

# Women impregnated with the Gospel



I spent the last week with 120 young Catholic women from around the globe gathered in Washington, D.C., for the second annual GIVEN Forum. The focus was on encountering God in a deeply Marian way by being receptive to his gifts and by equipping women with the tools that make this possible.

During the event, the women were covered with the prayers of cloistered nuns who had been contacted prior to the forum. Religious sisters served throughout, ready to meet just about every need. There was even a two-sister medical team!

I couldn't help but be amazed by the spiritual maturity of the young women who attended the forum. I was there serving as a speaker, mentor and spiritual director, and I can tell you without betraying any confidence that many of them are young masters in the spiritual life. They know God – who he is and who he is not. They know it can be difficult living out in the world and that there is a spiritual battle for their hearts. But God is equipping them to be saints. I have never been so confident that he is raising up saints in the midst of our broken, aching and brutal culture.

So many of them have a love of Mary like I've never seen – a real relationship of daughter and loving mother. GIVEN is all about having a *fiat* like Mary. It's about living a life of total "yes" to the will of God, and learning to know his will and caring to live it. The women I spoke to and interacted with all shared this perspective.

GIVEN attendees were overflowing with gratitude for the wisdom that was spoken throughout the event about what living

Christian lives looks like, which was surprising, because they appeared to be experts already. They seemed to care only to be the embodiment of what Pope St. Paul VI said about women at the end of the Second Vatican Council: impregnated with the Gospel, ready and willing to be instruments to save nothing short of the peace of the world.

Helen Alvaré, a law professor at the Antonin Scalia Law School of George Mason University, captured the spirit of GIVEN when she spoke about some of the countless kinds of invitations one may receive throughout life and the urgency of being a witness to Christ right now. Alvaré stressed that we have to be humble, but we can't be falsely humble. That's why it's so important to know your gifts. If you know them, you know how God wishes to use you as his instrument in the world.

Among the things I found stunning about the GIVEN Forum was that it began as the U.S. bishops were meeting in Baltimore and it ended on Father's Day. GIVEN is all about love in the heart of the Church and the family, and if women know their gifts, men will follow. Renewal happens when tender, confident and maternal leadership is a bold reality in our culture.

Like Alvaré, Sister Mary Madeline Todd was one of the keynote speakers toward the end of the forum. In talking about Pope St. John Paul II's writings and teachings on women, she noted that if we were all "walking in the truth that God loves us, we would have so much freedom."

That's what GIVEN is ultimately about: making free citizens, allowing women to know their supernatural protection in a world that wants to drag them down. And my experience of these young lights is that they know it, want it and live it. They just need some additional tools and community. They are now part of a network that exists to help with continuing relationships and, most importantly, prayer. Let's keep an eye out for some of the saints God is raising up to help us all be the same.

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