your own.
Let them count for someone —
for my children, for my husband,
for my mother, for the women I will never meet
whose suffering is the same as mine.*

*Mother of Sorrows, who stood when I would have run,
stand with me now.
Teach me to stay.
Teach me to let the pain hurt
until it becomes seed.*

Amen.

A PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Each morning this week, name one wound — past or present — and offer it. Say aloud: *Lord, I unite this with Your cross. Use it for the salvation of souls.* Do not look for evidence. The work is being done in places you cannot see.