

In the Book of Revelation St. John describes a vision of a great sign in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, a crown of stars on her head and the moon beneath her feet. The woman is with child, about to give birth to the one who will shepherd his people (cf. Rv 12:1-2). This vision shows how God's plan culminates in the Incarnation and birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, through which he overcomes the ancient foe. This vision also depicts the culminating fruits of his Resurrection and Ascension, which are manifested in the Assumption and Coronation of his Blessed Mother as Queen of Heaven and Earth, and in the future glorification of the Church which she represents.

It is a multi-layered and multi-faceted vision. And it is significant that the sign is very specifically that of "motherhood" – a *woman* who is *with child*. In God's grand vision for creation, both visible and invisible, the apex and goal is man, a spiritual being who exists in a physical body, which body begins with the man, but concludes with the creation of the woman. According to tradition, the angels were created first, but the final goal was the creation of man on the sixth day, after which God could finally enjoy His rest. But the sixth day was only complete when God drew the woman from the side of man.

Why is motherhood so important? Because the physical body of the woman conceives life, bears life, and nourishes life. Through man and the capability of his physical nature God continues His creative act, bringing new spiritual persons into being, and above all this happens through the woman. In the Incarnation, only the woman was necessary.

What the choirs of heaven marvel at – this vision of the glorious woman about to give birth – the devil despises. St. John's vision therefore continues with another terrible sign, that of a great dragon, blood red, with seven heads and ten horns, who attacks the woman seeking to destroy her child. This is the devil and his entire power structure of evil, set up in opposition to God's design. The devil opposes God most directly by attacking the most important aspect of God's creation: *motherhood*.

When the serpent first accosted man in the garden, he went straight to Eve. The demons spare no effort in their attacks against the woman, against marriage and the family, and to corrupt the sexual meaning of the body. Abortion is the greatest triumph of the underworld. Nowhere are the lies more intense, or the irrationality, or the demonic rage, than this issue.

Abortion is truly impossible without the lies, confusions, pressures, and temptations brought to bear in human lives through demonic activity. But demonic activity is also found in the attacks upon marriage, in the “illogic” of contraception, in the corruption of the conjugal act from love to selfishness, and in the denigration of the physical body through pornography. Finally, it is also found in the deliberate confusion and manipulation of people – especially young people – with regard to the meaning of their masculinity or femininity, such as found in the transgender movement.

Sexual identity, for both the man and woman, must begin with an understanding of the Marian vision of *motherhood* given in the Bible. Both the man and woman find their purpose in the particular service they provide to this ministry, beginning on the physical level of the body. The strength of the woman’s body is therefore within, directed to the bearing of children. The strength of the man’s body is therefore in the external limbs, directed to the protection and provision of his family.

We must not be led astray or into confusion. Sin and concupiscence make it very challenging, but Christ shows the way. Each person faces particular personal challenges in this area, but they are an important part of the spiritual battle, and an important key to our spiritual life and growth. We don’t shy away from them, but embrace the particular challenges God has given us. Chastity and purity are fruits of the Holy Spirit, and they are great prizes promised by the Lord to those willing to accept the sacrifices, discipline, and demands of true love. Christ is the Good Shepherd, and through the Church and Scripture his voice guides and directs us in the truth. We must stay close to the Church and study Scripture continually in order to hear that voice and be familiar with it, so we are not led astray or confused by the demonic voices of death and destruction.

It is well worth reflecting on the mystery of our human lives, how each of us came to be at God’s command, within the body of our mother, and how our entire being, on the physical, emotional, and spiritual level, are in service of that mystery of love and life.