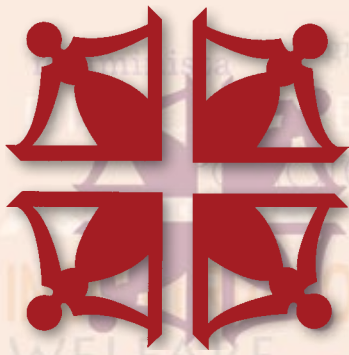




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The 16 days run from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December 2025, Human Rights Day.

WOMEN ON THE EDGE (MARGINS) THE SURPRISING REVOLT OF THE BORDERS 16 Days to Overcome Violence from 25 November to 10 December 2025



photo by Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva

Introduction

The term *margin* derives from the Latin *margo*, which also means limit, boundary. Unlike the latter, the margin, however, has a less geopolitical, more domestic tone: we find it in pieces of cloth, in the pages of books, even in digital documents. It is the end of a surface, but not for this reason crushed against an outside, rather it is a place that has and gives space, that has its own ways of functioning. This is clearly seen in figurative uses: if there is sufficient time, if we have ample room to make independent decisions, if we have spending margin, then we have something at our disposal. The social margin is found in that neighborhood that is almost no longer considered society, just as the margins of the page are practically no written page. It is a space in which a figurative surface, at its extreme edge, does not retain its full function: there, in that border area, many things and people can be let go, but just as many can happen. Just as in economics, where the margin can be negative, indicating a loss, but also positive if revenues exceed costs, the FDEI believes it can represent the marginality imposed or cultivated by women. From the margins it is possible to have a different, even revolutionary perspective on

things and situations: “from the margins and the marginalized can come teachings capable of addressing problems in a new and transformative way”, thus in the first meditation of this Notebook, at the center of which is the figure of the Syrophenician woman. This pagan woman, probably alone and therefore also poor, launches a provocation at Jesus that pushes him beyond his physical and mental boundaries, allowing him to understand what “in his being at the center he had not seen”. This is demonstrated by the women of two rival tribes in South Sudan, kept out of the bloody conflicts but called to mourn the dead. Women weave subtle yet powerful threads of female solidarity, until peace breaks out. Or women who no longer wish to be confined to a definition of gender or corporeality and who know how to produce new and creative ideas and spaces. Well, even Jesus was considered marginal, a poor Galilean, the son of a carpenter, who addressed the least. Yet from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, in the positive reversal of the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-23 and Matthew 5:1-12), those to whom it belongs, who are welcomed into it, finding justice, peace, respect, and joy, are precisely those on the edge (margins), and from there they move to deconstruct a perverse society...

Mirella Manocchio
FDEI President

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NOVEMBER 2025

From the margins, women push us to change



photo by Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva

In the face of abuse, violence, or discrimination, we must never accept isolation. The ‘We can do’ concept finds its expression in the struggle waged alongside other women, and not only. Furthermore, the violence one suffers is “mediated” by our being a man or a woman, it also varies whether one is “white” or “black”, or whether one falls outside the “heteronormative standard”.

I, the writer, am a man; this is a fact, and I must not forget it when I reflect on and take action against violence on women. A man, for example, can never say, “I understand you”. And not because of some form of negative prejudice (“men are stupid”), but because my emotions are mediated (and therefore filtered/shaped) by my being a white, Northwestern, straight man. This, however, does not mean paralysis of action; we all must act, but to do so in a truly constructive way, we men in particular must step back, step aside, and listen; listening speaks louder than words. Even simply asking the woman who has been attacked if she wants to talk about it, how she feels, or if she’ll allow us to help her, isn’t trivial. The attacked woman is a “victim” of an attack, but her identity isn’t defined by what she’s experienced. This is the first important step: helping the woman reclaim her identity.

BIBLE VERSE

“Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” (Mark 7:8)

QUESTION For Discussion

What concrete actions can we take for women who suffer discrimination and violence? How can we begin a respectful dialogue?

MEDITATION

In a single sentence, we learn that from the margins and the marginalized, teachings can emerge that can address problems in a new and transformative way. The speaker is a pagan woman who becomes a teacher to the Master. She, who was once an unbeliever (pardon the term) to be kept at a distance, thanks to her firmness, in the face of Jesus’ offensive response, manages to “convert” him.

The woman’s words allow Jesus to question himself: toward whom should he act? What are the boundaries? She who was on the margins grasps what Jesus, in his being at the center, had not seen. From her, he learns that in the Kingdom of God there is room for all peoples and that all are subjects of mission and recipients of the Gospel. This woman “on the margins” enables the transition from the mission “toward the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 10:5b-6; 15:24) to “all peoples” (Mt. 28:19)!

And Jesus isn’t the only one to learn; thanks to this story, we too learn and are reminded of the risk of withdrawing into ourselves and our own reality. We discover that from the margins, often undervalued, can come solutions capable of converting hearts, revolutionizing minds, and giving a new direction to our lives and those around us.

PRAYER

Lord, just as you can't embrace someone with your arms folded, you can't meet anyone by raising a wall of prejudice. Help us to be close to those in need, just as you never fail to be our neighbor and help us.
Amen.



LIBRO: Isabel Allende, *Donne dell'anima mia*, Feltrinelli Editore, 2020.

The author recalls moments from the past and lingers on the present to tell us the reasons for her feminism, which arose within the framework of a rigid patriarchal structure.

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NOVEMBER 2025

Women in Peace Procedures



BOOK: *Donne in guerra per la pace*, Amneris Vigarani e Patrizia Marzocchi, Scatole Parlanti, 2024

QUESTION For Discussion

How can we harness the power of women in building peace in seemingly hopeless conflicts?

An isolated area of Africa in the Rift Valley. A frontier, the Nakua River, a few fords. On one side, subtropical Southern Ethiopia, with green areas. On the other, the forgotten Turkana Desert, in northern Kenya. To the west, South Sudan. The Ilemi Triangle. No states. A few indigenous villages with an archaic lifestyle: semi-nomadic herders.

Two ethnic groups, the Turkana and the Nyangatom. Few terrible trails, a blank Google Maps: a Cipax-St. Paul Apostle mission meets elderly people and women. Their lives, they say, have always been plagued by bloody micro-conflicts, between villages or between the two ethnic groups: cattle theft, border crossings, especially during drought, and subsequent attacks, murders, and vendettas. Men always armed. A never-ending spiral of violence, exacerbated by climate change. Until women, faced with murdered sons and husbands, began to realize: too much blood, too much mourning, the already harsh life of communities continually destabilized, "It's time for peace." And, forming the small women's groups that always begin, they spoke, first among themselves, then with the "others." And then with the young and the old, in a long, patient, grassroots process that gave rise to the "Peace Committees." And peace has truly arrived, officially sanctioned in 2021: if

there's a drought, all shepherds can move to more fertile areas. And so far, it's holding up.

BIBLE VERSE

"David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands." (1 Samuel 25:32-33)

COMMENTARY

In the Bible, the process of establishing the kingdom of Israel coincides with wars and devastation. These narratives are told in a masculine way, where power games are asserted through the force of kings or rulers and coups d'état. In this chain, however, we are told the story of a female figure, Abigail, who appears to exercise wisdom in a time of blind violence and to work for peace, attentively listening to the situation. Abigail's action is one of encounter, and even while placing herself in a position of submission, she manages to break the strong chain of violence. And David recognizes this, blessing in her the God who gave her wisdom, preventing further bloodshed. A silent figure, a marginal woman in the great history of men, who manages to refocus the experience of faith that comes from encounter.

PRAYER

Amid the rubble that suffocates hope, we call upon you, Lord.

In the midst of violence and human stupidity, hold us accountable for our actions, which can generate change and open us to hope.

Let us act for your Kingdom, which does not involve weapons that do not lead to oppression, where love begins again from what the world breaks.
Amen

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NOVEMBER 2025

Women Fleeing War: Contexts and Challenges in Africa and Asia

BOOK: *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Dina Nayeri (2020)
It recounts the author's childhood, her escape from Iran, her journey through refugee camps and different countries until her arrival in the USA.

QUESTION For Discussion

How does a woman's identity change when she's forced to flee a war? What aspects transform, what strengthens?

In 2024, an estimated 73.5 million people were displaced from their countries due to conflict, violence, or disasters; often, these are women, children, and the elderly forced to flee in extreme conditions.

In Africa, the crisis is dramatic: in 2024, more than half of the continent's internally displaced people (over 34 million) are women, girls, and boys who fled mainly from South Sudan, DR Congo, and Sudan.

In Asia, protracted conflicts in Syria, Myanmar, and parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan have resulted in massive internal and external displacement, with women often facing persecution and deprivation.

As refugees, women face risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse, sometimes even from those who are supposed to protect them. They also experience limited access to services: difficulties in healthcare, education, and employment, especially in contexts where female mobility is prohibited or restricted. Many are left to provide for their children and elderly alone, often suffering from psychological trauma.

International agencies (UNHCR, NGOs, IDMC/NRC) are working to provide shelter, medical care, and legal protection, but resource shortages, cuts in humanitarian funding, and political instability are slowing down their efforts.

Internally displaced women often remain "invisible" compared to international refugees: internal displacement does not receive the same legislative attention.

BIBLE VERSE

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." (Matthew 2: 13)

COMMENTARY

Joseph gets up in the night and, together with Mary, crosses a border, the frontier of fear, to save Jesus from Herod's fury. They don't go on pilgrimage, but into exile; they don't bring gifts, but fragile hopes and a few cloaks.

The Bible doesn't tell of the wind in your face, the faltering steps, or the silent tears of those who know they must leave home forever. But we can imagine.

Today, many women in Africa are experiencing the same flight. In Sudan, in Congo, in northern Mozambique, they take their sons and daughters by the hand and walk for miles to escape guns and machetes, destruction and violence. Like Mary and Joseph, they have no certainty about the future. Like them, they know that the lives of their sons and daughters are worth every effort, every risk. Their faces are living pages, written not with ink but with dust and sweat, with the courage of those who love more than fear.

PRAYER

Lord, you guided Mary and Joseph on the dark paths of flight, accompany every woman who carries her sons and daughters away from war. Give them strength in their legs and peace in their hearts. Extinguish the hatred that devastates their lands. May they one day be able to tell their sons and daughters not only how they escaped violence, but how they found a home and a future. Amen.

Women outside the box, free women

FILM

The Kids Are All Right (2010)
Lisa Cholodenko

QUESTION For Discussion

How do we deal with social pressure and external scrutiny? Do we truly know how to live the freedom we've been given without constraints, internalized or otherwise?

The margin, by its nature, is not a fixed place; it rotates around the center depending on the gaze of the observer and experience it; in this constant movement, my experience as a bisexual woman also finds space. My identity crosses the margin, shifts it, continually reinterprets it, and this is why it is elusive and frightens those who would impose on women—and queer women in particular—a closed, narrow, sometimes even hostile space from which they cannot escape. Yet, we women have emerged from those pre-established patterns of men, also thanks to the Scripture, which preserves a plurality of perspectives and does not allow itself to be enclosed in just one. They relegated us to the margins with the intent of closing us off, while we found openness there: spaces that don't suffocate, but generate new life. What suffocates is not diversity, nor marginalization, but the gaze of society that seeks to pigeonhole us into binary, rigid, and often exclusionary categories.

It is in this excluding gaze, which we sometimes find even in our sisters and in ourselves, that we encounter suffering. Because living on the edge is indeed a liberating experience, but it can also feel lonely, not understood, unseen. In everyday life, the gaze we encounter is one of judgment and devaluation: am I queer enough? How much weight do I give to social expectations in my choices? Which side of the

gaze am I on? Am I perhaps the judgmental gaze? All these questions fall under the condition called minority stress, that is, the chronic stress resulting from not being accepted or not accepting oneself, which can lead to negative consequences on mental and physical health.

BIBLE VERSE

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29)

MEDITATION

All the things that kept me apart from others—the lack of a body that felt like my own, the inability to fit into gender categories, the feeling of being completely, unspeakably different—made me feel closer to God. God knew who and what I was.

In this testimony, Jewish transgender activist Joy Ladin tells us how feeling understood and addressed by God allowed her to tell the truth about herself.

It's as if God were the only one who asked her, without prejudice, "Who are you?" In answering this question, Joy rediscovered the meaning of her existence, which had been stripped from her—from family, to school, to work—because Joy could only have been a heterosexual male. For Joy, and even more so for us, Jesus Christ, God wants to know about each of us. "Who are you?" is the mirror image of Jesus' question: "And who do you say I am?" It opens us to hearing the story of the Son of God. This mutual listening allows us to feel loved, blessed, and free, thanks be to God, from the chains of our world. We are here together to include in God's love every living being born of God's will and creativity.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, today we pray for those who suffer because of their identity.

We pray for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, asexual, intersex, and all other possible identities, born of your creation. Bless each of these people and grant that they may discover their calling on this earth and be loved as you love them.

Amen

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NOVEMBER 2025

The situation of Palestinian women

BOOK: *Questa terra è donna. Movimenti femminili e femministi palestinesi* Cecilia Dalla Negra – author

QUESTION For Discussion

What parallels can be drawn between the struggles of Palestinian women and those of other women in conflict or marginalized contexts?

What can Western feminism learn from the experiences of Palestinian women?

Palestinian women are a symbol of strength and determination. Their daily commitment to building peace, social cohesion, and human dignity continues to represent a concrete hope for the future of the Palestinian people. They play a fundamental role in social, cultural, and economic life, despite facing numerous challenges related to military occupation, humanitarian crises, and internal sociocultural constraints. Their resilience and contribution to society are recognized both locally and internationally.

They are protagonists in various sectors: from education to healthcare, from journalism to humanitarian work. More than 60% of Palestinian women are literate, and many hold academic or professional positions. Furthermore, they are active in supporting families and engaging in nonviolent civil resistance, often leading communities in times of crisis.

Palestinian women face serious challenges, including conflict-related violence, mobility restrictions due to Israeli military checkpoints, arbitrary detention, and home demolitions. According to data from human rights organizations, over 30% of Palestinian women have experienced some form of domestic or political violence.

Despite the challenges, many women are organizing in movements for civil rights and gender equality. Local and international NGOs are working to ensure women's access to justice, social protection, and economic opportunities. In politics, despite being underrepresented, some women are emerging

as influential voices in local councils and the Palestinian Legislative Council.

BIBLE VERSE

“Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she began to sob.” (Genesis 21: 14-16)

COMMENTARY

It is the cry of one who, abandoned by men, believes herself abandoned by God; her cry echoes that of her son Ishmael, who has also been abandoned. The situation is desperate.

God hears the boy's lament and, reminded of His promise (“even of the son of this handmaid I will make a nation”), acts powerfully and heals the situation.

Hagar's eyes are opened, she can see a spring of water, God has heard the boy's voice, she will hear God's voice. Hagar no longer needs the unstable protection given by human beings, she does not return to submit to her mistress Sarah, she is called to act in freedom.

With open eyes and ears, with strength and an open mind, you will be able to survive in a hostile environment!

PRAYER

Our Father, like Hagar who was able to hear God's voice and see what desperation made difficult, grant that Palestinian women may find strength for themselves and hope for their children. Please, grant an end to this terrible conflict that is exterminating an entire people. Amen.

30 NOVEMBER 2025

Women of Taranto: Leaders in the fight against pollution

DOCUMENTARY:

In viaggio con Cecilia (2013), on the trail of industrialization and female civil resistance

La svolta. Donne contro l'Ilva by Valentina D'Amico - It tells the stories of six women from Taranto with silent dignity, on the frontline of the health/work conflict. (Noidonne)

Women, particularly mothers and wives from the Tamburi neighborhood in Taranto, are becoming the strongest voice against the trade-off between the right to work and health. Firmly united, they founded the Women for Taranto Committee, for years, calling for the closure of the Ilva plant or its ecological conversion (www.lettera43.it).

Collected testimonies tell of personal dramas such as those of Anna Carrieri, affected by transverse myelitis without warning, or Caterina Buonomo, mother of an autistic child, who attribute their condition to the heavy metals emitted by the steelworks (Noidonne).

Official studies show a 20–30% higher cancer incidence among women compared to the provincial average, with significant increases in uterine, liver, and stomach cancers (neodemmos.info). Furthermore, a recent report highlights the presence of dioxins in the breast milk of women in Taranto, confirming the impact on infertility and female reproductive health (GreenMe).

There's no official, unequivocal figure, but the scientific consensus is clear: ILVA pollution has caused serious health consequences for Taranto's children, with significant increases in infant mortality, malformations, tumors, and respiratory hospitalizations. There is no official count of the exact number of children who died directly as a result of the ILVA plant, but epidemiological studies report

significant increases in infant mortality, respiratory diseases, and pediatric cancers. Data indicate a 20% increase in infant mortality in the first year of life, a 54% increase in cancers in the 0-14 age group, a 24–26% increase in hospitalizations for respiratory diseases, and a 9% increase in congenital malformations among children born between 2002 and 2015.

BIBLE VERSE

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own," (1 Corinthians 6:19)

MEDITATION

The apostle Paul invites the believers of Corinth to consider their bodies as temples of God; this image is wonderful, but at the same time, it calls us to an immense responsibility. The body is the locus of divine presence, and human beings are invited to care for it and respect it; it is a precious gift from our God that allows us to praise and serve Him. This passage offers us numerous food for thought. Remembering the victims of chemical warfare, let us consider the situations in which chemicals harm our bodies: the negative effects of drug abuse, the health damage resulting from pollution and the irresponsible exploitation of resources, the consequences of failing to comply with protocols for the protection of nature. Let us give glory and praise to the Lord in our bodies, in our lives, and in the creation that has been given to us.

PRAYER

*Thank you, Lord, because you made me so wonderful!
But forgive me, Lord, because very often I don't see myself as beautiful.
Sad and tired, broken, fragile and useless, inadequate.
I take refuge in the lies told to me by those who sell my body and soul! Come to me, Lord, in your great mercy, heal me!
Amen.*

QUESTION For Discussion

Is it important to address environmental justice with a gender perspective? Are there other places in Italy or around the world where women face situations similar to Taranto?

1 DECEMBER 2025 -WORLD AIDS DAY

Women Fighting Stigma



BOOK: *Cattivo Sangue*, Elena Di Cioccio Autobiographical novel about a young woman who suddenly finds herself confronted with HIV positivity, a disease that still carries a stigma today.

QUESTION For Discussion

How can our churches help reduce stigma against people living with HIV and support them in their self-care?

For too many women, health is still “an achievement”: multiple biological, social, and cultural factors limit their ability to fully exercise their right to health.

In Italy, new HIV diagnoses are showing a growing trend, with an increasing percentage of women affected. Recent international studies on HIV have focused on gender differences, highlighting a specificity that characterizes women; in particular, the female genital tract presents characteristics that can favor infection, and the progression of the disease is different than in men.

Women are also underrepresented in clinical trials: antiretroviral drug trials target a predominantly male population. To ensure equitable healthcare, “women-specific” therapies are needed, based on a gender-specific approach to HIV treatment, where specific sexual characteristics are essential for obtaining accurate data on the efficacy and tolerability of treatments.

Cultural and social factors hinder the use of prevention methods and access to health services: women often find themselves in a position of less decision-making power in relationships, fear a negative judgment from their partner when they ask to use a condom, and lack the ability or strength to convince him if he responds negatively.

Targeted health literacy education is needed for women to become aware of the impor-

tance of taking care of their health, to be truly free and emancipated.

BIBLE VERSE

To you, Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:

“What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me; Lord, be my help.” (Psalm 30:8-10)

COMMENTARY

Dealing with illness, fragility, the tangible inability to control our own bodies, their rhythms, and the sensations they convey, is an immense challenge. Sometimes unbearable, other times a source of energy and hope we never thought we could tap into. Sometimes we face our finitude, the suffering of those we love, with incredible tenacity, and then we don’t know how to face our own; sometimes the exact opposite.

The psalmist, meditating on his own suffering, launches a plea to God that is also a challenge: What good would I be to you, O God, if I were no longer alive? How could a heap of dust praise you?

Facing suffering means relating to finitude, to the ultimate limit, to the threshold from which there is no turning back. And on the threshold, the psalmist cries out his desperation: it cannot end here, it cannot end like this. Illness is not the end of existence. It is not the abandonment of all meaning, of all possibility. I want to live, even if only for a moment longer, to be able to call upon you, to whisper, to shout your name.

PRAYER

*Lord, you go before us.
When I think my life is a black hole,
behold, your word reminds me
that there is not a meter that you
have not explored,
not a tear that you have not shed,
not a smile that has already graced
your face.
Amen*

2 DECEMBER 2025

Abolishing slavery is a Christian duty



BOOK: *Fiori di strada*, Alfonso Reccia, Infinito Edizioni, 2020
Many African women are forced into prostitution along streets traversed daily by thousands of people, slaves of organized crime. Young women and their lives, their pain, their sacrifices, many defeats and very few victories.

QUESTION For Discussion

What concrete action can you do today to bring freedom and dignity to those who are oppressed?

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery recalls that millions of people, throughout history, have experienced visible and invisible prisons.

Scripture proclaims that human beings are created in the image of God, and therefore no one can treat another person as their property.

Christ himself said that he came “to proclaim liberty to the captives” (Luke 4:18).

Catherine Booth, co-founder of the Salvation Army, forcefully denounced the exploitation of women and the trafficking of girls in Victorian England. She wrote: “It is not charity to remain silent in the face of such evil; silence is complicity.” With these words, she demonstrated that authentic faith cannot ignore suffering and that a Christian must never remain passive in the face of injustice.

Slavery isn’t just a thing of the past. Women are still enslaved in modern chains: forced labor, trafficking, addiction, and violence that destroys their dignity. The Gospel urges us to bring hope where there is darkness, and to transform society with gestures of love and justice.

Defending freedom means serving Christ in our weaker brothers and sisters.

Following Christ means committing oneself to the integral freedom of all human beings, because salvation touches body, soul, and society. The true Church does not remain a spectator, but becomes a prophetic voice against every form of oppression.

BIBLE VERSE

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17)

COMMENTARY

The freedom the Bible speaks of isn’t just social. It is the freedom that comes from the encounter with Christ. Without Him, even a life free from external chains can remain a prisoner of sin, fear, or injustice. Only the Holy Spirit gives the inner freedom that truly transforms and changes the direction of life.

Catherine Booth wrote: “A faith that does not intervene against evil is not the faith of Christ.” Her words remain timely. The Church must not limit itself to praying, but must denounce whatever destroys human dignity.

Praying and acting are two sides of the same mission, and every believer is called to participate in this spiritual battle.

Today, millions of people are oppressed: some in body, some in soul. Some are slaves to forced labor, others to addiction. But the Gospel proclaims that Jesus breaks every chain. On the cross he conquered the powers of evil, and those who believe in Him experience a freedom that no master can take away.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You who freed prisoners and gave hope to the oppressed, break today the chains that imprison millions, especially women. May Your Church not be silent, but a courageous witness of Your love. Amen.

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Translations: in English by Annie Marcelo, in German from the Women’s Network CELL, in French by Rachele Sartorio, in Spanish by Carmen Hernández.

3 DECEMBER 2025

Gender Disability: Beyond Stereotypes and Marginalization



BIBLE VERSE

«The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'» (Matthew 25:40)

MEDITATION

Who are the leasts?

Each of us will think of someone, while others will think of no one or someone far away. The least are among us. The least may be us or someone dear to us.

How much of a part of our lives and our churches are people with disabilities?

How inclusive are women with disabilities? How much attention do we pay to ensuring that women and men, girls and boys with motor and cognitive disabilities, visually impaired, hearing impaired, blind, neurodegenerative disorders, and psychological problems, feel welcome in our churches? Do they feel like a living, active part of our churches, not just passive listeners?

PRAYER

Lord our Father, remind us that diversity is part of us. That slightly crooked body; that saliva dripping from the mouth; that tic that is repetitive; that failure to respond adequately because one didn't hear the question clearly and didn't dare ask for it again; that infrequent attendance at services because the restroom is too far to get to in time; that little ball that needs bouncing to stay indoors; singing only hymns and songs learned by heart.

Lord, each of them could be us, and welcoming them means welcoming you. Lord, give us strength with a smile.

Amen



BOOK: *La voce a te dovuta. Donne con disabilità e violenza di genere*, Valeria Alpi, Edizioni La Meridiana, 2024

QUESTION For Discussion

December 3: a day that should be celebrated every day. A challenging day, certainly, but do these challenges bring joy when faced in the light of the Gospel?

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was proclaimed in 1981 by the United Nations with the aim of promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006 and ratified by Italy in 2009, further promoted the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities, reaffirming the principle of equality and the need to ensure their full and effective participation in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres of society.

However, the UN has highlighted the lack of integration between disability and gender policies in Italy, and vice versa, calling for urgent action. These include: integrating gender and disability into all public policies; combating stereotypes, domestic violence, and female unemployment; and ensuring effective access to health services, especially for women.

To date, these indications have not been fully implemented.

A radical shift is needed to recognize and address intersectional discrimination, overcome ableism, and overcome patriarchal structures; women with disabilities have suffered a dramatic increase in physical and psychological violence, and families are often isolated; fully involve women with disabilities as protagonists in the policies that affect them.

4 DECEMBER 2025

Woman, Life and Liberty

photo by Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva



BOOK: Azar Nafisi's book on the liberating power of literature in Khomeini's Iran (Adelphi, 2003) was adapted into a film in 2024. Reading the book or seeing the film helps us understand how the injustices of regimes can be fought with literature.

QUESTION For Discussion

Are we capable of judging with justice and compassion? Are we bearers of peace in these difficult times?

The protests that the slogan Woman, Life and Freedom has gathered and made known represent for the writer Sara Hejazi (*Iran Women and Revolts*, Morcelliana, 2023) a watershed between a dying world, political and religious Islam as a frame of reference, and a new period still being defined.

Hejazi narrates and interprets the history and current events of a large, plural country, with ethnic and religious minorities, a majority identity and a youth component distant from the political class.

In this context, millions of women are subjected to a penalizing policy. The analysis of the complex relationship with the West is interesting: Westernization equals modernity. The Iranian revolution is a product of modernity; the movement exposed the contradictions of a country with the most educated population in the Middle East, with 60% of students being women, while public and private life is governed by the Sharia.

In the Iranian context, the relationship with women is the issue that most fuels political discourse in the face of the failure of the state's efforts to impose a submissive identity on them.

BIBLE VERSE

"Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lapidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided." (Judges 4:4-5)

COMMENTARY

Deborah is not only a prophetess and a judge, she also accepts to be a military leader, even though she does not directly participate in the fighting against the Canaanites.

Those were difficult times, there was no governing authority, there was no faith in the Eternal, until "*I arose Deborah, a mother in Israel*" (Judges 5:7) she says of herself in the song of victory. She lived the calling she was given amid the difficulties and contradictions of her time, with courage and faith, a protagonist in the history of her people and the conquest of freedom. Then the country enjoyed peace for forty years. We can imagine her sitting beneath her palm tree, listening to the parties involved and judging with rigor and compassion, because peace exists when justice and compassion are found together.

PRAYER

We pray for all women around the world who seek freedom, convinced that theirs is the freedom of every living being. In particular, we pray for Iranian women, for those who expose themselves and take risks, as well as for those who remain silent. May the divine spirit grant them courage and a prophetic voice, so that they may be like mothers to their people, accompanying them in their journey, without fear or hatred, always with hope. Amen.

SOME OF THE PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE...

The cover photo and those on pages 2, 5, 11, 12, and 15 are taken from the photography exhibition 'La Versione di Eva' organized last March by FDEI and the "Caradonna Collective" with images by photographer Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva. The exhibition uses the bodies of women and men to convey a message that offers an open and inclusive narrative of our society.

The exhibition is available free of charge to women's groups and churches upon request, at only the cost of shipping, to FDEI: fdei@fcei.it

5 DECEMBER 2025

Protecting the soil, protecting life. Protecting the dignity of women

photo by Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva



LIBRO: *Scienze visionarie* di Cristina Mangia e Sabrina Presto (edizioni Dedalo, 2024) collects stories of women who have transformed science into an instrument of justice, showing how caring for the earth also means caring for relationships, against all forms of violence.

QUESTION For Discussion

How can we get more men into social volunteering and more women into leadership positions? What more can we do for the environment in our community?

The soil is under threat: construction, fires, pollution, deforestation. This leads to landslides, floods, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity. This is a wound that jeopardizes the future of the entire planet.

December 5th marks two important days: World Soil Day and World Volunteer Day. Two intertwined calls: protecting the earth means protecting life, and this requires commitment, time, and heart. Women are on the front lines of this fight.

Guardians of water, food, and wood in many rural communities are the first to suffer the effects of degradation. They bring and pass on traditional knowledge about biodiversity and soil care. However, when they have access to education and resources, they know how to transform them into a common good: sustainable practices that strengthen communities, reduce poverty, and improve health and education. They are seeds of change.

Rachel Carson, with her outcry against pesticides, has demonstrated the connection between human health and ecosystems. Vandana Shiva reminds us that defending the soil means defending community, food sovereignty, and health understood as harmony between people and the environment. Yet women remain less listened to in decision-making processes. Recognizing their role is crucial. Protecting the soil, protecting life, and protecting the dignity of women are the same journey.

BIBLE VERSE

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them" (Acts 6: 1-3)

COMMENTARY

In the Jerusalem community, men are entrusted with the task of providing for the needy, taking on social tasks in direct contact with those affected. In today's volunteer work in the Church and society, men predominantly hold leadership positions, while basic work is typically performed by women. This relationship is slowly changing.

Volunteering is still important today. No community, no society can do without it.

Women are also very active in environmental protection. For example, they are committed to sustainable agriculture, waste separation, reducing plastic production, planting trees, and clearing concrete areas.

The earth needs air, sun, and water so that it can nourish all human beings as God intended.

PRAYER

Lord, no one can live without the help of others, and the earth, your creation, needs our care, even for future generations.

Grant love, patience, and tenacity to all those who voluntarily commit themselves to a livable world, especially in politics and economics.

Amen

6 DECEMBER 2025

Women in Prison – From “Bonds” to “Liberating Bonds”



DOCU - FILM: *Le Farfalle della Giudecca* also known as “*Fondamenta delle Convertite*” Penelope Bortoluzzi (2008; lenght 117’)

A year in the women’s prison of Venice: daily life in the corridors and common areas of a former monastery overlooking the lagoon. Inmates from around the world, their children, and the prison officers live in relentless promiscuity, each navigating hierarchies, friendships, role-playing, and power games in their own way.

Women in prison have lives defined by a painful paradox between “bonds” (constraints, restrictions, confinement) and the desperate need for “bonds” (relationships, motherhood, community).

The surprise lies in these women’s ability to transform the prison environment into a laboratory of relational resilience, as Stefano Anastasia emphasizes in his book: “*Return to the World. Penalty, women, prison.*”

Prison is built on the masculine logic of isolation and force. Women, even in confined spaces, instinctively tend to recreate bonds of mutual aid and solidarity. Often, managing motherhood in prison forces the system to renegotiate its boundaries and include life in a place designed for social death.

Many inmates bring with them histories of violence. Prison can become, in virtuous contexts, a place where healing processes are developed, no longer individual, but communal.

The woman in prison, the most marginal of the marginal, forces us to look at true justice, the kind that doesn’t just punish, but is capable of restoring life.

BIBLE VERSE

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you”. (Isaiah 60:1-2)

MEDITATION

The prophetic command “Arise, clothe yourself in light” echoes the “Talita Kumi” upon the community, and it resonates powerfully in the cells of the world.

For women crushed by the weight of confinement, this Word is radical. Their light does not wait for the bars to fall; it is called to shine upon that darkness, transforming the darkness itself into a dramatic stage for the glory of God. Clothe yourself in light does not mean denying pain, but embracing hope as a daily habit, an act of spiritual revolution. It is the choice to stop viewing your own wound as a definitive condemnation and to rediscover it as the very place where Christ places his hand and pronounces his command of resurrection.

Be a light, not for yourself, but to tear apart the veil that hides hope from the world. The world needs this light that does not fear the darkness, a light born from the periphery.

PRAYER

God of Light and Boundaries, we pray to You for every woman whose life is marked by confinement, by illness, or by violence. Where the world sees only failure, help us to see the prophetic point. May their marginalization not be a tomb, but a plateau from which a greater justice can be proclaimed. Grant us eyes to perceive the bonds that heal, and the courage to break the bonds that imprison. May they rise, clothed in Your light, to be sentinels of Your hope.
Amen.

QUESTION For Discussion

If our prison system were redesigned to honor the dignity of women and mothers, transforming punishment from segregation to reparation, what practical and immediate changes should we implement in women’s prisons?



BOOK: *Mothers and Beyond - Interdisciplinary Research on Women’s prison and its alternatives*

7 DECEMBER 2025

Apocalyptic or integrated?



FILM: *Sconnessi*, directed by Christian Marazziti, 2018, 90 mins

A light-hearted comedy that tackles a timely topic: how do family members react when they find themselves in the mountains without internet access?

QUESTION For Discussion

How can we begin to reflect on new media? Are young people a reflection of our behavior?

In the 1960s, Umberto Eco dedicated a book, “Apocalyptic or Integrated,” to the then-current controversy over television. His advice was precisely to delve deeper into the medium’s characteristics in order to master it. Not to be prejudicially opposed or dominated by it. With a knife, you can cut bread or kill. The same goes for the smartphone today.

So let’s reflect: addressing the issue of young people and social media and their use of them in a moralistic manner is perhaps not the best approach. We must begin with the observation that the digital device (the smartphone) is now an object that practically all of us use, and that provides an ever-increasing number of services to those who use it. And it can be used well or badly.

Only about 40 years ago, the wireless telephone was born. It quickly became possible to send texts, and soon after, the cell phone began to offer increasingly attractive “services” for everyone, centered on social communication—in theory, for everyone, but in reality increasingly within closed circles, where people can hide, strike, and take revenge. But these aren’t characteristics specific to the medium: they’re our choices that the smartphone enables.

In short, this new medium forces us to explore its advantages and disadvantages, to reflect on the changes it’s brought about in our human relationships, among ourselves as adults, but also between adults and young

people, and among young people themselves. It’s a reflection we feel is needed; perhaps it’s already late, but it’s important to begin.

BIBLE VERSE

“May my cry come before you, Lord;”
(Psalm 119,169)

MEDITATION

The psalmist asks God to grant him understanding. Today, we too are experiencing widespread confusion and need help to understand. We are connected souls, but isolated hearts. A disturbing silence haunts young people’s rooms. It is neither peace nor quiet, but the absence of true connection, of an embrace unmediated by a screen.

Every morning, many young people wake up and, before even looking out the window, open the virtual world in the palm of their hand. They live there, in those digital windows that construct identities through filters, hashtags, and studied poses, seeking a place in the chorus of virtual attention.

But while it’s true that social media gives the impression of uniting, it’s equally true that it can divide and isolate. Bullying, like a subtle poison, insinuates itself online, corroding self-esteem by hurling facile insults and impulsive judgments.

We need to find a word of healthy reciprocity that doesn’t oppress, capable of providing a profound, humane, and supportive education. It takes intelligence: a transcendent word capable of saying that fragility is not weakness, that pain is not guilt, that diversity is not distance.

It’s not about demonizing technology, but humanizing it in the light of the divine word. To no longer be alone, no longer victims, but part of a community that welcomes and does not judge, that listens and does not condemn; a free and liberating community.

PRAYER

O God, help us and the young people to rediscover Your word of grace that allows us to laugh together, to cry together, to grow together.

Without filters, without masks, so that loneliness may dissolve and hearts may beat again with the rhythm of true life.

And...with your intelligence! Amen.

8-9

DECEMBER 2025

Migrant women: between vulnerability and resilience



photo by Gemma R. Gonçalves da Silva

PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER STUDY:

We suggest reading, even as a community, the Belhar Confession, an ecumenical document that calls for unity, reconciliation and social justice.

QUESTION For Discussion

How can we, as a community of faith and citizens, restore dignity and a voice to marginalized migrant women?

Migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon.

Many women leave their countries driven by conditions related to their social position: some flee gender-based violence, others seek better economic opportunities for themselves and their families.

Sometimes, more often than one might think, a woman consciously chooses to accept exploitative conditions in order to ensure a more secure future for her loved ones. She does so because the reality from which she comes is marked by social, sexual, and economic oppression and exploitation.

It is crucial to offer them safe spaces for listening and support, where they can share experiences and receive useful information. Equally important is ensuring these women have access to protected housing, legal counseling, and employment opportunities that reduce the risk of violence and marginalization.

In this journey, churches can play a significant role: they often represent the first place of social connection and emotional support for those arriving in a new context. If they become active support networks, they can help women regain confidence, autonomy, and security.

To make all this possible, those who welcome must learn to truly listen, setting aside their own good intentions and making room for the needs, stories, and choices of those who have undertaken a difficult and courageous journey, a living testimony to great resilience.

BIBLE VERSE

"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household" (Ephesians 2:19)

MEDITATION

This verse speaks of the inclusiveness of the Christian community, which transcends national and ethnic barriers to form a new family united in Christ.

We must not forget that, in Christ, we are fellow citizens: a non-religious term, but a very concrete one, tied to marital status. Fellow citizens, therefore, not second-class citizens: with the same rights and the same duties. Together.

In worship, we are called to live this inclusiveness. Worship is a particularly important place for those living in precarious conditions, where we can experience inclusiveness, indeed, practice full acceptance: we are all equal, members of the same family, and we can embrace this dimension of Christian life, putting it into practice in our daily lives. This is our calling.

In Christ we have become a new humanity, a humanity that does not stop in the face of obstacles, but can face and overcome them.

PRAYER

God, source of our life, you created all peoples to inhabit the entire earth.

Help us recognize your presence in migrants who flee their homeland in search of safety and a future that offers true life for them and their families.

Protect them on their journey and grant them a dignified welcome.

Give them the strength to maintain hope and the courage to build a new life.

Amen.

10 DECEMBER 2025

From the margin to the center: recognizing women's rights



December 10th is Human Rights Day, but for many women around the world, the road to recognition of their rights is still long.

UN Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, recognized the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and the protection of human rights. Yet even today, these goals remain largely unmet. Women are excluded from negotiating tables, political decisions, and peace processes.

However, the marginalization to which women are often relegated can also be a space for resistance, creativity, and transformation. Women are not only victims of unjust systems; they are also protagonists of profound change: they build solidarity networks, educate, provide care, and speak out with great courage, often risking their own safety. Their daily actions are political, even when they have no voice in the media or parliaments.

Justine Masika fought for years in eastern Congo, providing medical, legal, and psychological support to thousands of women survivors of violence. She denounced war crimes, testified before the International Criminal Court, and faced threats, attacks, and exile. Recognizing the value of the actions of women like her means finally giving substance to Resolution 1325, transforming international treaties from unfulfilled promises into concrete tools capable of recognizing and integrating women's leadership in building peace and human rights.

QUESTION For Discussion

If the courage and expertise of women like Justine Masika are evident, why do they continue to be excluded from decision-making processes? What small gesture of justice can you make today to defend the dignity of those who have no voice?

BIBLE VERSE

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)

COMMENTARY

This verse, with verbs conjugated in the imperative, clearly reflects God's requests. The first is: "Learn to do good!" It does not arise spontaneously, therefore; preparation, a habit, is necessary: educating the heart and mind to recognize evil and build good.

The invitations to seek justice, to lift up the oppressed, to do justice to the orphan, and to defend the widow's cause concern practical life and everyday processes and remind us that God sides with the vulnerable.

In today's society, the orphan and the widow have many faces: women victims of violence, war, trafficking, exploitation, discrimination, the poor and marginalized.

Today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose anniversary we are celebrating, also challenges us not to stand still and to transform the words of law and justice into action. It is an invitation to care for the victims, to educate in a culture of respect, to not remain silent and to actively intervene. It's a commitment that starts with language, with everyday gestures, with the choices we make together.

PRAYER

*Lord, teach us to do good.
Open our eyes to recognize injustice.
Open our mouths to defend the defenseless.
Put us into action to protect and respect life.
Give us the courage to always stand up for
dignity and freedom.
Amen.*



LIBRO: *Femme debout face à la guerre*, Justine Masika Bihamba, Edition de l'Aube, 2024. The book, available only in French, is a powerful denunciation of the systematic use of rape by armed groups as a war strategy.