

AT S9 E12 Lent Part 5 Transcript

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Hello and welcome to the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sister Miriam James Heidland and every week I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. This podcast is born out of our friendship and all that the Lord is doing in our lives. You hear us laugh. You hear us cry. You hear us share very vulnerably, and you hear us talk about the things that we're still learning along the way. And you're most welcome to join us. You can find out all of our information on our podcast episodes on abidingtogether,podcast.com, but for now, grab a cup of coffee, settle in and welcome home.

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together Podcast. We are already in part five of our Lenten series, the book, *This Present Paradise*, and we're going to talk about every act is love. And I think one of the greatest acts of love right now would be for me to eat breakfast. I'm sorry. I'm just, am I being your Lent ladies? I'm starving. Like. Sorry, I'm just hungry.

Heather Khym: We've been recording for a while and it was all first thing in the morning. So I hear you friend I'm with you, I'm with you in that.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: How are we doing Michelle? How are you doing almost, it's almost Easter, kind of almost we're working on it. You know

Michelle Benzinger: I see the horizon. I see the dawn about to break, but I am, yeah, I'm hanging in there. It is good. You know, it's still Lent though. I'm ready for Lent, you know, but we have to go through the whole process don't we? We can't get to Easter Sunday without good Friday. And we can't get to the whole Triduum without going through the desert, people. But can we just have a water break? I want a water break. I just want a water break.

Heather Khym: Can that water break include gluten? Just wondering. Just asking for a friend.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: and SweetTart jelly beans.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, you're just funny. Our listeners are probably like stop complaining, but you know, hey the struggle is real people. We're just keeping it real. It's just our flesh.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: This is just how it is friends. This is just how it is. Yep. So we are going to, if you want to join us, we are going to talk about episode or chapters 27 to 33 on this episode. And like, as we usually do, we'll hit a certain, some of, some of the highlights and then leave some of the Easter eggs, metaphorically speaking, for you to find yourself as you journey through the chapters. So we're going to start on page 145, and we're going to use the quote there from the book *Spiritual Combat*, which is really beautiful. He says, "A single action - even the least and most insignificant - done with the view of pleasing God alone and of glorifying him is worth infinitely more so to speak than many actions themselves of the greatest value and worth that spring from other motives." So so many saints, Saint Therese talks about this, Saint John of the cross talks about this and that, you know, that every act is love, that the smallest act done with love is greater than the biggest quote-unquote biggest act done for other motives. And so I think that's what we're going to

journey through - When we talk about suffering, we talk about praying for priests, we talk about the hidden life, we talk about a lot of things in these chapters, but the fact that every act done with love is the most efficacious act. So Michelle, you want to jump in there and kind of talk about for you as we journey through these chapters and that reality of acts done with love, how does that frame, how you saw the chapters and kind of what the Lord is doing in your life?

Michelle Benzinger: I love it. I love where Claire brings into, like in chapter 27, she says, she's talking about the two Carmelites have a complimentary mission to the laity today. You too, they seem to say, have a life filled with opportunities to turn nothings into treasures. Look beyond the apparent smallness of the stuff of your life. See beneath it. It is weighted with eternity. It is infused with grace. It is waiting only for your yes for its real power to be unleashed. And you will feel the tremendous force of love when the dam breaks in your soul, and you're carried by the current of your hidden acts straight into the heart of Jesus. When all the rivers of the soul, which are so immense they already resemble seas, go to lose themselves in the ocean of divine love,

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I mean, that's page 147-148 if you were using the book, but yes,

Michelle Benzinger: Thank you.

Heather Khym: Fire.

Michelle Benzinger: Fire, ilke, I love the whole part of the hidden acts straight into the heart of Jesus. And I've been really contemplating that, you know, the last couple of days when after reading this chapter and it's just been more and more. And I had a really good conversation with a dear friend of ours, who's in the seminary and we were talking about the hidden life and the hidden acts. And he was just talking about the purification process and all of that, that he's used to be going out and about. And he's a person that's been on many stages and stuff like that. And he said, no one applauds you in the hidden life. I thought that was such a great line. He's like no one applauds or affirms you in the hidden life. And so I asked him, I said, but does the Holy Spirit applaud you and affirm you in the hidden life? And he was like touché, touché. But he and I, our temperaments are very similar. And we were talking about that, but like, I want someone to say, Hey, good job. You know, like I always say, feed me and tell me I'm pretty, you know, come on, you know, affirm me in this. And, but it's the hidden acts, but those hidden acts when they are transformed or done in the right disposition, they are what really is like the embers that burn Lord's fire and how do I love the people that are right in front of me and how do I love them well? Especially in the hidden and unseen ways, just been really convicted of that because I always say I love the God of grand gestures, but really the majority of the spiritual life is the God of the little, small, beautiful ordinary things. So how do we really enter into that this Lent or not even enter into this Lent- how do we make that a part of our whole spiritual journey?

Heather Khym: Yeah, I think there's such a focus in the world on like the stage, the platform, the, you know, being an influencer, like we just see it all over the place. Everybody posting everything publicly and it really taps into like a deep desire of every human being, to be seen for who we are to be and to be known, but to be cherished, like in the deepest parts of who we are. And I love this part where she said, just before what you were reading Michelle, she was faced with like being a nobody in the midst of people who are somebody's. And she just

said, I decided then and there sitting in my suburban to be the best nobody I could be. And I think there's something so powerful about that. Just embracing our littleness and embracing where we are and what we're not. And, and that there's power there - that when we enter fully into those little places, in the hidden places. Like it says later on that's where saints are made. And I truly believe that. I think saints are made in the hidden places. Who cares if you can get up on a stage - we've seen this far too often in the church, like cross-boundary churches, not just the Catholic church, every church - leaders who are up on big stages and we come to find out that they are living, you know, duplicitous lives that are full of sin and, and pain, you know. And that are, that have hurt a tremendous amount of people. And I think, Oh Lord, like, can we just. It make me always like really deeply connected and authentic with you in all of the hidden places, because that's where it matters. It doesn't matter what people see on the stage. What matters is what is happening within our own hearts in our union with the Lord. Like we said, last time, this is the whole point of it all. Is union with the Trinity. And so if that isn't happening in the hidden places, there's no way that you can bring that anywhere else. You know, like we can't truly love other people if we're not cultivating love with the lover in the hidden places, like then it just comes out of like, maybe actions or good deeds, but when it's infused with the power of He who is love himself, that is that transforms people's lives, you know? And so, yeah, I think for most of my life, I've always felt like I'm on the B team. And I I'm, I'm good with that. Like, I want to be the best B team person that God has ever had, you know, because that's where he's called me to be. That's where I'm called to be faithful to him. And in those places where you feel small and when he does expand your territory, then you can lean into this dependence on him because you know, you don't have what it takes. It's not about you, you know, you become comfortable with littleness. And I think those are the people that I look up to the most who have influence and who have like large territories, large kingdoms or whatever, but they are fully dependent on the Lord. And it's not about them. It's about him. Yeah. And I want to see that in every part of my life, like, that's really something that I long for. And I bump into my sin and my pride and my Oh, like reckless desires all the time. But that is truly what I want is I want, I want it to be about him in all the places.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh, that's so, that's so lovely. And what Claire explains for us on page 147, she talks about that very thing. And she says Elizabeth of the Trinity as one of the first followers of Saint Therese. Also tried to do absolutely everything in a spirit of self forgetfulness and love. Remember, she had started this habit as a young girl and it had transformed her stubborn temperament. This theme of humility and embracing the little things in life is so important that it is worth revisiting in her adult years. That truth of that, that's reality. Can we just talk about humility for a second? I mean, what you're talking about ladies is that's humility. Humility is reality of who God is and who he and I, you know, and that I'm not him. And you know, this is who I am, and this is the truth of who I am. And I am in desperate need of a savior, in every place in my life, in desperate need. And I think that's what I'm sure we've talked about this on the podcast before. And I, I still believe it. I believed it then. And I still believe it. I really believe that people to borrow a very cliché saying at the end of the day, don't want to meet us so to speak. They want to meet Christ. They want to have a living encounter with the living Lord Jesus through us. Yes. But people want to encounter Jesus Christ and those, all those places in our hearts, where we are, where we depend on the Lord, because that's reality and allowing his love to breathe his fragrance through the particular instrument that is our soul is a stunning melody. That is part of a larger symphony of mankind. Amen. You know, it gets discordant when I try to play my own

note, you know, I want to play my own note and I want to play it when I want to play it and I want to do it how I want to do it because I am so little inside, I don't even know who I am. That that seems like the best way to me, but the places where - we've talked about this so often is - the places are of our intense poverty and our vulnerability, where those places that we just know, I'm like would that we knew that in every part of our life, because that's really what gives birth to true joy, where Jesus wants to bring us. He's like, I give you my joy. Like my, so my joy may be complete in you. So that my life is lived in you. And his song is sung in us. It's not to the eradication, the annihilation of who we are. It's actually the melding of the lovers. It's the song of the lovers. It becomes a duet of a harmony of captivating resonance.

Michelle Benzinger: There's a quote by Henri Nouwen. And it says precisely where I feel my poverty, I discover God's blessing. Oh girl. Yeah. And that is just it, because I think we've talked about this before in the last couple of episodes. When I think about like the Saint Augustine's and the Mary Magdalene's and how they became such great saints is because they knew of their sinfulness, but they knew of God's redemption even greater than their sinfulness. And they experienced God's love there and it just blew their minds that he could love them in that place. And it wasn't condemning themselves. It was praising his gloriousness, his magnificent love, his pursuit of their hearts. You know, if you ever look at Augustine, and you know, the beautiful, Oh, how late have I loved you? I mean, that is a heart cry of a lover, you know, with just so beautiful. I mean, it gets right up there with Mr. Darcy, you know, like in pride and prejudice, you know, you have bewitched me body and soul. That is it. You know, because they know it is the pursuit of the lover and that he loves them in spite of everything. And yeah, I think there's something beautiful about that. I think there's something beautiful that when we experience that kind of love and pursuit, and I think this Lent more than any other, it's just been coming to terms with my own humanity. And then I said before on the podcast, like, Ooh, that's not pretty, but Hey, this is fertile ground for the Lord to move. You know, this is where he can bloom and redeem some beautiful things in my heart, my life. And it's actually revealed my pride, you know, in more ways than one like, Oh my goodness. And it's actually revealed my deep, deep need for a savior. Like there's a desperateness and a dependence on him that I have been awakened to like never before. Like, I mean, I just am, like, I was reading the gospel story about the hemorrhaging woman and it was like an epiphany came up this week I'm like, I get it. I get why she was so desperate that she grabbed onto him. Like I get it now. And I thought I had gotten it before, but now, like I get it into the depths of my soul. Like, Oh man, I just need you to heal this. Oh man, I just need you, your touch. I need your presence. I need you fully and tangibly in my life right now. And that's what he wants from us, you know, to be desperate lovers of him.

Heather Khym: Yeah. And to have that happen, you have to be vulnerable. And in a place of honesty, you have to be willing to be exposed, you know. When two lovers come together, they have to be willing to, to be exposed before one another. Totally vulnerable, not just physically, but emotionally. Like everything, you know, is supposed to be, nothing hidden between two lovers. And, and it is that way with the Lord. And I think that as we allow God to come into these hidden places, these small places, these broken places, like that's where we are transformed, where character is built, where maturity happens, where he then can shape us into who we were meant to be. And people who then can be entrusted with his kingdom, you know, different parts of his kingdom here. And what an honor, you know, what a, what an incredible privilege to be entrusted with something from the Lord to steward well.

And, and we can't do that unless these, these things within our character are being forged in the fire of the hidden life. You know, it's hard to be in the hidden places. It's so hard. It's so hard to stay there. Like sometimes we just want to run into places where it's like, Oh, it's safer here. It's more comfortable here. But the beauty that comes from those places is unmatched. And you can't find it anywhere else. You can't make it happen. You can't fast forward through that part. Like this is where it, it has to be lived out.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Um, in the forging of the fire yes. Is. That analogy is used on so many different levels and this is the only way through. Like the maturing of love, like we talked about in the last episode about the maturing of love through consolation and desolation. And, and I think that is, it just like, I think Heather, you said last time, and both of you said it recently about how just in different stages of our life or how in the seasons of our life the Lord reveals different things. And I just had something happen to me recently, and I. You know, we all know, like the three of us we've spoken at different conferences and things like that, or, you know, we have a public podcast and I think anytime you say something in public, you take a risk that whatever you're going to say, people can make any comment they want about it. And so we've all, we've shared stories of just having really awkward moments with people after a talk of just the random stuff they say. And, and yeah, we just, and you just kind of like chalk that up of like, okay, you know, you're not going to hit every heart in the audience or people hear through their own filter. But I just had the Lord just uncover something to my own heart recently, because sometimes after a talk, just people say random things, but many times when people hear my story or they, I just share very honestly, people, it will happen every now and then somebody will come to me, but like, you know what, I just you're really wounded. And I'm just, I'm just really going to pray for you. Like, you just really need the love of healing, the healing love of God. And, and at first I would get really like defensive, but then now I'm like, well, amen, You go like, you go right ahead because I'm so grateful. It was just recently I had somebody else in front of a bunch of other people say something similar to that. And I found myself I was mortified. Like I could find, I could just feel, you talk about the forge of the fire and I could feel my anxiety rising and I could see my deflection of what they were saying. And it was like real time, like, okay, Lord, what's happening to me right now. And then somebody else kind of come around and said something very similar of, of that. And, uh, you know, pointing out my imperfections and, and I was just sitting there in front of everybody. And I'm just like praying, like praying, praying, praying. And I tell you this in that moment where I was just really praying, like to make the right decision and asking Jesus to speak to me. The Lord revealed to me that I still had a lie in my heart, that in my heart, I feel like I still have to be perfect to be loved. And that if I'm not perfect, nobody's going to listen to me. And I can't tell you just the astounding, because I've worked through that lie a lot of perfectionism of performance, but I was like, Oh, like, people I don't know the disposition of these people's hearts. They didn't mean anything untoward by it, but the Lord used that forging of the fire to reveal to me. So I was standing there and I was like, just praying through like renouncing that lie of - in the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the lie that I have to be perfect to be loved. Or if that I have imperfections or weaknesses that somehow it means I'm less than, or that I have to have it all. It was so deep in my heart because it's been such a long story for me that, through that, through that experience the Lord so kindly in his gentleness was like, I'm just trying to get at this. So you can, you can release that now. You know, you can release that now. And I didn't even know that was still in my heart. I had no idea. I was like, I did not know that I did not know that that was still there. And so just praying with those places of letting things be done

in love that no matter what those people's dispositions are, you know, whatever they, you know, these, that Lord, what, what are you doing in this and what are you trying to reveal to me? Like, where's your love encountering me here where I need to, I need to experience communion with you because there's parts of my heart. I don't even know, like, you know?

Heather Khym: Hm gosh. That is so beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. That's a vulnerable place and Sister, like what I'm so struck by is the beauty of like, there is like so many different things you could have done in that moment. You could have totally like, yeah., tore a strip off, them. Listen, I'm going to call out all your sins. Let me get down to write some stuff in the sand here, you know, or whatever in the dirt, like you could have gone a hundred different directions, but for you to take that internal pause, like you went to the cloister of the heart, you went to where Jesus was and you're like, Jesus, what are you trying to say to me right now about whatever is happening here? It's like you, you went to him to speak about your identity and who you are not just like fighting back in that moment. Like that's wow. The maturity involved there, but the beauty of that, I'm really struck by thank you for sharing that.

Michelle Benzinger: And I think those places of poverty and or the hidden places aren't God's signs of his displeasure or punishments, there are signs of invitation to look deeper. Like you went, leaned into your story and said, okay, Holy spirit, what are you saying in this moment? Where it would be easy to put a wall up in your heart and say, I'm shutting down. But instead you made a gate for the way for Jesus and the Holy Spirit to walk through. Now me as your friend wants to know those people and beat them up, but that's okay.

Heather Khym: Totally. Totally, I'm like where's my brass knuckles.

Michelle Benzinger: Like, whatever, but yeah, but I'm just like, uh uh, you did not, but we can make gates in those places or we can make walls and let us make gates and go deeper. You know, because the Lord is inviting us into more. And I love that with the deeper intimacy of knowing our hidden places and deeper intimacy, like she goes on in this chapter, the chapters that preceded it - is like really to learn how to be a mother, according to the spirit and learning how to pray. You know, there's both of those. I love that. When the apostles, I love this part. When the, you know, on chapter 31, teach us to pray. Like I, that is one of my favorite lines in scripture is teach us to pray. He does not say, Lord, teach us how to grow programs. Or teach us how to do this. Or teach us how to market on Instagram or teach us how to do all this. He says no, first and foremost, they ask, teach us to pray because it is a love relationship. It's like communion. It's like, basically teach me how to talk to you. And allow me to teach me how to learn how to be loved by you. And to dive deeper into this and to really pour our hearts to the Lord and have him pour his back out to us. And with both of those, she builds upon which I think this is so pivotal and crucial to our church and our world right now. Especially for - for all of us - but there's a special, unique call, I think, for women to learn the beautiful gift, to pray for our priests. And about three years ago, when the scandals hit again, because they've hit a couple of times. I actually experienced some of the worst of the priesthood. Not personally, like there was no personal attack, but I was just privy to a couple of situations and conversations and just saw the absolute worst of the priesthood. And my heart was broken and I have a dear friend whose family was severely. And almost like I have to say it diabolically came under attack by a priest and abused a member of their family and just have been with them for a while through this journey. And my heart was just broken. And that is when the, actually the four women doctors of the church series that we

have done was born out of that. And I remember being in front of the blessed sacrament, praying, and just like, Lord, I'm just heartbroken. Like. I don't know if I can stay like, in this church much longer. Like this is just so corrupt. And so it was just so ugly and just the brutality of it and the ugliness of it. And I felt like a whisper to my spirit. The Lord is like, I will start to highlight and bring to you different priests to pray for. Will you pray for them? Start praying for priests. And I will highlight some and start bringing them to you. And I felt it was a real invitation to the Lord, you know? And so I was like, and so I was like, yes, I will. And in that time, the Lord has been so true to his word. He has brought several priests to me to really pray for and to intercede for, and to sacrifice for, and to see the fruit of their ministry out of the prayer. And I feel like it's a, co-collaboration. It is a real sisterhood. I feel like yes. Parts of this is like a spiritual motherhood, but then I'm like, I'm not that old to be your mama. Oh yeah. Part I feel like it's a spiritual sisterhood. Yeah, no, but it is a maternal act because it is bringing forth life in the kingdom. It is a maternal act because it is sacrificed to bear life for the kingdom. But if the Eucharist is the source and the summit of our faith, we have to be praying for our priests. And it is really easy to be critical of them, but our first posture has to be to pray and guard them.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh, I totally agree, Michelle, I really don't think there's anything much more important in the world today than praying and offering for our priests. Because if men stop saying yes or men leave the priesthood, the world ceases to exist as we know it. I just, I could go on and on about this, my deepest love, and I love page 159, but she has this whole chapter on, you know, to be an apostle with you. And she talks about praying for priests and she says it's art is so stunning. She said, have priests and seminarians ever needed our prayers more? Have these men in the front lines ever needed spiritual backup as they do now? Have they ever faced such cultural hostility, pressures from within and without the church, incessant temptation from the enemy of souls who seeks to distort the image of Christ in the priest? she's like, it's our job to beg down graces on these men, to preserve their vocations, to multiply the fruits of their labor and to strengthen their resolve and call them to greatness. I recently heard a young priest thoughtful answer the question. What do priests need today? And he answered, we don't need comfort. We need courage. And I think, you know, I think we've often, we've also often said this, you know, do we pray for people as much as we criticize them? So if we're going to criticize your priest, you better start praying for him, better start fasting for him because they're people too. And they need help, and they're men who have real stories and real lives and real brokenness and real beauty and, and. For me, I think that's the most important thing we can do is to pray for them because they're in persona christi on earth. They love in a way that nobody else can love and without them the world as we know it ceases to exist, I just, yes, yes. And yes. And yes. And yes.

Heather Khym: Amen. Amen. I don't even have anything else to say about that. I'm just in agreement with both of you and, you know, we have had the blessing of having many friends of ours who are priests or have become priests, and we've been able to be, you know, a home of refuge for them. Yeah. I think there's a certain, uh, aspect of maternity. Like you said, Michelle, that, that we can offer no matter. And this maternity, as we've talked about in previous podcasts, but in case you haven't heard it before, isn't just physical motherhood, or you have to be married to experience maternity. Like this is the call of every woman that there is a maternal gift that we all are invited to share with the world. And God will invite us to do that in very specific ways with different people. And I think that that gift of maternity that we can offer to priests is in like the nurture and care at like the prayers of a mother, you

know, like for children. I mean, it's not like they're our children, you know, per se, but there's just this maternal quality that each woman has that they're able to offer as a gift to the world. And I think specifically for our priests, there's some things in there about sensitivity to the person, a generosity of our time and our prayers that, that are really necessary.

Michelle Benzinger: I think one of the beautiful things the Holy spirit is doing in the church right now is to almost a more familial model of the church, where it is brothers and sisters and yeah spiritual mothers and fathers. And it looks all together. We are meant for communion. And that is the example that we are given by the Trinity. And I was just so convicted because like a couple of years ago when I was even starting to pray for the church. And really the Lord is really doing a deep work in my whole heart about the church, you know, seeing that her humanness and her ugliness, but seeing her beauty and all of that. And I felt like it was a warning from the Holy spirit. He said, you know, you can not criticize her and allow her restoration and redemption also. Like choose which side you're going to be on. You know, and Teresa of Avila says, you know, behind each priest, there is a demon fighting for his fall. If we have the language to criticize him, we must have twice as much to pray for them. You know? And so there's a conviction for us. Now, does that mean that we don't hold our priest accountable? Heck no, we still do. We hold all of us accountable there. We're all called to our responsibility and holiness. But there is a desire to pray and there is a desire to really see and call out the beauty, you know, in these vocations and all of that above. And I think there's a responsibility to women to be true life givers in this situation to come forth with that with our priests. And it's just such a, like the Lord is doing something new in all of this. And I just feel very convicted about this with just a resurgence of a maternal feminine genius to come into church like we have never seen before, you know, I feel very strongly, so.

Heather Khym: It's going to call forth the masculine genius in a new way that is going to be, and those things coming together in a complimentary way are I think going to transform the church.

Michelle Benzinger: I agree. I agree. Even though our good friend, Fr. Mark Mary can't stand the term masculine genius, he thinks we need to know another phrase for him. So Fr. Mark Mary, you can come up with another phrase if you want something better. Anyway,

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I love the masculine genius. That's very true. I mean the spiritual attack upon priests and the enemy seeking their destruction because he knows who they truly are. And you see women at the cross. You see a mother, Mary, you see the women of Jerusalem, that follow Christ to Calvary there's like that. There's a particular just really gift that we as women have as life bearers. And if you don't know how to pray for your priest, just entrust him to the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Just say, Jesus and Mary, I offer my priest to you. I don't know what to do. I don't know what he needs. I don't even know where to start, but just to continue to pray a rosary for him, to offer your Eucharist for him, place him in the hearts of Jesus and Mary and ask for his restoration for it. And you know, so the deepening of his own heart and. I know we're almost out of time here, but I love which is, I think it's great that Claire put these chapters side by side about praying for your priest and motherhood in the spirit. Because on page 164, she talks about she quotes mother Theresa speaking on the United nations conference on women in Beijing and from, Oh, she wrote a letter in 1995, but it says a woman's motherhood is God's most precious gift to her because through it, she loves in a way that mirrors his. It is a woman's superpower, this power of

loving. And so God, in anticipation of the lies the enemy would sow, raises up icons of our lady, of our mother in the bouquet of women and saints. And he says, here, here is motherhood. Here is women who reflect beautifully this restorative redemptive kind of love that gives life to the world. And that in an essence, maternity is the most mature identity of a woman. And that's the natural outflowing of love both. Like you're saying Heather, both biologically, but spiritually, you know, it said that Mary conceived Jesus in her heart before she conceived him in her womb. And that's the call of, of every woman and that's the outflow and that's the tenacity of. When I, when I watch our lady accompany Jesus to the cross, like just this tenacity of a mature love poured out. The love that stands by, a love that suffers, a love that offers, a love that is restorative, a love that is respectful, a love that is beautiful. Is that, is that, is that not the most terrifyingly beautiful thing you've ever seen? And it just, I love the movie Steel Magnolias. I think we've all seen it like a million times, but I just, I, I love that scene, you know, these women and, you know, for all of its foibles, but yet, but like at the end, when, um, what's her name now I forget - Sally fields - when she's lamenting her daughter's death. And she's like, I was here when that beautiful creature came into the world and I was there when she left. And like that power, that tenacity of a woman's love, uh, she suffers differently than men. She has different gifts than men. And it's the restoration of both the masculine and the feminine genius that is key to healing the whole world, which is why the enemy wants to seek to destroy it at all costs. And it happens within us. It starts within us. That's where the Lord begins, always in the inner cloister. That's why we keep going back to them.

Michelle Benzinger: One of my boys is reading John Steinbeck's book East of Eden for a class right now. And we were talking about it, but. We're talking about the quote there's one of my favorite quotes comes from that book and it says, I believe a strong woman may be stronger than a man, particularly if she happens to have love in her heart. And he says, I guess a loving woman is indestructible. And I just love that line. I was like, that is a good line and it's not stronger in the sense of like, I am woman hear me roar, you know, like that kind of sense of stronger in her vulnerability. It is stronger in her generosity. It is stronger in her receptivity. It is stronger in her sensitivity. That is a woman. And I was telling a good priest friend of ours about a podcast I was listening to. And it was talking that a vulnerable, fully embodied woman is one of the most dangerous things on the earth because it makes men step up. Almost like the quality that Fulton Sheen says, men rise or fall to the caliber of women in the civilization. You know? Well, I think there is an invitation that the Lord is calling to what does it really mean to unlock and unleash the feminine genius in its purest and truest form? And that invitation brings forth life. It is like a domino effect when that happens, the other dominoes fall and get an order to what the kingdom needs to be. And I think it is for such a time as this. That the Holy spirit is appointing all of us to say. And he, yes, to this invitation.

Heather Khym: And in some ways, you know, it's beautiful that even the world is recognizing that the strength and dignity of women in our society today, but there's also at the same time, like a very big twist there. Yes. That's going on where the power of a woman has to be elevated by stepping on men or sometimes on each other. And, and these are things that I think we have to be wary of that when we look for examples of what it means to be a powerful woman that that has to be motivated by love. That all of the power needs to come from a place of love and where the intention isn't for selfish desires, but the intentions are pure. You know, that the intentions are really geared towards the other. So I think that the

Lord is raising up beautiful women who are powerful. And whose hearts of love are fierce, you know, and those are the women that I want to look to as examples for myself.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Amen. Amen. Amen. I love that's the love that suffers and that rises again. Isn't it? You know, Mary's there at the suffering, but man, she's also there at the resurrection. You better believe it. And that's stunning, so stunning. Well, I feel like there's a million other things we could talk about ladies, but is there anything else before we. I know we're going to have to end our conversation somewhere. We're going to have Claire with us next week. So if you join us for episode six, we're going to have Claire who wrote the book. I cannot wait to hear from her and just hear as she sees the chapters and what was going on in her heart. We have a very special, special guest, obviously in Claire next week, but maybe as we finish our discussion, ladies, anything you want to add as we finish, go into our one things and finish that time.

Michelle Benzinger: No, and like we said before, like just each chapter is packed with so much goodness to stay, and just to marinate in what the Holy spirit highlights to you. And like the, even the ending chapter, Lord, the one that you love is sick. It goes deeper into what Sister was just talking about. Just the power of redemptive suffering, the power of loving and suffering, and that even in suffering there is a redemptive, powerful aspect to it that transforms the world. And so just to look at each and every chapter and see, and I love hearing about all of you that you are meeting as groups, hearing about your discussions and all of that on this book. So, yes, just asking the Holy spirit to highlight and animate what he needs to for each and every one of us.

Heather Khym: I think that's great. And I would also just encourage everyone at this. I'm speak to myself as well, that, you know, you might hear things or read things that you're like, Oh, that's so good. And you want to write it down or whatever it is, but to just try to take one thing that you allow to get rooted into your heart. That will bloom into action and change within your life, you know, to let something, I don't know what the word is. I want to say, like ferment, put that's not right.

Michelle Benzinger: Marinate!

Heather Khym: Marinate, Right. But you know,

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Or ferment. That's fine too. It's probiotic.

Heather Khym: Ok alright then. I don't know. What analogy to use perfectly, but the point is to let something become rooted within the heart.

Michelle Benzinger: I think you can tell we are all hungry.

Heather Khym: I know bring it on.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Amen. Yes, that's excellent. Both of you. Excellent. So

Heather Khym: Speaking of being hungry, um, can I jump into my one thing?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yes, please do.

Heather Khym: Yes. So my one thing is, um, a recipe that I use all the time for lemon garlic grilled chicken. It is this awesome marinade. It's on Mel's kitchen cafe. I'll put the posts or

the link for it in the show notes, but I use this chicken marinade all the time. It's always good. Every single time for grilled chicken, especially. Yeah. So it's going to be in there for you. Everybody needs a good chicken marinade.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah, they do. Can I have it now?

Heather Khym: How about now?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: How about now?

Heather Khym: Sister, what's your one thing?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: My one thing is actually, the Institute for Catholic Culture and I'm taking a philosophy class from them, which is just philosophy 101, it's basic philosophy. But they have so many amazing talks by so many great professors and they're doing such great work on so many different levels - everything from medical mercy to code of justice, to penance, to all kinds of stuff. And so I just wanted to recommend them the my philosophy class, that registration is closed, but they offer that I think every year, and then this summer they're going to offer a different one. So I just wanted to give a shout out and a much appreciated note of appreciation. That's kind of redundant, but to the Institute for Catholic culture, and I'll put the link in there if you want to check out their website and they have a lot of free talks that you can watch by some really great people. So, that's one my one thing.

Michelle Benzinger: And my one thing is a fun meal that I made for Catholic Relief Services. It is a little video that has me and my children cooking, um, which is funny, but that we made for their Lenten whole proposal. And so it was a really fun video.

Heather Khym: And how have we not seen this yet? Michelle's cooking show. What?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, have we been with you this whole time and we had no idea. Who are you?

Heather Khym: Yeah, we don't even know you.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I don't even know who I am.

Michelle Benzinger: Okay. Well, just because I did it last, past week. I know, seriously. And so when they asked me, I was like, do you know who you're asking him to cook, but it was really fun. And it was really great, but I love, uh, just yeah, and it really gave a universal view, which you know, Catholicism means universal, but I really loved it brought something different to our Lent, just diving into Catholic Relief Services and what they do. So I will post the link here.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: That is lovely. Well, maybe dear friends, we could end our episode today with a quote from Claire on page 116. Just as an offering for your heart. She says, say an extra prayer for priests today, suffering priests, lonely priests, overwhelmed priests, the priest who baptized you, the priest who gave you the Eucharist, the priest who prepared you for your first confession, and first reconciliation heard your confession. Who knows the connection may be so powerful that it may reach all the way into eternity and shake you awake at night. God has a way of connecting us like that because he's a good father. So thank you for joining us on our journey and tune in next week when we'll have

Claire herself, uh, talk about the book and the final chapters herself. Until next week, we will be Abiding Together. God bless y'all.

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