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The Valiant Woman: Conferences for Women

Archbishop Landriot

Softcover — 223 Pages — \$18.95



Review by Mrs. Colleen Hammond
The Angelus Press

It's complicated being a woman. Maybe it's all of our hormones. But the feminist propaganda constantly swarming around us hasn't helped, either!

Am I the only one that has noticed that some women, in a twisted attempt to show their superiority over

men, have adopted offensive characteristics? Cussing, smoking, carousing, and infidelity are not a man's best qualities—or a woman's. So why imitate them? If I am going to copy any male characteristic, it will be the ability to make decisions without my emotions getting in the way.

The past couple of generations have lost touch with the beauty, nobility, and privilege of womanhood. Now, instead of learning about womanhood from the women around us, we need a book to help us dig into our soul to develop our God-given gifts.

Thankfully, we have *The Valiant Woman*, by the Most Reverend Jean François Landriot. Although not initially written for publication, the book is an extended version of the 16 conferences he gave to a women's organization when he was the Archbishop of La Rochelle in the mid-1800's. In them, he challenges each of us to strive to be a valiant woman, just like our Blessed Mother.

You would never know the inner beauty of the book by looking at its cover. A clipper ship seems a bit odd for the

front of a woman's book, until you understand that throughout the book Archbishop Landriot compares a valiant woman to a ship:

She too is graceful like a well-built ship; her speech, her motions, her gait, everything about her, partakes of the majestic port and softly-gliding motions of a ship. She is an ornament to her family and to society, and in worldly assemblies presents an image of those graceful yawls....But beauty by itself is useless, may even become dangerous; therefore the valiant woman, like the ship, possesses strength; of a vigorous Christian temperament, she can resist the utmost fury of the sea, brave the tempestuous waves, and hold her course amidst the stormy billows; she, too, is fortified with galvanized metal, that is to say, with those solid virtues which can withstand the assaults of the passions. Though she may have to abide in troubled waters, exposed to all the dangers of life, she still rests intact, and ever proudly maintains the honor of her name and house.... (pp.38-39)

Once I got past the schooner on the cover, I found that the book is densely packed with vital and useful information. It was a bit challenging at first to adjust to the antiquated writing style, which wasn't made any easier as it is a translation from the French. But since His Excellency Archbishop Landriot knows the heart and soul of women so well and challenges us in such an uplifting manner, I quickly adapted to his style.

While modern culture tells us that it's demeaning for a woman to stay home and raise children, Archbishop Landriot shows that it is only the woman who is blessed with the courage, flexibility, and energy to handle all the difficulties of her state in life. He encourages woman to be "queens in your own empire; but if you value your happiness, your tranquility, and the success of your affairs, do not seek to be the queens elsewhere" (pp.14-15).

I was raised listening to, among other things, an *Enjoli* perfume ad on television that said I could bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan. Looking back I wonder why I wanted to do both jobs! But somehow, many of us bought into that philosophy and rushed into the workforce to grasp the brass ring and be “queens elsewhere.” Women are now realizing that they've been duped. They may have equality in the workplace, but there is no equality at home. Mom is the only queen there.

The influence of a virtuous mother raising her children is undeniable. One woman can make or break a culture by how she raises one child. Where would we be today if Moses' mother had not chosen to be the queen of her home? How about Charlemagne's mother, Bertha? But the opposite is true as well. It is said that much of Karl Marx's life of revolt was aimed at revenge toward his manipulative and possessive mother.

Granted, women have the indisputable gift of multi-tasking. So, if anyone can handle running the many facets of a home it's a woman. But with that gift comes a caution from Archbishop Landriot: keep yourself occupied with good things because the brain is always busy doing something! Is it busy balancing domestic affairs and piety? Or are we being sentimental and daydreamy?

Let's face it. With us gals, if our brain isn't busy with something productive, it may tend to be occupied with something to do with hair, make-up, or fashions—or some sort of gossip. We can't get away from it at the check-out counter in any store.

What about e-mail? Detraction, calumny, and backbiting have become a daily pastime. Now anyone can rob his neighbor's reputation by forwarding an e-mail or posting to a chat board or group. And even if we're “only” reading it, we may be the guiltiest of all! “Both the backbiter and his listener have got the devil in them, one in his mouth and the other in his ear” (Sins of the Tongue, Fr. Belet of the Diocese of Basle, p.65).

Archbishop Landriot suggests that our brain must be more active than our fingers. He proposes that we fill our mind with good thoughts, good books, and tranquility. If possible, we ought to “sing while you work, and shun not the joyous canticles and simple expressions of a happy soul” (p.22). That got me to thinking—what songs do my children hear me singing in our home? What books do they see me reading?

Ah, books. Here is where Archbishop Landriot won my heart. In one of his conferences, he said, “Nothing which elevates the mind and ennobles the heart should be unknown to you. A woman's soul has the same origin as a man's, and needs light no less than his” (p.36). Even St. Clement of Alexandria said that it was a duty for women to study philosophy (p.34). And we have the female saints as examples!

From the Acts of Saint Catherine, Archbishop Landriot quotes St. Catherine as saying that she applied herself “to

every branch of rhetoric, philosophy, geometry, and other sciences” (p.34).

But my personal favorite is St. Monica. The Archbishop says that:

she is another admirable model for you in this respect. She loved to discuss the highest problems of philosophy with Saint Augustine and his companions; and she did so with a breadth of view and elevation of thought which astonished her hearers. (p.34)

Archbishop Landriot understands that study has great advantages; “it elevates the mind,” and keeps us away from frivolous magazines and conversations that only focus on other people, make-up, hair styles, and fashions. He even recognizes that the more a woman “cares for her body, the less will she cultivate her intellect” (p.166). It makes you wonder if he had visions of our make-up counters at the mall, our work-out clubs and weight lifting centers.

Being well read also allows us to carry on intellectual conversations with our husbands. Archbishop Landriot says that we can “retain the respect and love of a husband” through a “delicate, well-cultivated mind, which looks on all things from the highest, the most amiable, and most holy point of view” (p.30). That's better than peppering our husbands with diaper stories and news of our girlfriends!

All of this encouragement to study and expand our minds comes with a warning, however. Our household duties and family affairs must come first! Once those are accomplished, then we can find time for study, reading, poetry, literature, fine arts, and music. One more caveat: nothing in excess! Why? Because “women run a risk of going to extremes in everything” (p.25).

Maybe we tend to go to the extreme in things because we're so detail-oriented, which is another one of the feminine gifts. Archbishop Landriot teaches us that “woman often possesses more intelligence for little details than man; she has a finer perception of a multitude of things which wholly escape him” (p.98).

Although we have the gift of paying more attention to the details, our job is to “foresee, to find out, to calculate beforehand, to submit her ideas to her husband, and act in concert with him” (p.98). Why? Because he can cut through the emotions and make a logical decision.

Quite frankly, that is one of the many things I appreciate about my husband. He protects me from my emotions! I'm sure that is why God assigned men the duty as head of the household. Husbands and wives are equal in dignity, separate in role and function, and those roles and functions are complementary. And when “the wife is acting in concert with her husband, and...everything is decided by mutual agreement” (p.93), all is well in the world.

I learned a number of years ago to let my husband be the head of the home, and I stopped trying to be the neck that turned the head. Instead, I embraced the role of being the heart of the home. As Pope Pius XI said in his encyclical on

Christian marriage: “For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love” (Pope Pius XI, *Casti Cannubii*, §27).

As queen of the home, we make sure it is the chief place of love by keeping it brimming with harmony, peace, and joy. I saw a bumper sticker that said, “If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!” Isn't that the truth?

Women, being more ordered to an emotional life, are designed by God to empathize and teach children the proper way to respond to tragedy, triumph, and tribulations. “One single kind word said from the heart is often enough to disperse clouds (and) dissipate prejudices...” (p.84).

Archbishop Landriot suggests that the way a mother ought to deal with the faults of others is to “meet them with patience and unfailing docility; meekness and patience will do far more than anger and violent recrimination...” (p.85). That's much better than the manipulation and possessiveness that Karl Marx supposedly experienced from his mother.

The real inner strength and character of a woman is defined by Archbishop Landriot as “an energy of soul which enables us to bear calmly the trials and evils of life; which gives us courage to carry out our designs with unshaken firmness, and preserves in us a vigor of action which human obstacles cannot destroy” (p.104).

Because the entire home revolves around her, a woman needs this steadiness. “Is not the wife the bridge for the family?” Archbishop Landriot asks. “Does not everyone lean a little on her—husband, children, servants, even troublesome neighbors; while a large portion of domestic care rolls also over her, and weighs continually on her shoulders” (p.120).

But this inner strength is not to be mistaken for obstinacy! Matter of fact, Archbishop Landriot points out that stubbornness is a clear sign of a weak mind. Someone who is inflexible and keeps to his own ideas and plans more than he should is not virtuous. But the opposite of obstinacy is weakness, which is also not virtuous! A woman who is feeble or susceptible doesn't have the fortitude to resist. Firmness is in the middle, and consists in doing what you have determined is the right thing without letting anything stop you. It is an inner strength and stability that is gentle, humble, and tranquil—not rough, haughty, or touchy.

Since all of home life revolves around the mother, it's important that our bodies be well rested and our souls well armed for our daily spiritual battles. Archbishop Landriot devotes a few conferences to the importance of getting a good night's sleep and rising early for prayer. He gives many quotes from Sacred Scripture indicating that morning is the best time for prayer as the mind is a clean slate. It isn't clogged with the happenings of the day or earthly things.

I'm a morning person, so getting up a few hours before everyone else has never been a problem for me. But every

mother who wakes her family up in the morning knows that what Archbishop Landriot says is true: “The most formidable combat man has to fight is not always on the battlefield, but is rather that which he has to wage with his pillow” (p.57). And mothers are on the front line of that battle every morning!

It is only with a life of prayer that we are able to handle the trials and difficulties of life. Keeping with his ship theme, Archbishop Landriot says that the valiant woman ought to “let the billows of trials and difficulties come and go, and toss about the vessel of our life at their will. True piety, deeply rooted in the heart, can alone give you this combined buoyancy and energy which holds its ground all the better for appearing to yield” (p.41).

With our emotions racing most of the time, that's a tough balance to maintain. We need a strong prayer life and a good friend to lean on. Thankfully, we have our husbands to turn to. “It is asserted that a woman rarely — I do not like to say never — finds a true and steady friend in the heart of another woman” (p.121).

Any mother will tell you that it seems to be a thankless job. But Archbishop Landriot encourages us by saying that, A sweet reward awaits the valiant woman; it is sometimes deferred, but is sure to crown the latter years of her life. Her virtues, long unacknowledged, are at length fully appreciated, and sooner or later her husband and children unite to lavish on her every mark of respect, and proclaim her to be the centre of their love, and the source of their life and happiness.... (p.204)

The role of a woman, a wife, and a mother is so monumental, so pivotal to our culture and our world today, and there are few that seem to be embracing it. Every woman should read and study Archbishop Landriot's conferences to learn more about this noble, valiant, and multifaceted role of womanhood.

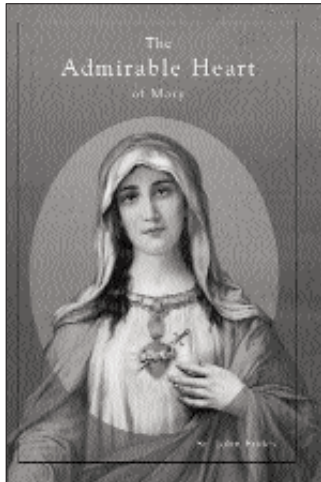
Behold the model of a woman, wife, and mother; contemplate this beauteous character, which has two sides apparently quite opposite, and yet which complete each other. On one hand, a womanly mind full of feminine delicacy, forethought, practical prudence, and gentleness; on the other, the vigorous intelligence of a man, with the resources, strength, energy, activity, and firm perseverance which we admire in a masculine character: “And joining a man's heart to a woman's thought” (II Mach. 7:21). (pp.212-13)

Mrs. Dennis (Colleen) Hammond is the author of the best-selling book *Dressing with Dignity*, and is much in demand as a speaker at conferences, retreats, and parish events. A former on-camera meteorologist for The Weather Channel, model, actress and Miss Michigan National Teen-Ager, Colleen abandoned her highly successful career in television to become a stay-at-home mother. Colleen lives in North Texas with her husband and their four children. Visit her website at <http://www.ColleenHammond.com>. Reproduced with permission.

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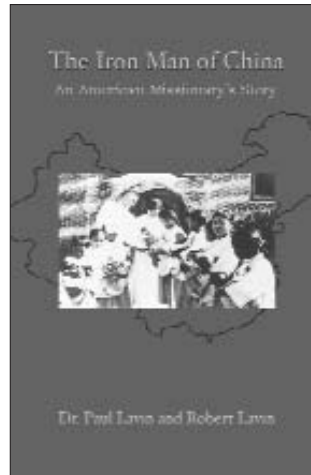


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Softbound — 402 pages \$9.95

The Iron Man of China

Dr. Paul Lavin and
Robert Lavin

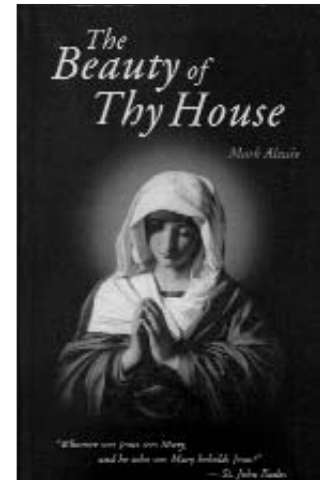


Without knowing anything about the man whose life is recounted on these pages, *The Iron Man of China* may seem a curious title. Except for a year furlough home in the states, Father Lavin served the Chinese people for twenty years (1932-1953), traversing thousands of miles by foot or bicycle, and exposing himself every day to life threatening dangers. In 1953 the Communists expelled him from the mainland threatening him with death if he should ever return. This well-documented book, written by the Iron Man's nephew, illustrates one of the reasons why there are ten million Catholics, loyal to Rome, in China today.

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The Beauty of Thy House

Mark Alessio



"I have loved the beauty of thy house and the place where thy glory dwells." (Psalm 25:8) This verse, rich in content, is an appropriate choice by our author as a title for a book written in praise of the glories of the Mother of God. Throughout this magnificent production, the scholarly writer demonstrates that figuratively, and in its highest moral sense, the object of this ecstatic exclamation of the Psalmist is not a structure of stone but of virtue. This book provides the reader with ready access to a complete Marian theology. More than that, it is a perfect combination of dogmatics, apologetics and devotion presented in an exciting, even fervid, literary ambiance.

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