

A woman's talent is to listen, says the Vatican.

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key Vocabulary

Match these words from the text with their meanings.

1. humility
 2. virtue
 3. theologian
 4. intuition
 5. antagonism
 6. unique
 7. knee-jerk reaction
 8. mature
-
- a. An ability to know or understand something through your feelings.
 - b. A response that is immediate and not carefully considered.
 - c. Behaving in the sensible way you would expect an adult to behave.
 - d. A way of behaving that shows that you do not think you are better or more important than other people.
 - e. Someone who studies God and religion.
 - f. A strong feeling of disliking someone.
 - g. Not the same as anyone or anything else.
 - h. A good quality or habit that a person has, especially a moral one.

2 What do you think?

A document published by the Vatican lists 6 most typical characteristics of women. Which 6 in this list of 10 characteristics do you think it mentions?

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. listening | 2. managing |
| 3. organizing | 4. welcoming |
| 5. humility | 6. strength |
| 7. winning | 8. faithfulness |
| 9. praise | 10. waiting |

Now look in the first paragraph of the text and check your answers:

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A woman's talent is to listen

John Hooper and Jo Revill in Rome.

The Vatican has published a document containing its views on the most typical characteristics of women: "Listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting." In its most important statement on the role of women in almost ten years, the Roman Catholic Church said these virtues of the Virgin Mary were ones women showed "with particular intensity and naturalness".

The 37-page statement, published in full last Sunday, was written by the Pope's leading theologian, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Because it is an official Vatican statement, it is likely that it was read, and perhaps amended, by the Pope himself before it was published. The document will probably produce a lot of discussion about the characteristics of women. It says: "Women preserve the deep intuition of the goodness in their lives ... and contribute to the growth and protection [of others]. This intuition is linked to women's physical capacity to give life. This capacity is a reality that has a strong effect on the nature of the female personality".

In his *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, Cardinal Ratzinger criticises "ideas that are often at variance with the true progress of women". He said that one of these was the idea that women were regarded as less important than men. This idea created antagonism and implied that "women, in order to be themselves, must make themselves the enemies of men". Confrontational

thinking like this was "leading to harmful confusion . . . and had a negative effect on the structure of the family."

The differences between men and women were becoming lost in this "gender war", he said. "To avoid the domination of one sex or the other some people deny these differences and regard them simply as the effects of historical and cultural conditioning." This view ignored the qualities that came from a woman's unique ability to give birth. This ability "allows her to become mature very quickly, and gives a sense of the seriousness of life and of its responsibilities. A sense and a respect for what is concrete develop in her". The cardinal uses the document to argue that, because they have something unique to contribute, "women should be present in the world of work and in the organisation of society".

The document received a mixed reaction from feminists and women writers. Erin Pizzey, founder of the international women's refuge movement, said: "Catholic priests and bishops cannot marry so I don't think the Catholic Church is in a position to make statements like this."

But Catherine Pepinster, editor of the British Catholic journal *The Tablet*, said many women would identify strongly with the comments. "It is typical of feminists to give a knee-jerk reaction to this document. It makes a distinction between the sexes, but it also says that women have a big role to play in society."

The Guardian Weekly 20-06-04

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3 Comprehension check

Decide whether these sentences are True or False.

1. The Pope wrote the document himself.
2. The document says that the ability to give birth strongly effects the female personality.
3. The author of the document regards women as less important than men.
4. He says that differences between men and women are becoming clearer.
5. He also says that giving birth means that women become mature much later than men.
6. Feminists and women writers all criticised the document.

4 Vocabulary development - prepositions

Fill the gaps using a preposition. Check your answers in the text.

1. The statement was published _____ full last Sunday.
2. Women contribute _____ the growth and protection of others.
3. Some ideas are at variance _____ the true progress of women.
4. This kind of thinking leads _____ harmful confusion.
5. Women have a respect _____ what is concrete.
6. Many women will identify strongly _____ the comments.
7. The document makes a distinction _____ the sexes.
8. Some people regard the document as the church's most important statement - _____ the role of women in almost 10 years.

5 Word building

Complete the table

	Verb	Noun		Verb	Noun
1.	publish	_____	2.	state	_____
3.	discuss	_____	4.	protect	_____
5.	criticise	_____	6.	react	_____
7.	contribute	_____	8.	amend	_____

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6 Grammar focus - past simple forms in the passive

Look at this example from the text:

The statement was written by the Pope's leading theologian.

Rewrite these sentences in the same way.

1. The Pope read the document.
2. The Pope probably amended the document.
3. Some feminists criticised the document.
4. The Vatican published the document.
5. Some people regarded women as less important than men.
6. Erin Pizzey founded the international women's refuge movement.

7 Discussion

The document says, amongst other things, that women listen and are welcoming, faithful and humble. Do you agree that certain characteristics apply more to women than men? Make a list of typical adjectives for both sexes.

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Key

1 Key Vocabulary

1. d; 2. h; 3. e; 4. a; 5. f; 6. g; 7. b; 8. c

2 What do you think?

listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise, waiting

3 Comprehension Check

1. F; 2. T; 3. F; 4. F; 5. F; 6. F

4 Vocabulary Development Prepositions

1. in	2. to	3. with	4. to
5. for	6. with	7. between	8. on

5 Word Building

1. publication	2. statement
3. discussion	4. protection
5. criticism	6. reaction
7. contribution	8. amendment

6 Grammar Focus. Past simple forms in the passive.

1. The document was read by the Pope.
2. The document was probably amended by the Pope.
3. The document was criticised by some feminists.
4. The document was published by the Vatican.
5. Women were regarded as less important than men (by some people)
6. The international women's refuge movement was founded by Erin Pizzey.