Federazione donne evangeliche in Italia (Fdei)

Fascicolo interno a RIFORMA n. 44 del 20 NOVEMBER 2026 Reg. Trib. Pinerolo n. 176/1951. Resp. ai sensi di legge: Alberto Corsani
Edizioni Protestanti srl, via San Pio V n. 15, 10125 Torino Stampa: Comgraf Società Cooperativa Quart (Ao)

(IN)DEPENDENT?

PARADOX OF WOMEN TODAY

16 days to defeat violence

from NOVEMBER 25 to DECEMBER 10

1976
2026

YEARS WITHOUT CEASE

FEDERAZIONE DONNE EVANGELICHE IN ITALIA

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The 16 days run from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, 2026, Human Rights Day.

Introduction

Throughout 2026, the FDEI took the opportunity to reflect on two significant anniversaries: the 80th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Italy (June 1946) and the 50th anniversary of the FDEI itself (May 1976). This was marked, in particular, by a roundtable discussion titled "Free to Choose, Free to Be."

In this 'Quaderno' (booklet), the reflection is explored further, based on the premise that the goal of true self-determination for women has not yet been fully realized—that the liberation of women, and of society as a whole, remains incomplete and, in some instances, has even regressed. "Liberation," writes the philosopher Ágnes Heller, "is the prerequisite for freedom itself. Liberation does not depend solely on the person being liberated, but also on the individual themselves. (...) Women can free themselves from being defined by the male gaze, but this is, to a certain extent, merely negative freedom. Only self-determination constitutes positive freedom" (Á. Heller, Il lungo cammino delle donne. Dall'emancipazione alla partecipazione [The Long Journey of Women: From Emancipation to Participation], Lit Edizioni, 2018, pp. 12–13).

Looking at the issue from the other side, it is equally true that women often fail to realize that they remain, in a sense, 'enslaved.' The paradox lies in the invisible yet profound divide that separates rights granted on paper from the reality experienced in daily life. Over the last century, women have redefined history and social structures by securing the right to vote, breaking down barriers in education and the workplace, assuming leadership roles in politics, science, and the economy, and achieving a formal legal equality that was once considered utopian. Yet, behind this façade of emancipation and objective autonomy, there lies a deep-seated—and often silent—psychological, cultural, and economic submission to men.

This raises the question: are we truly independent, or do we remain profoundly beholden to patriarchal patterns that have never been entirely uprooted?

This year's 'Quaderno' stems from a desire to bring this paradox to light and explore it. At the same time, it is rooted in the firm conviction that many women refuse to be subjugated—neither physically, like the women with disabilities featured on page 10, nor mentally, like the Afghan women discussed on page 6.

Throughout history, many women have managed to decipher the reality of their times, transforming personal constraints into springboards for autonomous, revolutionary paths—forging new trails where established paths were closed off.

Today, the women who reshape social reality are those who tenaciously claim their own space in the world. They embrace independence as a mindset, cultivating the critical capacity to say "no" to prepackaged models or relationships defined by aggression and asymmetry. After all, gaining access to the public sphere is not enough if the private sphere remains a territory marked by imbalance and abuse.

Through these pages, we invite you to join us on a journey of discovery and awareness.

For us women, overcoming this contemporary paradox means transforming independence from a mere legal concept into a fully lived reality.

It means educating new generations to build relationships based on reciprocity, respect, and equal dignity—ensuring that no woman should ever again have to pay for her freedom with submission, or, worse, with her life.

Mirella Manocchio
President of Fdei

25 NOVEMBER 2026

When prince charming dims your colors





BOOK: Carmela Mento, Giovanna Spatari, Maria Rosaria Anna Muscatello, Gabbie di Parole – Il linguaggio della violenza psicologica, Franco Angeli edit.

FILM: The Invisible Man (2020 film) directed by Leigh Whannell
Take My Eyes 2023 directed by Icíar Bollaín, 2003

QUESTION
Learn more
Do we give enough consideration to a woman who feels she is a victim of violence but has no bruises to show for it?

It is not just physical blows that wound; words, attitudes, and even glances can be just as damaging.

There is a subtle form of violence that can occur within a romantic relationship. It often begins with intense passion and stirring words: a man makes his partner feel special, unique, and exceptional, telling her that she is the only one who truly understands him. Over time, however, he begins to take up more and more space, making himself the center of everything. He alternates between moments of sweetness and coldness, between caresses and icy silences. Eventually, he begins to use offensive, demeaning language and behaviors, things that make her feel as though there is something wrong with her, that she is incapable, or even stupid.

At first, it is not easy to recognize psychological abuse or interpret such behaviors; the woman ends up questioning herself, wondering if perhaps she could have avoided upsetting him, or if she should be doing more. Yet, this is precisely the mechanism employed by a manipulative man: he places himself at the center and dictates how things should function, including the life of "his" woman. He exerts control (over her schedule, finances, friendships, and mobile phone), criticizes her ("What are you wearing?" or "What have you done now?"), devalues her ("You're always the same; you'll never succeed; where would you be without me?"), shifts the blame onto her ("You made me angry; it's all your fault; you don't do enough for me"), and leads her to doubt her own perception of reality ("You're making it all up; that never happened; you're just overreacting...").

When a woman finally realizes and recognizes the violence inherent in these dynamics, even while suffering, she is often unable to break free or leave, she has become dependent on her partner. Why? Not because she is foolish or masochistic, but perhaps because she has been conditioned to believe that love is synonymous with endurance and sacrifice; perhaps because her need to be loved is so great that she accepts even a toxic form of love; perhaps because she hopes to recapture the fulfillment she felt in the early days; or perhaps because she has become so convinced of her own inadequacy that she fears she cannot make it on her own. There is only one way out, and it requires an initial step: breaking the silence, seeking help, and reaching out to an anti-violence center.

BIBLE VERSE

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

(Isaiah 41:10)

COMMENT

When a woman is a victim of violence, God does not ask her to remain where she is being hurt in order to prove to herself or others how strong she is. He tells her: "Do not fear: I am the one who sustains you and makes you strong" (Isaiah 41:10). The strength needed to leave an abusive relationship does not come from the ability to endure even more, but from the awareness that God accompanies every step toward freedom, safety, and peace. Seeking help, distancing oneself from violence, and safeguarding one's own life and heart are not signs of weakness or a lack of faith; on the contrary, they are concrete expressions of the courage and trust with which one accepts the help that God offers.

PRAYER

God, You are close to those with a broken heart. Look with love upon women wounded by violence, and grant them the courage to seek help, to protect themselves, and to rediscover freedom and peace. Bring into their lives people capable of listening to them and supporting them. Free them from fear and guilt, and remind them that they are precious, loved, and free. Amen

26 NOVEMBER 2026

The museum of the self: digital narcissism and the decomposition of the ego



The obsession with the digital self and the dependence of young women on social media can be reinterpreted, through the lens of the psychology of art, as a modern-day "Narcissus syndrome," in which the smartphone screen replaces the pool of water from the myth. The obsessive quest for aesthetic validation, measured in "likes" and fleeting interactions, is, in essence, the fragmentation of the "self" placed within a permanent, virtual museum exhibition, accessible to anyone at any time of day.

In classical portraiture, from Artemisia Gentileschi to Frida Kahlo, the female body served as a powerful instrument for internal exploration, an expression of trauma, power, or profound identity. Today, "selfie culture" inverts this paradigm. The body is no longer the subject of a work of art communicating an intimate truth; instead, it becomes an object of mass-produced design, altered by digital filters that standardize its features according to algorithmic aesthetic canons.

This visual short-circuit triggers a psychological dissociation: the young woman simultaneously becomes both the curator and the artwork within her own virtual gallery. The dependency stems precisely from the performance anxiety linked to this perpetual "exposure." Much like in a Cubist painting, one's self-image is fractured into a thousand digital fragments, all validated by an audience, leaving the authentic self hollowed out and trapped in a constant need for an external gaze to certify its social existence.

QUESTION
Learn more
How can faith help us reconstruct the self, beyond the gaze of others?

BIBLE VERSE

"I have the right to do anything," you say, but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything", but I will not be mastered by anything.

(1 Corinthians 6:12)

COMMENT

It is not easy to discern the point that separates what is merely "permissible", a matter of indifference—from what is truly beneficial for life, for the life that matters most: the spiritual life. Left to our own devices, we become lost in a labyrinth of choices, all of them seemingly easy, all of them promising success. In the vast marketplace of media, everything appears within reach, yet it often conceals hidden dangers. Young women are particularly vulnerable to insecurity and the risk of losing themselves amidst the many models of identity on offer, caught up in a cycle of selfies, eventually becoming dominated by the gaze of others. Yet, "the word of the Lord is a lamp to our feet" (Psalm 119:105); it provides guidance even along the most winding paths and sets us free to be our true selves.

PRAYER

Lord, please enlighten us. We ask this for adolescent girls, so fragile yet so strong, courageous yet fearful, full of energy and dreams, as they navigate a world that seems to offer so much while taking so much away. We entrust their youth to You: protect them, let them fly, do not clip their wings, but do not let them fall; and should they fall, help them to rise and walk again. We entrust their future to You, may it be one lived in freedom, with an awareness of both their rights and their responsibilities. Help them not to fear love; grant them the courage to speak up, even when their voices are unwelcome or in the minority; help them to listen without being overly judgmental, to defend justice, and to practice compassion. Amen.

27 NOVEMBER 2026

Always connected – always alone



"While I was swimming in a lake near Ivrea, my backpack was stolen. I lost everything: my mobile phone, documents, keys, and glasses. I was heading home, feeling dejected, clutching only a 10-euro note a friend had lent me for a train ticket, when a curious thought struck me: 'This is my chance! I have no documents, no identity! No one can track me or locate me…I'm disconnected and free!' A dizzying feeling, to be sure, though that was likely just the result of a rather stressful day…"

The idea that technological hyperconnectivity makes us less free, lonelier, and less happy is a serious hypothesis. In the most interconnected era in history, the perception of loneliness is constantly on the rise: the Order of Psychologists in Italy reveals that 55% of patients turn to chatbots as a "surrogate" for a psychologist, entrusting their psychological well-being to a machine. Yet, perhaps the most concerning aspect is the disconnection from one's own self. The algorithm, fed with our data, preferences, and tastes, can never do justice to our contradictory complexity; instead, like a clouded mirror, it reflects a static image of who we are. As Pietro Del Soldà writes in *Amore e libertà* ("Love and Freedom"), we risk "the hegemony of a digital identity over our lives, one that drastically simplifies the complexity of our psyche." That complexity, however, can emerge through unexpected encounters with people and environments vastly different from our own, encounters the algorithm will never facilitate, yet which connect us to the parts of ourselves that are less "trackable," submerged, and adventurous. And in engaging with what is different, one is never truly alone.

We are immersed in an invisible web of voices from all over the world, promising constant closeness. Yet, at the heart of this ceaseless connection, we discover a profound, silent solitude: the solitude of those who find themselves facing ultimate questions, questions that thousands of contacts cannot answer, such as the meaning of one's own real, non-virtual journey, the weight of one's choices, and the presence of pain and death.We are immersed in an invisible web of voices from all over the world, promising constant closeness. Yet, at the heart of this ceaseless connection, we discover a profound, silent solitude: the solitude of those who find themselves facing ultimate questions, questions that thousands of contacts cannot answer, such as the meaning of one's own real, non-virtual journey, the weight of one's choices, and the presence of pain and death.

QUESTION
Learn more
What do we look for on the screen that we don't dare ask of the person next to us?

BIBLE VERSE

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."
(Luke 22:42)

COMMENT

This is the experience Jesus lived through in Gethsemane. He, too, was surrounded by relationships: united to the Father by an eternal bond, with his disciples by his side. Yet, at the decisive moment, he experiences an abysmal solitude, the solitude of one who fully embraces his mission of peace, without shying away from suffering. As the disciples sleep, he says: "My soul is overwhelmed with a sorrow unto death."

This experience speaks to us, too. No "like" provides answers to life's vital questions; no digital connection can replace the physical presence of someone by our side during times of pain and fear. Social media may bridge distances, but it cannot inhabit our pain.

Our destiny, however, is not solitude! In Gethsemane, Jesus' relationship with the Father is not extinguished; rather, it is crowned with trust: "Father, not my will, but yours, be done." This is not a surrender to evil, but a trust in a God who causes light to rise again, even in the deepest night. We need not merely a multitude of contacts, but the grace of God and genuine bonds capable of dwelling within our silence, even in the thickest darkness.

PRAYER

O God of love, in the nights of our solitude, when silence weighs heavy and the heart seeks a friendly presence, come to dwell within our questions, our thoughts, and our fears. You who have known Gethsemane, accompany our uncertain steps and set us free from the isolation that extinguishes hope.

28 NOVEMBER 2026

The anatomy of the void





BOOK: Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* a monumental work that combines neuroscience, clinical psychology and profound human empathy

THE DRUG EXPERIENCE: JULIAN'S FORWARD FALL

Julian was a brilliant chemical engineer who had an expert understanding of the brain's dopamine receptors. He knew exactly what was happening within his nervous system whenever he took substances to numb the pain of a devastating divorce and a professional failure. For years, he experienced his addiction as a paradox: he tried to combat it with scientific rationality, only to fail every single time.

The turning point did not come when he decided to be "strong," but when he found the courage to confront his own inner void, without holding anything back. One night, after hitting rock bottom, he stopped blaming the substance and asked himself the forbidden question: "What is this loneliness of mine truly hungry for?" He realized that his addiction was the only way he knew to grant himself "permission to exist", an anesthetic against the judgment of others and his own relentless perfectionism.

Julian stopped treating desire as an enemy to be destroyed and began to listen to it as an alarm bell for the soul. Whenever he felt the impulse, instead of suppressing it, he acknowledged it, welcomed it into his prayer, and brought it before God: "Lord, I do not know how to exist without crutches, but here I am, break this bread of misery for me."

The path was not linear: there were relapses and moments of deep darkness. But healing began when he stopped chasing moral perfection and began to let himself be loved in his brokenness. His brain chemistry changed only when his heart found a place where it no longer needed to hide.

QUESTION
Learn more
Do we know how to stay close to those who withdraw into addiction, before loneliness becomes a cage?

BIBLE VERSE

"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

(Matthew 12:43-45)

COMMENT

Addiction – nicotine, substances or other surrogates - is often described as a moral defect or a lack of willpower. It's a convenient cultural lie. Anyone who struggles with an addiction knows that willpower exists; the problem is that it wears out.

Matteo's text offers a stark anthropological and spiritual insight: the brain and the soul cannot tolerate a void. If we root out a destructive habit, when the house is "swept and put in order", but leave the inner space desolate, that emptiness cries out for redress. For Julian, drugs and cigarettes weren't just a chemical addiction, but an existential cane: a support on which his soul leaned to keep from collapsing under the weight of pain, anxiety, or a sense of inadequacy.

Telling someone struggling with addiction to "just stop" is like tearing off their prosthetic limb and asking them to run a marathon on their stumps. Addiction is not overcome by fighting the substance, but by filling the ontological void it once occupied. Until that emptiness is inhabited by a real Presence, by a greater purpose and a mercy capable of embracing the chasms within us, the mind will seek to fill it with something else, often something worse. True sobriety is not the absence of poison; it is an abundance of life.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, break the chains of drugs, free my mind, heal my heart, and give me back the strength to choose life. When I am weak, sustain me. When I fall, lift me up. When I lose hope, hold me close to You. Do not leave me a prisoner of addiction, but make me free, strong, and able to begin again. Amen.

29 NOVEMBER 2026

The stubborn independence of afghan women





BOOK: *Afghanistan Dossier 2025 – The Denied Rights of Afghan Women*, compiled by CISDA. Free download here.

The situation of Afghan women is one of the most dramatic consequences of the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Since then, access to education and employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public life have been severely restricted. This progressive exclusion has turned fundamental rights into daily struggles.

And yet, women's autonomy continues to find space. Studying in secret, working from home, supporting one's family, or sharing knowledge with other women are forms of resistance that preserve a sense of independence, gestures that are often invisible, yet essential for countering the isolation imposed by the regime.

In this context, the experience of RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, founded in 1977 to defend women's rights and promote a democratic society, is significant. Through educational, healthcare, and social projects, it supports the most vulnerable communities, transforming education into a tool for emancipation.

From Italy, CISDA (Italian Coordination for the Support of Afghan Women) works alongside Afghan feminist organizations and supports their projects. The resistance of Afghan women is not merely a response to the regime's restrictions; it is a determination to keep alive the possibility of making choices, gaining knowledge, and building their own future. Where freedom is denied, every form of autonomy becomes an act of resistance.

Can study, sharing, and work serve as tools of freedom and resistance for women living under a regime that restricts their rights, and even in contexts that are not fundamentalist or democratic? Why has the international community forgotten Afghan women in the name of normalizing the misogynistic, theocratic regime of the Taliban?

QUESTION
Learn more
How long can a world call itself civilized if half of Afghanistan's population is erased from public life?

BIBLE VERSE

"It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. "

(Isaiah 4: 6)

MEDITATION

At times, life feels like a scorching desert or a violent storm. Tormenting life circumstances can cause us to lose our balance or our will to live. God does not promise us an impregnable fortress; instead, He gives us a simple hut, perhaps fragile in the eyes of the world, yet sufficient to keep us safe. Chapter 4 of the Prophet Isaiah tells us that, following periods of tribulation and purification, God promises His protection to the faithful. He does not eliminate the storms and pain of life; rather, in the very midst of the torment, He creates a refuge through His nearness, a presence that often envelops us in a very subtle way. It might manifest as a conversation, an unexpected solution, empathetic support, or a silent prayer. These are the small signs in our daily lives that allow our souls to breathe a sigh of relief and draw upon new hope. Our Afghan sisters, who once again find themselves in an extreme situation, devoid of any independence, may need precisely this in order to keep living and fighting: a sign from women elsewhere in the world that they are in our thoughts, and that we support them, including through financial aid. Such a small gesture can make all the difference, and we must ensure it is not withheld.

PRAYER

Our God, we do not ask You to undo the atrocities that human beings have brought about, for how could we ask You to mend what humanity has broken? We do, however, ask You for the strength and courage to persist, so that the world may see greater justice and women may be free to choose their own lives.

30 NOVEMBER 2026

The NO PFAS moms



The PFAS contamination in Veneto is one of the most serious pollution episodes at European level. It affects a large part of the province of Vicenza and the areas of Verona and Padua. Caused by spills of perfluoroalkyl substances from the Miteni plant in Trissino, it polluted waterways and underground aquifers over approximately 180 square kilometers: the number of people involved could reach up to 350,000.

Among the associations formed to speak out against the contamination, the "NO PFAS Moms Group" (*Gruppo mamme NO PFAS*) holds a prominent place. It originated with a group of mothers in the Vicenza area who, in early 2017, upon seeing biomonitoring data for their children that revealed contamination levels tens of times higher than the danger threshold, reached out to other mothers through schools, parishes, and personal networks. Before long, their numbers grew to the hundreds. They knocked on many institutional doors, met with technical experts, members of parliament, and government ministers, and even took their cause to the European Parliament. They followed every hearing of the first-instance trial, which concluded in June 2025 with the conviction of 11 executives from the company Miteni. Today, they continue to keep the focus firmly on environmental remediation and biomonitoring efforts.

SERIE CONSIGLIATA:
Toxic Town (Netflix). Produzione britannica, racconta una delle peggiori catastrofi ambientali del Regno Unito, a Corby, e la lotta di un gruppo di madri.

FILM CONSIGLIATO:
"Cattive acque (Dark Waters, 2019) di Todd Haynes. Racconta la vera storia dell'avvocato Robert Bilott (Mark Ruffalo), che per primo affrontò in tribunale la DuPont, accusata di contaminazione da Pfas negli USA.

BIBLE VERSE

"Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice!"
(Habakkuk 2: 12)

COMMENT

The West is in a violent material and spiritual swamp: some consciences are wondering where the path of "political correctness" or "no alternatives", as you choose, taken fifty years ago has led us. Beyond opposition to rearmament, conscription, militarization, and war, all of which serve to accelerate the plunder of nations, there is the issue of public health. Here, one sees isolated mobilizations, often reactive and emergency-driven rather than systemic, against the controlled dismantling of public healthcare, as well as against climate warming, drought, and pollution. These factors drive disease and mortality, resulting in life expectancies that vary according to social class. A case in point is the Italian "Zero PFAS" network (which includes the *Mamme noPFAS*, "Moms Against PFAS", group in the Veneto region); PFAS are toxic substances used, among other things, in the cooling systems of data centers that power artificial intelligence.

We, women and men alike, are entirely dependent upon a symbolic order and a model of development that is both unsustainable and necrophilic, a system of which we ourselves are the bearers. There is a belief that this system can be mitigated without addressing the very foundations described by Habakkuk. Yet, a multitude of people of good will hold fast to the thread of life, with determination, and at times, with desperation. Are the churches today capable of speaking and enacting a word of liberation? Or do they preach and practice a faith devoid of hope, and a god with no future?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to remember that the doors of Your Kingdom are already wide open, even when, as we look around, we fail to notice it. We live one day at a time, yet each day exists because it is oriented toward the future, and that future is You. You give meaning to our days and point us toward the eternal horizon of life: with You today, and in Your presence tomorrow. Amen.
Recommended series: Toxic Town (Netflix). A British production, it recounts one of the worst environmental disasters in the United Kingdom, in Corby, and the struggle of a group of mothers.
Recommended film: "Dark Waters" (2019), directed by Todd Haynes. It tells the true story of lawyer Robert Bilott (Mark Ruffalo), who was the first to take on DuPont in court, accusing the company of PFAS contamination in the United States.

QUESTION
Learn more
How can we enhance women's ability to work together to concretely address environmental emergencies?

1 DECEMBER 2026 - WORLD AIDS DAY

Education that fosters independence


Foto Melkam edil

The German Church School in Addis Ababa is the first inclusive school project in Ethiopia. Founded in the early 1970s by the Lutheran community of the Kreuzkirche as a socio-educational initiative, the school is located within the church compound. The institution is funded by the community itself, private donations, and various organizations, including Melkam Edil and CBM (Christoffel-Blindenmission). The current principal, Amen Teshome, explains that the curriculum spans from the first to the eighth grade. "Through their education and the support provided to their families, our students have the opportunity to build autonomous and independent lives."

For many years, AIDS has been a serious problem in Ethiopia. At present, 13 parents have informed the school that they are HIV-positive, though it is estimated that the actual figure is between 5% and 10%. If parents are no longer able to work, the school provides financial support to the family. Those who are still able to work receive training or assistance in starting a small, independent business to earn a living, for example, by being provided with a stall to sell coffee or vegetables. For students, and especially for girls, the opportunity to enter an educational program, combined with the support of their entire family, paves the way toward a future defined by independence.

QUESTION

Learn more

What does it cost us, and how much does it enrich us, to support an education that grants dignity to those who seem to lack the means for it?

BIBLE VERSE

"Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life."

(Proverbs 4:13)

COMMENT

On the occasion of December 1st, World AIDS Day, this reflection becomes all the more urgent. The German Church School demonstrates how love for one's neighbor translates into concrete action. Supporting these children, who are affected by their parents' illness or are themselves HIV-positive, means breaking the cycle of poverty and stigma. Education grants them the possibility of an independent life. It is not merely a matter of material aid; the school serves as a key to independence, especially for young girls. This project is a living example of love for one's neighbor, reminding each of us that even a small gesture can transform vulnerability into dignity and hope for the future.

PRAYER

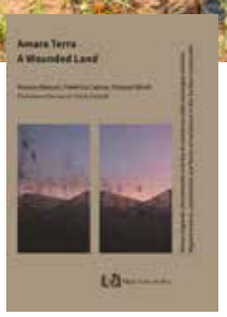
Lord, we thank You for the school that welcomes every child, every boy and every girl. Bless those who teach and those who provide care, as well as families enduring the hardships of illness and poverty. Teach us a form of independence that is not about closing ourselves off, but rather about being empowered to live freely and to give of ourselves to others. May education help girls to embark on a path toward a self-determined and independent life, and help boys to grow into men who are conscious of, and respectful toward, the freedom of others. Amen.



2 DECEMBER 2026

A slavery that cannot be seen





BOOK: Amara terra (Bitter Land). Monica Massari, Federica Cabras, Simona Miceli, Migrant Women, Exploitation, and Forms of Resistance in the Sicilian Countryside, Milano University Press, December 2024. Free download here.

In Sicily, between Acate and Santa Croce Camerina, vast stretches of plastic turn the fields a silvery hue. Beneath an unbearable, sweltering heat, thousands of Romanian women harvest vegetables, earning 15 euros for a 12-hour day, while breathing in pesticides, all within the confines of their employer's property. Those who control the work control everything else, too: one's time, one's shopping, and even the route one's children take to school.

But this is merely the most visible form: modern slavery is not an on-off switch that separates the free from the unfree; rather, it is a spectrum of degrees. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) has moved away from dividing the world into the free and the unfree, choosing instead to examine these various degrees, these asymmetrical dependencies. On that scale, the lives of many women in Western societies fall much lower than we would care to admit.

In our country, 71% of unpaid care work is performed by women, amounting to five hours a day and a staggering 336 billion euros in unrecorded economic value. In 2024, nearly 61,000 parents left their jobs upon the arrival of their first child; seven out of ten were mothers. A lack of support services means that imbalances take root within the family itself. For the same number of hours worked, a woman earns 5.6% less; this gap rises to 16.6% for those with a university degree, and to 30.8% for those in executive roles. Those who lack an independent income find themselves facing a closed door, a door for which they possess neither the key nor even the ability to see the keyhole.

This is nothing new. At the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, between 1445 and 1485, one out of every three foundlings was the child of an enslaved woman. In Venice, enslaved women were baptized and immediately married off, with their husbands chosen by their masters. Centuries have passed, yet even today, not all women are fully free to make their own life choices.

Are we doing enough to fight exploitation?

QUESTION
Learn more
Are we doing enough to fight exploitation?

BIBLE VERSE

"So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world."

(Galatians 4: 3)

COMMENT

Are we free or not? This philosophical question threatens to draw us into a long, winding journey across various eras and disciplines: as Protestants, we might recall the dispute between Luther and Erasmus regarding freedom of conscience. Sigmund Freud, the "father" of psychotherapy, also offers a clear answer: he posits the co-existence of different parts of our mind, parts that dynamically alternate, integrate, and at times even hinder one another. "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden", "Where the 'it' was, the 'I' must come to be" , that is, awareness and the corresponding capacity to choose. Relative, because we know, beyond a certain determinism and the optimism of the late nineteenth century, that the choices we make today (and, in part, those we will make tomorrow) are conditioned by many factors, both personal (such as those rooted in family and generation) and social. Learning of the existence of "slavery" in our country today not only saddens and outrages us, but also leaves us with a sense of helplessness, shattering our faith in the progress of societies that, decades ago, had attained a high level of awareness regarding their own values and the dignity of the individual.

PRAYER

"Christ has set us free so that we might be free; stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Our freedom, the "freedom of the Christian", is not merely the result of clear thinking; above all, it stems from the certainty of being loved by God, which in turn fosters a sense of gratitude and a willingness to accept ourselves just as we are. Lord, help us to open ourselves to the gift of Your grace, so that we may become joyful people, free to act for the freedom of all, everyone, everywhere, in this world. Amen.

3 DECEMBER 2026

To be seen, to have a voice, to be able to choose

"God sees me." It's a simple phrase, but it becomes a declaration of freedom when uttered by a woman accustomed to being perceived first through her disability and only then as a person.

Hannah Boyd is a young woman who, following a traumatic brain injury sustained at a very early age, grew up grappling not only with the consequences of her disability but also with the expectations of others. Doctors believed she would never walk, speak, or live independently. In the *Words of Life* podcast (The Salvation Army International), she recounts a journey marked by faith, a profound mental health crisis, and the painful feeling of having been neglected by certain churches. In The Salvation Army, she found a place where she is not defined by her wheelchair, but is instead welcomed simply as Hannah.

When we talk about women with disabilities, the tendency is to focus primarily on care, protection, and needs—and far less often on autonomy, choice, responsibility, vocation, leadership, desires, and the future. Yet, independence does not mean doing everything on one's own; it means being the primary agents in the decisions that shape one's own life—receiving support without that support supplanting one's own will—and having the opportunity to participate, serve, work, love, believe, Hagar is a woman on the margins—a foreigner, vulnerable. Yet, it is she who gives a name to God: "the God who sees me." Being seen by God does not mean being observed in one's fragility, but rather being recognized in one's wholeness. No circumstance can erase a person's dignity, voice, or vocation. Disability is not solely a matter of an individual's body or mind; environments, structures, and attitudes can also create exclusion. This is also reflected in the official position of The Salvation Army regarding people with disabilities, which is rooted in the dignity of every human being, created in the image of God. It calls for overcoming discrimination, fostering self-determination, and involving people with disabilities in the life of the Church and in the policies that affect them.and be heard. For society and for the churches, the question also arises: how many obstacles do we ourselves place in the way of a person's autonomy?



FILM: Eva Libertad, **The Silence of Others**. Deaf. An invitation to view disability from the perspective of those who experience it.

QUESTION

Learn more

In our churches, do women with disabilities find only welcome and assistance, or do they also find a voice, the opportunity to make choices, responsibilities, and spaces for leadership?

BIBLE VERSE

"She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."
(Genesis 16:13)

COMMENT

Hagar is a woman on the margins—a foreigner, vulnerable. Yet, it is she who gives a name to God: "the God who sees me." Being seen by God does not mean being observed in one's fragility, but rather being recognized in one's wholeness. No circumstance can erase a person's dignity, voice, or vocation. Disability is not solely a matter of an individual's body or mind; environments, structures, and attitudes can also create exclusion. This is also reflected in the official position of The Salvation Army regarding people with disabilities, which is rooted in the dignity of every human being, created in the image of God. It calls for overcoming discrimination, fostering self-determination, and involving people with disabilities in the life of the Church and in the policies that affect them. The goal is not a community for people with disabilities, but rather a community in which they can live, participate, and serve alongside others. Churches that proclaim a God who calls each person by name can become laboratories for a different kind of society—communities in which a woman with disabilities is not merely a recipient of care, but an active agent of mission, witness, and change. Perhaps this is where it all begins: by creating the space for them to speak, to make choices, and to transform their own communities.

PRAYER

God, You who see us and call us by name, deliver us from a way of looking at others that reduces a person to what they can or cannot do. Teach us to recognize in women with disabilities, sisters who possess a voice, desires, gifts, and vocations. Make our churches accessible, in their physical spaces, their language, their relationships, and, above all, their decision-making. Grant us the humility to stop always speaking on behalf of others, and the courage to remove the barriers we have built, so that every individual may truly belong, make their own choices, serve, and contribute fully. May we, by seeing one another through Your eyes, become witnesses to dignity, freedom, and justice. Amen.

4 DECEMBER 2026

Hidden addictions and alcohol





FILM: 28 Days (2000). A story about recognizing addiction and the difficult path to recovery.

QUESTION

Learn more

Asking for help is the first step toward freedom: what can a community do to ensure that this step is also a feasible one?

BREAKING THE SILENCE AND REGAINING DIGNITY

Addictions do not always have an obvious face. They can hide behind an orderly life, a job, a family, or even a constant presence within a religious community. Alcohol, socially accepted as it is, can become an escape from pain, loneliness, anxiety, or wounds that have never been spoken of. When consumption turns into a necessity, the individual learns to conceal it: they downplay the amounts they consume, drink in secret, and promise to quit tomorrow. Silence protects the addiction, not the person.

Addiction does not just affect the person who drinks. It permeates relationships, erodes trust, and can lead to fear, financial instability, humiliation, and isolation. In many households, it is primarily women and children who bear the consequences. It must be made clear, however, that while alcohol can exacerbate aggressive behavior, it never justifies violence. The responsibility always lies with the person who commits it. No woman should ever be urged to remain silent, to forgive without being protected, or to stay in a dangerous situation for the sake of preserving the image of her family or community.

Many women also experience a hidden addiction. The fear of being judged as inadequate mothers, wives, or believers can prevent them from seeking help. Behind the behavior that needs to be corrected, there is always a person who deserves to be heard. Shame leads to isolation; a supportive and competent approach can pave the way toward healing. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, it is the first act of freedom. Addiction often requires medical, psychological, and social support. While prayer and community can sustain one's journey, they are not a substitute for professional care.

A response based on proximity: from its very origins, The Salvation Army has encountered people wounded by addiction and marginalization. The choice of abstinence represents prevention, freedom, and solidarity, not moral superiority. As Christians, we are called to reach out without passing judgment, offering a confidential listening ear, guidance toward appropriate services, and tangible protection to those experiencing violence. Our own communities must also learn to recognize the warning signs, refuse to cover up abuse, and collaborate with anti-violence centers, healthcare services, and recovery programs.

BIBLE VERSE

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

COMMENT

Jesus encountered people in truth, without reducing them to their mistakes. He did not condone what destroys life; instead, He restored dignity and the possibility of a fresh start. The Christian faith does not promise magical solutions: it proclaims that no person is defined by their addiction, and that suffering need not have the final word. This hope becomes credible when it takes the form of a reliable presence, an open door, and concrete assistance. If alcohol controls your life, or if it creates fear and violence in your home, do not remain alone; speak with someone you can trust and reach out to professionals. In situations of danger, the priority is to protect yourself and any minors by immediately contacting emergency services or an anti-violence center.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, draw near to those who are struggling in silence with addiction and to those living in fear. Grant them the courage to seek help, lead them toward capable people, and make our communities safe places, places defined by truth, protection, and mercy. In the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

5 DECEMBER 2026

Both the one and the other



Volunteering stems from a willingness to offer something of our own, time, skills, a listening ear, experience, to others. In 2026, the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, we are invited to reflect even more deeply on the value of this commitment.

But what happens within the relationship between those who offer help and those who receive it? We often think of independence as the ability to manage entirely on our own. Yet, no one is truly self-sufficient. Throughout our lives, we need one another, we need care, a listening ear, skills, trust, and opportunities. Having needs does not mean being dependent. This distinction is crucial for a woman seeking to rebuild her life after experiencing violence. Moving forward does not mean being able to do everything on one's own right away. Securing a home, finding a job, caring for one's children, and even having someone who will listen, can be essential for making a fresh start.

After a relationship in which trust has been betrayed, trusting again can be difficult. A respectful volunteer relationship can offer a different experience: someone stands by me without deciding for me; he listens to me without judging me, respects my yes and my no; it recognizes not only what I need, but also what I know, want and can do.

Helping does not mean making oneself indispensable. And receiving help does not mean giving up one's freedom. This also applies to those who volunteer: the desire to be useful can lead us to lose sight of our own limits. Yet, even those who provide help can grow tired, need support, or say no. A relationship that fosters freedom does not exhaust either the person receiving help or the person giving it.

Truly sustainable development also begins here: with relationships capable of supporting without holding back, accompanying without taking someone's place, giving without dominating, and receiving without feeling inferior.

QUESTION

Learn more

How can we help one another without creating dependency, while instead fostering freedom and trust?

BIBLE VERSE

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."

(John 13:14)

MEDITATION

Jesus rises from the table, lays aside his garments, takes a towel, and bows before his disciples to wash their feet. Peter objects: "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus replies: "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me" (John 13:8). Peter must learn not only how to serve, but also how to allow himself to be served. This can be difficult for us, too: we are accustomed to being the ones who provide care, respond to needs, and manage things on our own. Receiving help can make us feel vulnerable or dependent. Jesus, however, transforms service into a reciprocal relationship: "one another." There are not some who always provide help and others who are always in need; rather, each person can bow before another, and each must be able to allow another to bow before her.

This perspective also challenges our own volunteer work: those we encounter are individuals with their own personal histories, abilities, desires, and freedom—all of which must be respected, rather than merely people in need of our help.

For a woman who has experienced an abusive relationship, encountering someone who stands by her side without seeking to control her, and who respects her decisions, can offer the experience of a different kind of relationship, one where needing another person does not mean belonging to them. This is one of the profoundest expressions of Gospel-based reciprocity: discovering that we can need one another without losing ourselves.

PRAYER

Lord, teach us to bow before one another without feeling superior. Teach us to accept an outstretched hand without feeling weaker. Grant us the freedom to help without seeking to become indispensable, and the humility to ask for help when our own strength is not enough. Teach us to recognize and respect the desires, choices, and limitations - both our own and those of others. Make our communities places where we can serve one another freely. Amen.

6 DECEMBER 2026

Gambling



In a period marked by wars, rising costs, instability, and uncertainty, many people experience significant financial anxiety. In such a situation, gambling can appear to be an escape. However, gambling does not always begin out of financial need; it may start as a form of entertainment, a way to seek excitement or pleasure, or as a reaction to stress, frustration, or boredom. It is precisely this emotional component that can lead to it spiraling into a compulsive addiction.

It often begins with a small win. The resulting euphoria and adrenaline drive a person to repeat the experience; rather than acting as a deterrent, each loss becomes a challenge, a push to do whatever it takes to secure the next win. It is a cycle that is not merely "vicious" but pathological, where both losses and wins alike compel the individual to keep playing. When the money runs out, the person may resort to lying, manipulation, or taking on debt just to continue, ultimately jeopardizing their job and the financial stability of their entire family.

Gambling is a genuine illness. It is an addiction to a substance produced by one's own body: adrenaline. For a long time, gambling was primarily associated with men, but it is increasingly becoming a problem for women as well, though it often manifests in different, more discreet ways, such as through scratch cards, bingo, lotteries, or online platforms, where computers and smartphones allow for complete anonymity. It serves as an attempt to escape from distress, stress, anxiety, depression, or economic and psychological dependence; the phenomenon is even on the rise among very young women.

To feed their addiction, those who gamble become cunning and learn to manipulate, involving the closest people and sacrificing everything to satisfy the compulsion. The game becomes the only reason for living and the others an increasingly invisible shadow.

In this dramatic situation, family members, friends, and partners find themselves disarmed, disappointed, angry, perhaps even crushed by debt, and utterly powerless; any help they attempt to offer ends up becoming a form of self-inflicted harm. They are gripped by a desperate, urgent need to save the person, coupled with a sense of guilt at the very thought of leaving them to their fate.

It is essential to seek outside help through the healthcare system or organizations such as the "Gamblers Anonymous" 12-step program, founded in the United States in 1957 and now comprising around a hundred groups across all regions of Italy. Inspired by the "Alcoholics Anonymous" model, this program focuses primarily on achieving abstinence and regaining control over one's life.

Family members can find support and comfort in "Gam-Anon" self-help groups.

BIBLE VERSE

"Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones."
Isaiah 54: 11-12)

COMMENT

When a woman becomes lost in gambling, there is often a deep-seated need at the root of it: a desire to escape a reality that is not always easy to bear. Yet, even the greatest winnings cannot fill the voids she feels within. Gambling offers no true comfort; instead, it breeds addiction and leaves behind a bitter sense of defeat. There is, however, a God who sees our lostness and promises us that our worth far exceeds any illusory win. In God, we have no need to „win", we are already more than victors, thanks to Jesus, who triumphed on the cross and offers us life in abundance.

PRAYER

Blessed God, help me to seek love in You, to find in You the fulfillment of all my needs, and to sense my own inestimable worth, for You make me victorious each time You grant me the strength to avoid falling into the abyss of gambling. Take control of my mind and my entire being. In Christ Jesus. Amen.

QUESTION
Learn more
How much silence and shame surround those caught in gambling, and how can a community break them?

7 DECEMBER 2026

A feminine approach to care



Medicine is both a science and an art, dedicated to human health. In the West it has developed around a historically androcentric paradigm, with standards that have had the young adult male as their model. Only recently, and still not consistently, have gender differences become a significant factor in research. There remains a need for a strong commitment to raising awareness and providing training for young professionals, for instance within the field of pharmacological research. Hormonal and metabolic factors, as well as body composition, influence the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of medications; research conducted based solely on male parameters puts women, in particular, at risk of drug dependency. Standardized dosing, the medicalization of emotional distress, and the underestimation of pain are consequences of "gender blindness," which can lead to overprescribing or iatrogenic dependency. It is essential to consolidate this shift in the cultural paradigm and invest in gender-based medicine, fostering a more accurate, precise, and informed approach to healthcare that supports women's autonomy and independence.

QUESTION

Learn more

To love means to know and accept the uniqueness of others.

BIBLE VERSE

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

(Genesis 1: 27)

MEDITATION

The history of exegesis has not sufficiently emphasized that, even within the literal text of the creation account, the distinctiveness and specificity of the masculine and the feminine emerge as signs of both equality and a certain distance, a distance that is, in fact, what makes a relationship between free and independent persons possible. There must be a likeness, a likeness to the Creator, in which human beings see themselves reflected, as well as an equal dignity and the unique identity of each individual. It is within this dialectic between those who are equal yet different that the possibility of love unfolds; love arises from mutual knowledge and flourishes from the very essence of every human being, who is relational from the very beginning. The Christian faith, centered on the Incarnation, is called to uphold this truth in life, work, the sciences, philosophical and theological thought, and the practices of daily living. This entails a profound attentiveness to the other in their specific, unique, and unrepeatable nature, a nature that cannot be reduced to any rigid schema, but is instead precious and deserving of the utmost care, in accordance with the identity with which each person was fashioned, an identity to which the biblical text bears witness.

PRAYER

Lord of Wisdom and Light, we praise and thank You for the gift of differences, for the complexity of creation, and for the plurality of beauty. We thank You for the women of science and knowledge, courageous pioneers and brilliant researchers whom You have bestowed upon the world.

Look upon every woman in her daily life: those who seek justice, and those who fight for freedom and for rights that have been denied. Grant them insight, tenacity, and clarity of thought; provide support when their contributions risk being forgotten or undervalued. Bless the work of all, that it may be guided by a desire to serve, to foster the common good, and to seek the truth. Teach us to walk together, so that every woman may flourish freely, autonomous and independent, without fear and without violence.

Grant us the strength and courage to speak clearly, to denounce violence, and to counter it with a vision of justice. Teach us to shape the present by nurturing harmonious relationships amidst our differences, and may science, enriched by diverse contributions, serve as an instrument for the loving care of the home we all share in this world. Amen.

8-9 DECEMBER 2026

Endometriosis, an invisible pain





BOOK: Marcello Ceccaroni, L'inferno invisibile. Endometriosi: la solitudine di un dolore senza nome, Laterza, 2026.

DOCUMENTARY FILM: Shannon Cohn, Endo What? (2016). Testimonies from women with endometriosis and insights from experts.

QUESTION
Learn more
Can those who are not believed in their pain count on our attention, or do we leave them alone?

"It's far more than just a 'painful period', it's a taboo." Endometriosis is a chronic condition that can cause pelvic pain, extremely painful menstrual periods, fatigue, and other issues that interfere with daily life, potentially even leading to infertility and serious psychological distress. It can emerge as early as adolescence, and a diagnosis often follows a long and complex journey. The problem, however, is not merely a medical one: a student might miss classes or exams, while those in the workforce may struggle to function on days when their symptoms are at their most intense.

In recent years, several well-known women have helped break the silence by sharing their own experiences of suffering, among them, actress and director Lena Dunham, and television host and activist Padma Lakshmi, who co-founded the Endometriosis Foundation of America alongside physician Tamer Seckin to advance awareness and research. The singer Halsey has also supported awareness-raising initiatives. The value of these accounts extends beyond the fame of those sharing them; they serve as a reminder that behind every diagnosis lie real people—with their own careers, relationships, and life plans.

In Italy, endometriosis is included in the Livelli Essenziali di Assistenza (LEA) as a chronic condition; however, the exemption from healthcare co-payments (code 063) applies only to stages III and IV under the ASRM classification. This recognition does not grant a general right to be absent from work or school; such absences are governed by existing regulations and applicable employment contracts. Legislative proposals have been introduced to provide greater protections regarding workplace absences, remote working, and the right to pursue education, but for the time being, these remain merely proposals.

The Italian Endometriosis Foundation, active since 2007, promotes research, public awareness, and support, while calling for a reduction in diagnostic delays. The movement led by these women raises a broader question: to what extent is a society capable of recognizing what cannot be seen? Recognizing endometriosis means believing those who say they are in pain and helping them feel better, ensuring that absence from school or work does not become a cause for penalty. Above all, it means moving past the notion that women's pain is a sign of weakness to be endured, and instead focusing on health, dignity, equality, and the right to education and employment.

BIBLE VERSE

"and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God".

(Luke 13: 11-13)

COMMENT

The stooped woman in Luke's Gospel makes us think of the ailments that often afflict women, both physical and psychological: her inability to straighten up may indicate the "burden" that women are often forced to bear, but also ailments that are minimized or ignored. It is Jesus who notices her suffering; far from ignoring it, He calls her to Himself and declares her set free. The touch of His hands brings about her healing, enabling her to glorify God. And, countering the laws that forbade such actions on the Sabbath, He asserts that she ought to be released from those bonds! Jesus has the power to lift our burdens and untie the knots that oppress us, even in seemingly impossible situations, and we can entrust ourselves to Him completely.

PRAYER

When suffering arrives, when pain seems to have no meaning, when I cannot understand the reason why, when I feel lost, Lord, look upon me—grant me Your grace! Amen.

10 DECEMBER 2026

To vote and to be elected

Paola Cortellesi, *C'è ancora domani*, Vision Distribution, 2023





BOOK: Serena Dandini, Paura non abbiamo. The Women Who Built the Republic – EINAUDI Editori, May 2026

Livia Turco, La Repubblica delle donne. From the right to vote to gender equality. Seventy years of political and civil achievements by Italian women – Edizioni UNICOPLI, June 2015

THE POWER TO DECIDE FOR ONESELF

It is well known that Italian women only gained the right to vote in 1946. In the popular imagination, the focus is almost always on the right to cast a vote, much like in the poignant final sequence of Paola Cortellesi's film, where women at the ballot box wipe off their lipstick before folding their ballots, ensuring they do not risk invalidating them. Far less consideration is given to the fact that universal suffrage also entails the right to be elected (the right to stand for office).

This, too, happened for the first time in 1946: 21 women were elected to the Constituent Assembly, a mere 4% of the 556 members tasked with drafting our Constitution. Though few in number, these "founding mothers" were able to champion rights specifically for women, such as the principle of equal pay, which was included in Article 37 thanks to their efforts. At that time, the right to vote also meant gaining access to the corridors of power, where one could advance the cause of liberation. While pay equity is not yet a universal reality, having a seat among the decision-makers makes a significant difference; furthermore, economic independence is an essential key to unlocking the door to self-determination.

BIBLE VERSE

"The daughters of Zelophehad (.....) names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah. They came forward and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest (....) at the entrance to the tent of meeting and said, "Our father (....) died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father's name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives."

(Numbers 27:1-4)

QUESTION
Learn more
What is the relationship between women's economic dependence and the difficulty they face in exercising self-determination?

COMMENT

After nearly 40 years in the desert, the people of Israel are able to enter the land promised by God, and Moses is called upon to oversee the distribution of the territory among the tribes (cf. Numbers 26:52–56). At this point, five sisters come forward to explain their situation: under the established rules, they would not have been permitted to inherit land, and their father's name would have been lost. With courage and determination, they propose a solution, and God upholds their position, declaring: "If a man dies and has no son, then you shall pass his inheritance to his daughter" (v. 8). These women, much like all those who fight to ensure equal rights for every human being, looked beyond the patriarchal reality of inequality in which they lived and boldly envisioned possessing property that would grant them economic independence. They sought the opportunity for self-determination, a pursuit that ultimately became a right for all women! And God supported their claim: the right to exist as individuals in their own right, rather than merely as the possessions of men.

PRAYER

God, our Creator, You who fashioned human beings in Your own image and likeness, bestowing the same vital breath and the same dignity upon both man and woman, we pray for all the women of the world who are engaged in the struggle to have equal rights recognized. Sustain their courage when weariness takes hold, and amplify their voices when injustice and silence seek to stifle them. Amen.

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