

S11 E16

Heather Khym: Hello friends. As many of you know, the month of May is dedicated to our Blessed Mother, and we should all seek special ways to honor her. One of the very best is by praying the rosary. A fresh and beautiful way to pray it is through an apostolate called SoulCore, which intentionally engages the whole person in the sacred experience of the rosary.

SoulCore integrates the prayers of the rosary with core strengthening, stretching, and functional movements, inviting participants to nourish body and soul and encourage deeper reflection on the virtues. SocialCore is designed to engage the senses through prayer scripture, sacred art, music, candlelight, and movement. Live classes are offered across the country and internationally as well as digital offerings through DVDs downloads online streaming studio, and newly launched SoulCore app.

We invite you to visit SoulCore.com that's S O U L C O R E .com to discover the beauty and transforming power of the rosary in body, mind, and soul. As a gift to Abiding Together listeners, SoulCore is offering complimentary 30 day access to their online studio, library of classes. Go to www.soulcore.com/signup and enter promo code 30FREE. That's 30 F R E E all caps to begin your journey today. You can also check them out on social media through @soulcoreproject. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Hi friends, and welcome to season 11 of the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest, and encouragement in your journey with Jesus Christ. Hi, my name is Sister Miriam James Heidland and every week I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger, and we talk about all things Christ, about life, about beauty, about sorrow. We laugh, we cry, you'll fit right in. So grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and welcome home.

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together Podcast. Where we will complete our series on the identities and our four part series on the identity of Bride. Before we go into it, ladies, this has been quite a monumental undertaking.

Michelle Benzinger: It has.

Heather Khym: Yeah, It's not for the weary of heart. The faint of heart. See, I can't even say it straight

Michelle Benzinger: I think Heather is a little delusional, but for Heather, we had the fire alarm again for the second night in the row.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah those who heard our Mother episode heard about the fire alarm.

Michelle Benzinger: Mmhmm, We had it again last night.

Heather Khym: Yes, which I as being the responsible one...I got up, I went outside like we're supposed to while two other people...I was like the headline the next day. The new podcast Abiding Alone with Heather. Because two of them got burnt in a fire.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Two hosts perished out of pure laziness.

Heather Khym: Needless to say there's been very little sleep going on and a lot of recording.

Michelle Benzinger: I slept great both nights. Like a baby.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Like a baby.

Heather Khym: Like a rock

Michelle Benzinger: That's what ear plugs and sound machines are for. So anyway.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yes, that's what we do. So we are going to finish with the, the title of Fruitful Love, which is really an encapsulation of so much of what we talk about. A fruit, all of us want our love to be fruitful. All of us want to have abiding on the vine, having fruitful, our hearts be fruitful. Our relationships be fruitful, our lives be fruitful. So the statement of intention we've been using from the mass for the marriage rite of Catholic Church, which is the question that the two of you were asked as you stood before the Lord and your beloved spouse, and you were asked, "Do you intend to accept children lovingly from God and raise them according to the law of Christ in the Church?"

Heather Khym: Mawriage. That's all that's running through my mind right now.

Michelle Benzinger: Okay. I have to tell funny story. When they asked us this at our wedding, Chris goes, answers, "Oh, yeah," Like that, I'm like, yeah. Oh yeah. It was so funny.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I bet everybody giggled. Yeah. So we will read our scripture passage for this series, which is from Genesis. We'll read it for the last time and just let it unfold as it continues to unfold in our hearts. This is Genesis 2:18-25. And it says, "Then the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner. So out of the ground, the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air and to every animal of the field. But for the man, there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused deep sleep to fall upon the man. And he slept. And then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man. He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman for out of her man this one was taken. Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Heather, do you want to jump into this? Felt fruitful love and kind of what you notice in your heart and what the Lord's stirring there.

Heather Khym: Yeah. Fruitful love again. Let's just go back to the, this is the image in which we were made was for it to be fruitful, you know, to be life generating. And the Holy Spirit is the love between the father and the son, which is just a profound meditation and reality. You know, that, that there is, I mean, a profound love that we were made in the image of. And so when we look at love it needs to bear fruit, a fruit that will last. And so obviously children are the most obvious sign of that, but it should be bearing a lot of other fruit. It should be life giving. It should be bearing life to the world in a variety of ways. That's the beauty of family is that yes, you can have your, biological children or you can have your blood relatives, but family is bigger than that. And the way that your love can generate new life, isn't just through your biological children, but through your whole community. And so I just think this is one of the most beautiful parts of marriage really, and of union that new life should be born. I mean, it's the most special gift that we've been given in our marriage. Like I just adore our children and I couldn't have ever prepared myself for what a wonderful gift they are. You know, and at every stage, like even in the most difficult I haven't slept times. And now that they're teenagers, I just absolutely adore every single stage. And they teach me so much. But I do want them to be assigned to the world of the love of God. That's my job as a parent is to help

them come into the fullness of who they are and to help like cultivate that love that they a two can pour forth no matter what vocation they're called to, because that love should be generated in every vocation. How about you, Michelle?

Michelle Benzinger: I agree. One of the huge signs we have in our house is a quote from Mother Teresa that we love is, "We draw the circle of family too small," and we have that. And it was actually the quote my husband used when he gave the eulogy for his mom because she was such a person that like everyone was family, and she welcomed people in so well and such a gift of hospitality. And so I think that's really important and we can have hospitality of our homes, but do we have a hospitality of our hearts.

And that really provides a fruitfulness, and it says in Genesis be fruitful and multiply. And that is for yes, children, physical children that are our own, but it also is for discipleship. And it is also for bringing people into the Kingdom, and we have to have, I think for this idea, yes, it's a marriage intention. Do you accept children lovingly from God and raise them according to the law of Christ in the Church? I think there's one thing to have children. I think there's another thing to form them well. And teach them and that the domestic church should be the primary teachers we should be. But also I think there's something that we're all called to make disciples.

And I was telling Sister this morning, we were going to mass. I ended up staying and watching this documentary last night before I went to bed about the fastest growing country that the Church is growing is actually Iran. And it is actually women leaders in Iran in these home churches that are spreading the gospel, and this is the fastest growing movement in the church right now. And there's something about that, just the fruitfulness of women and a place where they're so oppressed, the Lord is granting freedom to them and they are fruitful and they are multiplying and they are making disciples of all nation. And I mean, their faith is bold and courageous, but for us, how is the Lord calling us to be fruitful right now? And how is He calling us? We really touched upon this in the Mother series, calling us, it only comes out of intimate union. All fruitfulness. Whether a marriage, a spiritual children, wherever it is, comes from intimate union. So are we creating space for this intimate union to happen?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And I know those are very, depending on the kind of intimate union we're talking about, those are very tender conversations. And I would imagine both of you being married, for so many years now of just the conversations you both had to have with your spouse about intimacy and about union and about children and about just the welcoming of a child. And those are deep decisions that every couple has to make with the Lord and just even coming together as a couple. And what does that mean? And what does it

mean to be, to be naked, without shame, or to have those places that still experience shame to be allowed the Lord to come in, to fill those places. And I love this quote from Love and Responsibility" where John Paul II is saying, "Love is never something ready made, something merely given to man and woman. It is always at the same time, a task, which they are set. Love should be seen as something which is in a sense never is, but is always becoming. And what it becomes depends upon the contribution of both persons and the depth of their commitment." Like we said earlier that each couple has a love that the world has never seen before. And that really manifests a particular way that Christ loves the Church. And so we have to regularly go to the depths of our own hearts with the Lord. And then with spouses, especially for you as married couples, like to me it seems like that's the oxygen many times to your marriage because it'd probably be very easy to get caught up in just the day to day duties of life, but to really have those moments and then to really speak of that and to be regularly engaging in like just deep areas of intimacy with each other.

Heather Khym: And that can look a variety of ways. I think that's something that we've learned over the years because there's obvious, the most obvious sexual union that every couple, there's ebbs and flows to that and what that looks like and what that means and what each person needs and how fruitfulness can look within that even for one another.

But there's all kinds of intimacy that need to be cultivated. And that's something I think men and women are so different with what we need to experience intimacy. And so those conversations can be very vulnerable, but they're so, so important. What does it look like to just hold each other? What kind of intimacy can be born from just the silence of being in each other's arms? And what does it look like to hold space for each other in conversation, but what does it look like in all of those different realms of intimacy. It's so vitally important, but it takes time. And that's the hardest thing that I think we're battling against right now in our world is we don't have enough time. We do, but we feel like we don't, we're always rushing. There's always too much in our schedule. And I think that just the discipline of having margin so that there's room so that if something goes awry, we still have time for the most important things that they're not the thing that goes out the window right away.

Michelle Benzinger: It's been so interesting since the, in the season that I've been taking some time back, realizing what are the most important things and to really do vocation well, it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of time and takes a lot of intentionality like we were saying. But I think that's what you were talking about, the deeper intimacy. I love the part in "Love and Responsibility" and John Paul II talks a lot about tenderness. He talks about tenderness and I love this part. He says that "Tenderness is the ability to feel with and for the whole

person, to feel even the most deeply hidden spiritual tremors and always to have in mind the true good of that person." And he said, "Thus tenderness is nothing but the expression of my deep attunement to the beauty and goodness; to the pain and the sorrow; to the whole subjective interior state of the other person and their uniqueness as God's beloved and my desire to express my closeness to them in a tangible way." But I also think there's something beautiful and he goes on to say, and also Joshua Elzner, the book I was talking about, "Entrustment to Mary." He talks about it also, but that Joseph and men have to shelter the woman. So the woman feels secure therefore to give a full gift, to feel safe and secure, to give the full gift of herself. And I think there's something about that. A man's tenderness yet strength to allow a woman to unfold because even in like in a sexual meaning, if their man's tender touch will help a woman's whole body to open up and to unfold. But if there's something harsh or something forced or something, I'm not talking about abuse, but even just like, there's not an attunement to the woman, like there's not attunement to her soul or there's not a tenderness to it. It was really interesting, one of my mentors said to me her husband, who's a tough Marine. I've said this on the podcast, but they're in their late sixties now. And he said "It's taken a long time to learn how to make love. He said, any man can have sex, but it takes a long time to learn how to make love." And I think that's so true. And you and I've had the conversation before, like there are certain men that their very presence makes you feel safe and secure, that it almost like a woman unfolds in them. They become in them, they blossom in them. And I'm not saying that women cannot have that on their own or they need a man to do that. That's not what I'm saying, but I'm saying you know when you feel protected there is something about that. And when a man just makes you feel like, okay, he's safe. And his tenderness is a gift. You know, there's a strength to it and it's different than our tenderness, but there's a strength to it that just allows us to unfold. Sister, what are your thoughts?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, I think all of that is very true. And I just think of that's the attentiveness of Christ, the Bridegroom for us. Of His attunement to us. So for example, for us, every woman wants to be attended to and asked questions about and to be, hey, I thought of you and that we wanna be sacrificed for. We wanna be protected. We wanna feel safe and secure that we don't have to worry. That's not up to us. And we wanna be like a partner on a great adventure and we want to receive and we want to give back life. We want to receive and give back life. That's etched on our bodies. That's etched on our souls. And it's that pattern of Christ of how He loves the bride that helps the woman open. And it helps the church at large because we talk about the church as a woman, like the church is a womb through the baptism, through the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Church is a womb where the children grow and they're born into eternal life. It's really stunning, just the theology of our bodies, the theology of what God is writing into our souls. And it's that echo

of, it's not arbitrary. It's not random. Or it's not just like, oh, I'm being too girly. Like these are the things that resonate in the heart as men regard and deeply appreciate, they want to be needed. They want to be able to show up and to provide. And they want to, to be thought of a strong and safe and secure. That makes a man's heart bloom. And so I think the mutual reciprocity of that gift and just seeing that beauty of, and all of us, we love men. Like we love the masculine genius. We love just, it's so beautiful. Men, your masculinity's not toxic, it's glorious and we love it. And the way the Christ is forming that as a divine bridegroom for the bride, which is an eternal reality of a love that never ends. Of a love that never ends. That we can't even fathom the beauty of that.

Heather Khym: Yeah. I think we always need to hold very close to us that the goal is union. The goal is union with God and in our marriage the goal is union with your spouse, which leads to a deeper union with God, because that's your primary vocation. And so when we talk about attunement and what each other needs and intimacy, like, we always have to be asking like, how can we grow in our intimacy in union. Does this lead to intimacy in union? I think being aware of what each other needs is so important in honoring one another. There's different stages that women go through. This has come up so many times from our listeners. They're like, can you guys talk about menopause? Can you talk about... Like all of these different... There's so many things that come into play within a marriage and especially when it comes to fruitfulness or our sexual intimacy. And so things change, like having it stay the same or thinking that the other person, and I'm talking about the women's side of things, but men change too. And they need different things at different times too. So how can we attune to one another's needs so that it leads to intimacy always. And maybe it looks different in a different season and that's okay but I think exploring those things together, but also with friends is so vitally important. These conversations, I don't think happen enough.

Even in the conversation that those conversations are leading to union within the marriages. Like you said before, when you and Gretchen share, you're for each other's marriages. I felt that with different friends too, and my mom in particular, if I share something with her, she is for Jake and I in everything, there's never a throwing under the bus. So even if we're talking with friends about our sexuality or are the things that we need, that it isn't throwing our spouses under the bus, or they're so dumb, or they don't know, or whatever it might be, but really asking questions of one another, how do you cultivate this so that it leads to deeper intimacy? That's really what we all want. And sometimes our disappointments or our fears, or our lack of knowing what to do lead to frustration, which comes out in gossipy conversations. I think it's just something to guard against because those things can cause our hearts to become even further distant. And to sometimes believe some of the things that the world

says like, oh, that's just how it is. You know, women are always like this. Guys are always like this. I'm like, no, that's just not, that's not what we believe. Like God can change things, and He can transform, and He can grow things. And He can also take away things that have been problems for us.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And one of my, two of my friends, they're both married. They're both Catholic speakers and they were joking. I was hanging out at them one time and they were both joking. They wanted to write a book. "What really happens on your wedding night and what happens when you have your first kid." They're like women don't ever talk about, here's the things you really need to know. And here's what actually happens when you have a baby. She's like it's not like it is on your honeymoon. And they're like, they're very funny. Just very honest. And it's true, I mean, I'm sure for you in many ways, unless your mother talked to you about, honey, here's what happens and you're kind of going to a, and then you think you should know, or then you have all these expectations from your spouse. I mean, I could just only imagine. I think having good, just healthy conversations with people that love us, that understand their bodies, that know God, that know the whole purpose, is so tremendously life giving.

Michelle Benzinger: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Like I laugh even for my first child. Like thank God for my sister-in-law like, she's like, all right, she had a child right before I did. She's like, I'm gonna tell you the truth. I mean, she went out there. I mean, no one tells you about that mesh underwear, please. Like, I mean, it is just like these horror stories. And she's really, really funny. Anyway but also, no one just like walks you through things. Like walks you through things. And before, and other cultures, different cultures would tell the bride, all right, this is what happens on your wedding night. This is beautiful, whatever. And a lot of our parents, we don't have those conversations. Like they didn't feel comfortable. Mine was sex waits til you get married. That was about the extent of our conversation.

Heather Khym: Or the conversations have more of, I mean, for lack of a better word, like a raunchy sort of tone to it. That turns into humor and whatever, but it doesn't actually lead to you knowing, or expecting or protecting the goodness and beauty of it. I mean it's okay to laugh and have fun and all of that. I'm not saying that, but being honest. Like that is more rare. It is definitely is more rare.

Michelle Benzinger: And these conversations have to happen. These conversation, I know the young adult girls that I know that have gotten married, like, all right, talk, walk me through it. Like tell me the different things, let me know. And then some of them, a lot, have had their purity been restored in ways in shape or form, and they've have had sexual encounters in the past before that.

And the Lord has restored a lot. So for them, there's a lot of fear going into marriage now, like what does it look like? And it also makes you feel kind of, we all laugh kind of bipolar because you're like, okay, wait till sex have married, da da, da, da. And then which, oh, now you're allowed to do this. And then, oh, and I get to sleep with the person in the same bed too? It's just all.

Heather Khym: In the same day. It switches from one to the other. It's bizarre.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes and oh, it's totally different. And people are just at various different places about that, but there's a lot of fear. And I think its just like having this honest conversations, but that knowing that sex is such a beautiful thing and it's so holy and it's so healing and it's beautiful, but that's not been a lot of people's experiences either. So to go and have those hard conversations.

Heather Khym: Or even saying to yourself like it's holy, like, because some of our mindset for so long has been it's not holy, it's dirty. It's you don't really talk about them. Definitely don't talk about it at church. Don't bring God into the bedroom. Like that's weird and totally hokey or just awkward, like all of those things. And so to just say, this is holy, like remind yourself of the truth. Totally. It's good. God made it. It's what He wants.

Michelle Benzinger: And to have those conversations with your spouse, like this is what's going on in our sex life, what is this, what is this intimacy? You know, having these whole conversations about your body. You're like, ooh, like it feels weird at first or unnatural, but then it becomes beautiful because our languages have a body as JPII says, all of their own. So there's a deep, intimate union, as your two bodies come together and it's a very holy thing and that is the language that we have to actually learn. It's almost, like John Paul II said, "The body has a language all its own." Well, it's almost like learning a foreign language. We have to learn the language of our bodies. I think for oftentimes as women, we ignore our bodies. We beat them into submission. We want them to be what they're not. We wish they would change. We wish them... And we really wear them out in a lot of ways. And I remember like a couple of months ago a doctor asked me like, what is your body saying to you? And I'm like, oh my gosh, I don't speak the language of my body. Like I'm the Tower of Babel, I'm not a tower of the holy, I mean a temple of the Holy Spirit. Like I need to learn the language of my body, but really listening to it, you know, because it's, and that's what John Paul II talks about in "Love and Responsibility" and talks TOB, what does an integrated whole self look like to therefore give ourselves holy to the other person? And when this wholeness comes about, the fruitfulness is abounding. But like we've often said it takes work. It takes cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: One, I think even acknowledging probably the conversation we're having right now is probably very uncomfortable for some people of just like, and it triggers fears, are people's past areas of maybe just sexual brokenness. And just to, we just wanna offer you, friends, just a deep grace and a love there. And I know for myself and my own restoration my body, mind and soul, one of the things that was paramount was studying John Paul II's "Theology of the Body". That was pivotal in my life, pivotal in my sobriety, pivotal in my life. And it's something that continues to unfold and understand that I had deep lies about my body, about sexuality was, what is the gift for? And then just areas of coming to terms with areas of sexual abuse and trauma. And is in a sense, it seems easier just to shut that whole part off and to judge it and just to hate it the rest of our lives versus allowing the Lord to lead us gently into these tender places and to restore them. And that's a sacred journey for all of us. Like every single person, all of us are on a journey of integration, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and sexually. Like that's part of our... And so just understanding that sometimes we have a huge resistance to that and just kind of noticing what that resistance is. Like, okay, Holy Spirit, what am I? Even as you're listening now, or just even in any of the identities, especially maybe there was one identity, one episode that you listened to us and you were like, I can't, that's hard to hear, this is a hard saying. And just to notice that, okay Lord, what do you want me to hear in this? Like what are you trying to tell me? And what are you trying to bring me to life? Because you look at Christ and you look at Mary, and it's the fullness of life, like just fullness, fully living fully at peace with their body, fully at peace with who they were as a man and a woman. And fully at peace with who they were before God. I mean, just like that reality of Christ in his human nature and his divine nature. But it just, so we're talking about the restoration of the entire human person. Which is our eternal commitment.

Heather Khym: Yeah. I remember when we were at Franciscan going to school and Jake and I were engaged, I think, dating or engaged, and Christopher West came to speak there. And it was the first time we ever heard him and we sat there, been Catholic our whole lives. I was in ministry for a long time, even before I went to university, went there and I had never heard that message before. I sat there, we were both like jaw drop. Like listening. It was like a bomb just went off in our minds and in our hearts and our understanding of what sexuality was. And some of the things that we had in our stories and in our lives that we just didn't even realize. And God's plan and the holiness of it, that this isn't something to be hidden from God. But for God to be in the middle of the whole thing.

That blew our minds. And I remember going to an engaged encounter and one couple was talking about how they pray before they have sex and Jake and I

looked at each other like, what the heck are they talking about? We were so judgemental. I was like, oh my gosh, these people are such losers. Like here's how judgmental I am. But I was so far from that, at that point, I did not know how those two things came together. And not because I had this horrible sexual past, but it had only been formed by the world up until that point. I mean to be honest, it just had never been talked about. At all the church things that I went to and all the, it had never been talked about with any kind of honesty or detail. Or like pressing into certain things that it had only been formed by the world. And I didn't realize how much of that was in my mindset. I didn't realize how much impurity had crept into my thoughts. Just what I would hear I would always take certain things in a sexual way instead of just in a pure way. And it was just because of the formation that I'd had from TV and the world, like from the secular culture.

Yeah. And so to be able to grow in those areas together, we listened to a lot of Christopher West in the years following and have gone to some of his courses, and it's been tremendously helpful for us, but to then talk about how do we integrate that in real ways, individually, and then as a couple, those truths, so we can grow. So it's been a growing together in our understanding of that. And most people don't walk into marriage with a really holy, full understanding of our sexuality and what fruitfulness really looks like in all of those areas. So, yeah. So just a word of hope there, like you can always learn and grow in new ways and God can restore and renew your mind. It's like, think about these things. What is pure? What is good? What is holy? Like we can retrain our minds through the grace of God to see things more purely, to experience our sexuality in a more pure way. And the other, to push aside some things that are maybe contaminating our hearts and our view and our perspective. So I think these are all, all areas that can help us on a really practical level.

Michelle Benzinger: I agree. And I think for us, it's really important, like realizing how we were formed. And there was a very big and not blaming any parental units or anything, just a lack of formation. We didn't get it. And we allowed the world to teach it.

Heather Khym: We didn't know how to do it. We know a lot more now I think in general.

Michelle Benzinger: Oh, absolutely. And I remember a good friend of ours, Brian, that runs Dumb Ox Ministries. I was asking him, what age should I tell a certain child about a certain part of sexual things? And he said, if the child is going to hear from the, their classroom or whatever, you need to be the first to tell them. You need to be the first to introduce this topic to them. You need to beat them to the punch because you don't want their formation to come

somewhere else. I thought that was such a great word of wisdom and advice. And one of the things that we love even trying to do our own children inform them as humans, but, and with that is their sexuality, is to not have just "the talk". But we introduce it and start having the talks like where it's open conversation. It's not just this one time conversation. Like the birds and the bees talks. It's an ongoing conversation that we have. And for me, even with boys and not like pigeonholing boys and saying this doesn't happen with girls, either, even boys when it comes to this idea of pornography or whatever, like I told our boys, this is a no shame zone. If there's something struggling, will you come like you will not be punished. You will not be whatever we're like, this is a no shame zone. And realize that with that philosophy, our boys have come to us with any kind of struggle or any kind of things. And we, and just even how we approach sexuality. You know, where that we just approach it with an openness, but a reverence also. And they're has to be some accountability, like it's, but just to say like, okay, what's the deeper issue here. And what is the deeper issue? And I think like Dr. Bob is brilliant when it comes to what's the deeper longing. If there's a disordered in your sexuality or disordered desire in your sexuality, what is the deeper desire? So therefore you can name that deeper desire. So the Lord can order in proper order and it can glorify the Lord in that way.

Heather Khym: Yeah. I think that's key. And the formation of kids and their understanding. Like I remember having the actual, like part of the talk with one of my daughters. And I remember her saying, like I just have questions because I feel like everybody else knows but me. And I said, actually, honey, you know more about this topic than probably most of your friends, because we've been talking to you from the moment that you could understand what love is and how to love another person and you can't use another person and you love people and not things and why that is.

And I said, this was all the foundation. I said, this is all we've been talking about for so long and this is the culmination of all of those things. And it was as like the light bulb just went off of like, oh my gosh, we've been having this conversation for years. Yeah. I'm like exactly.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. And that's so true. And I think for us that really brings our whole kind of series back to full circle of being gift; that our bodies mean something, and that we're made for another and that's ultimately for God that it's just revealed in every way that we are, we don't make sense by ourselves. Like we need each other that we're made for another, that we find ourselves as John Paul II says "in a gift of one another." And I'm just thinking of, as we talk about kind of a wrap up for our series, we talk about fruitfulness of what does it mean to look, what does it mean to be fruitful in every stage of our life?

So as children, when we're kids, what does it mean to be fruitful; as teenagers, in our twenties and in our thirties, whether we're married or single, what does it look like to be fruitful in forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, like, because we're called to be everbearing of fruit and, and the Lord is always pruning. He's always up kind of picking up the plant when it falls over. He's always planting new things, He's always removing the weeds. And so that we, our hearts are not just like, oh, I was fruitful for this season, but this is our life. This is heaven. Like God is everbearing like evergreen, like say Hildegard...Hildegard of Bingen and talks about us as being like evergreen, evergreen, that we're always bearing fruit and the Lord's always pruning and he's always trimming, but he's always bringing to birth new things. And that's why it's the deepest desire of the heart is to be fruitful, is to love, is to be received, is to give like everything we've been talking about. These echo on our soul because of who are made in the image and likeness our God to be. And that's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing.

Michelle Benzinger: Amen friend. Amen.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, my dear friends, any, this has been a long journey, especially with Spirit Juice and all of our friends here. It's like our last episode, at least for a while here. What are we any last words as we wrap up our series on our identities and any final thoughts?

Heather Khym: Yeah, I hope that people are able to come back to these series. Like we did stay at the very beginning, we're gonna do a deep dive and some people are like, whoa, you guys are going too deep. I'm like, I know, I know it's okay. It's a little bit different than what we've done before. But there was a purpose behind that. We have so many seasons of various topics you can pop back into. But I think there's a time for each person to go through different parts of this and to take time to reflect and to talk with friends and to meet in groups and have these discussions. And I hope, my prayer is, that this is extremely fruitful in the hearts of our listeners. And even for us, this has been fruitful for me, these conversations. I really wanna take time to ponder them after we go.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I do. And we've all had moments in a life where we were given a book and we tried to read it and put it down. And then a couple years later you came back to it or you read it again. And that, and that's my heart too. And I know it's yours, Michelle, too, that you would find just these series that you can watch on video done so beautifully by Spirit Juice. Just edited so well and just so beautifully filmed and that you could sit by yourself or with friends and just continue to allow these things to unfold. And maybe then you bring your daughter in or your mom or just so the life, like life continues to grow and it does continue to be fruitful. And we can't ever, we

never adult out of or grow out of growing into our identities more deeply. That's an eternal process and that's such good news. It's such good news.

Michelle Benzinger: And we just like to thank our listeners. Thank you for being on the journey with us and thank you for abiding with us and thank you for the gift that you each and every one of you are.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Yeah. So we, we sometimes say this, but I mean, we read your emails and we see your posts on social media and we hear your hearts and there's no way we can respond to every single one of you. But we do hear you. And I know Heather for you, like just reading people, you do a lot of the email reading and things like that. And just, we, we care for you very deeply and we always want to, to be our best for you and to allow the Lord to come and, and heal us so that we can be our best for you. And so it's just been a, a wonderful, a wonderful journey.

Heather Khym: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: So dear friends, our one thing for the final episode here. Michelle.

Michelle Benzinger: My one thing is actually our listeners and so just their loyal support and their complementary and just the letters and gifts and just the love that we have received from them and for all of the people that work behind the scenes to make this podcast happen. There's a lot. So to thank Lizzie and Emily and Katie and Victoria, here from Spirit Juice and Kevin that runs our website. Like there's a lot of details that go into all the little production and all the people behind the scenes, we're very grateful for you.

Heather Khym: My one thing is a recipe for Brussels sprouts.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: What?

Heather Khym: It takes them to a whole new level. I know people are going to say, Brussels sprouts? Roast these babies. There's a little bit of like bacon on there, like this balsamic maple syrup. And then some crushed pecans. I mean, it's gonna take it to the next level. They're so good.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Have we had that at your house before?

Heather Khym: I don't think so. Next time we'll make them. Like you could just have that as your dinner.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh wow. I could, I'm hungry. So I could.

Heather Khym: So that'll be in the show notes. And Sister, what's your one thing?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I think my one thing is our listeners and all the staff at Spirit Juice as well. And I also wanna thank Michelle. Thank you so much for this, this was mostly your concept and that you worked really hard on the content and offering just different quotes. And so I just love your creative heart. And so just thanks. And just all the details that happened for this to happen.

Heather Khym: And thanks to our patrons.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Our patrons.

Heather Khym: So generous.

Michelle Benzingier: The best.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, dear friends, this concludes our series on the identities and our series on brides. So thank you so much for joining us. And until next week we'll be Abiding Together. God bless you. Have a wonderful week.