

They're my sisters.  
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"Shirley"  
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I've started wearing, on fitting occasions, my prized campaign button. It commemorates my first vote for President in the 1972 primary. My campaign button is proudly red, white, and blue. The words emblazoned on it? Catalyst for Change: Shirley Chisholm for President.

The USA would've been better off had she won. She didn't, but she accelerated something that has resulted in today's election and recovery of public service as honorable, catalyzing today's choice between the dynamic and promising new versus the threadbare, miserable old. Because of increasingly cruel manic insults, no wonder optimism is winning. My, Donald, your insecurity is showing.

Some might remember a church fad, popular 20 years ago. Churches wanted to draw men back to pews. 'God for the Guys Sunday' they called it, howsoever patronizing. ¿Quien es mas macho? Church -- a magnet for real men. A manly church. Macho, macho Jesus.

Recommended wasn't lots of hugging, emotionalism -- you know, feminine relational stuff that appeals to women, like flowers, sharing intimacies, and doilies. And shelve those songs that sound like Top 40 love songs: "O, Jesus, I love you." That's what their website advertised.

Recommended was church with a musky scent. Choose a theme: Great Outdoors Sunday (hunting, fishing), Sports Sunday (soccer too?), Tool Time, Big Iron Sunday (classic cars, motorcycles), Big Bad Barbecue Sunday. Get it? Park a Harley in the Fellowship Hall, fill the Sanctuary with power tools. Remember, men's brains are less verbal than women's. Guys, real guys, require object lessons. Finish off worship with a men's huddle. Holding hands is squishy but huddles, yeah, that's the ticket. Butt-slaps permitted. I get it. I tend toward a rigorously intellectual and tough-minded, strong faith. But what does that have to do with gender? Strength comes in many forms. I want religion that promotes sacrificial work. Nurture and admonition -- we each have our inducements, functions, and gifts. Is it really either World Wrestling Entertainment or sewing circles?

I am grateful for how women contribute, glad for Jesus being an original feminist. His regard for women is the hope of the world. Jesus affirms women are neither property nor objects. They're my sisters. As you treat them, so you treat me.

Newsflash: shall we count the ways women are punished if raped? Forced marriages? Girls denied an education? Women beaten if they discard headscarves? Honor killings? Women viewed as property? Child brides? Girls shoved down surgical lists?

In case we think these wrongs are foreign issues, you might ask The Women's Center of Columbia and Montour Counties about local incidences of sexual assault and violence.

In case we think these practices occur only over in those countries and theocracies, perhaps we Christians could unpack some of our own theological baggage, our theological excuses for men to control women.

Tertullian, church father: "And do you not know that you are Eve? You are the gate of the devil, the traitor of the tree, the first deserter of the Divine law." There's a lovely Sunday School lesson for our little lassies.

Thomas Aquinas, father of Roman Catholic Medieval theology, believed that woman is a misfit, inferior human being whose only purpose is to produce children and comfort her husband, that there is in her "something deficient or accidental."

Some churches still misread the Bible by denying women (along with obstructing the work of the Holy Spirit) as pastors, priests, elders. Forward to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the 19th century! Mind your place, sweet things. When the Bible speaks in Genesis about 'helpmeet,' it means complement, partner, equal in every way, not subordinate.

Should we also here mention women exploited, degraded, blamed for the man's own situation, failure, predicament. Yes, listen, to how some men reveal their own inadequacies, whether voiced by hip-hop singers, preachers, or politicians. One woman decried how "the name calling disrespects, dehumanizes, and dishonors women." It also shows how a man doesn't know how to be a man.

We have to rethink sin, many thoughtful Christian women suggest. We encourage humility as an antidote for the vice of arrogance and pride. Well, that may be useful and necessary for men who tend to use power and could use less pride and less desire to dominate. But requiring humility of women, expecting them to be self-effacing, can reinforce stereotypes of martyrdom and submission, when empowerment and pride would be more necessary and virtuous.

When did white male America finally permit women suffrage? And the women say: "We didn't need your permission."

Shirley must be smiling in heaven.