

Family and work balance

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At times, a woman is not sure of having found the place which suits her and to which she is called. Often, if she has a job outside, the demands of the home weigh her down and if she spends all her time with her family, she feels that her

scope is being limited. What would you say to women who have this experience?

This very real feeling is frequently due to particular limitations which we all have because we are human: it comes because we lack well-determined ideals capable of guiding our whole life, or because of a subconscious pride. At times, we would like to be outstanding in everything. And since this is impossible, it leads to confusion and anxiety, or even depression and boredom: you cannot do ten things at the same time, you do not know which to do, and you end up doing nothing well. In this situation, jealousy can develop, one's imagination easily becomes escapist and seeks refuge in fantasy which, leaving reality far behind, ends up weakening one's will-power. It is what I have repeatedly called 'mystical wishful thinking', made up

of useless day dreams and empty ideals: If only I hadn't married, if only I did not have this job, if only I had better health, or was younger, or had more time!

Like everything valuable the solution is costly. It lies in the search for the true centre of human life, which can give priority, order and meaning to everything. We find this centre in our relations with God by means of a genuine interior life. By making Christ the centre of our lives, we discover the meaning of the mission he has entrusted to us. We have a human ideal that becomes divine. New horizons of hope open up in our life and we come to the point of sacrificing willingly, not just this or that aspect of our activity, but our whole life, thus giving it, paradoxically, its deepest fulfilment.

The problem you pose is not confined to women. At some time or

other, many men experience the same sort of thing with slightly different characteristics. The source of the trouble is usually the same lack of a high ideal that can only be discovered with God's light.

But smaller remedies, which seem trivial, must also be used. When there are lots of things to do you have to establish priorities, to get organised. Many difficulties stem from downright disorder. There are women who do hundreds of things and all of them well because they are well organised and have courageously imposed order on all their work. They know how to concentrate at each moment on what they have to do, without getting worried about what is round the corner, or what they might have been able to do before. Others are overwhelmed by all that there is to do, and because they are overwhelmed, they do nothing.

Certainly there will always be many women whose only task is to run their home. This is a wonderful job which is very worthwhile. Through this profession — because it is a profession, in a true and noble sense — they are an influence for good, not only in their family, but also among their many friends and acquaintances, among people with whom they come in contact, in one way or another. Sometimes their impact is much greater than that of other professional people, to say nothing of when they put their experience and knowledge at the service of hundreds of people in centres devoted to the formation and education of women, like those which my daughters in Opus Dei direct all over the world. Then they teach others to run a home, and become educators who are more effective, I would say, than many university professors.

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