

Life and Love: Combatting the Culture of Death through Personalist Feminism*

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores two necessary conditions for combating the culture of death. The first requires women to realize that they are humanity's life-bearers, with a genius for person-centered humanism. As such, they must heed the urgent plea of John Paul II to establish a prolife and personalist feminism that welcomes male collaborators and defends human life from conception to natural death. The second necessary condition is for all to recognize that human fulfillment comes about through a caring, person-centered love that is respectful of human life.

THIS PAPER EXPLORES TWO NECESSARY CONDITIONS for combating the culture of death. The first requires women to realize that they are humanity's life-bearers, with a genius for person-centered humanism. The second is for all to recognize that human fulfillment comes about through a caring, person-centered love that is respectful of human life.

1. The Feminine Genius and the Need for Personalist Feminism

In *Evangelium Vitae* Pope John Paul II sought to combat the spreading culture of death by appealing to women to start a new social movement: a new kind of feminism that would defend life from conception to natural death. This

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is necessary, John Paul writes, because

In transforming culture so that it supports life, *women* occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to develop a “new feminism” which rejects the temptation of imitating models of “male domination,” in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence, and exploitation. Making my own the words of the... Second Vatican Council, I address to women this urgent appeal: “Reconcile people with life.” You are called *to bear witness to the meaning of genuine love*, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every interpersonal relationship.¹

This passage is remarkable in four ways. First, John Paul II assigns to women the responsibility to take the lead in reconciling “people with life” and in developing a new type of feminism that – unlike secular feminism – rejects both abortion and the widely held belief that abortion makes sexual equality possible.² Second, this passage expands the task of feminism beyond that of defending the unborn to that of defending the dying and the human person from all discrimination, violence, and exploitation. Third, this passage requires the new feminism to acknowledge and affirm the feminine genius, identified elsewhere by John Paul II as that “‘genius’ which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance.”³ Fourth

¹ *Evangelium Vitae* in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, edited by Michael Miller, pp. 772-894 (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1996) §99.

² The misconception that abortion was necessary for women for women to flourish has been enshrined in decisions of the United States Supreme Court beginning with *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and, especially, in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992). For historical context and arguments that feminism ought to be prolife, see Angela Franks, “The Gift of Female to Fertility: Church Teaching on Contraception” in *Women, Sex, and the Church: A Case for Catholic Teaching*, ed. Erika Bacchiochi (Boston MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2010), pp. 97-119; Erika Bacchiochi, “The Uniqueness of Woman: Church Teaching on Abortion” in *Women, Sex, and the Church*, pp. 37-55; Anne Maloney, “The Feminine Genius and Its Role in Building the Culture of Life,” *eJournal for Personalist Feminism* 2 (2015): 19-27, accessed 2014 <http://www.stthomas.edu/sienasymposium/publications/ejournal>; Janet E. Smith, “Feminism, Motherhood, and the Church” in *The Catholic Woman*, ed. Ralph McInerney (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp. 41-66; and Mary Krane Derr, Rachel MacNair, Linda Naranjo-Huebl, *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, 2nd Edition (Feminism and Nonviolence Studies Association, 2005).

³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* §30. The feminine genius is extensively

and finally, this passage requires the new feminism to reject “models of male domination” that presumably fail to honor human dignity. These models are alien to maternity, which, according to John Paul II, provides experiences confirming that a person “is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health.”⁴ A keen appreciation of the person enables women “to bear witness to...genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others...which ought also to be at the heart of every interpersonal relationship.”⁵ The new feminism is thus to be a person-centered humanism that personalizes humane care in support of the individual’s actual needs. Accordingly, this new person-centered feminism is best characterized, according to Sr. Prudence Allen, as “personalist feminism.”⁶

John Paul II’s reliance on maternity and the feminine genius as justifying the need for women to take the lead in fighting against all that dehumanizes the person involves relying upon what I have called elsewhere “the precept of

analyzed from various perspectives in *Woman as Prophet in the Home and the World: Interdisciplinary Studies*, ed. R. Mary Hayden Lemmons (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2016). In “John Paul II on the Genius of Women” of *Woman as Prophet*, pp. 3-14, Susan Selner-Wright argues that the feminine genius is human capability that maternity hones and that men are to develop. In “On Women and the “Seeing of Others” of *Woman as Prophet*, pp. 15-28, Paul Kucharski argues that the feminine genius is unique to women and enables women “to see with their hearts.” In “Woman as Prophet: A Feminism for the Twenty-First Century” of *Woman as Prophet*, pp. 45-64, Deborah Savage treats the feminine genius as a supernatural reality. In “The Feminine Genius, Personalist Feminism, and the Call for Women to Prophecy According to John Paul II” of *Woman as Prophet*, pp. 31-44, I analyze it in terms of a vertical, God-centered dimension and a horizontal, humanitarian dimension; both of which facilitate the ability of women to proclaim the truth about persons and love and to advocate for human dignity.

⁴ *Evangelium vitae* §99.

⁵ *Evangelium vitae* §99.

⁶ Prudence Allen, “Can Feminism Be a Humanism?” in *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michele M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 251-83 at p. 284: “In fact, I would probably make the stronger argument, that only a personalist feminism can be a humanism in this full sense; it recognizes that the person is a ‘who,’ that a woman, a man, and a child are analogous ways of being a person, and that persons can be fulfilled only by participating with one another in building up the common good of other persons. Indeed, the only way to become fulfilled as a person is by the repeated habit of giving of self to others persons.” I make a similar case in “John Paul II’s Universal Call to Personalist Feminism” (Siena Symposium Conference paper, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2008).

opportunity.”⁷ This precept formalizes a key condition presupposed in all cases of omission. It asserts that the one who can prevent or remedy a wrong ought to do so. John Paul II’s tacit reliance on the precept of opportunity unites his appeal to women in *Evangelium vitae* with a specially important text from the Second Vatican Council:

[Women], you are present when the mystery of life begins and console when life departs at death. Our technology risks becoming inhumane. Reconcile men to life. We especially beseech you for the future of our species, restrain the hand of the man who, in a moment of folly, would destroy human civilization.... Women, you know how to render truth sweet, tender and accessible place the spirit of this Council in institutions, schools, homes and everyday life. *Women of the universe, Christian or not*, you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, save the peace of the world.⁸

This message presupposes that women, regardless of their faith commitments, have the opportunity (and thereby the duty) to advance the cause of peace and end violence against vulnerable human life. At the beginning of life, women are the ones who become pregnant. At the end of life, women tend to be the ones who lovingly comfort both the dying and their survivors, for most nurses tend to be women and most wives outlive their husbands. At any time, women can be speakers of truth who know how to make it sweetly accessible, e.g., as mothers, spouses, siblings, teachers, managers, and so on. In other words, women who excel in bearing witness to the truth can protect human life at its beginning by forgoing abortifacients and abortion, at the end by consoling the dying and the grieving with sweet truths about God’s love, and in between by making the truth about human beings lovable at home and in the world. To so make God’s truth known is, in a sense, to prophesy, that is, to bear witness to these truths. Hence, both Vatican II and John Paul II are, in effect, pleading with women to prophesy that authentic love – as self-giving and person-centered – accepts others and helps them when possible.⁹ In *Evangelium vitae*

⁷ I first introduced the term “precept of opportunity” in *The Feminine Genius*, p. 35.

⁸ Vatican Council II, “The Council’s Message to Women (December 8, 1965),” *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966): 13-14 (translation mine, emphasis mine).

⁹ *Woman as Prophet* justifies the obligation of women to prophesy in various ways. Selner-Wright argues that the woman’s knowledge of the ontological truth about human beings obligates them to be prophets of love (“Genius of Women,” pp. 7-8). Savage argues that the Church calls women to be prophets (“Woman as Prophet,” pp. 51-54). Christine Falk Dalessio argues that the prophetism of the body authorizes

John Paul II is thus asking women to embrace personalist feminism as part of their vocation and as a way to exercise their prophetic voices.¹⁰ It is asking women to be prophets by promoting a civilization of love, in part, through personalist feminism.

To identify personalist feminism as a prophetic expression of the feminine genius is to identify it as having a spiritual dimension. After all, as John Paul II argues in *Mulieris Dignitatem* §16 and as Pew Research confirms,¹¹ women tend to be more religious than men. They tend more easily to see others as children of God. This God-centered spirituality is helpful for building a prolife culture. It helps men realize that they need to collaborate with women and become personalist feminists who promote loving others from conception to natural death. Christian men and women are especially called to exercise person-centered love for three reasons. First, Jesus Christ models merciful, person-centered love and, as John Paul II explains, predisposes one “to being open to each and every person” for whom he died.¹² Second, the laity are charged with the duty to engage the world and build a civilization that enables

women to be prophets (“The New Feminism, Prophetic Bodies, and Freedom,” pp. 65-77, 73-76). Heidi Giebel argues that being a prophet is a part of every woman’s vocation (“Worthy of Belief: Reflections on Prophecy, Responsibility, and Virtue,” pp. 111-26 at pp. 111-114). I argue that being a woman prophet is not only an obligation due to baptismal graces and the precept of opportunity (“The Feminine Genius,” pp. 34-36), but is also necessary for the fulfillment of the feminine genius (“Afterword: A Summary of Key Interdisciplinary Findings,” p. 234).

¹⁰ *Woman as Prophet* argues that the new feminism is necessary in different ways. Savage’s arguments focus on the need of secular feminism for the insights of Catholicism and especially those concerned with the Blessed Virgin Mary and proposes a Catholic feminism focused on Mary (“Woman as Prophet,” pp. 45-64). Dalessio’s arguments focus on how understanding the language of the body and John Paul II’s personalism posit a criteria of truth indispensable for advancing feminism and establishing a new prolife feminism (“The New Feminism,” pp. 65-77). I argue that a new personalist feminism is required on the basis of the feminine genius, the call to prophesy, and the need to counter the growing culture of domination and death as argued by John Paul II (“The Feminine Genius,” pp. 36-37 and “Afterword,” pp. 242-44). I also argue the John Paul II’s analysis of the femininity’s prophetism establishes a Marian ecclesial feminism that is supportive of personalist feminism (“Prophetic Femininity,” pp. 83-84).

¹¹ Forty-seven percent of men and fifty-nine percent of women reported that religion is very important in their lives, “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” Pew Research Center (Nov. 3, 2015), p. 46.

¹² *Mulieris dignitatem* §21.

all to flourish as human beings.¹³ Third and finally, Christianity teaches that flourishing is through loving and being loved.¹⁴ God really wants human beings to be kind to each other and to treat each other humanely as brothers and sisters in humanity's global family.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta explains that Jesus loves each of us and that dying for us was not enough because he wants us to see him in one another and to know that what we do for the hungry, naked, and homeless we do for him.¹⁵ So, in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, she said that hunger includes being hungry for love, nakedness includes being denied human dignity, and being homeless includes being forgotten, unloved, and meaning "nothing to nobody."¹⁶ She urged all to seek the poor, beginning in their own homes, and to be present to them, especially by smiling at each other, even when difficult: "let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love, and once we begin to love each other naturally we want to do something.... Make time for each other in your family. Smile at each other."¹⁷ Authentic smiling can be the point of connection through which love is both given and received. This insight into how merciful person-centered love works enabled the ministry of Mother Teresa to be characterized by the President of the Republic of India as transcending "all barriers presented by race, religion, and nationality."¹⁸ The key is believing that loving involves a relationship in which the receptivity of the recipient gives more to the benefactor than the benefactor gives to the recipient: "Giving -- giving something of oneself -- is what confers real joy, and the person who is allowed to give is the one who

¹³ See Pope Paul VI's *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, accessed 2016, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html. Also see John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, accessed 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html.

¹⁴ Mother Teresa, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" (December 10, 1979). Accessed 8/8/2018 at https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-acceptance_en.html.

¹⁵ Mother Teresa, *Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech*.

¹⁶ Mother Teresa, *Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech*.

¹⁷ Mother Teresa, *Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech*.

¹⁸ John Sanness, "Presentation Speech of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize to Mother Teresa," *Nobel Lectures, Peace 1971-1980*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr and Irwin Abrams (World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1997), accessed 2016, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/presentation-speech.html.

received the most precious gift.”¹⁹

Mother Teresa’s emphasis on the relationality of love identifies the moment of encountering of loving and being loved in return as being the moment of interpersonal connection and unification. This moment, when virtuous,²⁰ integrates the horizontal humanitarian and personalist dimension of the feminist genius with its vertical God-centered dimension and enables women to encounter God in another.²¹ This integration of faith and care constitutes a spirituality that becomes indispensable when care becomes difficult on account of the need for transcending one’s physical, emotional, or volitional limitations. God-centered spirituality is thus important for excelling as a woman prophet and a personalist feminist. This is especially the case since loving God strongly motivates developing the virtues that render care most effective, that protect against discouragement, and that strengthen the resolve to love those entrusted by God to oneself by providing opportunities to help them.²² Accordingly, Christian spirituality with its emphasis on loving as Christ loves is especially helpful for personalist feminists caring for the vulnerable. Accordingly, although any women – or man – can prophesy about the indispensability of merciful, person-centered love on the basis of nature or their own faith-commitments, Christian women are especially well-situated to more easily exercise leadership and be paradigmatic prophets, as argued in *Woman as Prophet in the Home and the World*²³ and as the Church recognizes.²⁴

¹⁹ John Sanness, “Presentation Speech.”

²⁰ For a careful and extension discussion of the virtues necessary for prophesying, see Geibel, “Worthy of Belief,” pp. 111-26.

²¹ Lemmons, “Prophetic Femininity.”

²² Geibel, “Worthy of Belief,” p. 113; Lemmons, “Afterword,” pp. 235-36.

²³ In *Woman as Prophet*, the woman’s prophetic ability for leadership is defended on the basis of philosophy, revelation, social science and the lives of saints. Paul Kucharski, “On Women and the “Seeing of Others,” pp. 15-28 at pp. 2-23; Savage, “Woman as Prophet,” pp. 51-52; Dalesio “The New Feminism,” p. 76; Geibel, “Worthy of Belief,” pp. 111-25; Anne King, “St. Hildegard: Prophet and Doctor of the Church,” pp. 127-34; Susan J. Stabile, “Women Mystics of the Catholic Church,” pp. 135-48; Mary Eberstadt, “Women and the Crises of Polarization and Secularization,” pp. 149-62 at pp. 159-60; Meg Wilkes Karraker, “Spirit in the Heartland: Catholic Sisters as Servant Leaders for Justice and the Common Good,” pp. 217-30 at pp. 219-23, 225-26; and my Introduction, pp. xiv-xvii, “The Feminine Genius,” pp. 32-36, “Prophetic Femininity,” pp. 82, 94-95, and, “Afterword,” pp. 232-35.

²⁴ That the Church calls women to be prophets is argued in various ways in *Woman as Prophet*. Savage appeals to Church documents and the exemplarity of the Virgin Mary (“Woman as Prophet,” pp. 45-47, 52-54). Dalesio appeals to the body’s

Given the sensitivity to persons and their welfare characteristic of the feminine genius, defeating the culture of death and building the civilization of love require women to prophesy that persons are to be loved as persons. Such witnessing to the truth about persons, according to John Paul II, is “the fundamental contribution which the Church and humanity expect from women. And it is the indispensable prerequisite for an authentic cultural change.”²⁵ In other words, without the witnessing – or prophesying – of women, the world cannot be reconciled to life nor can peace be established. “Authentic peace,” stressed St. John Paul II on World Peace Day in 1995, “is only possible if the dignity of the human person is promoted at every level of society and every individual is given the chance to live in accordance with this dignity.”²⁶ Advancing peace and human dignity also requires men to seek the collaboration of women so that merciful, person-centered love can be tailored to the needs of individuals so as to alleviate, for instance, the burdens that so besiege mothers as to tempt them to abort the child within the womb.²⁷ Dissolving this temptation requires personalist feminists to collaborate with besieged mothers to meet their particular difficulties. Until then abortion will continue to undercut the very basis of humanitarianism, namely, the prolife principle that every human being – including those too vulnerable to survive without help – ought to be loved and protected.²⁸

prophetism (“The New Feminism,” pp. 74-76). Giebel appeals to Scripture (“Worthy of Belief,” pp. 111-25). I make the case by appealing to baptismal graces (“The Feminine Genius,” pp. 34-35) and Mariology and femininity’s prophetism (“Prophetic Femininity,” pp. 79-84).

²⁵ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* §99.

²⁶ John Paul II, “Reading 16” [Message for the Twenty-eighth World Day of Peace, January 1st, 1995] in *Pope John Paul II Speaks on Women*, ed. Brooke Williams Deely (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), pp. 229-34 at p. 229.

²⁷ For arguments that justice demands accommodating mothers in the workplace, see Elizabeth R. Schiltz, “Should Bearing the Child Mean Bearing All the Cost? A Catholic Perspective on the Sacrifice of Motherhood and the Common Good,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 10/3 (2007): 15-33; also see her “Workplace Restructuring to Accommodate Family Life,” *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* 4/3 (2007): 343-49.

²⁸ Cf. Mother Teresa’s 1979 Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech in which she argued that since peace arises from love, the failure to love the unborn child is “the greatest destroyer of peace”; accessed 2016, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html.

2. Femininity as Icon of Person-Centered Love

Besides being a personalist feminist and using her feminine genius to advocate for increased sensitivity to persons, a woman can also prophesy love by heeding the fertile femininity of her body; for femininity itself serves as an icon of person-centered love. In *Woman as Prophet* I argue that the iconic character of femininity is discernible from the philosophy of beauty, the exemplarity of maternal love, the Bible's prophetism of femininity, the Virgin Mary's role as the Theotókos, and the nature of sexual reproduction.²⁹ Only the last of these fall into the scope of this paper.

The biology of sexual reproduction identifies the function of the woman's womb as being person-centered, that is, centered on protecting and furthering the life of the embryonic person. Pregnancy thus schools women in the requirements and the joys of being other-centered.³⁰ In this school, there are no breaks for "me-only-time." Graduation typically occurs after nine months of being other-centered. Willingly carrying a child within oneself thus involves some degree of laying down one's life for the unborn child: the dietary requirements of eating and drinking for two combine with morning sickness and other physiological changes guarantee that one cannot carry on exactly as before. Pregnant women know, moreover, that they may have to literally lay down their lives if they are confined to bed rest for a substantial period of time or if something goes horribly wrong in childbirth. Willingly being pregnant thus exemplifies other-centered love and identifies the pregnant woman to be a paradigmatic prophet of that love. Hence, the nobility of pregnancy!

The other-centeredness of the womb is a biological and metaphysical revelation that femininity is essentially relational.³¹ Fulfillment qua femininity is thus in and through loving relationships that give individualized person-centered care. For maternal love is a self-giving love whereby one gives oneself to the welfare of another, that is, by becoming person-centered. The teleology of the womanly body thus prophesies -- albeit analogically³² -- that caring, self-

²⁹ Lemmons, "Prophetic Femininity," pp. 79-108; "Afterword," pp. 232-35.

³⁰ Lemmons, "Afterword," pp. 232-35.

³¹ The relationality of women makes it harder for them to bounce back from being harmed by others as shown by the statistic that women are more susceptible to post-traumatic stress syndrome than men, see Tom Cramer, "PTSD Study: Men Versus Women," *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, (April, 18, 2013), accessed 2016, <http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/2013/April/PTSD-Study-Men-Versus-Women.asp>.

³² Analogous forms of prophesying are explicated in my "Introduction," pp. xiii,

giving love is crucial for self-fulfillment. So, while not that every woman needs to bear children physically, every woman needs to find ways to dedicate themselves to caring for others. These ways include any relationship that requires putting another before oneself, such as parenting, marriage, walking with another through hardships of various kinds, and any type of work. Such deeds when performed respectfully and kindly fulfill the prophecy that other-centeredness brings some degree of self-fulfillment. This is especially the case when performed for those whom God has entrusted in some way to oneself whether through birth, adoption, or the opportunity to help the vulnerable as do, for instance, many nuns. To so serve those entrusted to oneself is to act as a spiritual mother.³³ Femininity thus symbolizes the deep truth that fulfillment requires finding a way of “loving and being loved,” as put by Mother Teresa.³⁴ Relationships of mutual love can be found in nuclear and extended families as well as in religious orders and other associations of mutual aid, support, and friendship. Only through such love can persons find fulfillment and the end to loneliness, for as Pope Francis says, “Authentic love is capable of taking loneliness away.”³⁵ The U.S. Supreme Court thus gravely erred in its infamous pro-abortion *Casey* decision. This decision declared that abortion was the key to a woman’s well-being. Killing one’s own unborn baby is not the way to fulfillment – selfishness never is.

Personalist feminism thus justifies itself through the feminine genius, the need for woman prophets, biology’s prolife teleology, and the necessity of benevolence and person-centered mercy for psychological and spiritual health. These terms are ideal for communicating, in a secular age, the truth about persons, authentic love – and God. Accordingly, as a social movement, personalist feminism enables person-centered women prophets to prophesy by advocating for the person against whatever thwarts the human spirit. Personal-

xvi-xvii, and “Prophetic Femininity,” pp. 79, 80, 85.

³³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* §21; Geibel, “Worthy of Belief,” p. 113.

³⁴ Mother Teresa, *Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech* for the 1979 Nobel Prize, online video accessed 2015, <http://www.nobelprize.org/media player/index.php?id=1852>; transcript at “Mother Teresa – Nobel Lecture.” *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 1 Jan 2016, accessed 2015, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html.

³⁵ Pope Francis, *Homily at the Opening Mass of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*; accessed 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20151025_omelia-chiusura-sinodo-vescovi.html.

ist feminism thus needs to overturn those laws that permit the objectification of woman, hinder the ability of families to care for loved ones, and that dehumanize the unwanted, the poor, the lowly worker, the elderly, the addicted, the sick and the dying, and the embryo, for instance, through embryonic stem cell mining, *in vitro* fertilization, and abortion.³⁶ Personalist feminism, built on the insightfulness of the feminine genius, is thus humanitarian and spiritual in its personalization of care according to the deep human need for love and for God. Personalist feminism thus helps women prophets and their male collaborators build more humane communities that will be respectful of the human thirst for the divine and for person-centered love.

In conclusion, personalist feminism is crucial for building a prolife culture – not only because it defends vulnerable human life from conception to natural death, but also because it affirms the woman prophet of life and love *and* advocates for the merciful, person-centered love and spirituality that humanizes culture. By so doing, personalist feminism defends the family and facilitates finding peace and joy. This is because, as put by Mother Teresa, “peace of heart comes from loving – from doing good to others.”³⁷ Thus, the ultimate task of personalist feminism is to promote peace by defending love as the meaning of life and the point of civilization. Only such love – coupled to a God-centered spirituality – is capable of successfully combating the culture of death.

³⁶ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*. Also see Pope Paul VI’s Apostolicam Actuositatem, accessed 2016, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html. Also see John Paul II’s Christifideles Laici, accessed 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html.

³⁷ Mother Teresa, *The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Loving*, compiled by Jaya Chalita and Edward L. Joly (New York NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1997), p. 399.