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International Women's Day: Diving into Women's Dignity

John Paul II's Letter to Women served as a springboard to understand our dignity as women.

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Endow -Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women- is a study program started in 2003 in Colorado by three women who were deeply touched by the writings of St John

Paul II, especially those addressed to women.

I first heard about Endow through the BC Catholic newspaper.

Archbishop Miller was bringing it to the Archdiocese of Vancouver and I was intrigued. I went with a friend to an information meeting and I became even more excited. I knew I wanted to be part of this.

JP II, in his letter, speaks about woman's capacity to make room for "the other", and to women's unique capacity to help create a society marked by love.

Endow gave me the tools I needed

Endow gave me the tools I needed to create an opportunity for other women, who like me wanted to be renewed in their faith. We all seek community and connection with others and to meet new people. With the consent of the parish priest, I

approached some ladies from my parish who I said hello to at Mass but really didn't have a connection to otherwise.

A group of ten women with varied life experiences came together once a week to learn and to share. The goal of each study group was to better equip women to be able to articulate the faith for themselves and others. We began with Endow's foundational study JPPII's Letter to Women. We read the document in its original language and then let the study guide explain it more fully.

A springboard to understanding our dignity as women

This study became a springboard to understanding our dignity as women and to talk about the challenges each of us faced. Faith is strengthened by knowledge. And as the weeks went by we found that studying increased our faith, nourished our prayer life

and equipped us to answer questions or enlighten misconceptions in the forum of public opinion. Reception of the sacraments, especially Holy Communion, became more meaningful.

Connecting on faith issues also strengthened a bond of friendship that grew stronger as we shared on a deeper level. Jesus calls each of us into friendship with him and friendship with others. Just like the early Christians whose outreach began from small communities, we too can come together in small groups to pursue holiness and deepen our relationship to Christ. Identified with Christ women have the power to change culture.

As a member of Opus Dei, I want to live the universal call to holiness and help others live it too. I want to inspire other Catholic women with the idea that holiness is possible in

the midst of a busy life. I am so happy that I had the opportunity to learn and testify about the faith with some of the ladies of my parish through an Endow study.

We are all called to be saints, right where we are. Pope Francis said, "When the Lord calls us to be saints, he does not call us to something hard or sad.... Not at all! It is an invitation to share His joy, to live and offer every moment of our lives with joy, at the same time making it a gift of love for the people around us." And this is part and special capacity of the woman.

Beth Lee

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