



Description of Studies

The *Endow* Curriculum: A Summary

Endow Mission Statement

Endow (Educating on the together to discover their God-given dignity and to understand their role in humanizing and transforming society. ***Endow* provides women with a forum through which to explore and understand what it means to be a feminine person created in God's image.** As a basis for discovery, *Endow* promotes the *New Feminism*, which is defined by Pope John Paul II. The *New Feminism* recognizes and affirms the "true genius of women" and responds to our culture's desperate need for an authentic feminine presence in every aspect of life and society.

***Endow* educates and inspires women through small study groups and engages the intellect of the "woman in the pew". By providing knowledge and fellowship in an intimate group setting, *Endow* also fosters a sense of belonging and gives women an opportunity to deeply understand and personalize the faith that draws us together and the fellowship that keeps us together. Both faith and fellowship are integral to our formation as women.** *Endow* attracts women from all walks of life and helps women realize that, no matter what we "do" in life, all women share a common desire for love and respect. Although society places a high priority on a person's skill, appearance and usefulness, *Endow* teaches women that their dignity originates from their personhood.

Unfortunately, in the past, traditional feminism divided and categorized women. *Endow* brings women together, to unite instead of divide. We are able to unite women by focusing on the unique gifts given to all women. Principally, this universal commonality points a woman toward her vocation. Many women struggle to find balance and purpose in their lives. *Endow* believes that, once women know who they are as God intended, they can support and nurture the rest of the community. This ultimately helps others grow in knowledge and virtue.

In keeping with our mission as an educational apostolate, *Endow* is committed to providing women with high quality materials for use in prayer/study groups. The studies are designed to take place over an eight week period. Groups are usually comprised of 8-12 people and provide women with an opportunity to learn about and discuss the authentic teaching of the Church in a comfortable setting. For women who cannot devote many weeks to study, we offer ***Endow* Intensives**. These are one-day condensed courses taught by *Endow* professionals, designed to impart the basics of the curriculum material in a particular subject. Whether you decide on our popular group study model or step up to an Intensive, you will discover the beauty in authentic Church teaching. What we strive to accomplish is summed up in the *Endow* motto: *Love the learning ~ Build the friendships ~ Live the faith.*

Below is a listing of our current offerings, brief descriptions of each one, and the area of doctrine each addresses:

Papal Writings

“Endow provides women with a forum through which to explore and understand what it means to be a feminine person created in God’s image...” In fulfilling the mandate to help women understand their feminine dignity, *Endow* studies begin with the words of John Paul II on feminism. The first two studies we begin with specifically address his teachings on the *New Feminism* and the specific giftedness of women, a collection of attributes or an interior disposition he calls “the feminine genius”.

Letter to Women – (*New Feminism, Theology*)

This letter, written for the occasion of the 1995 Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, acquaints us with the thought of John Paul II and is a good introduction to the Christian concept of woman and her indispensable role in the Church, the family, society, and the world.

On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem) – (*New Feminism, Theology*)

This 1988 encyclical provides the main theological basis for John Paul II’s message to women. It invites us to ponder the anthropology of man and woman, God’s intention for their relationship, and the result of original sin. John Paul II also shares his reflections on Jesus’ relationships with women in the gospels, the sublime vocation to physical and spiritual motherhood, virginity for the sake of the Kingdom, and the Church as the Bride of Christ.

On the Christian Meaning of Suffering (Salvifici Doloris) – (*Catholic Theology*)

Having familiarized ourselves with the person of John Paul II, his thinking and writings, this apostolic letter invites women to approach the question of why God allows suffering and how we are to understand it and participate in it as a means to our sanctification. This is a difficult question for all people to come to terms with, and this *Endow* study takes us along with John Paul II as he explores the various ways we experience suffering. He reflects on the origins of this phenomenon and examines our quest for its meaning. He shows us that it is only in Christ that we can hope to find meaning and purpose in our own painful experiences of suffering.

Mother of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Mater) – (*Mariology*)

In this 1987 encyclical, John Paul II reminds us that Mary is the greatest saint, and he explains why this is so. John Paul II calls her the “most excellent expression of the feminine genius.” Mary’s ‘yes’ to her role in God’s plan places her at the center of salvation history. For many *Endow* women, devotion to Mary is as natural as breathing; for others, Mary can seem to be an archaic model of the non-emancipated woman, in marked contrast to modern day feminist parameters. This study helps women understand and appreciate the place Mary holds in the Church. As the patroness of *Endow*, she is the model for all Christian women to love and emulate. The study is rich with prayers, quotes, and personal meditations and is designed to help everyday women embrace the Mother of God as our own spiritual mother today.

Of Human Life (Humanae Vitae) – (Catholic Morality, Theology, Church History)

This is Pope Paul VI's long-awaited and controversial encyclical, promulgated in 1968, that upholds the Church's ban on artificial contraception. It speaks of Catholic love and marriage and family life and warns of the dire consequences if Church teaching on this important matter is not taken seriously. This study is important because it addresses an area of Catholic morality that is poorly understood and sadly ignored in many, if not most, Catholic marriages. Reading and studying *Of Human Life (Humanae Vitae)* helps women further their ability to "think with the mind of the Church" as it offers a view of authentic Christian marriage that is life-giving and truly counter-cultural.

Vatican II

“Endow is a Catholic educational apostolate that brings women together to discover their God-given dignity and to understand their role in humanizing and transforming society.”

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a watershed event in the Church and in the larger society, the reverberations of which are still being felt after forty years. The Council produced sixteen documents, the most prominent of which is *Light of the Nations (Lumen Gentium)* - the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. This document provides the blueprint for an authentic understanding of the Church by returning to and delving into the original scriptural and patristic sources. *Endow* groups read and review what the Church herself has to say, as they learn about the Church's human and divine origins, her purpose, structure and mission. This study is of the utmost importance in forming Catholic women who have a true understanding of what the Church is and is not. As with all *Endow* studies, women benefit enormously by reading the document for themselves and are helped along by the companion study guide that helps unpack the concepts. *Endow* is proud to offer this study as it meets the instruction given us by John Paul II who said in a 1979 homily: "The pope expects a noble and generous effort on your part to always know better your Church...Take the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Light of the Nations (Lumen Gentium)*, and study them with loving attention."

Light of the Nations (Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) - (Church Tradition, Theology, History of Vatican II)

All Catholics speak frequently about the Church, but do we all mean the same thing? This document asks the question, "Church, what do you say for yourself?" and the answers are enlightening. By studying this document on the Church, women will learn what is true and lasting about the Church – that it is more than just a structure or an institution built by men, but rather the "sacrament of salvation" instituted by Christ Himself. Our study guide provides much needed information, historical background, insights from people who were part of the Council, pertinent quotes from Catholic writers and more. It is a much needed resource for women who seek to really know better the Church into which we were baptized.

Catholic Thought

“Endow educates and inspires women through small study groups and engages the intellect of the ‘woman in the pew’.”

All women who enter into *Endow* studies have faith in their hearts. It is what draws them to this program. In fact, the definition of theology is often said to be ‘faith seeking understanding’. At *Endow* we invite ordinary women of faith to stretch intellectually and avail themselves of the rich wisdom that resides within the Church. This can be an eye-opening and fruitful spiritual exercise. Whether they realize it or not, all Catholics are affected by St. Thomas Aquinas because he was so influential in shaping Catholic thought. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cites his work frequently – only St. Augustine is quoted more. This study helps women begin to understand what is unique and unforgettable about this thirteenth century monk.

Aquinas for Beginners – Part I – (Philosophy, Theology, Moral Life)

As its title suggests, this book provides a solid introduction to Aquinas and includes a timeline of famous philosophers throughout history, so readers may see where Aquinas fits in among the greats. Concepts regarding the human person as a union of body and soul, five reasons for the existence of God, and understanding the passions are some of what women will be introduced to in this study. This book provides women with an interesting study of theological principles that may have gone undiscovered up to this point. Written in a lively style with humorous and down to earth examples, women will discover that much of what Aquinas taught is still relevant and applicable to our lives today.

Aquinas for Beginners – Part II – (Philosophy, Theology, Moral Life)

Here we explore what Aquinas has to teach us about the virtues. In Part I we are taught about theory; in Part II we learn about practice. There are many everyday examples to help solidify these concepts so women may consciously live the moral life to which we are called. By learning the names and descriptions of various vices and virtues, women are encouraged to live vibrant Catholic lives with deliberateness and purpose.

Women Saints

“Although society places a high priority on a person’s skill, appearance and usefulness, Endow teaches women that their dignity originates from their personhood.”

Edith Stein: Seeker of Truth (Philosophy, Lives of the Saints, Christian Prayer)

This study introduces women to one of the twentieth century saints John Paul II canonized during his pontificate. He felt strongly that the world needed the example of holy men and women during these challenging times, and *Endow* has chosen Edith Stein as one saint in a vast galaxy to highlight. Her

story encompasses elements of philosophy (particularly phenomenology, which was a strong interest of John Paul II's), and theology and offers compelling insights into Jewish life in 1930's Germany. It is set during a period of Church history – World War II, the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII – which is highly significant. This saint was also a great influence upon John Paul II, and, as such, a study on Edith Stein is entirely appropriate for the *Endow* audience.

Dignity and Vocation of Women

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Discover Your Dignity: A Woman's Journey through Life – Part I - (Human nature, Christian Prayer, Philosophy)

This study, authored by four Religious Sisters of Mercy (who have been so formational in the *Endow* apostolate by offering academic as well as spiritual direction) takes women on a journey to see where their actual everyday lives intersect with God's Divine plan. The story follows the course of a woman's life from conception through old age and preparation for death, as it uncovers for women the mysterious workings of God in ways that involve the disciplines of biology, philosophy, psychology and theology. One author, a medical doctor, said that she really fell in love with God as she studied the wonderful way a human being is made. It is the hope of *Endow* that women going through this study are similarly moved to appreciate the wonderful, miraculous workings of their bodies and souls.

Discover Your Dignity: A Woman's Journey through Life – Part II - (Human nature, Christian Prayer, Philosophy)

This study completes what was begun in Part I. Each woman is on her own journey and likely will find herself somewhere on the pages of these books. Of all the *Endow* studies, the *Discover Your Dignity* series is easy to undertake, is quite basic, and provides much opportunity for women to share with one another about their own life journeys, challenges, sorrows and joys.

Course of Study

There is a certain progression of thought that is evident as one advances through the *Endow* studies. For this reason, it is recommended that studies, typically two per year, are undertaken in a particular order, though this is not strictly necessary. Once groups have undergone the two initial studies on the *New Feminism*, it is assumed they are well-situated to go on to other classes.

Based on feedback from *Endow* participants and editors, we have grouped books in this order to assist women in their decisions about when to study which topic. We recommend that all women begin with the “A Catholic Woman Today” series, but from there groups are free to begin any of the other three series of studies (“On Fire for God”, “Into the Classroom and Out to the World”, or “You are Wonderfully Made”).

A Catholic Woman Today

Embracing the *New Feminism* and Spreading the Life-Affirming Gift of ‘Feminine Genius’

Letter to Women

- What is the *New Feminism*?

On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem)

- Who am I as woman and from where do I receive my dignity?

On Human Life (Humanae Vitae)

- How do I express dignity and make life-giving choices in the everyday experience of marriage and family?

On Fire for God

Standing firm in Catholic beliefs despite hardship, and learning from the examples of holy women

Edith Stein: Seeker of Truth

- The story of one saint who loved Christ and gave her life as witness to His Truth

On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering (Salvifici Doloris)

- How to find consolation when things go wrong?

Mother of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Mater)

- Who can I look to as the most perfect model of femininity, virtue and discipleship?

Light of the Nations (Lumen Gentium- The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)

- How can I understand the reality of Christ’s Church – her origins, her mission, her message?

Into the Classroom and Out to the World

Learning the basics of foundational beliefs and how to apply them when confronted with today’s difficult decisions

Aquinas...for Beginners, Part I

- How do I know Church teaching is true? An explanation of the basics of Thomistic theology

Aquinas ...for Beginners, Part II

- How do I live this truth? An explanation of the virtues according to Aquinas

Bioethics 101 (coming soon!)

- An introduction to the most pressing moral issues of today

You are Wonderfully Made

Appreciating the intricate connections between body and soul and becoming a woman in love with God

Discover Your Dignity: A Woman's Journey through Life, Part I

- The woman as created by God in His image

Discover Your Dignity: A Woman's Journey through Life, Part II

- A continuation of the study, moving into old age and preparation for eternal life

Saint Catherine of Siena (coming soon!)

- Inspiring story of one of the great woman Doctors of the Church