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SHARING THE LOVE OF
JESUS THROUGH THE MEDIA

*WOMEN
OF GRACE®*



AUTHENTIC FEMININITY
"FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS..."

"WOMEN OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE... IT IS FOR YOU TO SAVE THE PEACE OF THE WORLD."

Our Lady of Fatima and Women's Role in World Peace

by Susan Brinkmann, OCDS

History was made this year when Women of Grace® founder, Johnnette Benkovic, delivered a message about the dignity and vocation of women to the world stage at the United Nations – a message delivered while standing in the shadow of the same Pilgrim Virgin Statue that first visited this global entity 65 years ago!

"I was astonished to have been invited. I was deeply honored and deeply humbled all at the same time," Johnnette said after the event.

"Through this venue, we had an opportunity to bring to the women of the world a perspective on woman that many may never have had the opportunity to hear before. And it was especially exciting for Women of Grace® because this is our mission – bringing this very message to women."

As you may recall, the event was hosted at the United Nations by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See and the Permanent Mission of Portugal and was intended to promote a message of peace.

Other speakers included Professor Andrea Bartoli, Dean, Seton Hall School of Diplomacy and International Relations who spoke about the The Importance of Religious Leaders Serving as an Example of Peace, Tolerance, Solidarity and Justice. Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children who addressed Children as a Zone of Peace.

Johnnette was asked to speak on the topic of Mary, the Dignity of Woman and Women's Role in the Promotion of a Culture of Dialogue, Mediation, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding, a talk peculiarly suited to a woman who has devoted her life to affirming women in their dignity as daughters of God and in their gift of authentic femininity.

Her hope for the event was that coming together in the UN to commemorate the anniversary of the apparitions of Fatima would "herald a new moment, a moment in which God's plan and man's hope meet, conceiving and giving birth to a new action for peace, that not only holds out the promise for it, but has the power to effect it. A plan that puts woman at the center of it, the one to whom the birthing of persons, and peace efforts, has been entrusted," she said during her address.

Being able to present this message to the women of the world, perhaps introducing some to the true nobility of their femininity for the first time, was a moment she was determined to seize.



Johnnette at UN "If woman is to be effective in the enterprise of life, no matter the position she holds, the profession she occupies, or the duty to which she is called, this fundamental reality of her essential nature must be expressed, realized, and actualized in her every endeavor," she said during her presentation. "It must flow from her like a stream of living water that quenches the thirst of a dry and parched humanity. Woman must be person-centered, person-oriented, and person-motivated. Her focus, by virtue of who she is, must be other-centered."

However, when the woman abdicates the genius that is uniquely her own, the human race is left wanting.

"Like Adam without Eve, it finds itself adrift, the victim of an identity crisis. Human life in all of its aspects – physical, emotional, mental, psychological, spiritual – ceases to



flourish and may even die. Humanity is not aided and the technology of man becomes inhuman. Man's North Star cannot be found. The feminine void is felt and the world becomes an unsafe, worrisome, and corrupt place."

Instead, women's contribution to the promotion of a culture of dialogue and peacebuilding "must be infused with this feminine character, her true authority and power," Johnnette said.

"It must find its genesis in the tender and sometimes tedious development of the human person attentive to the totality of his

or her personhood. Perhaps more than ever what we need are opportunities to bring the women of the world into a deeper knowledge of their feminine genius, so that the female mind can be renewed, restored and calibrated to the deep and true understanding of who she is and what her glorious potential can be on behalf of all of mankind."

After the talk, one woman told her that she had never felt so affirmed in her life.

And it wasn't just women who were touched by her presentation. Some of the men who were present that day expressed the same sentiment.

"I was deeply grateful to the men who thanked me and told me how much the talk moved them," Johnnette said.

As she told the National Catholic Register shortly after the event, "There is still much more to say on this topic, but the United Nations event at least opened the door for a renewed understanding of woman, her grace and genius, and the influence and effect she

can have for the betterment of mankind and the cause of peace."

We may not all have the same opportunity to speak on a world stage for the sake of women and peace in the world, but we all have access to the weapon of the Rosary which was given to us by Our Lady, the quintessential icon for all women, who encourages us to use it to bring peace into our troubled world.

"Let us pick up our weapon, the Rosary, and begin a new kind of battle — a battle of prayer — that is sure to engage the heavenlies and bring peace to this war-torn world," Johnnette says about the Warrior's Rosary Crusade which is described in her new book, *The Rosary: Your Weapon for Spiritual Warfare*.

"Like our ancestors in Faith who prayed the Rosary to great advantage and won wars because of it, let us, too, put this holy weapon into our hands and do the same!"

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AUTHENTIC FEMININITY
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We're present in all **50 states** and **17 countries** around the world. We've held over **200 international events**.




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Distributed over **465,000 Catholic resources** worldwide including over **2,800 Facilitator Kits** and over **40,000 Study Guides** for both Women of Grace® and Young Women of Grace®

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A Journey to Peace and Healing

by Ramona Von Berg

When I signed up for the Women of Grace Foundational Study, my life was broken. Some wounds stemmed from childhood and others were fresh. I considered myself an active Catholic but had no idea of the healing and transformative power of the Sacraments, teaching, and devotions of Holy Mother Church. Having no birth children, I also felt excluded from the "mother club" that nearly all my Catholic sisters enjoyed. My confidence as a woman was low and I was anxious to discover the meaning of authentic femininity. I expected to acquire "head" knowledge through the study and was amazed to discover that the Women of Grace Foundational Study would be a pathway to an entirely new and profound healing journey. I always knew in my heart that God was calling me to bring peace into the world through my marriage, family, and other relationships but could not see a viable and enduring means to achieve God's will in the midst of my interior brokenness.



Each study assignment and class discussion opened my eyes and heart to deeper levels of the truths about God and His great love, especially for women. I slowly experienced His love in new ways, beginning with a deeper understanding and participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I learned about "spiritual maternity" and prayed that God would open such opportunities. During the online study, I met a priest who lost his parents as a young age. I prayed that God would allow me to spiritually adopt him. I saw the beauty in each of the women saints incorporated into every lesson and in the facilitators and realized I too was created for beauty. I took baby steps toward self-care and a long lost smile reappeared. Then, I remembered a quote from Saint Mother Teresa, "Peace begins with a smile." Although small and incremental, my life was

moving in unison with God's will. The pieces of my journey began to fall in place, especially the broken ones. I wanted to discard them but God wanted to transform them within the context of His providential will. With my newly found realization of the healing and transformative power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I sought out Holy priests. I found a time and a parish but had no idea which priest would hear my confession. I quickly recognized his voice though. He was a priest who sang at the funeral service for Mother Angelica – a remarkable spiritual mother who was pivotal in the life and ministry of Johnnette Benkovic.

The surprises never stop and I am eager to see what God will do as I cooperate with His Grace by remaining receptive to His actions, trusting in His providence, and surrendering to His holy will. I have only one "ask" to any woman who reads this testimony – please do not see me as special or lucky or somehow preferred in any way because God wants YOU! He wants to come into your life in a mighty way but He needs your "Yes" or "fiat". If you feel even the smallest tug in your heart, let me invite you now to consider taking the Women of Grace Foundational Study course and also check out a treasure of resources on their website at <http://www.womenofgrace.com>. This ministry is all about changing the world one woman at time and everyone involved cares about you. There is a lot of information and it might be a bit overwhelming. We understand because we were all new at one time! Take your time, pray, and reach out. You are in a safe place. As Johnnette Benkovic quotes from Isaiah 42:3, "A bruised reed shall he not break."

Dear sisters in Christ, my journey is new and I have a long way to go. However, never have the words to this song been truer, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." I wish you the peace of our Lord, the same peace He offered before His crucifixion, "...my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."



FOR MORE INFORMATION

It's been more than a decade since we launched the Women of Grace® Foundational Study Program. This amazing program has resulted in:

- Almost 50,000 women hearing the message of authentic femininity and having their lives have been transformed.
- The expansion to all 50 states and internationally to Australia, Canada, Dominican Republic, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago, Gibraltar, and South Africa.
- Over 3,000 women stepping forward to become facilitators.
- 24 Regional Coordinators being installed in strategic positions around the world.
- The founding of the Benedicta Leadership Institute for Women®, now in partnership with Holy Apostles College & Seminar, to meet the needs for leadership training.
- The implementation of the monthly Facilitator Network Conference Call.
- National and Regional Conferences and Retreats around the country and the world.
- Ongoing spiritual formation through study programs and Women of Grace Exclusive.
- The launch of Young Women of Grace® for girls age 13 and older.

For information on participating in or leading a Women of Grace® or Young Women of Grace® Study Program, contact Betsey Sawyer at 813-448-3983 or email bsawyer@womenofgrace.com.

Young Women of Grace Comes to Allentown

by Susan Brinkman, OCDs

Graduates of the Young Women of Grace program from Regina Academy at St. John the Baptist Church in Ottsville, Pennsylvania traveled to Allentown this past weekend to spread the good news about this exciting new program for teen girls.

The faithful at St. Thomas More parish in Allentown received first-hand testimony about the Young Women of Grace program from three graduates, Maria, Anna, and Ena, who completed the program at Regina Academy this past spring. Accompanied by their facilitator, Mrs. Suze Middleton, they were invited to speak after the 9:00, 10:30 and 12:15 Masses on Sunday morning and share their experience with the congregation.

"In a few weeks, I will be starting high school and will be facing the moral challenges which society offers," Maria, 14, told the congregation. "God gives all women the gift of maternal love. I have learned through the Young Women of Grace program how to use this gift everyday by offering people a kind heart and a loving hand wherever I go."

She was followed by Anna, 14, who said: "One of my favorite topics was spiritual warfare. Satan is always trying to tempt us through things that either look good, feel good, or taste good. He wants us to scare and lead us to sin. But we don't have to be afraid of him," she told the congregation. "He has no power over us because we have the sacraments and prayer to guard us. I will rely on God's power to protect and guide me through my life."

Ena, 14, just couldn't say enough about her favorite part of the study – the saints. "I really enjoyed learning about the many different saints throughout my time in the Young Woman of Grace program," she said. "I can apply their stories to my own life because they are easy to relate to. In high school, I will rely on these saints and their intercession."

Young Women of Grace co-author Susan Brinkmann also spoke for a few minutes about both programs and the importance of women learning more about their role in society and the Church.

"We need to be prepared to take our rightful place in this world not as objects for entertainment but for who we really are, creatures made in the image and likeness of God with a special gift to imbue this world with life and love – which is our feminine genius."

But not all women are aware of this special call, which is why the parish is also offering the Women of Grace® program for adult women beginning September 20.

"Even if you don't have a daughter to enroll in the Young Women of Grace program, this is the perfect opportunity to learn the Church's foundational teachings about women," Susan said.

Christine Adelizzi and Bernadette Monchauk-Barski are facilitating the Women of Grace® study at the parish. Michelle Espinosa is facilitating the Young Women of Grace study which begins on Saturday, September 16 and will run every other week until June 2.

Here's What Girls Are Saying About Young Women of Grace®

"I think the program brought us all closer together."

"[I] loved the whole experience!"

"The book helped me to understand how Catholic women fit into society and the role they play in the world."

"It showed me how the culture portrays women with makeup, but this book told me God gives us true beauty and grace given by God - a grace we can use for the greater glory of God."

"The book taught us to resist peer pressure. The only person we need to impress is God."

"I liked the questions that had us search the Catechism and the Bible for answers."

For more information, visit young.womenofgrace.com

AROUND TOWN



Sharing the Good News!

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Graduation Day!

Graduation day for Young Women of Grace at Regina Academy at St. John the Baptist in Ottsville, Pennsylvania