

S10 E09 - Sister Pt 2 Transcript

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I love this season of advent. And so that's why I'm so excited to share with you that our sponsor this week is Ave Maria Press, and they are featuring their brand new Advent program called "Adore" with meditations written by our dear friend, Father John Burns. And it's going to be an absolutely beautiful way for you to enter into the season of Advent. We all know that Advent is full of Christmas parties and shopping and rushing around and things like that. So all of us have a choice this Advent. Will we sit with Mary and Joseph as they prepare to give birth to the Savior of the world? Or will we get distracted by all kinds of things? One of the best things about this journal that Father John Burns wrote is that it has prayerful meditations. It includes Scripture. It's got reflection questions. It's got a prayer for every day. In the book itself, which features beautiful original artwork by Valerie Delgado, it allows your heart to just to open to the season and to note what the Lord is saying to you, and to allow the Lord to come into a deeper place this Advent season. You can do it by yourself, or you can actually do it as a small group or with your parish. It's a wonderful, wonderful book of meditations. It also comes with a weekly video where you can get together and have a small group discussion, but just to set your heart in preparation for the coming of Christ the King and the beautiful season of Advent. So we are so delighted to be able to feature that. It's also my one thing this week so spoiler alert for the podcast. I just can't wait. I can't wait for you to see the beauty and experience of all of that. If you use the code ADORE at avemariapress.com you will get free standard shipping on the Adore programs. So ADORE at avemariapress.com You can find out more information from there. And so we look forward to journeying with the book ourselves and inviting you to do so as well. So ADORE at avemariapress.com God bless you.

Hi and welcome to season 10 of the Abiding Together Podcast. We are so excited to have you with us this season. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sr Miriam James Heidland, and every week I am joined by two of my dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. We talk about our life with Christ. We talk about big things, small things, beautiful things, sorrowful things. We laugh, we cry you'll fit right in. You are most welcome here. So please grab a cup of coffee, settle in and welcome home. Hi, and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together podcast, which can also be seen on our YouTube channel. So people can actually see us.

Heather Khym: Amazing.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: If they wish to do so.

Heather Khym: So excited to be partnering with Spirit Juice.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah, definitely. It's been wonderful, wonderful adventure so far, and we are going to delve into the identity of Sister today, part two. So as we mentioned, we've done a four-part series on Daughter, and then we're doing a four part series on Sister. And so this is our second part in that series.

Michelle Benzinger: Hi, Sister.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I know, hi. We've had quite an adventure...

Heather Khym: Speaking of sisters.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: We've had quite an adventure these last couple days.

Heather Khym: We have. We have. Yes, with very little sleep.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Do we dare divulge the details? I don't know.

Heather Khym: Okay. One super cool thing is we're by that Saint Therese Memorial, is it called?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: The National Shrine of Saint Therese.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, it is the dreamiest. I love it.

Heather Khym: We haven't even been inside yet.

Michelle Benzinger: We just walked around. And we were already mesmerized.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And just went outside and put our noses to the window, and we're just like...

Michelle Benzinger: Let us into this shrine. Let us into this shrine.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Open, open. They're like, "Get out of here", we're like "uh"

Michelle Benzinger: Oh, but the lake and the fountains and yes. If you're ever near Chicago, check that out. Wow.

Heather Khym: It's like the biggest one outside of France, right?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: That's the word on the street. I'm sure people that are listening to this know more about that shrine than we do, but it was just simply...

Michelle Benzinger: We will link the shrine in our show notes.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: That's a great idea.

Heather Khym: We hope to get there in person today. And then we'll have a lot to say about it maybe in the next episode. And then we'll have a lot to say about it.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah, maybe it'll be our one thing sometime. So today we're going to talk about communion and acceptance of sisterhood, casting a vision of sisterhood. And we are keeping with our same Scripture passage for the entire series. So this will be a month of you delving very deeply into the particular passages that we have for you. So we are going to lead once again with the gospel of Luke 1:39-56. And it says this: "At that time, Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice, she exclaimed, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill His promises for her.' And Mary replied, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. And from this day, all generations will call me blessed. The Almighty has done great things for me. And holy is His name. His mercy extends to those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with His arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home."

Amen. So there is much in there. And Heather, as we talk about this, and we're going to speak about, we've got a quote from John Paul II. Maybe if you want to

open that up for our listeners about the value of sisterhood and about just the deep heart of women, and her value that lies within her heart.

Heather Khym: Yeah. This is a beautiful quote from John Paul II in his letter to women. It says: "In all these areas a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable, for it will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity, and it will force systems to be redesigned in a way which favors the processes of humanization, which mark the civilization of love." I remember reading John Paul II's letter to women, and the first time I read it, I just wept when I read it. And I'm not like much of a crier when I'm reading things, in particular, maybe more with movies and stuff, but it was so moving to just hear how he, like specifically was honoring women in all of these different areas, you know. I just felt like we were seen like in a way that was very honoring, respectful, like our dignity was being seen and noticed. And I was like, you know, as we're sitting here today and we're talking about the acceptance of sisterhood, I'm like, how often do we look at one another with the dignity that each of us deserve? You know? And I think that's where we often fall short. There's reasons why we don't, or we can't, or we put walls up, or we are competing against one another, we feel threatened in some way. And I think it takes actual effort and allowing God to renew our mind, like from the things that have happened in the past, from the things that we might believe about ourselves or about others, or maybe just that we believe about our femininity and our womanhood in general. So I think a restoration of our mind, a transformation of our mind is part of that, you know, process of stepping into our dignity and really honoring one another's dignity in that way. What do you think, Michelle?

Michelle Benzinger: I love this. Like, I absolutely love this, like casting a vision for sisterhood. Like what does it look like to "process which mark the civilization of love"? I love that if you read our research in any kind of sociology, if you want to change a culture, you invest in women. Women are the heartbeats of culture. We are the life givers and we are the heart of culture. And so if you really want to change a culture or anything like that, you invest in women. Like even in developing countries, they were even talking about like giving women like different trades and art things to do, because they will actually take what they make and invest it into their families or the community and all of that. And so what does it look like for us to, as each of us as women, like we talked about in *Daughter*, are image bearers. We're made in the image and likeness of God. But what does it look like when sisters link arms and really create a civilization of love where it is supportive, where it is celebratory, where it is like the the women that have gone before us pour into the women beneath them and vice versa. Like there's a trickle down effect, that there is a sisterhood and a motherhood of women coming together, you know? And I think, as a mother of daughters, like this like excites me, like this really, really excites me. Like the way that I parent Olguine and Lily, like to create a vision for them, how

womanhood should be, you know. It was easier to do it with Lily because we adopted Olguine when she was so much older, but even how she approaches like her body and different changing seasons and different like milestones in her life. What does that look like when a group of women come together, you know, and really like, that's what we're going to look at in this episode, like the different milestones of a woman's life, what does it look like when it's celebrated within community and talked about it within community and where it's not done in isolation, but it's done in communion, you know? So what does that look like and how can each of us, each of us have a part to play in that? And what does, yeah. What does that look like? You know, and let's cast this vision for it. Sisterhood, like sisterhood made in image and likeness of God with dignity.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, each of us has a profound role to play in the formation of so many. We've been having some interesting conversations in our 30 minute drive here each morning. And just at dinner last night. And last night we were talking about just the one decision that you maybe could have made 10 or 20 years ago that would have changed your whole life. Like we've all had those moments. And many times we don't know that those are pivotal moments, but like years down the road, you're like, had I done that or had that person, that relationship, worked out or like my life would be totally different. And you just think of the one decision, like maybe your moment had moved. It was just like the one thing that.

Michelle Benzinger: I keep on thinking that movie from Gwyneth Paltrow, "Sliding Doors". Yeah, and it shows her if she had caught in the one subway or the other one, what would have happened?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's just like profound to think of, and we often use the term "Well, I'm just a this" "I'm just a mom." "I'm just a nun." "I'm just a woman." "I'm just a daughter." There's no "just" anything.

Michelle Benzinger: "Just a college student."

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And I think, I really do believe, when we leave chronological time and we all see God face-to-face, we will see how intricately woven we are and what a profound impact we had on every single person that God put in our orbit, so to speak. It's just that reality of, it's not a question of "Will I heal?" or "Will I dive into my identity?" or "Will I...?" I mean, how can we not? Because it affects everything. It affects everything.

Michelle Benzinger: Our yeses have a domino effect. Like we say, yes. Then it affects someone else's yes, affects someone else's yes.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: So true.

Michelle Benzinger: You know, we're all intertwined in our . Like really we are, and that is a beautiful thing, you know? And a little like serious.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Sobering. It's very sobering to think of it.

Michelle Benzinger: My yes affects other people's yeses. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It really does. I think, especially, I mean, in any way, but especially as moms of daughters, I'm sure you've guys have had both had moments where you've been looking at your daughters going like, "wow", you know, or "How did this come to pass?" or seeing new things in your daughter, and you felt the weight of, "If I don't do this for myself, then my daughter's going to suffer this, or I'm going to pass this onto my daughter, or I want more for her." And I can only imagine just looking in her eyes, but in a sense, like seeing your own, and like, I have to do something about this, you know?

Michelle Benzinger: Oh, absolutely. Heather, what are your thoughts?

Heather Khym: Yeah. I mean, I think you see it most visibly, the impact that you have on other people around you, like in your children and in your house, and in just even the environment that you feel like when you're in your own home. Like if I'm off, everybody's a bit off. They're like, "Oh, Mom's not having a good day."

Sister Miriam James Heidland: If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

Heather Khym: You know, and there's signals that I can see that I'm like, whoa, I mean, it's an accountability of sorts that either I can respond positively to or negatively to. And I'm like, I have an opportunity to change like how I'm operating and also teach people around me because I am a witness. Like it is a huge responsibility and only by the grace of God, you know? So I think there's like a huge part of discernment, of like really listening to the voice of God and all of these things to learn "Lord, like, how do you want like me to bear witness to who you are and the goodness that you're doing in my life and how can I serve you? How can I love you? How can I bless the people around me and the gifts that you've given to me? How can I be a good steward of all of this?" Like, that's why I think just random, going through your day randomly, you know, like it really takes like listening to the voice of God and saying, "Lord lead me." Like, I love that little prayer that I pray often. It's like, "Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore you. Like strengthen, guide, enlighten, console me." And it's like "Tell me what you want me to do and show me how to do it. And I promise that I'll be obedient to you. Just

show me your will God." Like, it's like these little prayers that can become like a mantra throughout our day of like, Lord, I really want, even if it's just like, I want to want this, like help me to want you more and desire your will even more. Because I think like when we really are stepping into God's will for our life, then it isn't just, oh, that just randomly happened, that this came together, you know, like our conversation last night. But you really feel like, no, we were following God's will in this and God has a plan. And I think that that's sort of like the legacy that I'm trying to lead my children into. It's like even from my parents, you know, that God has a plan here and He's been working throughout our family. And what is God saying to us as a family and how we should respond to His goodness in our life, you know?

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I think it is like, there is the intentionality of family and then there's intentionality of friendship, and there's intentionality of who we do life with, in communion with that, it's all of the above. And then one of the quotes, like I love Edith Stein's whole "Formation of Women", but I don't think I added on this show notes, but she said women are formed basically organically. Like emotional formation takes place. Basically what she's saying, I'm paraphrasing her, doing life together, but they need to see, younger women need to see other women, older women, that embody what it means to live incarnationally. They need to see that embodiment. But I love it because we do a lot of life with young adult women also, like they come to family dinner at our house every Sunday and all this kind of stuff. So it's funny. I think they learn more, not by like my teaching or like the podcast or whatever. They learn more by our day to day life. They do. Like I had to cancel something a couple of months back, like we were supposed to do something, and I just couldn't do it. Like I was so tired. My body was just like, wouldn't give. And I'm thinking, my go-to is like, "I'll just push through and do it." And so I texted them like, "Girls, I really want to be with you all tonight. I'm tired and I probably should rest." And one of the girls texted me right back privately. And she said, "We need your witness of self care and rest more than we need your presence right now." And it was so good for me to hear it because for me, I'm thinking, okay, like, I can just do this. I can just push through. I can just, you know, whatever, but they need the mess too. They need the imperfections. They need how we handle situations. Like one of the girls that lived close to us forever, Annie, you know, her favorite thing was watching Chris and I argue. I'm like, "Why?" Cause she's like, I like how, when you reconcile, I like watching you.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It doesn't mean the end.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, it doesn't mean the end. And I like how you laugh or you're funny about it, but then how you fight fair. And she's like, and I like how you come back together. And I like that you're not afraid to do it in front of me. You know? Like it's not like arguing or whatever like, no, you're wrong, like. It's Chris who's wrong.

Heather Khym: Or feeling like you need to hide the messy part.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah! Not hide the messy part. It's like, this is how it is. And this is how it is. And like where I think one of it is realize like the mess is okay, the mess is okay, that this is where the beauty happens. And this is where the Lord is creating things. And this is where the beauty happens. So I think it's the organic stuff, like a formation, emotional formation and sisterhood. But I also think it's the intentional stuff, like in different milestones that come along in a woman's life that we be intentional about pouring into them during these different seasons of life.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: That's very true. And you do have some of that quote here, which I can read, which is really, really lovely from Edith Stein. And she says, and just as we read this, just to notice what happens in your own heart as we read it and kind of maybe women that come to your mind as you think of this. She says, "Emotional formation is not taught through formal education. Although the emotional formation of women can be enriched and assisted by traditional education that takes feminine needs into account. Instead," And just think how true this is in your own life. "Emotional formation is taught by environmental experiences and personal interactions, underscoring the importance for women and surrounding themselves with emotionally mature women, living out their spousal and maternal vocations, right? So to interact with women who still need to grow as the women mature, to still interact with women who still need to grow in emotional maturity in these environments and through these interactions, women can help others heal and to develop into whole people." So I think that's that reality of, I mean, I can think of women in my life who've mothered me. Like we all need a mother. We talked about as daughters. We all need to be fathered and mothered. Nobody ever grows out of that. All of us need to have somebody ahead of us and somebody behind us. We need to have people on the journey with us, peers. We need to have somebody ahead of us. And we have to have people behind us that we can disciple with Christ and to bring them to the Lord. But that reality of just women in my life who, one of them was one of my very first superiors. I just learned so much about being a woman from her, and I mean, of course my mom and things like that, but just think of the other women that have come into your life that have had a profound... And the beautiful thing is sometimes women, they don't even know it. They don't even know the profound impact they've had, but these great matriarchs that God has given us in our life, even if the interactions have been small, that have made it, left a profound impact where we look at the woman and we're like, "I want to be like that." And now you're not trying to emulate something, but you're just like, you recognize the maturity, the dignity, the love, the truth, the authenticity, the wholeness. And you just say, "I want to be like that. I want to be like that."

Heather Khym: Totally. Yeah. The impact of my own mother in my life, although there's been spiritual mothers as well that have come alongside, or just sisters in

particular, like that have been such an incredible blessing to me. And you know, many people know that we built a house and my parents built with us. So they live right next door now. And we moved in right before the pandemic hit. So it was like perfect timing, really that we were all together. We're in this bubble all together, but that my kids could receive from my parents in even a greater way than they have been before. And the impact that that is having, the way that my mom loves my kids, in particular. My dad loves my kids. We're talking about women. So I'll just focus on my mom, but you know how they bake with her and she's teaching them things, but it's also like the care and the anticipation of their needs that she's able to offer them. And then I'm able to offer it in a different way, you know? So you can just see the beauty of family and generations, which normally we don't have any more like that. That is not lost on me. I recognize what an incredible gift and rare gift that that is, that we're all living in very close proximity to each other. And I think when that was lost, it takes more time and intentionality to seek that out. Like we need to have older generations speaking into younger generations and vice versa, you know, that the youth and like the zeal that comes along with that, and the free spiritedness, like can reignite and inspire an older heart that may be feeling tired or maybe a little bit down. So yeah, I think in particular, what was coming to my mind, I was thinking about my youngest daughter, Eva. And when I was younger, I used to really struggle with my emotions. I would have enormous emotions, and I didn't know what to do with it. And my voice had really been stifled like through trauma. So I didn't know how to express my emotions. So interiorly, I just felt rage. Like lots of tears, like hot tears, but I never wanted to show it in front of anyone. So I would just disappear, you know. I would never come back again. Like I would like silent treatment people, like, You know, it's just like unhealthy and immature because I didn't know how to do it. And it was coming from a lot of trauma. And thankfully like through a lot of different places I've been able to grow, but also witness other women who have more congruency between their interior world and their exterior as well. So I've been learning over the years, how to do that, going to counseling, like learning how to address those things so that I was able to offer my daughter, Eva, something as she's growing up. And she's a super feeler, she's a super creative, you know, so she's just like everything is out there. And for a while, when she was young, you know, like her emotions would just take over and they would overwhelm her and flatten her sometimes. Like she would just go down into this spiral of, "Oh, everything's horrible." And meanwhile, it was like one thing that was horrible. But for her, it was like, felt like everything was horrible. And so it took a few years of really walking her through that. And I remember one time, like, it was good for me to hear. She was like, "Can I just cry?" And I'm like, "Yes, honey. Yes, you can, you can just cry. You don't have to put it all together." Like you were saying about your Lily, like you can cry, but at some point you need to stop crying, and you need to remember what the truth is like. So let's talk about that. And then maybe you can write some things in your journal so that when you are feeling really low, that you can come back to some truth, you know? And it was just a process of like little

practical things that I kept teaching her. Like, you seem really down, like, why don't you just take 10 minutes to go write down five things that you're grateful for? You know, not as a punishment, but like an encouragement. Like, I have a responsibility because I've matured a little bit in these areas to bring you along. It's not, I'm not perfect. I'm still growing in that. But now when I see her, she's 14 now, and she is like so quick to get out of the cycle of the spiral. She can do it on her own. Now she is like a total bright side kind of person, but she still feels her emotions. I'm like looking at her thinking, "Gosh, you're so healthy and you're only 14." And I'm like, but this is the impact of like, we say, you know, "wounded people, wound people" or "hurt people, hurt people." But healed people will heal people. And I think that that's a beautiful gift that we can offer to one another. And once again, another reason to grow in maturity, you know, like, I'm like, it's good to grow in maturity. It's hard.

Michelle Benzinger: Oh yeah.

Heather Khym: Hard as heck!

Michelle Benzinger: It is hard.

Heather Khym: Like, I don't want to be an adult sometimes, but I'm like, but it's good.

Michelle Benzinger: It is. I think there's something like with growing in maturity, like even circling back to these milestones out of a woman's life. Like these are milestones. So these are like markers for growth and maturity. Like for a woman, like one of the first things for girl is when they get their menstrual cycle, you know? And that's like, usually, like we said earlier, like we call it the curse, which actually it is not.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's not a curse.

Michelle Benzinger: It's a blessing. It is like our bodies are a blessing. They're a mystery, you know, still for all of us.

Heather Khym: Inconvenient. Inconvenient sometimes.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, but it's a mystery. I know for me, like even really been reading about this and a woman's body and all this kind of stuff.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And the cycle.

Michelle Benzinger: And the cycle, but even how I prepared my youngest daughter for that. You know, like we went, I think I've even told the story on the podcast before, we went away for a day, you know, and I told her what was going to happen in her cycle, and prepared her for it. And that it was a blessing and all of this, and then explain to her like, and I broke it down with the Feminine Genius that, you know, she has these four super powers. That's what I taught them, her sensitivity and her generosity and her maternity and her receptivity. These are super powers. These are not things that are, you know, like a negative, these are actually amazing. But then I had some of the young adult women come over and tell them their stories of when they first got their period, they were funny and they were laughing and then we prayed over her because I wanted it to be like this experience, you know, and then pick out like, so that's like a first one. You know, but really like a lot of us, all three of us journeying with a lot of young adult women, you know, like, okay, no one ever really prepares you really well for marriage. No one really prepares you. Like we were talking about last time, like holy sex, what that looks like.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Or having a baby. Like what really happens when you have a baby?

Michelle Benzinger: Oh my gosh, my sister-in-law. I mean, she's hysterical anyway. Yes. She was like, because I was like, okay, you know, like you go through the childbirth classes and you do all of that and whatever. But then she was like, "Let me give you the lowdown, sister." Like, that's what she called me. She's like, it's a train wreck. She would just put out there, yeah, it's beautiful. And you have this baby, but like, you know,

Heather Khym: Be prepared.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, no one tells you about that mesh underwear, baby. Like, they just don't talk to you about that, you know? Right before you go. And so it's just like a lot of stuff, but these are the beautiful things. Like when we take away like the unspoken things and really say, but it's a group of women saying, "All right, this is what you do. This is how you get through it." This is, you know, and usually and culturally.

Heather Khym: And billions of women have done this before you. Women who are weaker than you, or not as smart as you, like, you can do this. You know, like just to normalize some of those things. So when you're in it and you're like, nobody told me this. You're not thinking "I must be the only one."

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. And I think especially for new moms and young moms like that first six weeks to two months, like when you are so sleep deprived that you'd like, it feels like almost like a form of torture. Like, but yet you love this child so much, but your everything's just everywhere. You know, like no one says like, "All right, I must be doing it wrong. Or is this what..." you know? Because it doesn't look like we, and I love how Edith Stein says we all have our unique ways of expressing our feminine hearts and our feminine genius. It's very unique to that person. But yet, then there is a commonality between all of us as women that we need one another and we need to tell each other these things that no one says.

Heather Khym: And that beautiful things come out of those hard things. Like I remember that first, you know, those first seasons of like babies and all the lack of sleep and you're just giving everything. And at the same time, I think that's what really bonds you to your child because you can look at them and go, "I've given you everything. Like I really have laid down my life for you." And there's something about that, that I think that's part of what creates this bond. that is unbreakable between parents and their children, mothers in particular.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I'm also thinking of also smaller moments of like the time when you don't make the sports team. Or the girls don't sit with you at lunch and you go home and "Mom, the kids picked on me at school today." Or you fall in love for the first time. I'm like, "what's happening in your heart when you see a boy that you really love?" And like all those things awaken and how many of us have had really close experiences of moms saying, "Okay, let's sit down. Let's say what's happening." And it's a long conversation. But it's like those things that, if we don't have somebody with us in those places, we're just left to figure it out on our own. Or we think something's wrong with us. Or we, like we've talked about before in our podcasts, we believe the lies that the enemy is speaking, or even the girls at school, which we're going to talk about in another episode. But those places of, you know, and as your, as your talents begin to unfold and like, what brings you life? What are you really good at? And those are the paramount times when women in our life can come alongside us and to bless us and to help celebrate us and to help remind us of who we are, and also to call out the things that we don't see in ourselves or the places that we're really gifted but we can't see, or that we're afraid, and our friends or our sisters come alongside of us and say, "You're really good here. Like, this is a great gift. You can do this. I'm with you. If you fail, it's okay. We're still gonna love you." You know? And that safety just gives our heart a chance to grow and a chance to try something new, or a chance to grieve where somebody is not trying to push you out of the state of grieving or whatever that is. They're sitting alongside you, reminding you of who you are. And those things are they're priceless.

Michelle Benzinger: Absolutely.

Heather Khym: And we're never too old for that.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: We're never too old, yes.

Michelle Benzinger: Oh my gosh, I think I need like that sisterhood and even mentorship now just as much, if not more than I ever did. You know? And I'm so thankful for a couple of my friends, one, that are just like a season ahead of me in marriage and kids. You know, like one in particular, like when I was taking my son to college, she's like, "Do you need me to go with you? Like, just to be your emotional support. Do you need me to go with you?" But I'm watching as she's marrying her kids off, you know, and then just offering her that moral support. But even as marriage transitions and changes, like they're becoming empty nests. So like talking it through with her, you know, and I think having that sisterhood where, you know, each other is for like, for your marriages. Like that you really, each of us love the other person's husband as a brother and like really fighting for each other in our marriages and say, "What does this look like?" You know, and some of my friends that are a season ahead of me, they're like, "Okay, we're hitting pre-menopause and menopause. Nobody talks about..." Like, we laugh about this. We're like, what kind of fresh hell is this? You know, that no one talks about. Like it's, but it's all these different seasons, you know? And we are meant to have these conversations and talk about it. And how do you navigate it? How do you live holy through it? And how do you laugh? Like, I mean, if you don't laugh, like hard, or just like at the insanity of it all, like, you know, it just is okay. Like, and these are the people, you know? And I think when we look at different, like even movies or something, there is something about us that is so drawn to that sisterhood. Like, you know, there's like the iconic movies, like "Steel Magnolias" and stuff like that. Like across the generations, you know, these different women, you know, coming together and you can even...

Sister Miriam James Heidland: "Little Women"

Michelle Benzinger: Little Women," all these things, there's something about sisterhood though. There's something in women's hearts when we see these, they're like, "yes!" you know? And you see the unique expressions of each of the women in the movies, you see,

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It wouldn't be the same without one, right?

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, but like, there is like, oh my goodness. You know? And there's just a heart connection because we are hearts, that's so different than men's friendships, you know, not better.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's just different.

Michelle Benzinger: Just different, yeah. Totally different.

Heather Khym: Yeah. And they can be equally destructive. Like, I mean, women's relationships, like when they're lived disorderly, or it's coming out of our woundedness or whatever, like they can be so hurtful. I think some of the greatest wounds have come from women. Like through women. So when you get it right, and when you experience sisterhood as it should be, I mean, it's incredibly life-giving. And I remember when Jake and I first got married, we were still going to university. We were like the only people married out of our friends. So they were like, seemingly thought all our problems went away when we got married, because we were allowed to have sex now. So that was like all the problems were gone.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Everything else goes away.

Michelle Benzinger: Everything else goes away.

Heather Khym: I was like, you know, and for a while, like as a couple, you were like kind of obsessed with each other. It's super fun and all of that, but you realize very quickly, like this person cannot be everything to me. Like I probably need sisterhood now more than ever, you know, when you're married and you go into different seasons of life, and it's such a blessing because it takes the pressure off of other people in your life to be everything for you. It's like "Jake, you don't need to be everything for me because I have other people." You know, and he's an introvert. So he can't possibly listen to me for this long of all the things that I have to verbally process, you know? Like, he's so grateful for that I have sisters too.

Michelle Benzinger: Oh my gosh. Every time I come off my silent retreat, like sometimes I've been with Gretchen, sometimes I've been with you. Chris is like, "I am so thankful that you're with one of those women before you come home to me because that way you can concise and get it all together. I mean, he's so great to listen to me.

Heather Khym: Break it down to the three points.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And so it's a beautiful thing, but it does. I remember after we got married and the season of people, a bunch of us was wedding after wedding after wedding. I remember one of my roommates from college calling me and she's like, "He just doesn't get excited when I come home from Target and when I show him my stuff." And she's like, "Can I live with y'all and just sleep in his house?" We were just laughing because we're so used to just doing that, you know?

And yeah. There's something special about that, you know? So for you Sister, what does sisterhood look like in the context of religious life? You know, in community?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, we literally call each other Sister.

Michelle Benzinger: There's that.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: So, and it's commonly ordered around all of us in the pursuit of the Lord. So it is the common, we talk about the philosophical definition of friendship is shared goodwill and the goodwill is the pursuit of the Lord. And so religious life, I believe I've said this before, is a cross section of the population. God does not just call one kind of person, but it is a cross section of population, from women from all walks of life, every age, every background, and coming together for a common purpose of living out our spousal life with Christ in a common life. And, and it's not like "Sound of Music".

Heather Khym: Cause you don't get to choose.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I know, we don't get to choose, so you're sent,

Heather Khym: It's like your family. You don't get to choose.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yep, you're sent where you go, and there are certain people, of course, in every place that will be easy blessings for you and other people that will trigger some of your deepest insecurities, and both are to be attended to. Right? So, oh yeah. I've just been blessed with some really wonderful women in my religious community. And I really, that's where I learned how to be a woman. I had to come into religious life to really learn at the deeper level of how to be a woman and take everything my mom taught me, and just brought it into maturity in that regard. So I'm just so grateful for them. I'm just so grateful for this call. And I'm thinking, you know, as we talk about this and kind of as we go from here and we're speaking about mentoring, we're speaking about mothering. And I think it's something you said, Heather, in our episode on Daughter is like, we have to be able to become those women. All of us want those women in our life. And all of us it's very easy to look at women and we can pick out how they fail us or how they're not, but Lord have mercy. Am I looking at myself saying, "Am I the kind of friend, am I the kind of sister that I want in my life?"

Michelle Benzinger: Exactly.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Like, am I the kind of person that's showing up, that's listening, that's attending, that's supporting, that's sharing? I mean, so I think

that's really where we start, and, you know, like seeks like. Many times we will attract people, we'll just subconsciously attract people that you have different needs and things like that. But we have to really be attentive to the Mary and Elizabeth of, you know, cause sometimes we're Mary, sometimes we're Elizabeth. And we have to be okay with both, and "Okay, Jesus today, where are you calling me today to become, to grow, to deepen that kind of woman that I would like in my life to be that kind of woman?"

Michelle Benzinger: And I was thinking about that. I think you and I had that conversation because I was thinking someone said to me like a couple of months back, like you have a lot of girlfriends, like sisters, you know, like how did you learn how to do that? And I thought it was such an odd question. I'm like, what do you mean? And then I thought back, my mother has always had a circle of women around her. You know, like even the women that I grew up as a little girl are still her close friends. Like they just went to the lake house. I mean, two of them live at a lake together, like Ms. Pat and Ms. Francis, they still. Yeah, like that they are, I mean, they were having babies together and they are still, you know, praying with one another. So it was what was modeled for us also like as, just as a marriage is modeled for us, like our parents, but so is, you know, friendships, women friendships and relationships. And so, it's funny because even like some of my mom's good friends, their daughters are really good friends of mine, you know, because that's how we have it. I also think it may be a Southern thing too, but no, I mean, I think that's everybody's thing, but you know what I mean? And so.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, your mom, she has those friends too, doesn't she?

Heather Khym: Yeah, she does. A group. Like lifelong friends since I was three years old, when we moved to that town, they've been friends and, you know, daughters and sons of those women that my mom is closest friends with are my friends. So there's like the second,

Michelle Benzinger: Generation.

Heather Khym: I mean the closest of friends to me. And so we get together now, like on a regular basis and it was modeled for me. I remember as a kid sitting there around these older women, like at a table and they would get out their tea and their every, and make it so beautiful. And I was like, whoa, this is a lost art. Like, now that I've grown up, I'm like, they've always done this since I was a little kid, like the little egg cups, the cute little jam jars, and all the things. And I'm like, they really know how to bless each other with beauty.

Michelle Benzinger: Canada is such an English... I forget y'all are from... English Commonwealth.

Heather Khym: Yeah, no, there's such a huge traditional influence.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: There's beautiful tradition in that.

Heather Khym: Well, yeah, my mom is from Scotland and then her other friend is from England and her other friend is from Ireland and then one from Canada.

Michelle Benzinger: See? There you go, they're from the Commonwealth.

Heather Khym: So it's like, yeah, totally, totally. Yeah. So we have all those cute, cute little things and fresh baked scones and all of that stuff. But yeah, I mean they really know how to set a table for each other, literally. And also I think just like in life, they know how to set a table for each other. Like, come on friends, sit with me and share with me here. And let me bless you and let me honor you. And so that's something that I've grown up with and seen that was modeled. But now I also do with their kids and some other friends that have come along the way. And I know recent conversations with my oldest daughter as she's like stepping into adulthood. And you know, I'll say, "How is it meeting new people?" She's at a new school, you know, meeting new people. And she's like, well, you know, sometimes she doesn't always like find someone she's like super besties with right away. And I'm like, don't underestimate the people that you come across who are different than you, because those are now some of the most valuable relationships in my life, because there's so much that you can learn from one another.

Michelle Benzinger: Amen amen.

Heather Khym: and the differences start to crack you up, like where it's just like, I delight in how different you are than me, you know?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. And maybe that's something that we could focus on this week is just asking Lord to reveal just all the beautiful things about women in our life that have come to mother us, have been sisters alongside of us, and maybe reaching out just saying, "Thank you. I just admire your, I admire your kindness. I admire your goodness, your truth, your beauty." And just really asking the Lord this week of, "Okay, Lord, where do I need to grow?" Like as I'm listening, you know, because I'm listening to you both. I'm like, "Okay, where do I need to grow to be a better sister, to be better in that regard to give the support and to reflect the beauty that each woman is in our life."

Michelle Benzinger: And I think I go back to John Paul II, he was talking about this being a civilization of love, but also John Paul II's letter to artists, you know, he said your greatest masterpiece is your life. You know, and so it is an art form of becoming, like become who you are.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yes, always.

Michelle Benzinger: It's an art form, you know? So what areas do we need to grow? What areas in our creative, you know, creative love, do we need to grow? Where do we need to be more attentive or pay attention? Or yeah, what new colors do we need to bring into the landscape of our life? Yeah. So yeah.

Heather Khym: And there's some things that you can't change, like right now, there might be some people thinking, "Well, I don't have that." What can you do? Like, okay, notice that you don't have it. And it's okay to feel like,

Michelle Benzinger: Identify that.

Heather Khym: you know, a longing for that. But what can you do? Like, I'm a big believer in that. Like, is there one person that you could call and say, "Hey, do you want to start getting together for coffee on a regular basis or tea or whatever?" And I mean, you just can start somewhere and it doesn't, like you said, Sister, it doesn't always have to be like, where we're waiting to be invited, or we're waiting to be ministered to, we can be the ones to initiate. And it can be a game changer, like I think. So I just want to encourage people to do that, to like, just take time to go, "Where am I at? What am I needing? What am I longing for? And what can I do to move this one step forward in my life right now?"

Michelle Benzinger: I agree.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Amen. Yeah

Michelle Benzinger: Well, there we are.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: There we are. Should we take a second to do our one things for the week? As we kind of sum that up. Miss Michelle, what is your one thing, my dear?

Michelle Benzinger: My one thing is actually one of our sponsors that is Chews Life, Shannon from Chews Life. And as long as I go along the day and it just kind of keeps me in the mode. And so I'm not wearing it right now, but I love my rosary bracelet. I already had one, but now I have another one. And so I just love it

because I can just pray the rosary and it's on my wrist. And as long as I go along the day, and it just kind of keeps me in the mode of yeah.

Heather Khym: And I love the little crucifix and stuff that you can move around.

Michelle Benzinger: You move around it.

Heather Khym: So it saves your spot when you get interrupted,

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It saves your spot.

Heather Khym: which is so normal for life.

Michelle Benzinger: That is my one thing. What about you, Sister? I mean, well, Sister you can go.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Actually my one thing, providentially, is the very sponsor that we have this week. Ave Maria Press is sponsoring us, and they are announcing a brand new program for Advent called "Adore" with our friend Father John Burns. He's hosting it. It's got original artwork done by a beautiful artist, and there's meditations that he's written every day. And there's beautiful a video that goes along with it every week. It's beautifully filmed. So I'm so happy to have that be my one thing, the "Adore" series by Father John Burns, partnered with Ave Maria Press.

Heather Khym: I need to get one of those.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I think it's good, you can get it for your small group. You can get it for your parish. So and all the details are in our sponsor announcement for the week. So that's great. I'm really proud of him.

Michelle Benzinger: Good job. Way to go, Father John.

Heather Khym: My one thing is Be Love Revolution. So this summer. Yeah. So Debbie Herbeck has a ministry called Be Love Revolution and she's really ministering to young girls.

Michelle Benzinger: Talk about mentorship and sisterhood!

Heather Khym: There's like camps for young girls. I think it's like grades 6, 7, 8, right? And then the older teenagers then pour into the younger ones. And then she has college students that are then pouring into those ones and has monthly nights.

So if you're in the Ann Arbor area, you need to check out Be Love Revolution. If you're not, you need to look online and check it out anyway. Yeah. I think just like touch in there wherever you can. What I love about what Debbie's doing, and we all got to see it in person in the summer, which is like a huge...

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It was amazing.

Michelle Benzinger: It was amazing.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Talk about being proud of a sister. We were all blown away by Debbie.

Michelle Benzinger: She's a rockstar. Yes, she is.

Heather Khym: It's because she really lives it.

Michelle Benzinger: She loves those girls.

Heather Khym: She's a grandma and she's still bringing young girls twice a year down to Mexico, to the dumps to serve the poor. And I'm like, Debbie, you are legit. Like, I mean, you really go there and like the way she disciples and then teaches other people to disciple. It's such a beautiful model that she's living out. I know. So anyway, check out Be Love Revolution. They have great Instagram. It's super inspiring. And I think especially if you have young girls, you might want to send them to that camp. So check it out.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. That'd be fun. You guys might take your kids. That's exciting. Well, thank you so much for joining us this week, dear friends, and we will continue our series on being a Sister next week. So until then we'll be Abiding Together. God bless you. Have a great week.

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