

AN INVITATION
EPHAPHATHA



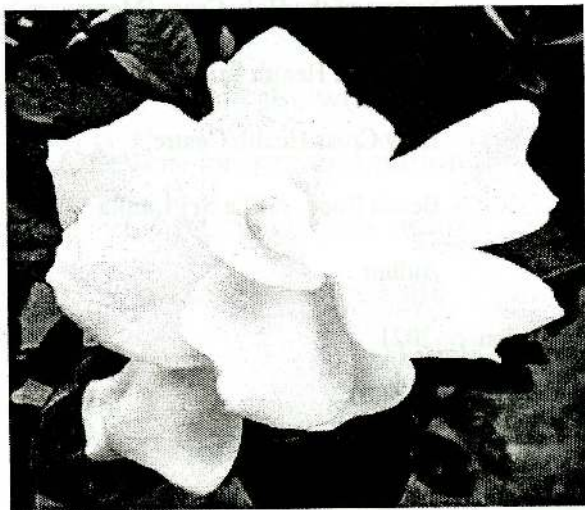
TO ALL THE WOMEN TO
BE OPENED

Sr. Victorine James HC

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | noolaham.media

EPHPHATHA

AN INVITATION



TO ALL THE WOMEN TO

BE OPENED

Sr. Victorine James HC

Title : EPHPHATHA - BE OPENED
AN INVITATION TO ALL THE WOMEN TO
BE OPENED

Author : Sr. Victorine James HC
Sisters of the Holy Cross (Menzingen)
School of Health Sciences.
Holy Cross Health Centre,
Beach Road, Jaffna **Sri Lanka**

Copy right : Author

Year of publication : 2021

Print : First print

Pages : xvi + 76

Number of copies : 200

Printing : St. Joseph's Catholic Press, 360, Main Street,
Jaffna Sri Lanka.

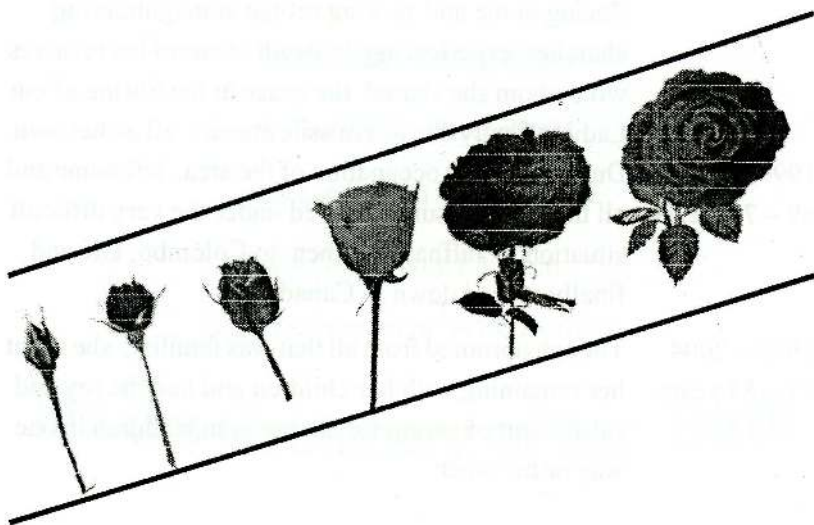
EPHPHATHA

(Mk 7:34)

AN INVITATION

To all the women
Of every culture and nationality
Of every age and status
In every walk of life

TO BE OPENED



AMMA'S LIFE AT A GLANCE

- 1921 – 1937** Care-free years; - Grew up with one sister 6 years her junior;
0 – 16 years Primary education at Holy Family Convent, Naranthanai; Secondary education at Holy Family Convent, Illavalai as a boarder
- 1938 - 1973** 24 hours busy schedule as wife and mother
17 -52 years caring for a home full of children assisting Papa in his twin roles as Registrar and Ayurvedic medical practitioner
- 1974 - 1981** Empty nest - just Papa and Amma
51-60 years keeping home for the return of children for week-ends, vacation or any occasions
- 1982 -1989** Widowed at 60 - alone at home; distressed by the pogrom of 83, children back home as refugees in their own country, and as a result of the situation moving abroad; military presence, shelling, bombing, fleeing home and seeking refuge at neighbouring churches; experiencing the death of one of her relatives with whom she shared the space at the Shrine of our Lady at Chatty due to a missile attack – all on her own.
- 1990 -1991** Due to military occupation of the area, left home and
69 – 70 years all that she treasured, moved under the very difficult situation to Jaffna, and then to Colombo, UK and finally settled down in Canada.
- 1992 – 2004** Though uprooted from all that was familiar, she spent
71 – 83 years her remaining with her children and had the joy and fulfillment of caring for all her grandchildren in one way or the other.

Dedicated

(the greatest woman of my life)

TO AMMA



Felicitas Nicholas

04 Jan 1921 - 29 Apr 2004

who carried and nurtured me

and from whom I learned

the effectiveness of PONDERING

On the Centenary of her Birth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Preserving the history and tradition of the Holy Cross Sisters in Sri Lanka, for the future generations, by documenting them, was a need that was expressed in many Provincial Chapters and Meetings of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Sri Lanka. I took up this expressed need as a challenge and a duty when an opportunity presented itself to explore the Archives of the Mother house as well as that of the Generalate of the Holy Cross in Switzerland. I was able to complete the work on time, (my first trial in writing), and released the book in 2010, titled 'Sri Lankan Province 1930- 2010' for the celebration of the 80 years of the presence and service of the Holy Cross Sisters in Sri Lanka.

As I was approaching my 75th birthday and the 50th year of my Religious Profession, I tried once again to write. This was quite a different experience. For the first book, I searched the archives, as well as asked my senior sisters for their remembrance of events in the Province. But, for the second book, the archive was within me, and I had to dust the many layers covered by inattentiveness and neglect, and with the help of the divine light, look deeply into myself and search my past. Publishing the book titled 'One Pot Spirituality' – Reminiscing to Relish in 2019 was definitely a life-giving experience for me and I still relish it.

The encouragements and the challenges I received after the two books, prepared the ground, once again to write. 'You can write', 'you should write' echoed again and again. I am ever grateful to Rev. Bishop Duleep de Chickera (Bishop Emeritus, Anglican Church, Colombo) Rev. Fr. S.J Emmanuel, Rev. Fr. Mathew Puraidom OFMConv, and many others for their challenges and encouragements.

As a woman, I always wanted to uphold the dignity of women. I am not a feminist and I am not one who supports women's liberation movements. I believe God created women to be equal partners with men in the family, has assigned specific places and jobs in the society, and in whatever establishment they work together and it is the women

themselves who should claim their respective places in society and contribute their mite to the world at large.

The Covid 19 pandemic stifled our routine life in many ways. As for me the restrictions in movement, and social/ physical distancing, etc., challenged me to get to work or rather sit down to work. And the result of the 'lock down' is the book that is in your hands now.

I am thankful to Rev. Fr. P.J. Jebaratnam, Vicar General of the Diocese of Jaffna who despite his heavy schedule of work in the diocese for his introductory message and blessings.

I sincerely thank Rev. Sr. Robina Paulin, the Province Leader of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, for having taken time off to give a comprehensive view of the book.

My special thanks are due to Mrs. Bubsy Mariathan, who first of all, as a woman knows well the challenges faced by women, and being fully engaged as a wife and mother is aware of the responsibilities of a woman, and added to that, as a Lecturer at the Jaffna National College of Education - a ministry that demands time and dedication - contributes to the education of the future generation, for finding the time to read and analyze and give her valuable contribution.

I am indebted to Rev Fr. Ruban Mariampillai, Director, Bishop Savundram Media centre, for his timely help in getting the book in order. With generosity and willingness he answered all my the last minutes requests and SOS calls, and compensated my ignorance in Journalism.

Along with Fr. Ruban, I also wish to thank Rev. Fr. Ainsley Roshan and the staff of St. Joseph's Catholic Press, Jaffna for their competent printing job.

Thanks to them both, and their combined work that you have a decent looking book in your hands.

As I present this book, I am aware of the countless number of women of the past and the present; women with whom I associated, and continue to associate; the women whom I got to know through my

faith, reflection, books, and media; They all have contributed in some way or other in writing this book. All of them continue to contribute in my search to be open to all that is feminine in me.

To the Almighty, who willed that I be a woman, love and uphold my femininity, that I commit my womanliness in His service to the people, and be an inspiration and support to all women. To Him all praise and thanks are due.

Sr. Victorine James HC



Foreword

During this pandemic period, when all else stand frozen without any movement, Sr. Victorine's desire to share her experiences with all women, had fostered her to organize methodically and carefully her reflective thoughts and experiences without any discrimination of caste, creed or even Religion. Her reflections based on biblical, spiritual and secular knowledge come to your hand, in the form of a small book. Her personal determination has stimulated her creativity and the result is, -the formulated document- that can inspire, and at the same time help the reader in her / his reflection, and question one's inner self of its integrity. This, I believe, would gradually lead the readers to become more conscious of the rich potentialities that the Lord has gifted to women, as women and not as men.

The document calls all women, all nationalities, and women from varied cultures as well as women from all state for a 'soul-searching' exercise to 'ponder like Mary' and trusting the Lord to face the challenges which means taking the risks to open oneself to the realities present in this 2021 world. The invitation extended to women, is concerned in bringing to their consciousness, the women from different sectors and backgrounds from the Bible. As such there are women from the old Testament, for example, Sara, and Rebekah, Leah and Rachel, Ruth and Neomi, Esther and Deborah and from the New Testament like Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, Syrophoenician woman, the woman with the issue of blood, as well as women from the Epistles of St. Paul and women from the Acts of the Apostles are taken and discussed as exemplary figures, for some particular outstanding qualities, which transformed their personalities and they shine forth as women of Hope to the people in their times.

Furthermore, the document also tables questions to ponder, reflect and to see as to what extent one's personality cooperates/ed in response to God's call which comes day after day, inspiring "to be open" and cultivate the correct attitudes and values that would push one again and again, to go to people and share those values, and experiences with them.

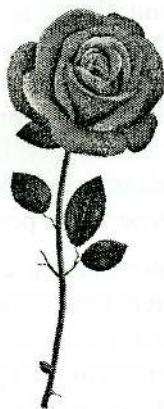
Anne Frank, a Jewish Teenager, whose diary written before she was being sent into the concentration camp and Malala Yousafzai a Pakistani, a teenager of seventeen, who risked her life for standing for the right of every child for education, are highlighted as exemplary girls in our time. Soon after her recovery Malala built a fund with the assistance of her father, for the education of female children. Thus, this outstanding deed of the teenager chimed so loudly across the continent, that she was awarded the Nobel Prize at the age of 17. The invitation in the document goes not only to adult, but also for teenagers as well as to Elders.

I congratulate Sr. Victorine James, for the time consuming and pains taking work, she has undertaken in order to bring out her second creation. I wish and pray that the contribution made by her in this small document, will be taken up seriously by the readers and cause to bring forth fruits thirty, sixty and hundred-fold.

Sr. Robina Paulin

Provincial Leader

Sisters of the Holy Cross (Menzingen)



EPHATHA, AN INVITATION TO ALL WOMEN TO LEAD A LIFE WITH PRIDE, DIGNITY AND SELF- RESPECT

Message from Fr. Vicar General

The book *Ephphatha* has come as a voice in the wilderness echoing an urgent appeal to the whole world 'to be opened' to the aspirations of women who yearn to have their existence on this earth with dignity and self-esteem.

This appeal comes from all the women, of every culture and nationality, of every age and status, in every walk of life, to whom the author deservedly dedicate this book.

Pope Francis in his post-synodal Exhortation to every young Christian (*Christus vivit*) has made an exigent appeal to respect the rights of women and denounced that the contribution of women to the church and society is vital and indispensable.

There was a time when people used to think that woman was the hearth. She was considered to be subordinate to man. Her whole life spent in showering upon others. As a girl, she had to serve her parents. As a daughter she had to tolerate the preference given to her brothers. As a wife, she was considered to be the mistress of the young and nurse of the old. As a mother, she had to make sacrifices for the sake of her children. They think that woman is a kind of a slave. They treat her badly. They did not give her equal rights as men. Female babies are even killed at their birth.

But, a recent study reveals that throughout history, the central role of women in society has ensured the stability, progress and long-term development of nations. The median female share of the global workforce is almost equal to that of men. Women's

formal and informal labor can transform a community from a relatively autonomous society to a participant in the national economy. The role of women in the urban and rural workforce has expanded exponentially in recent decades.

The author of this book has taken a keen interest to prove the worth of women after having had a deep study on their lives and contributions to the world throughout the history of the universe. She has explored the whole Bible and ascertained the influence of women for the fulfilment of the history of salvation. She invites all women to open to themselves, to God, to the realities around them, in order to feel their worthy existence, and their insignificant role for the betterment of the society and the whole world.

I am pleased to thank Sr. Victorine James for this valuable book on women and congratulate her for having shared her knowledge and experience with every other woman whom she invites to lead a life with pride, dignity and self-respect.

Revd. Fr. P. J. Jebaratnam

Vicar General

A RESEARCH NOTE

A theory called the 'Taxonomy of Educational Objectives' presented by the educational theorist B.S.Bloom categorizes a person's cognitive process as including the following steps: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create. This can be considered as the eventual growth of knowledge, and this work ultimately shines as the author's growth in the above mentioned process.

The rise of a woman is thoroughly expressed throughout this work. A nun's wide range of experience from the traditional Jaffna Tamil Catholic community to a broad worldly perspective is explicitly portrayed here. A single woman's knowledge and experience are imparted to mass audience which ultimately helps for the betterment of the world.

Agreeing to what Prof. Yuval Noah Harari states in his book, "Sapiens - A brief history of the human race", all throughout the history of the human race, in every age, in every country, every religion and in every political, economical, social and cultural backgrounds, a woman is often looked down upon as a secondary citizen.

In contrast to this practice, nature prioritizes women. It can be seen in all of Mother Nature's creations. Because, the survival and persistence of a species is possible only with the feminine quality. Even our God needed a woman to incarnate. Adhering to these arguments, there could be no counter talks on the idea that femininity is sacred and must be treasured.

This book presents us with women who are revolutionary role models who served in many roles as those who expressed themselves in spite of the various obstacles they faced in their path, their struggles, their contribution to the sustainability of the society, their achievements and hopes.

The specificity with which the Biblical women of both the old and the new testament are addressed, as lasses, damsels, widows, queens, leaders, rebels, differently abled, mothers in their diverse roles proves the author's authentic search in the field.

The aspect of the book which points out to the women in the world as we know takes the readers into a whole new dimension as it reaches far beyond the hands of religions, which also elevates the quality of the book. It gives us a reason to take pride in realizing that the contribution of women to shape the world.

Apart from this, the book has the power to motivate women to action. The book explores the importance of self actualization through the process of listening, questioning, reflecting, answering, deciding and acting. It also provides a form of guidance on how to change it into action and how women in their different ages can improve themselves.

Quotations of intellectuals and their use in the appropriate places shine as gems escalating the quality of the work.

The author looks back at her life as a woman who had gone through several phases of life and gives us the gist of her reflection with a variety of her accumulated knowledge and experience. These reflections, show us her thriving search and analysis and unravels a new perspective on women.

Deep reading and enhancement of knowledge is a choice everyone had to make. But to open up myself for enlightenment is solely my responsibility.

Mrs. Bussy Mariathanan

Lecturer

Jaffna National College of Education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. The Symbol
3. A model for Prayer
4. An Invitation to Be opened
5. Women in the Sacred Scripture Part 1 (OT)
 - a. Sarah: wife of Abraham
 - b. Rebekah: wife of Isaac
 - c. Leah and Rachel - wives of Jacob
 - d. Ruth and Naomi - Mother -in- law and daughter -in -law
 - e. Hannah:- Mother of Samuel
 - f. Esther: - The influential Persian Queen
 - g. Deborah, the Prophet and judge to Israel,
6. A Pledge to Be opened -
7. Women in the Sacred Scripture Part 2 (NT)
 - a. Mary and Martha
 - b. Mary Magdalene
 - c. The Syrophenician woman
 - d. The woman with an issue of blood
8. Powerful questions to ask
9. To you Teenagers
 - a. Virgin Mary as a teenager - Jewish
 - b. Miriam sister of Moses - Levite
 - c. Anna Frank - German Jew
 - d. Malala Youzufai - Pakistani
10. Be thankful

11. To you, Every Active Woman
 - a. Bernarda Heimgartner - Foundress, Educator
 - b. Catharine of Hungary - Queen, Social Worker
 - c. Florence Nightingale - Nurse, Statistician, Social Reformer
 - d. Helen Keller - Champion of differently abled, educator, Author,

12. Be thankful

13. Virgin Mary, Mother of God

14. Be opened to The possibilities Around
 - a. to the life and mission in the Church
 - b. to the nature around and its seasons.
 - c. to the environment and its changes.
 - d. to your roles, occupations and professions

15. What is it that stops us from living to the full

16. To you elders

17. As women we affirm

18. Conclusion

19. As you lay down the book

INTRODUCTION

As a child growing up with more boys at home as well as in the neighborhood, (with almost at 4:1 ratio) I had sensed that I was someone special and different. My association with girls of my age was only in the classroom. Though this feeling of being special and different left me with some longings, some scars, and some blocks in my early life, yet it proved to be a challenge in my late teens, paving the way to love myself as a girl with a particular place, talents, and potentials. Instead of looking to see what I could have done as a boy and regretting it, I began to look at myself as to what I can be as a girl.

So I am writing this to all women of every age, - from a budding teenager to a tottering great-grandma - to every woman of every walk of life without any cultural, social, religious, professional bias. Coming from a Sri Lankan Tamil culture, rooted in the Catholic faith, and following the way of life of a Holy Cross Sister, my experiences and examples will somehow reflect my upbringing as they are mine for I can only draw from what is deep within me.

From the Sacred Scriptures

I searched the Scriptures to find my place as a woman and to my surprise, I found right through the Old Testament, many women stepping out of the boundaries of home and family to involve themselves in the society of their time.

a. Old Testament

Book of Genesis - I learnt about the creation of the first woman, '*God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them*' (Genesis 1:27) which means they were created equally. Again, '*the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."*' (words of Adam the direction of a divine revelation) *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.* (Genesis 2: 22 -24)

Book of Proverbs - 31: 10-30 is dedicated to a woman, praising her for what she is and what she does. Here I pick a few verses. A woman

- is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her.
- gets up while it is still night; provides food for her family; sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks, and her lamp does not go out at night.
- holds the distaff in her hand and grasps the spindle with her fingers; makes coverings for beds; clothed in fine linen and purple. with strength and dignity;
- opens her arms to the poor; extends her hands to the needy.
- speaks with wisdom, faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- watches over the affairs of her household; does not eat the bread of idleness;
- Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband praises her:

It concludes that charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised

b. New Testament

Gospels Certainly, in the Gospels written toward the last quarter of the first century, I found several women associating with Jesus, showing that women were among Jesus' earliest followers.

- ✓ From the beginning, Jewish women disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, had accompanied Jesus during his ministry and supported him out of their private means (Lk 8:1-3).
- ✓ He spoke to women both in public and private and seemingly learned from them. An unnamed Gentile woman

taught Jesus that the ministry of God is not limited to particular groups and persons, but belongs to all who have faith (Mk 7:24-30; Math 15:21-28).

- ✓ A Jewish woman honored him with the extraordinary hospitality of washing his feet with perfume.
- ✓ Jesus was a frequent visitor at the home of Mary and Martha, and was in the habit of teaching and eating meals with women as well as men.
- ✓ When Jesus was arrested, women remained firm, even when his male disciples are said to have fled.
- ✓ Women accompanied him to the foot of the cross. (Lk 23:27)
- ✓ It was women who visited the tomb first (Lk 24:1 Jn 20:10)
- ✓ Women were the first witnesses to the resurrection, chief among them again Mary Magdalene. (Jn 20:14-18)

And I do not see anywhere, Jesus treating women as if they have no right to be where they were found, or as if they were second class citizens.

Acts of the Apostles

In the Acts, we find many women of diverse status - household servants, tradeswomen, business leaders, intellectuals - working along with the apostles and disciples. Just to name a few

a. Tabitha Acts 9:36-43 In the port city of Joppa a disciple named Tabitha was singled out for her acts of kindness to her community. She devoted her resources as well as her time and labour to a life of practical service. The primary focus of her ministry was to poor widows, for whom she made tunics and

other items of clothing. When she died, the widows were weeping and showing Peter the good things Tabitha had made for them. In response, Peter followed the example of Jesus, prayed over Tabitha, and raised her from the dead.

b. Mary, the mother of John Mark Acts 12:6-19 In the early days groups met in the homes of believers. One of these early house churches was hosted by a woman named Mary, the mother of John Mark. For a woman to own a house and lead a large household was uncommon but not unknown at the time. Mary was most likely a wealthy widow, originally from Cyprus and related to Barnabas, who had opened her home as a meeting place for the church.

c. Rhoda the servant girl Acts 12:6-19 One of Mary's household servants was Rhoda, who answered the door, when Peter came after he was miraculously freed from prison by an angel. Rhoda rushed to the door, dropped her jaw at the sight of Peter, and rushed right back without letting him in. Peter just stood outside and kept knocking, waiting to be invited in, while she was trying to convince others that Peter was at the door.

d. Lydia of Thyatira Acts 16:11-40 Lydia was an agent of the lucrative dye and fabric industry based in that city. Thyatira purple was renowned throughout the empire and reserved for emperors and other high-ranking officials. Lydia ran her business from Philippi in Macedonia a Roman colony for retired politicians and military leaders. Once she was converted to Christ, she placed her home and considerable resources at the disposal of Paul and his team, even after they had been released from prison. In doing so, she provided for the apostle's mission as it moved down into Greece and eventually across Europe.

e. Priscilla, Acts 18:1-28 Together with her husband, Aquila, she ran a small business in Corinth making tents. After meeting

and working with Paul, the well-traveled duo became valued members of the apostle's missionary team.

Unusual for the time, Priscilla and Aquila are always mentioned together, suggesting they were equal partners in life, business, and ministry. Even more unusual, Priscilla is almost always named first, indicating hers was perhaps the higher-profile role within the church

Epistles

Some of the above-mentioned women are found in the writings of Paul, working closely with him and supporting him. Though Ephesians: 5, looks at the first glance, as if Paul was putting women down, but in reality, Paul concludes that a man leaves his father and mother to be united with his wife. He also talks about letting all kinds of submission to one another, become obedience to Christ.

From early Church The early church attracted significant numbers of women; many of these were prominent in culture and played a financially substantial role in the church.

Many women have come down to our times as saints and martyrs such as Agnes of Rome, Saint Cecilia, Agatha of Sicily, Blandina.

- Among the most notable of all Christian noblewomen must be Helena of Constantinople, the mother of Emperor Constantine. Constantine's Edict of Milan of AD 303 ended the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire and his conversion to Christianity was a significant turning point in history. He legalized Christianity across the Roman Empire, ending the mistreatment of Christians.
- Saint Monica was a pious Christian and mother of Saint Augustine of Hippo, who after a wayward youth, converted to Christianity and became one of the most influential Christian Theologians of all history.

- From the 5th century onward, with the establishment of Christian monasticism, other influential roles became available to women. Christian convents allowed them to acquire literacy and learning, and play a more active religious role.

From Charter of the United Nations

United Nations started in 1945, shortly after the end of World War II. In the introduction of the Charter on Human rights, enforced on October 24, 1945, we find “We the people of the United Nations are determined... to reaffirm faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the **equal rights of men and women** and nations large and small....”

Armed with positive images of women I asked myself: ‘What does it mean to be a woman? What do I want it to mean?’

In a way, being a woman today is hard and confusing as we are constantly being bombarded by contradictory messages of what a woman is supposed to be. Messages of inadequacy confront us. We expected to be feminine and masculine; powerful and gentle. We’ve got all kinds of roles to fill: friend, caretaker, mother, daughter, nurse, housekeeper. This is the tale of two systems, clashing with one another. It’s the square peg in a round hole, the contradiction of trying to fit feminine energy into the values of its opposite.

But this is important because we look up to influences of who we become especially at an early age. One study found that only 7.5% of children’s books feature a female protagonist. How could a young girl possibly have a female role model, when she doesn’t even have access to some heroines and their stories?

In times of change, leadership and examples are what we need. We

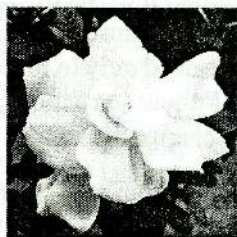
need exemplary women and their stories. Specifically, we need examples of women who have excelled or are excelling, especially in ways or fields that were not designed by the masculine. It exists often in the unsung heroines of our every day. These feminine transcend the systems and show us a new way of doing things. We need only to tune into and exalt their way of life. When we are clear about our values, we change the target. And by changing the target we change the system.

So what is the new target; the new value? What behaviors, character traits, and values do we admire in a woman? What does it mean to be an exemplary woman? The more I thought about it, the more confirmed I was, because together we can create a new reality, share it, and influence others. The change that we desire will not be given to us. It must be imagined; then created.

In the following pages I have dedicated some space for the 'women in the Sacred Scriptures' 'women who impacted the society in recent times' and some women who have been a source of inspiration for me.

My hope and prayer in presenting these pages to you is, that you too may rise as a woman in your arena, be open to the society around, impact the family and society and leave your footprint deeper in the soil, so that those who come after you, can see their place clearly and be open to the challenges the society offers.

2. WHY THE SYMBOL OF A ROSE IN FULL BLOOM?



As a young adult when I first faced the question ‘who am I?’, my reflection brought forth various answers and numerous symbols. At one stage of my life, picking and choosing among the many symbols, I almost settled down with a symbol of a Rose Plant, with a half-opened flower.

**Almost with some pride, I declared
I am a rose plant, firmly rooted in the soil
with a partly opened flower
facing the sun.
My stem and the leaves are healthy
because my roots are firmly embedded
in the soil, and draw nourishment
and strength
from the life-giving source that is deep within.**



Later, at one stage, a challenging question was posed to me about my Holy Cross way of life; ‘When are you going to be fully opened and what happens when a rose fully opens?’

Yes, a rose is meant to spread its fragrance and how can it do it, if it does not open itself fully. Opening its petals means two things: the rose can send out its fragrance and in the very act of opening its petals can wither and fall. ‘unless a grain of wheat falls and dies,’ and so is the rose. When its petals wither and fall, the stem experiences death

and when the stem is pruned it makes place for new shoots to spring.;
new buds to form; fresh flowers to bloom.

Now in the late seventies of my life, having experienced the joy,
contentment, hurts, pains, rejections, betrayals, and together with the
fulfillment of having been fully opened and available to God and those
around me, I want to invite you, my dear friends in the different walks
of life, to be opened to all what life offers.

There are hundreds of women who had some impact on my life and
here I cite some of them who inspired, challenged, and supported me
in my endeavor to be fully opened to life, and I propose them for your
reflection, emulation, and companionship.

**May the God-given graces, talents, and abilities that lie dormant
within us be awakened to truly become, who we are meant to be.**

3. PRAYER

How do I pray.....? When do I pray....? What do I pray for?

Each one of us has a different pattern of praying; we follow different schools of prayer; we identify ourselves with different spiritualities – Ignatian, Dominican, Franciscan, and so on.

The prayer I want to suggest to you today has a biblical origin based on LK: 15 The parable of the prodigal son / the prodigal father / merciful father.

This parable, among other things, gives us the example of how we pray as well as how to pray.

- when we are immature, centered on our selves, seeking comfort and satisfaction
- when after having been tossed about by life's manifold experiences and come home to ourselves

These are not two different chronological stages but two sides of one coin.

In the first part of this parable all that the son wants, is phrased as '**Father Give me my share.....**'

How often have we prayed like this son: Lord give me peace, give me enough money in my hands...., give me good health...., a comfortable home....give me a good job, a good income, Some of us may have a long list that could even exasperate the Lord.

In the second part of the parable is the same son, who had all that he wanted, as well as experienced what having all that we want, do to our life. He had experienced the reality of life reality of his attitude 'give me....'. Now his prayer changes: '**Father make me your servant**'

Arrogantly, standing erect, demanding our rights 'give me' to falling,

kneeling, unable to look up, begging 'make me,,,,,

In Phil 4:6 we read 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving, present your request to God**'

Yes, dear sisters, let us pray with gratitude to all that the Lord has been in our lives, place our petitions without any anxiety because He knows our needs, more than we know. We will become what we pray for.

So, there is no formula of prayer, but a gentle reminder, to be opened to all the wonderful things God has in mind for us.

Make me a servant, humble and meek,

Lord let me lift us all that is womanly
and may the prayer of my heart always be,

let me be opened, let me be opened

To all that is womanly in me

Even though I am forgetful of my role,
you call me daily anew.

You call me your beloved to stay,
urge me to shine on your light.

May I use my gifts, my feminine traits
to your people around in need.

Let me soar on high on eagles wings, be who I am meant to be.

'It was God's breath that made me and keeps me alive' Job 33;4
'Everything has its origin and sustenance in the breath of God'
Atharva Veda 11.4.1

4. An Invitation to Be opened

*Deep within your soul, there is a knowing place...
a Sanctuary.....*

Enter that sacred place'

Macrina Wiederkehr 'In the Song of the seed'

- TO ONESELF,

to your calling

to your family and friends

to your talents and potentials

to the challenges and struggles of everyday life

to the victories and failures small and great

- TO GOD

who is transcendent

who became one of us

who dwells in us

- TO EXEMPLARY WOMEN

in the SACRED SCRIPTURES

who made an impact in the world in the recent past

who continue to inspire and journey with us in the
contemporary world

- TO WOMEN AT HOME

Grandmothers,

Mothers

sisters

daughters

- TO NATURE AROUND

- TO YOUR PRESENT OCCUPATION

5. WOMEN IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES PART I

As a young religious preparing myself to get involved in people's lives through the ministry of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, I searched the scriptures to find the place and mission of the women in history.

To my surprise I found a lot of women in the scripture, who stood at the forefront, involving themselves in the lives of the people and seeing that God's call and purpose is fulfilled in their lives and that of others around them.

Before going into the details, I wish to take two quotes from Dieter F. Uchtdorf, from his writings in "The Influence of Righteous Women,"

"Women hold a special place in our Father's plan for the eternal happiness and well-being of His children"

"The lives of women in the Church are a powerful witness that spiritual gifts, promises, and blessings of the Lord are given to all those who qualify, 'that all may be benefited'

Keeping in mind the purpose of this book, I wish to mention just a few of the women and what I had learnt from their lives.

1. Sarah: wife of Abraham (Genesis 11-24)

Sarah overhears a conversation between Abraham and the three visitors, that she will have a son. She laughed about it and in her impatience, influenced Abraham to father a child with Hagar, her slave, (starting a conflict that even continues today). But, at 90, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, and her offspring became the nation of Israel, from whom Jesus Christ, Savior of the world was born.

Her life teaches that God's promises always come true, and his timing is always best and nothing is impossible to God

2. Rebekah: wife of Isaac (Genesis 24-27)

Like Sarah she was barren until Isaac prayed and she delivered twins, Rebekah favored Jacob, the younger, over Esau, the first-born, and helped influence the dying Isaac into giving his blessing to Jacob instead of Esau. Here again like Sarah, her action led to division.

We learn from her that whatever be our mistakes, God can turn them to good and fulfill His purposes.

3. Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29-35)

Leah: Wife of Jacob through cheating

Through a shameful trick of Laban, Leah became the wife of Jacob and had a heartbreaking life trying to win Jacob's love, but God specially graced Leah. Her son Judah led the tribe that produced Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.

We do not have to try to earn God's love. It is unconditional and free for the taking.

Rachel: Wife of Jacob through love

Rachel became the wife of Jacob, but only after her father Laban had deceived Jacob into marrying Rachel's sister Leah first. favored Rachel and her sons became heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joseph had the most influence, saving Israel during a famine.

Benjamin's tribe produced the apostle Paul, the greatest missionary of ancient times.

God's abiding blessings to married couples is revealed through the love of Jacob and Rachel

When Jacob wanted to go back to his land, Rachel and Leah gave simple and straightforward answer that showed their commitment: 'Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do' (Genesis 31:16)

4. Ruth and Naomi Ruth 1-4.

Ruth: a Moabite woman married an Israelite living in a foreign country. After the death of her husband (as well as his brother and father), her mother-in-law, Naomi, decides to return to her hometown in Bethlehem and asks her two daughters-in-law to return to their homes. Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." Ruth 1:16-17 Later we find that Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi and Boaz's faithfulness to Ruth, and everyone's faithfulness to God. God, in return, rewards Ruth and Boaz with a child they named Obed, who became the grandfather of David. From David's line came Jesus of Nazareth, Savior of the world. Thus Ruth becomes the great grandmother of King David.

When we show love and kindness to others, we invite the Lord's blessings into our lives. If we choose to trust and follow the Lord, He will reward us for our faith

5. Hannah: Mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1-2)

Hannah was an example of perseverance in prayer. Barren for many years, prayed unceasingly for a child until God granted her request.

She gave birth to a son and named him Samuel. What's more, she honored her promise by giving him back to God. Samuel eventually became the last of Israel's judges, a prophet, and a counselor to kings Saul and David.

We learn from Hannah that when our greatest desire is to give glory to God, he will grant that request. When we ask the Lord to bless us, we must be willing to use those blessings to serve Him.

6. Esther: The influential Persian Queen (Esther 1-10)

Esther was selected in a beauty pageant to become queen to the Persian King Xerxes. When a wicked court official, Haman, plotted to have all the Jews murdered Esther intervened. She modeled bravery and courage, stepped out, proving God can save his people even when the odds seem impossible.

She teaches us that we must break intimidation and use our influence to bring glory to God. The Lord can place us in particular circumstances so that we can help others. If we courageously do what is right, many people can be blessed by our actions

7. Deborah, the Prophet and judge to Israel (Judges 4-7)

Deborah played a unique role in Israel's history. In answering the call, Deborah became a singular biblical figure: a female military leader, facing the "900 chariots of iron," the height of military technology at the time, She served as the only female judge in a lawless period before the country got its first king. In a male-dominated culture, she enlisted the help of a mighty warrior named Barak to defeat the oppressive general Sisera.

Deborah's wisdom and faith in God inspired the people. Thanks to Deborah's leadership, Israel enjoyed peace for 40 years.

Though the violence of Deborah's story is a radical departure from standard biblical themes, yet we can admire her wisdom, courage, and compassionate zeal for justice.

Process of Interiorization

'Each of us needs an opportunity to be alone and silent, to find space in the day of the week, just to reflect and to listen to the voice of God that speaks deep within us'

Cardinal Basil Hume

Find a quiet corner; take a relaxed comfortable position: become aware of your breath; As you settle down reflect:

Having read about different women, just look at a woman who appeals to you most. What does she tell you? What is the quality you admire most in this woman? Is there some likeness of her in you? How do you want your life to be different, to be full, to be useful to others?

Resolve to carry this image of the woman, the image of you that is akin, and then strengthen your desire to be open to the change that comes over you.

6. A PLEDGE 'TO BE OPEN'

'When we choose to traverse the invisible boundary of the known self and enter the unknown, we are saying: Yes I want to grow, to become wiser, to be strengthened to be less burdened by what weighs me down and keeps me from being my authentic self. I am willing to pay the price for this growth'.

Open the Door Pg 94 Joyce Rupp

Having read about some women in the last pages let us pledge anew to be open to life's every circumstance. To do that, we need to start somewhere. The place to start may differ to each one of us, but the time for all of us to start to be open is NOW

- ✓ be opened to the conversation needed to forgive the hurt.
- ✓ be opened to the relationship that will lead you to heal
- ✓ be opened to keep a definite time to relax and be your self
- ✓ be opened to the vibrations within you and be with your higher self
- ✓ be opened to read a book that will awaken your thinking
- ✓ be opened to start a hobby that will increase your productivity
- ✓ be opened to study something new that will lead you to be genius
- ✓ be opened to create something new that will bring in financial gain
- ✓ be opened to your daydreams and night dreams to change the world
- ✓ be opened to spot other exemplary women of today
- ✓ be opened to be always polite, punctual, and grateful
- ✓ be opened to refuse to be like someone else
- ✓ be opened to change your pain into strength and heartache into joy Above all,

'be open to being yourself, to your talents, abilities, possibilities'

'The Christ we seek is within us in our inmost self, and infinitely transcends ourselves. This is the very root of our being. Therefore, what we are called to is to live habitually and constantly as possible with great simplicity of love which proceeds from the depths of our being where Christ reigns and loves' Thomas Merton on the inward journey

I am presenting in the following pages some women who sought Jesus for various reasons. I see them as courageous women who were prepared to step out of their traditions and cultures and were ready to be opened to the life-giving stream and thereby achieved their hearts' desire.

Mary and Martha

Martha and Mary were sisters living in Bethany, located on the outskirts of Jerusalem. I will take two incidents in the Gospels relating to the two of them on this page.

1. The first incident attests to the fact that in Jesus' ministry, women were not second-class citizens; they were recognized as being fully entitled to receive instruction from a teacher. When Jesus arrived, Mary sat at his feet listening to his every word. (The image is one of a rabbi teaching his students. It was highly unusual for a woman to be accepted as a disciple.)

Possibly Jesus was there for a meal, and the hostess Martha was very distracted; making sure everything was just perfect for her guest. - a typical expectation for a woman. It was not an appropriate request that Martha made to Jesus the guest if he cared that Mary had left her alone to do all the serving and to tell Mary to help her.

Jesus indicated great tenderness and concern for Martha, calling her name twice and telling her that Mary had chosen the "good" part and that it should not be taken away from her.

Though this incident is used to highlight the contemplative life versus an active life, It is more about discipleship, and more so about women's discipleship.

2. Mary and Martha have another encounter with Jesus after the death of their brother Lazarus.

When Lazarus was sick, the sisters sent word to Jesus, "The one whom you love is sick." They don't directly ask him to come to them. Jesus did not go immediately and by the time he arrived Lazarus had lain in the grave four days.

The moment Martha heard Jesus was near, she ran to meet him, saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Though it sounds like a complaint the next sentence expresses her faith. "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Martha continued to have confidence in Jesus, though it is unlikely she expected him to raise Lazarus. Jesus gives an ambiguous, yet well-known answer "Your brother will rise again." and follows it up with an unexpected serious claim "I am the resurrection and the life," meaning that the physical death had no power over believers. Martha's response was typical of a formal confession of faith: "I believe...."

In this short conversation, Martha acknowledged Jesus with three titles. Messiah, Son of God, and the one who is coming. This almost equals Peter's confession - from the mouth of a busy hostess.

Then Martha went to get Mary who was sitting in the house with the professional mourners. The one who sat at Jesus's feet was now sitting with the mourners according to custom and Martha told her that the "teacher" wanted to see her.

Mary said the same words to Jesus that Martha said, "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died." and fell at his feet, but there was no response from Jesus

When Jesus asked for the stone to be removed, Martha objected because Lazarus had already been in the grave for four days, Jesus' gently reminded Martha of their earlier conversation that if she would only believe she would see the glory of God.

Mary Magdalene

Though there are a lot of paintings and stories and speculations as to who this Mary Magdalene is here I just want to share the person I see and admire as Mary Magdalene - the repentant prostitute, the sinner washing Jesus' feet with her tears and drying them with her hair

(Lk 7:37-38)

Next, I find her presence in Calvary. She is the only person to witness Jesus' crucifixion, his burial place, and the empty tomb.

All the gospels name her as a witness to the empty tomb, When she is listed among several women, her name is always first, indicating her importance. Jesus appeared only to her in John 20:16 and Mark 16:9. This caused credibility problems since women were generally not perceived as reliable witnesses in the ancient world.

And this is the last we hear of her in the New Testament. Paul does not mention her, and she has no role in Acts.

Modern scholars are more likely to see her as Jesus' primary disciple and a great leader and teacher in the early church.

Unlike traditional views, the Eastern Orthodox Church believes that Mary Magdalene was virtuous all her life. She is not the sinful woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her tears. It is clear that as we learn more about the early church, some of our traditional presumptions have to be challenged. It is becoming clearer that Mary Magdalene was, indeed, a disciple of great authority and a leader of the early church.

The Syrophenician Woman

The story of the Syrophenician woman is found in Mk 7:24-30 and Math 15:21-28.

Though there is slight variation in the narrative, in both gospels, this story follows an accusation by the Pharisees about, eating with unwashed hands. Pharisees had accused Jesus of not following the "tradition of the elders", and Jesus telling them that whatever goes

into a man from outside does not defile him; it is what comes out of his mouth that defiles him.

After this Jesus left that place and went into the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre (modern Lebanon) was mainly a Gentile region with a long, unhappy history with Israel.

The woman who came to Jesus was mentioned as a Syrophenician / Canaanite. Both terms highlight her paganism; as a non-Jew: she can be counted as an enemy of Israel.

This woman who had “heard about him”, implored him to heal her daughter. “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.” “Lord” and “Son of David.” Jewish messianic terms and Jesus completely ignores her and does not speak to her. His silence gives the impression to his disciples that he’s not interested in helping her. So, they suggest that he “send her away” since she is annoying them by keeping on screaming.

Jesus repeats that he was “sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman, however, was not to be denied. At this point, the screaming woman fell at his feet, on behalf of her daughter, once again imploring him “Lord, help me. “

Jesus says, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

The woman quickly responds that even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table. This time he said to her, O woman, your faith is great; let it be done as you have requested. “Her daughter was healed at that moment.

He told her to go home; with complete trust, she did.

The Woman With The Issue Of Blood

The incident of the healing of this woman takes place within a larger story. Jesus is on his way to a synagogue leader’s house to heal his dying daughter when an unnamed woman causes an interruption to His progress.

What we know about the woman is, first, she had an abnormal bleeding condition, continuing for twelve years. In my opinion, it is a very long time for someone to go on like this. Second, she had spent all her money on treatments from many doctors, and nothing had helped; in fact, it seems to have become worse.

According to Jewish Law,

- she is ceremonially unclean due to her bleeding issue and would not have been permitted to enter the temple for Jewish religious ceremonies.
- anything or anyone she touched became unclean as well.

The fact that she was in the crowd pressing around Jesus means, that each person who bumped into her would have become unclean, including Jesus. But, after twelve years of suffering, she was obviously desperate for a miracle.

“When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed’” (Mark 5:27–28).

As soon as the woman touches Jesus, her bleeding stops and she knows she’s been healed. In an instant, Jesus does what no doctor in twelve years had been able to. And contrary to all the teaching of Leviticus, through Jesus, the penalties of the Law are reversed, and the contaminated woman did not make Jesus unclean—He made her clean!

Jesus immediately responds to the woman who touched His clothing and was healed. People were pushing and pressing into Him from all over, yet He stops, turns, and asks, “Who touched my clothes?”. The disciples were skeptical, but Jesus knew that healing power had gone out of Him.

After the woman comes forward and explains herself, Jesus clears up any misconceptions about her healing, saying, “Daughter,

your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” God is moved to action by our faith, even when He’s in the middle of doing something else.

Jesus could have healed the woman and kept on walking to His original destination. Only He and the woman would have known what had taken place. But He didn’t do that. Jesus stopped what He was doing and acknowledged the result of this woman’s faith: her complete and instantaneous healing.

Process of Interiorization

Take time off to be quiet. Go through in your mind the women about whom you just read. In each of their lives, there was a miracle. They experienced some healing.

Ask yourself ‘Can I “steal” a miracle from God?’

The women about whom we read above are women who lived with a bold, authentic purpose. They journey into the open, into places, among crowds of people, where they are not supposed to be. They are not concerned about the situation around them but are focused on being close to the target, who in their experience can bring them healing: Jesus.

These women teach us that healing –whether mind soul or body - emerges when a needy person is psychologically healthy enough to recognize illness and becomes determined enough to crawl into the presence of God and touch his feet/the hem of His garment. By going to the bottom, women can get up. They are healed. It is not just the touch of the feet or the hem of the garment that healed them but, “the touch of faith that made the whole” (Luke 8:48).

What do I want to do in my life? What do I want to do with my life?

8. POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK

'Asking the proper questions is the central action of Transformation. Questions are the keys that cause the secret doors of the psyche to swing open' *Clarrisa Pinkola Estes*

If only we could believe and trust that the questions themselves have tremendous worth.

Provocative questions are the best when we are stuck, unable, or unwilling to open. Stimulating questions bring attention and draw us beyond our present responsiveness, awakening us to how we are to grow.

To find the answers deep within, persistence, sincerity, a willingness to be opened, communication with God and others are essential.

Even if we do not find the answers, questions enable us to identify and face unknown and unresolved aspects of our life.in.

1. Who am I?

- in my family
- in my community
- in the society
- in the universe as a whole.

2. How important is it for me to be living at this moment in history?

3. What do I want?

- What is my goal?
- What's holding me back from getting it?
- How am I holding back?
- What is currently preventing me from reaching this goal?

4. What is the pressing need of the moment?
 - What is my role in the issue?
 - How have I tried to address it?
5. Is there something within my ability to change the present moment?
 - Have I tried to change?
 - What is preventing me from getting involved?
6. What motivates me in life right now?
 - Why do I get up in the morning?
 - What is the most meaningful action I could take now?
 - What am I grateful for right now?
7. How do I want to change my mind's programming on that topic?
 - What new habits will I put in place to fortify my new mindset?
 - What new skills or support systems will ensure my success?
8. What am I tolerating right now in my personal life?
 - social life?
 - Do I realize that figuring out what I am currently tolerating in my life is often even more motivating?
9. What are the things that are causing pain in my life right now?
10. What am I willing to do in the next 30 days?

Process of Interiorization

Take a question; enter into silence; be aware that you are not alone; bring the question to the Lord; watch your thoughts and feelings. write them down. Thank the Lord for being with you; to keep showing the way; entrust Him your resolve; Feel the peace within; come back to your normal activities carrying the peace and the resolve with you.

9. TO THE TEENAGERS

“Being a teenager is an amazing time and a hard time. It’s when you make your best friends – I have girls who will never leave my heart and I still talk to. You get the best and the worst as a teen. You have the best friendships and the worst heartbreaks.” – Sophia Bush

As we cross over the threshold from our childhood, though our personal journeys differ, the common factor to be open to the challenges ahead remains the same. All of us are required to change, and change can be scary. There can be confusion, insecurity, and lack of energy to be opened to the reality ahead. We indeed have our parents, teachers, elders, friends to guide us. Despite that fact, if ever we feel inadequate there are invisible exemplary guides and we do not have to make our journey alone.

To be opened is nearly impossible if we do not know some people who have gone before us and have left us their imprints as an inspiration for us. They have shown by their lives that it is possible.

Here below we can read and reflect, and make our own choice as to which areas we need to be opened and which path will lead us to reach the deepest desires of our soul.

I. Mary the Mother Of God (Part 1)

I had intentionally omitted to include Mother Mary among the women in the Scriptures as I want to present her as a teenager to the teenagers, ('a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, (Lk 1:27)



I want to highlight some of her outstanding qualities as given in Lk 1:26-51

Mary reflected I presume that Mary was in a mood of quiet reflection at that time when 'God sent an angel' for I believe that it is in silence that one can listen to the deeper, higher voices speaking within and also able to differentiate the voices we hear.

Mary listened in awe, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." And in fear and anxiety to the impossible news, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son'. As she listened she was also aware of the doubt in her heart, as to what would become of her engagement

Mary Questioned "How will this be," not referring to the engagement, but to the fact that she is a virgin, and she does not know man.

Mary made herself available to accept God's invitation to the possibility of losing her betrothed to a situation of facing disgrace as an unwed mother. to see her son being rejected, crucified and killed. (She knew the old testament prophesies)

Mary responded "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled (Lk 1:38).

Mary sprang into action Having learned from the angel that her cousin Elizabeth in her old age is pregnant 'she arose and went in haste' to assist her. (Lk 1 39)

Mary acted spontaneously and was quick to be with Elizabeth. On reaching the place she greeted Elizabeth.

Elizabeth in turn greets her as blessed and calls her 'Mother of God. Mary accepts in humility and proclaims the mighty deeds of the Lord

Process of Interiorization

Go to a quiet place with Mary; Look at Mary; feel her struggles; feel her questions within her; reflect on her trust; her courage to leave behind the life she had known; to open up to God and circumstances in a new way; to accept a new path; Thank Mary for her trust and ask her to accompany you; share with her what you are struggling with at his moment; listen to her; Feel the peace and acceptance that comes within you; convince yourself to be more opened and receptive; what are you going to do: how are you going to spring up? Imagine how you would greet your friend with the newfound peace and acceptance in your life.

Come back to your place of responsibility with new vigour and energy to be opened.

II. Miriam, the sister of Moses

Miriam was the eldest daughter of Amram and Jochebed, and sister of Aaron and Moses. She would have been only about 5 years old when Moses was born.

Unfortunately at that time, there was a decree that all Hebrew baby boys be killed. Her mother hid him for three months, but when she could no longer do so, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it to make it waterproof. Then she placed Moses in it and hid it along the bank of the Nile river and instructed Miriam to watch him.



When the Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe, she noticed the basket and when she saw the baby, she fell in love with him and decided to keep the baby as her own. At that moment, Miriam was brave and quick to step forward to offer to find a woman to nurse the baby for the princess and brought her own mother to care for him.

This particular incident, shows two important characteristics about her:

- that Miriam as a child was already caring, competent, and certainly brave. Otherwise, how could a child speak so eloquently and convincingly to a princess
- She must have an obedient and responsible child to stay by her brother as instructed by her mother.

After this incident, we do not hear from her for quite some time. As Moses grew into adulthood, we know that he had killed an Egyptian, and then had fled into a desert.

When at God's command when Moses returned to Egypt, and together with Aaron, delivered God's commands to Pharaoh, and performed great miracles I am sure Miriam was somewhere around.

And when the Israelites were allowed to leave Egypt, Miriam was there with them, crossing the Red sea and then looking behind them seeing the chariots of the Pharaoh and all his armies chasing after them. She witnessed the miracle when God opened a path through the sea, allowing the children of Israel to walk across on dry land.

Exodus 15 records the first song in the Bible, a song of praise from a redeemed people, sung by Moses. *'Then Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam sang 'Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.'* Exodus 15: 20&21

Miriam was a leader among the Hebrew women, and she was

gifted musically. She took the place of leadership that the LORD gave her, and used it to direct the woman to praise the Lord. She was a godly influence in their lives.

She was a gift from God, and that is why she was so influential, however, at some point about two years into their journey, things begin to change in Miriam's heart. The protective sister, the prophetess, the woman's worship leader, the woman who supported Moses, became his rival and critic.

Moses had the final word on everything, and Aaron was the high priest. She was a prophetess. However, the people of Israel were not being governed by a committee of three. Miriam wanted more power, more authority, and began to speak even against Moses

She was actually being driven by pride, jealousy, and envy at this point and even began to criticize Moses' wife, and then question that he was not the only one God spoke to.

The Lord finally disciplined Miriam with leprosy for a week. Perhaps this brought her great shame and humiliation, even long after the week had passed. She lived thirty-eight more years under Moses' authority, and never questioned it again. In the first month of the fortieth year of their travels, and she died, never having entered into the Promised Land.

Process of Interiorization

Pause a while. Look at Miriam as a five-year-old girl, standing among the reeds close to the river and watching her baby brother in a basket. Get in touch with her feelings as she sees some ladies bathing in the river and coming towards the basket. It may have been fear and anxiety for the safety of her brother....

Imagine the way she speaks to Pharaoh's daughter?

Remain in silence and listen to Miriam? What does she tell you?

III. Anne Frank - German Jewish teenager,

World War II Holocaust victim.

Author of 'The Diary of Anne Frank.'



Anne was born on June 12, 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany to German-Jewish parents. When she was 4 years old the family moved to the Netherlands, after Adolf Hitler came to power there in 1933 and made life difficult for Jews.

In 1942, Frank and her family went into hiding in a secret apartment behind her father's business in German-occupied Amsterdam. Life was tense, as they lived in constant fear of being discovered by the people working in the warehouse below. Anne passed the time, in part, by writing her observations and feelings in a diary she had received for her 13th birthday, a month before her family went into hiding

In 1944, the family was found and sent to concentration camps, where Frank died of typhus in February 1945 at the age of 15. Her father Otto Frank was the only member of his immediate family to survive the concentration camp.

Anne Frank wrote about life in hiding, her feelings of loneliness, and her frustration over the lack of privacy. She not only detailed typical teenage issues but also displayed keen insight and maturity when she wrote about the war, humanity, and her own identity.

Anne Frank's diary was first published in 1947, and has been translated into almost 70 languages, and is one of the most widely read accounts of the Holocaust.

Frank Quotes

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

"I know what I want, I have a goal, an opinion, I have a religion and love. Let me be myself and then I am satisfied. I know that I'm a woman, a woman with inward strength, and plenty of courage."

"Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!"

Process of Interiorization

Take a few moments and choose a quiet place. Sit comfortably and become aware of breathing. When you can become conscious of how you breathe in and breathe out, picture Anne sitting in a corner, with a diary and pen. What is she writing? Can you also tell yourself 'I know what I want, I have a goal,

Ask yourself 'Do I have a goal?' In your mind formulate your goal, picture yourself doing everything to attain that goal.

There is a tendency that we can forget about this. Take a notebook and write down your goal in life and what you learnt from Anne.

Tell the Lord what your goal is and ask him to be with you and guide you.

IV. MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Since three years of my life was spent in Karachi, Pakistan engaged with young women pursuing their nursing education and training, I wish to cite the example of the youngest-ever Nobel laureate Malala. She received the Nobel prize at the age of 17.



Malala was born in Mingora, Pakistan on July 12, 1997. Her father was an educationist interested in girls' education and had a few girls' schools in the area. Malala was interested in studying, but everything changed when the Taliban took control of her area - Swat Valley and among many things banned education for all and in particular for girls.

When she was 15 years old she spoke out publicly on behalf of girls and their right to learn. And this made her a target. She was shot on the left side of the head by a masked man who boarded the bus she was traveling. She fell unconscious and 10 days later when she woke up she found her in a hospital in Birmingham, England, and learned from the doctors and nurses about the attack — and that people around the world were praying for my recovery.

After months of surgeries and rehabilitation, she had a choice. Either she could live a quiet life or she could make the most of this new life in a free country to continue her fight until every girl could go to school.

With her father, she established the Malala Fund, a charity dedicated to allowing every girl to achieve the future she chooses. In recognition of her work, she received the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2014 and became the youngest-ever Nobel laureate

In 2018 she began studying Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at the

University of Oxford, and this year amid the global Corona Pandemic 2020 she graduated from Oxford University.

So this is a young woman of our age and time. According to her today 130 million girls are out of school, and she hopes, together, we can create a world where all girls can learn and lead.

Process of Interiorization

Dear teenagers and young women of today, after having read these accounts of teenagers let's pause for a while.

What has these teenager done, while living among people who do not see the world and its need as they saw it?

Are there any realities around us that we do not accept, that seem harmful to society, the environment, or even to ourselves personally?

Do we want to make a difference because we will pass through this world, this age, only once?

Do we believe that together we can make a difference? We can impact society

10. BE THANKFUL

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire,
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something.
For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times.
During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations.
Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge
Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes.
They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary.
Because it means you've made a difference

GRATITUDE can turn a negative into a positive.

11. TO EVERY ACTIVE WOMAN

Joyce Rupp in her book 'Open the door' (pg 56) writes, 'I believe when the truth comes, - 'with love and grace' - we can find the courage to let it transform us. Here is a poem that rose from my depths at a time when love and grace were present to me.

*Truth, Go ahead look at me, through me,
for you see what I hide from myself and the rest of the
world.*

*Go ahead, and take those clear eyes and pierce the
falseness with your reality.*

*Draw open the thick door of my pretensions. my less
than perfect self.*

*My heart shivers under your penetrating gaze, only
because your wisdom is strongest*

*than my dread, do I accept (hesitantly) what you bring
me to my freshly open door. ,*

In the following pages, I present four women who have influenced my life in a particular way and I am very thankful for them for their life and example

1. Maria Anna Heimgartner - The foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross of which I am a member

2. Elizabeth of Hungary – Queen, Social Worker, A member of the third order of St Francis and the patron saint of our order.

3. Florence Nightingale – Nurse Educator and social reformer, my model and mentor

4. Helen Keller - the differently-abled woman who taught me that every obstacle can be a stepping stone to reach the goal

These women have experienced the truth entering them with love and grace and they could not, but become agents of transformation.

Maria Anna Heimgartner

26th Nov 1822 – 13th Dec 1863

Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Cross (Menzingen)



Maria Anna was born in Fislisbach, a rural community in Canton Aargau (Switzerland). She grew up in a poor but deeply religious family. She did her schooling in the village.

When Maria Anna was 14 her father died and to help the family, she worked for two years as a children's nurse. Feeling the call to religious life, and helped by Fr. Theodosius Florentini OFMcap she began studies with the Capuchinesses in Baden, then in 1841, because of the political upheaval in her own country together with two other girls began three years of study with the Ursulines in Freiburg, Germany. To achieve their aim already at an early age they had to leave their home country for political reasons. They could only undertake their training outside Switzerland.

The three of them got the privilege to be trained as teachers. Fr. Theodosius Florentini, who dreamed of reform in the field of education wanted to form "able Teaching sisters". The three made their religious profession on 16th Oct 1844, and on the next day established themselves in Menzingen. Maria Anna, now known as Sr Bernarda was appointed superior at the age of 22. of the newly founded congregation. Their first school was founded in the same year, and by the time of her death in 1863 she had opened 59 schools and some boarding for girls.

Mother Bernarda was an exceptional 19th-century woman in Switzerland - A woman who lived from a deep faith in God and gave life in abundance. She had the vision to improve the position of women through holistic education. She was not afraid to take the risk to achieve the goal. She dared to start a new form of religious life in central Switzerland and to live in small communities among the people. "God

is always close to us, even if we don't feel it," she said and trusted.

Mother Bernard's central concern was an education for all rural girls, amidst situations where it was not possible. She believed that education will empower women and they can become self-assertive. As a woman, she did not shy away from the risk to reach her goal. She was a woman with a clear vision and total commitment. This guiding vision she treasured till the end of her days.

"The greatness of her soul shows itself more clearly in her life than in her words". Lukas Businger wrote in his diary about Mother Bernarda, 24 June 1863:

This lived Spirituality also becomes evident from Mother Bernarda's letters. They reveal a woman who can deal with concrete realities of life and can make decisions in the light of deep faith, e.g. Mother Bernarda resists to accept private teaching posts with rich and influential people. We especially meet this strong and courageous young woman in situations of crisis and opposition. She does not allow herself to be intimidated by her opponents. She does not allow the essentials of religious life to be watered down. Mother Bernarda is a woman with a clear-headed sense of duty, and the ability to put up with injustice. She is always able to forgive.

Her greatness lay in her steadfastness. Neither external opposition nor inner hurts could make her deviate from the good she recognized in the task undertaken. The adherence to this clarity in her direction caused her great suffering. "She chose the Cross, she bore the Cross she was victorious in the Cross."

Process of interiorization

Having read the above page, take a break, be quiet observing your breathing, and then read the following quotes from Mother Bernarda

"Even if we have no property, no sources of support let us rely even more trustfully on God who up to now showed himself so kind and loving towards us".

“For all this, we did not allow ourselves to be discouraged but placed all our trust in God”.

“Just as in worldly business there is so much courage and daring enterprise we should allow God’s Providence to overcome all our discouragement and fears in the spiritual spheres.”

Dwell on these words, and let these words permeate your whole being. Trust in God, in His Divine Providence, and trust in yourself whom God has called as a woman today

St. Elizabeth of Hungary

7 July 1207 – 17 November 1231

Queen, Member of SFO, Social Worker



Elizabeth was the daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary. At the age of four, she was betrothed to Louis IV, with the hope that a future union would reinforce political alliances between the families. In 1221, at the age of fourteen, Elizabeth married.

In 1223, Franciscan friars arrived, and the teenage Elizabeth not only learned about the ideals of Francis of Assisi but started to live them. The Third Order was such a new development in the Franciscan movement, that no official ritual had been established at that point. Elizabeth had a ceremony of consecration in which she adopted a Franciscan religious habit in her new way of life. In the spring of 1226, when floods, famine, and plague wrought havoc in Thuringia Elizabeth assumed control of affairs at home and distributed alms in all parts of their territory, even giving away state robes and ornaments to the poor. Louis was not upset by his wife’s charitable efforts, believing that the distribution of his wealth to the poor would bring eternal reward; She built a hospital with twenty-eight beds and visited the inmates daily to attend to them.

Elizabeth is perhaps best known for her miracle of the roses

which says that whilst she was taking bread to the poor in secret, she met her husband returning from on a hunting party, who, to quell suspicions of the gentry, that she was stealing treasure from the castle, asked her to reveal what was hidden under her cloak. At that moment, her cloak fell open and a vision of white and red roses could be seen, which proved to Ludwig that God's protecting hand was at work.

Her life changed irrevocably on 11 September 1227 when Louis died, just a few weeks before the birth of her third child - daughter Gertrude. After Louis' death, his brother, Henry took over the affairs as Elizabeth's eldest child, who was only 5 years old.

Following her husband's death, Elizabeth made solemn vows including celibacy. Her pledge to celibacy proved a hindrance to her family's political ambitions. Elizabeth was more or less held hostage, to force her to remarry. She, however, held fast to her vow, even threatening to cut off her nose so that no man would find her attractive enough to marry.

In 1228, Elizabeth joined the Secular Franciscan Order, spending the remaining few years of her life caring for the poor in a hospital which she founded in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi. Elizabeth's health declined, and she died before her 24th birthday in 1231.

At her canonization, she was declared the patron saint of the Third Order of St Francis.

Process of Interiorization

You have just read that in her short life, Elizabeth manifested such great love for the poor and suffering. Not only that she, though a queen, chose a life of penance and asceticism when a life of leisure and luxury could easily have been hers. Seeking to become one with the poor, she wore simple clothing. This choice endeared her in the hearts of the common people throughout Europe.

Look back at your life. What choices have you made?

Florence Nightingale

12th May 1820 – 13th Aug 1910

Nurse, Statistician, and Social Reformer

Live your life while you have it. Life is a splendid gift. There is nothing small in it. For the greatest things grow by God's Law out of the smallest. But to live your life you must discipline it. You must not fritter it away in "fair purpose, erring act, inconstant will" but make your thoughts, your acts, all work to the same end and that end, not self but God. That is what we call character'



Florence Nightingale

Though Florence Nightingale's parents were from England she was born in Florence, Italy, and was named after the city of her birth. She lived in central London.

Florence was a very intelligent and talented child and her father took particular interest in her education, guiding her through history, philosophy, and literature. She excelled in mathematics and languages at an early age. Never satisfied with the traditional female skills of home management, she preferred to read the great philosophers and to engage in serious political and social discourse with her father.

At the age of 16, convinced in her religious belief, she felt that God wants her to reduce human suffering. Nursing seemed the suitable route to serve both God and people. However, her attempts to seek nurse's training were thwarted by her family as an inappropriate activity for a woman of her stature.

Despite family reservations, Nightingale was able to enroll herself for two weeks of training in July 1850 and again for three months in July 1851. During her training, she learned basic nursing skills, the importance of patient observation, and the value of good hospital organization.

In 1853 Nightingale broke away from the family and became the Superintendent of the Institution for Sick Gentlewomen in Distressed Circumstances, in London, where she successfully displayed her skills as an administrator by improving nursing care, working conditions, and efficiency of the hospital.

After one year she realized that her services would be more valuable if she can train nurses and impart her knowledge and skills to them. However, politics, not nursing expertise, was to shape her next move.

October 1853 the Turkish Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia. The British and the French, allies of Turkey, sought to curb Russian expansion. The majority of the Crimean War was fought on the Crimean Peninsula in Russia. The care of the wounded was very ineffective, and the British public demanded that the situation be drastically improved.

At the request of Sidney Herbert, secretary of state at war for the British government, as well as at her request, Nightingale led an officially sanctioned party of 38 women, to Scutari. Nightingale found conditions at the Barrack Hospital filthy, supplies inadequate, staff uncooperative, with severe overcrowding

To care for the soldiers properly, Nightingale established standards of care, requiring such necessities as bathing, clean clothing and dressings, and adequate food. Attention was given to psychological needs and by providing educational and recreational activities. She spent many hours in the wards, and her night rounds giving personal care to the wounded established her image as the “Lady with the Lamp.”

Her efforts to formalize nursing education led her to establish the first

scientifically based nursing school—the Nightingale School of Nursing, at St. Thomas' Hospital in London (opened 1860). She also was instrumental in setting up training for midwives and nurses in workhouse infirmaries. International Nurses Day, observed annually on May 12, commemorates her birth and celebrates the important role of nurses in health care.

Process of Interiorization

Light a lamp and place it in your quiet corner. Sit there; relax observe your breathing. Go back into the recent past of your life. Think of the people who had some positive influence on you. Are there any significant people who helped you to be aware of your talents and potentials? Who were by your side supporting you, assured you that you can do it. Think about how they have helped you to be opened. Bring each one to your mind and thank them. As you finish take the lamp in your hand and say

'Lord thank you for the people you sent on my path who helped me become who I am today, opened to myself, opened to others and opened to you'

Helen Keller (1880-1968)

Champion of differently-abled,

Educator, Author

You're just yourself. Live with it. Here I am. I'm just me and all I can do is be me. That's the only thing I can do, and I can do it better than anybody else. If I don't do it, nobody will do it. So often we spend our lives trying to be other people. Yet God says, "I made you, and I like the 'you' I've made, so just do your best and be yourself, and I'll be there to help you." It's not something we have to do alone, but something we grow into. Duns Scotus



When Helen was only 19 months old, she experienced a severe childhood illness, which left her deaf and blind. For the first few years of her life, she was only able to communicate with her family through a rudimentary number of signs; and was considered to have badly behaved.

In 1886, through an eye, ear, nose specialist in Baltimore, Helen was put in touch with Alexander Graham Bell, (developer of the first telephone) who was then investigating issues of deafness and sound. Bell was moved by the experience of working with Keller, writing that: "I feel that in this child I have seen more of the Divine than has been manifest in anyone I ever met before."

Alexander Bell helped Keller to visit the Perkins Institute for the Blind, and this led to a long relationship with Anne Sullivan – who herself was visually impaired. At the age of 20, with no prior experience, she set about teaching Helen how to communicate. The two maintained a long relationship of 49 years.

In the beginning, Keller was frustrated by her inability to pick up the hand signals that Sullivan was giving. However, after a frustrating month, Keller picked up on Sullivan's system of hand signals through understanding the word water. Sullivan poured water over Keller's left hand and wrote out on her right hand the word 'water'. This helped Helen to fully understand the system, and she was soon able to identify a variety of household objects.

"The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old."

Keller made rapid progress and became proficient in Braille and was able to begin a fruitful education, despite her disability. Keller made more progress than anyone expected. She would later learn to write with a Braille typewriter and she became the first deaf-blind

person to attain a bachelor's degree and became an influential campaigner for social, political, and disability issues. Her public profile helped de-stigmatize blindness and deafness, and she was seen as a powerful example of someone overcoming difficult circumstances.

During her education, she also learned to speak and practise lip-reading. Her sense of touch became extremely subtle. She also found that deafness and blindness encouraged her to develop wisdom and understanding from beyond the senses.

“We differ, blind and seeing, one from another, not in our senses, but in the use, we make of them, in the imagination and courage with which we seek wisdom beyond the senses.”

“Once I knew the depth where no hope was, and darkness lay on the face of all things. Then love came and set my soul free. Once I knew only darkness and stillness. Now I know hope and joy.”

Keller became a proficient writer and speaker. In 1903, she published an autobiography ‘The Story of My Life’. It recounted her struggles to overcome her disabilities and the way it forced her to look at life from a different perspective.

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.”

Keller also wrote on political issues. She wished to see a fairer distribution of income, and an end to the inequality of Capitalist society. Her book ‘Out of the Dark’ (1913) includes several essays on socialism.

From 1918, she devoted much of her time to raising funds and awareness for blind charities. She sought to raise money and also improve the living conditions of the blind, who at the time were often badly educated and living in asylums. She was also noted for her optimism which she sought to cultivate.

“If I am happy despite my deprivations if my happiness is so

deep that it is a faith, so thoughtful that it becomes a philosophy of life, — if, in short, I am an optimist, my testimony to the creed of optimism is worth hearing.” - Helen

Process on Interiorization

Did you notice that in reading about Helen Keller, you also have come to know another woman Anne Sullivan, a visually handicapped person? A differently-abled person helps another with a similar or even worse situation. What does this tell you, about yourself?. At times, how we struggle to hide our inability, ashamed of our disability.

When we are free to reach out to another, through our sense of freedom we give glory to God, we say thank you to God.

Coming to think about it, when we accept ourselves as we are, don't we feel some satisfaction in us. When we stop looking at others and see something that we do not have and yearn to be like them, we are on the right road for growth and maturity.

In the silence of your heart, feel your strengths, abilities, talents, and with awe accept them.

12. HOW DO I KINDLE THE FIRE OF INNER POWER

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is, that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Who are you not to be? Our playing small does not serve the world...and as we let our light shine, we unconsciously permit others to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Marianne Williamson in 'A Return to Love'.

We are very much aware of the power that dwells in authority, politics, money, fame, job, in titles, etc., which is an external power, which neither makes a person better nor bring lasting happiness to the person or rarely does anything to change the world for the better.

But then, what is inner power? It is the power of a strong character, having an honest tongue, a creative mind, a wide open heart, a spirit that lives for a cause and all these anchored in a strong faith in the one who dwells and moves our every action.

This inner power is accessible to all if we want it and we can fuel it, refine it, polish it and radiate it. Just imagine who gave authority to Mother Teresa, Catharine of Hungary, Anne Frank and thousands of women to be who they were. It was their inner conviction, listening to a power higher than themselves and being opened. And their inner power moved millions around them.

So inner power is truly available to each person living in this world today. This is the only true power that gives lasting happiness, profound fulfillment, boundless energy and a world free of destructive elements.

The following points may help us develop our own inner power

1: Thinking. My thinking creates my world. As a woman I am not a victim and within me at this very moment lies a kingdom of pure power

2: Intention. My dominant thinking will generate new intentions. The clearer my intentions, the more my desire and my motivation will fuel me to be who I am called to be.

3: Choice. My intention will give rise to my choices. When I choose something with the attitude of owning my inner power there is no fear in me.

4: Responsibility. I need to take absolute personal responsibility (APR) When I am aware of my inner power and make better choices, I will begin to assume better responsibility over my life. And this will be the step to leave the past behind and experience a resurrection.

5: Action. No matter where I live or what I do when I take personal responsibility, whatever I put my hand to do I, I perform better. I also discover that I have new energy, I am brave and resourceful, and I experience a new found peace.

6: Influence. I do hope my inner power becomes contagious and in turn affect others. Their belief in their own gifts, talents and potential will grow.

Process of Interiorization

Take a note book and pen and retire to a quiet place.

Look at yourself, your strengths; what am I good at? spend some time reviewing the past where you have shown some wisdom, some energy, some resilience.....Jot down what come uppermost. With the paper in hand, visualize yourself as a person full of energy, born out of your trust in the Lord and your convictions, affirm yourself, all what you see positive in you.

Resolve to use your strengths and energies for the betterment of your own life and to spend your life for others around you.

Thank the Lord for this time and space He has given you.

13. MARY MOTHER OF GOD

Here we look at Mary as the Mother of God and naturally refers to her from the time she gave birth to her Son.

Out of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, only two have recorded words spoken by Mary. And there are only a few occasions her presence is mentioned. The occasions which report about Mary in the Bible, together with these words allow us to catch a glimpse of who she is: the only human person who accompanied Our Lord from crib to cross and who through her presence in the embryonic church continued to give witness of Him after His ascension.

So in this chapter, we will consider Mary's words as well as her presence separately

Mary's Presence

1. At Jesus's Birth: She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.
Lk 2:7:7
2. At the presentation in the temple: Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ... Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your soul too." But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
Lk 2:22-38
3. Outside the place where Jesus was preaching Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. (Mary is presented here as a model of one who believes and follows Jesus as His mother and disciple.)
Lk 20:27-40
4. meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary
5. Standing beneath the Cross at Calvary Near the cross of Jesus

stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. *Jn 19:26-27*

6. Holding the dead body of Jesus
7. At John's house
8. In the upper room: They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. at the ascension *Acts 1:14*

Mary's Words

1. In the temple of Jerusalem *Luke 2:41-52*

When the boy Jesus, at the age of twelve, remained and was found in the Temple. His mother's words expressed distress and grief:

"Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." *(Lk 2:48)*

2. At the wedding feast of Cana *John 2:1-11*

Mary's involvement, in Jesus' first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Here Mary speaks twice. Turning to her Son she said:

"They have no wine." *(Jn 2:3)*

Trusting that Jesus would prevent the embarrassment of those newly-wed from happening, she told the servants:

"Do whatever he tells you." *(Jn 2:5)*

The tradition as well as all the icons and pictures show Mary as quiet and submissive. But as a Jewish peasant woman, it is unlikely that she was either of these things. Her actions and words at the wedding give us an example of Mary's assertiveness as she indirectly insists that Jesus help in a difficult situation.

Process of Interiorization

Take a few minutes to be quiet and silent. Look at Mother Mary. You will have so many icons and images that come to your mind when you think of Mary. Choose the one that appeals to you. sit by her side, and talk to her about one of the incidence of her life with Jesus.

eg. Ask her how she felt when Jesus, just 12 years old was staying behind in the temple, and she searching for him. And then, to find him with the teachers and elders in the temple? Listen to her and then share your anxieties about your near and dear ones. Entrust your worries and thank her for listening and supporting you.

14. BE OPENED TO THE POSSIBILITIES AROUND

A. To the life and mission of the Church

'The presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the Church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable'. by

Pope John Paul II

As the Declaration Inter Insigniores points out, 'The Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission: today their role is of capital importance both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church' " (No. 10).

Women have been increasingly called to play important roles in the Catholic Church;

Cynthia Stewart asserts that, although the hierarchy of the Church is entirely male as a result of the restriction against the ordination of women, the vast majority of Catholics that participate in lay ministry are women. According to her approximately 85 percent of all Church roles that do not require ordination are performed by women and identifies several reasons for the increased role that lay women play in the Catholic Church:

1. a shift in cultural attitudes leading to greater acceptance of women in leadership roles
2. an increase in outreach ministries targeted at groups with whom women have traditionally worked (e.g. elderly and children)
3. a greater willingness on the part of women to accept lower salaries than those offered by the secular world.

Pope Francis wants greater participation of women in the Church, saying they were the first witnesses of Christ and have a special role in spreading the faith. ' In the Church, and in the journey of faith, women

have had and still have a special role in opening doors to the Lord,”

“The role of women in the church must not be limited to being mothers, workers, a limited role... No! It is something else,” He struggled to express his thought. “All we say is: they can do this, they can do that, now they are altar servers, now they do the readings, they are in charge of *Caritas*. But there is more! profoundly more, even mystically more....” and e ended with this statement: “Women, in the Church, are more important than bishops and priests; *how* this is something we have to try to explain better because I believe that we lack a theological explanation of this.”

Process of Interiorization

*Retire to a quiet place; put away all other thoughts and relax
Imagine your parish Church or any other place where you go and join
others in prayer.*

*Having read how Pope Francis, was struggling to express his
thoughts on women, how they could contribute more to the Church, I
want to reflect with you, on what way can we become more participatory
in the life of the church. As Pope says are we satisfied with reading
during Mass and being altar servers, choir members, being part of
the small Christian groups in our locality, or is there something more.*

*What are the needs around us? Look at all the members of a
group you belong to whether the choir, prayer group. Do you know the
members, their needs? have I been able to reflect God's love to them?
Have I been able to see something of God in them?*

*Ask yourself seriously in what way can I contribute to the
mission of the church? What talent or capacity can I use in the service
of the Church?*

Jot down in your notebook whatever comes uppermost in your mind.

*Close your time of prayer asking the Lord for the stamina you
need to carry out your resolve.*

b. To The Seasons Of Life And Nature

‘If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. If we did not taste adversity then prosperity would not be so welcome’. – Anne Bradstreet

Life is all about change, we are constantly changing, and our circumstances are simply a reflection of the natural evolutionary steps. Change happens as a result of the choices and decisions that we make daily.

The seasons of life are there to teach us lessons about ourselves, others, and life. They are there to help us grow emotionally, physically, and socially. And they are there to enliven our spirit and to strengthen our emotional resilience in the face of adversity and opportunity.

When we look at the natural environment in which we live, we see a very beautiful world cycling through patterns, phases, and stages of transition. Nothing ever stands still; nothing ever maintains its current state, identity, or shape for very long.

Transformation is a natural part of life and an important component of human evolution. It is something that is unavoidable, inevitable, and yet very manageable. Our circumstances, needs, desires, and behaviors must therefore naturally change and evolve alongside these cycles of life, or we risk undermining our personal levels of happiness and fulfillment.

The seasons of life transition naturally from one phase to another as a result of the thoughts, values, and beliefs we have consistently cultivated in our minds.

The joy you experience during your sunny days will not last forever. There will inevitably be a moment when your thoughts, decisions, and actions will naturally move you into another phase of

life, which may lead to arid and dusty days or stormy rainy days of pain and anguish. However, all these days are temporary, and will eventually pass.

The length of time it takes us to progress through each season is simply a reflection of our state-of-mind — a reflection of our ability to adapt to the conditions and circumstances we find ourselves in. If we adapt successfully we will move through difficult and unpleasant phases quickly. When we succeed we celebrate. When we fail we complain and blame, But eventually, we begin to contemplate who we are, what we want, and how we would like to progress from this moment onwards. These periods of life shape our character and paint the canvas of life we are yet to experience.

Process of Interiorization

Find a quiet place. become aware of your breathing slowing down, Consciously bring to mind one of the difficult experiences you have had; look at the event, watch those emotions as they pass through your mind screen; the hurt, the pain the betrayal. Where you are today? How have you arrived here? Somehow the tide had turned; your life has changed and transformed over time by reflecting upon the emotional highs, and the heartbreaking lows

Earnestly resolve to devote some time

- to experience inner peace and solitude
- to bond with family, friends, and loved ones
- to write down my thoughts and feelings
- to think critically, realistically, and thoughtfully about Life

C. TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS CHANGES

'For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed' Rom 8:19

As women, we need to be aware that in all the household activities we play a key role in dealing with air, water, soil, living creatures, and above all the environment as a whole, and are very sensitive to the various forms of environmental pollutions. These pollutions invite several kinds of diseases like food poisoning, bacterial, fungal, and viral attacks, and several carcinogenic problems.

Apart from that, climate change is a multifaceted problem, having social, economic, and political implications. Threats to the environment have the effect of violating each and every person's right to access food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education with dire consequences.

Global attention to women's role in environmental organizing and campaigning jumped a notch with the awarding of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement.

Despite the overall slow pace of change, some progress has been made in increasing women's participation in decision-making related to the environment. Women have traditionally been the caretakers of the community, as they manage most of the household and agricultural activities.

These issues lead to the following questions:

- "What is the relationship between women and environmental degradation?"
- "Will sustainability be achieved with women managing the environmental activities?"

Actually, large proportions of women are involved in different environmental activities, such as agriculture, solid waste management, sewerage, and management of waste in their living area. They also

need to learn more about environmental issues, such as preserving and protecting nature, sustainable development, etc.

Natural and man-made disasters

Even as I write this, Covid 19 as well as heavy rain and storm are playing havoc on people's lives around us.

Covid-19 is not the first pandemic in human history, nor will it be the last. But we know from the past that pandemics affected women and men differently and here we will see how as women we are more vulnerable to pandemics

Men were often the first to be infected during pandemics such as cholera and tuberculosis because they travelled more, as sailors, tradesmen, and soldiers. And it was obvious that

The women have carried the burden of care of children, spouses, and parents, and taken on the emotional responsibility. This makes up the greatest difference between men and women regarding illnesses and pandemics.

'We have relatively good data on gender differences in how the plague affected people from the 1600s onwards. It seems like women were most affected by the plague'.

When the doctors – who were primarily men – felt that they had lost the battle against the disease, and they felt powerless and disappointed. For the nurses – primarily women - however, it was the other way around. They felt useful during the pandemic when they had cared for and comforted sick and dying patients. Even though there was no cure, nursing, food, and care were still necessary and the nurses had been essential in this work. Actions like isolation of the ill, lockdown, travel restrictions, embargo on trade, quarantines, and use of facemasks were also used to fight the plague in the 16th and 17th centuries,

There are some clear common features between previous pandemics and covid-19, The history and experiences from previous

pandemics give us important information about how to handle today's corona pandemic.

More than 600 nurses worldwide have died from COVID-19 during the pandemic. This should not be a surprise as nurses are the largest group of healthcare workers in the world, dedicated to preventing the spread of coronavirus, and they are also engaged in caring for those who are suffering.

Attitudes and practices related to women are going to have a major impact on how we fare during the coronavirus pandemic, and full recovery seems unlikely until the challenges they face are placed front and center.

The coronavirus pandemic is exposing the weakness of outdated social norms and poor policy choices that have, placed painful burdens on women — ranging from unworkable family roles and a meager social safety net to insufficient labor protections and intrusions on autonomy.

It is time to recognize that female status and empowerment are critical to the country's resilience.

Process of Interiorization

Go into your quiet place. Seek quietness within. Observe how your breathing is getting slower. In this relaxed state bring to mind one of the natural catastrophes you have faced in your life. Storm, floods, Covid 19.

Go through in your mind the sequence of events as they gathered momentum. Experience the feeling that was uppermost in your mind at that time. Did you turn somewhere for help? Were there others who shared your anxiety, fear, restlessness?

What happened after the event? 'Though you walk through the dark valley, fear no evil, for I am with you' Repeat these words over and over. Thank God for having brought you out of any situation. Assure yourself that with God you can face any and every disaster in your life.

D. To your Roles, Occupations, and Professions

Women's place in the global city has come about primarily because of the reproductive role of women, which is seen as more than just reproducing children, but also the reproduction of the culture, styles of dress, behaviors, relations between adults and children, family, cooking styles, domestic labor roles, play, etc.

Sociologists recognize that women have roles in the family and roles in public life, and they find that "the relative status of women in family life is more difficult to measure than their status in public affairs." The roles of women have expanded with more women in the workplace and with a variety of family structures with new roles for all.

You are very much aware that as a woman, you are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family, as you assume many roles as, wife, partner, mother, organizer, teacher, administrator, director, re-creator, economist, disciplinarian, teacher, health officer, artist and queen in the family at the same time. Here are some of your routines.

As a wife, a woman is a man's helpmate, partner, and companion, sacrificing her personal pleasure and ambitions, and setting up a higher standard, maintaining peace and order in the household. In fact, a woman is the source of inspiration to a man, standing by him in all the crises as well as sharing in all successes and attainments.

She maintains a well-ordered disciplined household. and plays a key role in the preparation and serving of meals, selection, and care of clothing, laundering, furnishing and maintenance of the house, organizing various social functions in the family

She also contributes to the family income through her own earning within or outside the home.

As a Mother: the whole burden of childbearing and the greater part of the child-rearing task is carried out by the woman in the family.

As the first teacher of the child, and because of her intimate and sustained contact with the child, she can discover and nurture the child's

special traits aptitudes, and attitudes which subsequently play a key role in the shaping of his personality.

As a health care person, she ensures that all the family members have proper food, adequate sleep, and sufficient recreation.

As an enricher of the society Education and modern economic life has made many women venture out beyond the family sphere, and work for the enrichment of society. They form or join any women's organization, community centre, or club and they launch literacy programs or disseminate knowledge about handicraft, food preservation, etc, thus. help in raising the quality of life.

As a member of a religious group, they have a pivotal role to play in society. The family, especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition, became the central focus of societal development, and the notion that the social function of women is the preservation of the family rather than an individualistic notion.

Beyond domestic service: Outside the home, many jobs employ women. Secretaries, nurses, and teachers top of the list. Together, these three occupations provide jobs for around 12 percent of all working women.

Process of interiorization

Take some time out of the busy schedule to be with yourself. Look at what you have been doing for the last two or three hours. Were you involved in your primary duty or having time off for your secondary involvement?

Examine the uppermost feeling that fills you. name it, stay with it. How does it feel? are you comfortable doing what you were doing? Would you have like to switch roles? Spend time with your thoughts?

There are things in our life that cannot be changed and there things in our life that can be changed. Ask the Lord to give you the wisdom to know the difference.

15. WHAT IS IT THAT STOPS US FROM LIVING TO THE FULL

“Fear not that your life shall come to an end; rather fear that it will never have a beginning”.

Cardinal Newman

The most persistent and restless desire of my life is to be fully human and fully alive as a woman. On the other side of the coin, my deepest and most haunting fear is the possibility of wasting my God-given talents and potentials, the glorious opportunity of life. My one prayer is ‘O God, my Father don’t let me die without having really lived and loved’.

As a Holy Cross Sister, the feast of the exultation of the Cross is a standpoint to live my life to the full. Jesus though He is divine, lived His life to the full as a human being by submitting Himself to the will of His Father. Jesus accepted the cross not because it was imposed on Him but it was the divine plan and that was the way He could bring glory to His Father. Hence, not only Jesus brought redemption to all but in return, He himself has been glorified by His Father.

What happens to our human potential? Why don’t we live more fully? Why don’t we savor every moment of this great opportunity called life? According to many psychologists, the reason we do not live up to our potential and enjoy our human life to the fullest is because of our attitudes and vision of reality. Each one of us has a vision of reality that controls everything else about our life. The vision is the way we look at reality. It is the way we look at ourselves, at other people, at life, at the world around us, and God. Namely our life is controlled by the way each of us looks at reality.

I personally believe that 99% of our suffering grows out of wrong or distorted way of looking at reality- a wrong way of looking at myself and other people, a wrong way of looking at life, a wrong way of looking at the world, a wrong way of looking at God. These distortions cause most of our suffering.

All happiness and health begin with the way we look at things. Happiness isn't guaranteed by circumstances or possessions rather happiness is guaranteed only by your possession of the truth, by seeing things as they really are. If our attitudes are healthy and realistic, then our lives will be that much more full happy, and alive. On the other hand, if our attitudes, our vision of reality, are crippling, distorted, and unhealthy, then these attitudes will harm our lives.

No doubt happiness requires struggle. This is the basis of the spirituality of our congregation. "In the Cross is Salvation". The positive is the side effect of handling the negative. At the core of all human behavior, our needs are more or less similar. A positive experience is easy to handle. It is with a negative experience that we all struggle with. Who we are is defined by the values we are willing to struggle for.

Here's the truth. We exist on this earth for some undetermined period. During that time we do things. Some of these things are important. Some of them are unimportant. And those important things give our lives meaning and happiness. The unimportant ones basically just kill time. So when people say, "What should I do with my life?" or "What is my life purpose?" what we're actually asking is: "What can I do with my time that is important?"

Sometimes, the things that make us grow personally cannot be found in books nor are they taught in schools. What makes us strong, makes us better women, are the experiences that we encounter in life; Whether they are made up of happy thoughts or bad and horrible incidents, still they teach us valuable things in life.

There is a saying that "being wise is better than being knowledgeable". Wisdom is acquired through reflection of one's experience as well as of the environment. The more we reflect the more we become aware of ourselves. We become mindful of our existence as well as the meaning of life and all the things that surround us. So let our strife to be reflective women, not reactive ones. Happiness is ours which is in our hands alone not in any other objectives.

Process of Interiorization

Get into a quiet place and a quiet mood. Go back in memory lane; spot certain times of your life you consider wasted, you had no purpose; that your talents, time, and energy brought no expected results.

In the same vein look at the joyful moments of achieving your heart's desire; being recognized for your special talents and abilities. Stay with the feeling for some time.

Failures and success. How have they made their impression on me? What is the mark left on me?

What do I want to do in the coming months that will be a contribution to my family, society, and the world?

16. TO YOU ELDERS

'I, who am an elder myself, appeal to the elders among you. I am a witness.....' 1Pet 5:1

Pope to youth: 'The secret to happiness is in the life of your grandparents'

AGEING is a GIFT

'Although youth may be a gift of nature, age is indeed a work of art. It cannot be achieved. We have not earned it. It is a gift' in 'Noon to nightfall: A journey through midlife and aging' Mary d'Apice (p.160).

"Aging is the ordinary human process that God uses to bring us to Himself"

As I reflect on my aging process I realize that I must graciously accept aging as God's gift. And as I grow older I need to develop attitudes and skills that respond to my need for a changing identity, occupation, health, movement, comfort, inclusion.

My aging process invites me to:

- acknowledge it as a normal process, a reflective and preparatory time for the return home, to God
- "Appreciate and preserve the story of my life, remembering and celebrating God's interventions in my life.
- take needed care appropriate to the age and put away the worry and anxiety and complaints.
- Maintain a sense of worth, and use the skills and knowledge that I still have.
- Promote trustful relationship, and provide support in times of trouble
- minimize the experience of loneliness, withdrawal

'A blessing of these years is that we are the ones whose responsibility it is to prove the stereotypes wrong, to give age its fullness of life'
(Chittister, 2008, p.25).

Pope Francis expects that I will be a person of joy.

Sufferings and Losses

As we grow older we have the potential to experience many losses that will bring with them much pain and suffering. How we respond to these sufferings will be unique for each of us. Pope Francis tells us that in our "slowing down as we grow older ... we should be able to discover 'perfect joy' ... to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross" (Pope Francis, 2014, p.14).

Old age gives a precious opportunity to leisurely pray about and reflects on the great mystery of suffering and loss in one's life.

Reminiscence

"Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging" (Pope Francis, 2014, p.5).

We are reminded that this process will help us understand that human weaknesses are part and parcel of everyone's life, and to acknowledge our weaknesses is to acknowledge the fact that we are human. We have only to place ourselves into the arms of our almighty and merciful God. Relying always on the providence of a loving, tender, and forgiving God can give us the strength to go on.

Memories may bring a sense of joy and peace of mind and it may be easy to see where God has been with us along life's way and spoken to us. We may also come to see where God has been in our lives during difficult times, mindful that we are being conformed to Him who endured his passion and sufferings of the cross. Pope Francis

encourages us to participate in this 'prayer of reminiscence' because, "to tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts" (2014, p.6).

Are you aware that you have so much wisdom and experience to share?

Do you know that Wisdom doesn't go out of fashion? The passing of the years only confirms the truthfulness and the reality of your wisdom that springs from your experience.

When you were growing up, you didn't have access to information or resources as easily as today, and yet you learned countless lessons. You had faced hard times, including wars, displacement, loss of your beloved ones, loss of opportunities, and other crises like floods, storms, and Tsunami. With a lot of sacrifices, you had raised families.

You had been, brave women who were creative, and innovative and had made heroic decisions.

Be ready to face the future

One of the many ways that will help us to age joyfully is to befriend death, aware that it will be the doorway to eternal peace and joy" However, "eternal life that God has for us is not simply a better version of this one. ... In front of us is the start of a new time of joy and endless light" (Pope Francis, 2013). We will experience "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived" (Cor 2:8).

Having been a nurse, as well as exposed to near-death situations many times, I feel there is a sense of preparedness and openness to my death. However, there is also another feeling lurking inside about how death will come; suddenly due to an accident or due to a lingering illness. Whatever may be the cause, as Dawna Markova writes;

'When I die I want to remember the pulse of life; I want to be *well practiced in letting go*' of whatever I hold onto at the last moment and roll over into the outstretched hand of the Heavenly Father.

This is a message from the elders to all the women on a journey

- ✓ Embrace family traditions and build a home for everyone.
- ✓ Endeavour to live peacefully, lovingly, and caringly.
- ✓ Help others generously, compassionately, and without judging.
- ✓ Never give up being concerned about lifting others.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy mind by reading good books. Reading can give you strength, comfort, and even healing.
- ✓ Don't stop learning and bringing yourself up to date.
- ✓ Stay active. have a rich and active social life
- ✓ Nourish your spirit.
- ✓ Enjoy a good conversation.
- ✓ Be aware of how you present yourself to the world. Remember that the way you present yourself communicates something about you and reflects what you carry inside.

17. WE AFFIRM THAT AS WOMEN WE

- are recipients of unconditional love from the Trinitarian God
- are conscious and are responsive to the Divine in us
- have the strength to open ourselves to the compassionate and non-judgmental love
- are eager to go inward to the unknown and unnamed parts of ourselves and be at home
- are open to relish the joy of your constant companionship
- can open ourselves beyond the boundaries of our Ego, surroundings, culture
- have the courage to dig deeper to find the pearl of great price of our feminineness
- are filled with gratitude as we venture out to share our feminine qualities
- have the power to forgive ourselves and others and seek forgiveness, as we accept your merciful forgiveness

18. IN CONCLUSION:

When we are opened to ourselves, to God, to the realities around us, we will feel good about ourselves, coupled with insecurities and inadequacies.

Carol Orsborn does not let this feeling of inadequacy to get into the way of her forward march. This is the way she prays:

'I fall short of my ideas over and over. Yet despite the certainty of my unworthiness, I feel the spirit urging me to venture forth again. So, God, I ask you to use me anyway

Take my fears and use me, anyway,

Take my failures and use me, anyway,

Take my arrogance and use me, anyway,

Take my greed and use me, anyway,

Take my guilt and use me anyway,

Take my confusion and use me. anyway,

Take my regret and use me, anyway,

I offer all of myself to you.

Use me to serve many or few.

In pain or joy

Use me as you will'

It is my experience, that even if my prayer had been a sincere, genuine pleading for the Lord to intervene the Lord seems to dilly dally But that does not mean that he will not grant me my hearts' desire. I have found instances of this in the Gospels:

- At the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus sort of ignores his own mother's plea for help.
- The Canaanite woman who begged for healing had to wait even to be taken notice by the Lord.
- Mary and Martha had to wait for four with their loss and grief at the death of their brother.

These incidents remind me that God's intervention does not drop like fruits from a tree. It is only when I am ready deep down in my heart to accept God's decision that a real transformation will take place in me like the morning dew envelops me unseen.

19. As we lay down this book, let us take God with us

When you pray go into your inner room, close the door and pray to the father who is in the secret space' Mt 6.6.

‘If Prayer,
Meditation and other reflective activities
only circle around inside us
without the benefits of sharing
the gifts we receive,
we spiritually suffocate.

Not only that,
we miss
the growth-filled opportunities
the outer world promises
ourselves and others
when we engage with it’
(Joyce Rupp in Open the door. pg145)

*Within you there is an inner divine space.
Seek that which is in it.
Know the Divine within you.
Upanishad 8.1.1.*

QUOTES ON WOMEN

The minute you settle for less than you deserve, you get even less than you settled for.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman. Margaret Thatcher

A woman is like a tea bag - you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water. Eleanor Roosevelt

Live your life while you have it. Life is a splendid gift. There is nothing small in it. For the greatest things grow by God's Law out of the smallest. But to live your life you must discipline it. You must not fritter it away in "fair purpose, erring act, inconstant will" but make your thoughts, your acts, all work to the same end and that end, not self but God. That is what we call character.
Florence Nightingale

"Take criticism seriously, but not personally. If there is truth or merit in the criticism, try to learn from it. Otherwise, let it roll right off you." Hillary Clinton

"We realize the importance of our voices only when we are silenced." Malala Yousafzai

"One of the most courageous things you can do is identify yourself, know who you are, what you believe in and where you want to go." Sheila Murray Bethel

"If you're not making mistakes, then you're not making decisions."
— Catherine Cook

"It's not your job to like me, it's mine." — Byron Katie

"We need to accept that we won't always make the right decisions, that we'll screw up royally sometimes – understanding that failure

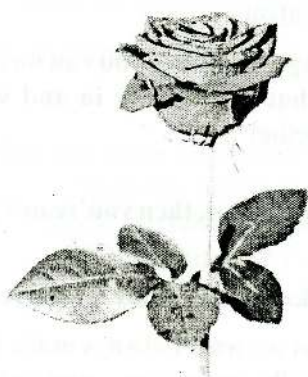
is not the opposite of success, it's part of success.” Arianna Huffington

“I’m not afraid of storms, for I’m learning to sail my ship.”—
Louisa May Alcott

“Don’t let anyone rob you of your imagination, your creativity, or your curiosity. It’s your place in the world; it’s your life.”— Dr. Mae Jemison

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” Maya Angelou

“If you live for people’s acceptance, you’ll die from their rejections.” – Lecrae



Furthermore, this document also tables questions to ponder, reflect and to see as to what extent one's personality cooperates/ed in response to God's call which comes day after day, inspiring "to be open" and cultivate the correct attitudes and values that would push one again and again, to go to people and share those values, and experiences with them.



Sr. Robina Paulin
Provincial Leader
Sisters of the Holy Cross (Menzingen)



Mrs. Bubsy Mariathan,
Lecturer. Jaffna National College of Education.

Apart from this, this book has the power to motivate women to action. The book explores the importance of self actualization through the process of listening, questioning, reflecting, answering, deciding and acting. It also provides a form of guidance on how to change it into action and how women in their different ages can improve themselves.

The author of this book has taken a keen interest to prove the worth of women after having had a deep study on their lives and contributions to the world throughout the history of the universe. She has explored the whole Bible and ascertained the influence of women for the fulfilment of the history of salvation. She invites all women to open to themselves, to God, to the realities around them, in order to feel their worthy existence, and their insignificant role for the betterment of the society and the whole world.



Very Rev. Fr. P.J. Jebaratnam,
Vicar General, Diocese of Jaffna



Sr. Victorine James, born in Naranthandi, Kayts, had her early education at the Holy Family Convent, Naranthandi, Trained as a Nurse at the Holy Cross Hospital in Kottiyam, Kerala, South India, she made her first commitment as a Holy Cross Sister in 1969.

Thereafter, worked as a nurse at St Michael's private hospital in Colombo and later as a Nurse Educator at the Nurses Training School, at the teaching Hospital Jaffna and at Holy Family Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan and at Holy Cross Hospital, Jaffna and as such was in contact with young women in education and training.

She has served in different capacities, participating in the varied ministries of the congregation, and has experience living with international communities of Holy Cross Sisters.

She has published 'Sri Lankan Province 1930 -2010' as well as 'One pot Spirituality' – Reminiscing to Relish her life and mission.

