The fortress is a gift that only has those who accept the challenge of living. You beat woman! You did not allow being defeated. Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). Spanish Poet

Prepare an atmosphere of reflection that include flowers, candles and pictures of women)

From the beginning God created the woman so man was not alone, both being company for each other, and understanding that loneliness only weakens the strength of humanity. Both must assume the commitment and mutual aid for the well-being of the family (Genesis 2:18). Also, in the Word of God, it is clear that women should be protected, loved and respected, and that, at her side, man should be able to give up his family and be one body and one flesh, regardless of the passage of time (Ephesians 5:25-31).

As a clear demonstration of the importance of this BEING, the Bible is full of great women's histories: brave and with vision, virtuous and self-sacrificing. The Scriptures refer particularly to some of them: Ruth, Esther, Judith and Maria Magdalena, among others, who despite the drawbacks and adverse conditions, managed to uphold the name of God and fulfilled the mission that God entrusted them.

The reality today is not different, since the woman dropped the simple fact of being a symbol of maternity, to become a heroine who is facing on a daily basis, various problems such as exclusion, inequality of roles, discrimination and violence. Also, women face the chance of being undervalued, and even having their intellectual contributions disregarded - situations that become an obstacle to their integral development.

On many occasions, the work of women in all areas of social, economic, cultural, artistic and political life has been ignored. However, women still show strength to overcome these adversities, and command respect for their dignity and their role in society.

A woman of fortress "does not retreat", but confronts all adversity with the power and authority that God has given her and "acts"; she does not weaken with the problem or circumstance, but in the storm, takes flight with the anointing of the Spirit; a woman of fortress knows what she wants, knows where she stands; she assumes challenges; she sets goals and achieve them, because she has within her the grace of God.
BIBLICAL TEXT:

Isaiah 60:1  “Arise! Shine, for your light has come, the glory of the LORD has dawned upon you.”

Proverbs 31:10  “Who can find a woman of worth?  Far beyond jewels is her value.”

Reflection:

A STRONG WOMAN OR A WOMAN WITH FORTRESS

A Strong Woman exercises every day
To keep her body in shape...
While a Woman with Fortress kneels to pray
To keep her soul in shape...
   A Strong Woman is NOT afraid of anything...
   While a Woman with Fortress demonstrates COURAGE in the midst of her fear...
   A Strong Woman does not allow anybody to remove the best of her...
   While a Woman with Fortress GIVES the best of her to all...
   A Strong Woman makes mistakes and avoids them in the future...
   While a Woman with Fortress realizes that mistakes in life might be God's blessing and learns from them...
   A Strong Woman walks confidently...
   While a Woman with Fortress knows that God is helping her when she falls...
   A Strong Woman shows in her face confidence...
   While a Woman with Fortress shows gratitude...
   A Strong Woman has Faith that she is strong enough for the journey...
   While a Woman with Fortress has Faith that the journey will make her stronger than ever...

RELECTION IN COMMUNITY:

✓ What kind of woman am I, a strong woman or a woman with fortress?
✓ Everyday activities at work put to test your fortress?
✓ How do you consider strengthening the woman who comes to you for help?

Among the strengths that we can highlight, is the woman who survives domestic violence - who, despite abuse, exclusion and violation of her rights, ends the cycle of violence and begins a new life. At the beginning, she encounters a difficult situation, - because she must face and try to overcome attitudes of society, such as - customs, traditions and prejudices as to what people will say! Economically, she must fight beside her children, assuming tasks considered for men. She must cope with the pain of the consequences left by the aggressions of her husband, whom she believed was her protector.
THANKSGIVING PRAYER

(Excerpt from “LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO WOMEN. Vatican, June 29th, Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, in the year 1995.)

Thank you, women who are mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child, the one who guides your child's first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.

Thank you, women who are wives! You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life.

Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters! Into the heart of the family, and then of all society, you bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity.

Thank you, women who work! You are present and active in every area of life-social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of "mystery", to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.

Thank you, consecrated women! Following the example of the greatest of women, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, you open yourselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's love. You help the Church and all mankind to experience a "spousal" relationship to God, one which magnificently expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with his creatures.

Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood, you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.

PRAYER FOR WOMEN

"Heavenly Father teach us to be women of blessing to others, help us to be sensitive to your voice and pour out in each one of us your wisdom and prudence... help us to be women of fortress..." Thank you because our lives are in You... and you are our Fortress..."

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