

Pope John Paul II's

Theology of the Body

"The Sincere Gift of Self"

Freedom, Truth, Gift, Communion, Dignity, Love...

Freedom, truth, gift, communion, dignity, love, person, meaning: these are all themes which are continually found throughout the writings of Pope John Paul II. They were there even before he became Pope. As Cardinal Karol Wojtyla he was influential in the writing of several documents from Vatican II, not the least of which was *Gaudium et Spes* — the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World — from which he never tires of quoting in his many encyclicals and apostolic letters.

"Man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, [and he] cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." (*Gaudium et Spes* 24)

How important it is to live our sexuality in a way which upholds and affirms the other person! Indeed, the true lover will never use another person or treat her as a means to an end.

We must first know the purpose of our existence and what we were created for if we are to live a fully meaningful life. Pope John Paul II explores the purpose of our existence in his *Theology of the Body*, which consists of 129 general Wednesday audiences delivered by him during the first five years of his pontificate.

Prior to his election as pope, John Paul II wrote a book, *Love and Responsibility*. In *Love and Responsibility* Karol Wojtyla presents the Catholic Church's teaching on love and sexuality in a way that makes sense to modern man. Wojtyla stresses the dignity of the person and shows how important it is to live our sexuality in a way which upholds and affirms the other person. Indeed, the true lover will never use another person or treat her as a means to an end.

In his *Theology of the Body* John Paul II digs deep into the meaning of being a human person based on Scripture. As a person with a body and soul, made in the image and likeness of God, we find the meaning of life through finding out what it means to image God and what our bodies have to do with it.

We not only image God through the gift of free-will, but also through being in communion with others. "To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion." Why? Because God himself is a communion of persons in the Trinity. He explains, "Man became the "image and likeness" of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning." (*TOB*, Nov. 14, 1979)

"Man Cannot Live Without Love"

A "communion of persons" occurs when two people freely give themselves to each other and accept one another in love. In fact, true love consists precisely in this *mutual self-gift*. As we see in the Gospels, the main point of the Christian life is to love.

John Paul II's other favorite quote from *Gaudium et Spes* tells us that, "Christ...fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." What does Christ reveal but that, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."? (*Jn. 15:13*)

It is Christ himself who reveals to us our basic vocation as persons by giving himself to us in his death on the Cross. Through his *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II seeks to present to us the Gospel message of love in a new, deep, and profound way. He knows that love is what all people seek. He goes so far as to say, "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience love

— Cover essay continued on page 11 —

Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body

This publication © 2003 Resurrection Publications
P.O. Box 21357 • Cheyenne, WY 82003-7026

For more information, please contact us at:

Toll-free: 1-866-333-6392 • www.theologyofthebody.net

Study groups meet regularly to discuss the *Theology of the Body*. Visit www.theologyofthebody.net for information on a group near you — or how to start one of your own.

The Theology of the Body – What, Why and How?

Through his theology of the body, Pope John Paul II seeks to explain what the body means as a sign of the person and the person's call to be a gift, and how it reveals the nature of God and His plan for mankind. He demonstrates the great importance of the physical body and human sexuality, and battles the heresies which, valuing only the spiritual, would proclaim the body unimportant, evil, or both. Through discussing the body in its creation and redemption, John Paul II simultaneously lays out the very meaning of life and how we are to live it! He not only tells us who man is, but how every person's vocation to love can be lived out either through marriage or through celibacy for the kingdom of God.

“The fact that theology also considers the body should not astonish or surprise anyone who is aware of the mystery and reality of the Incarnation. Theology is that science whose subject is divinity. Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology through the main door. The Incarnation and the redemption that springs from it became also the definitive source of the sacramentality of marriage...” (TOB April 2, 1980) p. 88

“To understand all that the redemption of the body implies according to Paul's Letter to the Romans, an authentic theology of the body is necessary. We have tried to construct this theology by referring first of all to the words of Christ. The constitutive elements of the theology of the body are contained in what Christ says: in recalling ‘the beginning,’ concerning the question about the indissolubility of marriage (*c.f. Mt. 19:8*); in what he says about concupiscence, referring to the human heart in his Sermon on the Mount (*cf. Mt. 5:28*); and also in what he says in reference to the resurrection (*cf. Mt. 22:30*). Each one of these statements contains a rich content of an anthropological and ethical nature. Christ is speaking to man, and he is speaking about man: about man who is ‘body’ and who has been created male and female in the image and likeness of God. He is speaking about man whose heart is subject to concupiscence, and finally, about man before whom the eschatological prospect of the resurrection of the body is opened.” (TOB July 21, 1982) p. 300

Original Unity of Man and Woman

Image of God

In the first chapter of Genesis we are told that Adam and Eve (and all of mankind) were created in the image and

likeness of God. We are in the image of God not only through the gift of our intellect and free will, through our ability to know and to choose, but also through our ability to possess ourselves and then give ourselves to another person, forming a communion of persons in love, since God who is love is also a communion of persons in the Trinity.

“Man became the ‘image and likeness’ of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning...Man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. Right ‘from the beginning,’ he is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons.” (TOB Nov. 14, 1979) p. 46

“The human body bore in itself, in the mystery of creation, an unquestionable sign of the image of God.” (TOB May 14, 1980) p. 113

Original Solitude

Man experiences the “original solitude” in two ways: First in that he is alone as the only rational creature on earth. He is aware of himself, of his body and its meaning. In his self-knowledge he knows that he is created by God, and is therefore not God. He realizes that he is not the same as the animals either. With his self-knowledge he also has self-determination, by which he can choose between good and evil. He is the only one capable of “tilling the earth,” which God gave him to tend and rule. Secondly, he is alone without the woman, without another human person. Man was not created to live by himself but in communion with others and he feels this acutely without the woman.

“The first meaning of man's original solitude is defined on the basis of a specific test [the naming of the animals]... By means of this test, man becomes aware of his own superiority, that is, that he cannot be considered on the same footing as any other species of living beings on the earth... Solitude also signifies man's subjectivity, which is constituted through self-knowledge. Man is alone because he is ‘different’ from the visible world, from the world of living beings... The concept of original solitude includes both self-consciousness and self-determination.” (TOB Oct. 10 & 24) pp. 36, 37, 38

Original Unity: Communion of Persons

Through “original unity” one aspect of man's solitude is overcome and the other is confirmed. With the creation of woman man is no longer ‘alone.’ But the two of them together, as human persons, are still ‘alone’ in the world of creatures. Original unity is seen in Genesis 2:23-24. When the woman is brought to the man he exclaims: “This at last

is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh." Through their spiritual and bodily union, they form a communion of persons.

"Man, whom God created male and female, bears the divine image imprinted on his body 'from the beginning.' Man and woman constitute two different ways of the human 'being a body' in the unity of that image." (TOB Jan. 2, 1980) p. 58

"Alone man does not completely realize this essence [of being a person]. He realizes it only by existing 'with someone' – and even more deeply and completely – by existing 'for someone'... The communion of persons means existing in a mutual 'for,' in a relationship of mutual gift." (TOB Jan. 9, 1980) pp. 60-61

Original Nakedness

John Paul II tells us that Genesis 2:25 ("And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.") is a "key element" of the revelation about man in the beginning! Why is this? In the beginning, the naked body actually showed Adam and Eve their call to love, their call to spiritual and bodily communion. This call to form a communion of persons was meant to be lived through their bodies. The ability of the body to show us our call to love is the nuptial (spousal/conjugal) meaning of the body.

Their nakedness, far from being of little significance, says volumes about their love for each other and about the purity of their hearts. Since shame is a result of being viewed as an object to be used by another person, Adam and Eve's lack of shame demonstrates to us that they both saw and received each other as a gift and sought only to give themselves to one another, not to use the other. They beheld the other with God's eyes, who "saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). They read in each other's body, which was a sign of the other person, a language of love, which each welcomed and reciprocated.

"'And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.' (Gen. 2:25) Nakedness signifies the original good of God's vision. Man and woman...see and know each other with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons. The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to that simplicity and fullness of vision in which understanding the meaning of the body comes about at the very heart of their community-communion. We will call it [the meaning of the body] 'nuptial.'" (TOB Jan. 2, 1980) p.57-58

"He participated in the divine vision of the world and of his own humanity. This gave him deep peace and joy in living the truth and value of his own body, in all its simplicity..." (TOB May 14, 1980) p. 113

The Nuptial Meaning of the Body

God created man and woman in such a way that through their bodies it would be self-evident to them that they are called to love, called to give themselves to one another. The very purpose and meaning of life is found in this imaging of God by becoming a gift to another. "God is love." (1 Jn. 4:16) Therefore, we fulfill the reason for our existence by loving. Our physical bodies were made precisely to show us this and be the means by which we accomplish this.

"The human body includes right from the beginning...the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift – and by means of this gift – fulfills the meaning of his being and existence." (TOB Jan 16, 1980) p.63

Quotes to remember —

"Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." (Gaudium et Spes 22)

"Man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, [and he] cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." (Gaudium et Spes 24)

"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience love and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it." (Redemptor Hominis 10)

"Understanding the fundamental meanings contained in the mystery of creation, such as the nuptial meaning of the body...is important. It is indispensable in order to know who man is and who he should be, and therefore how he should mold his own activity." (TOB Feb. 13, 1980) p. 74

"The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God [God's love for man], and thus to be a sign of it." (TOB Feb. 20, 1980) p. 76

The Freedom of the Gift

The freedom of the gift is a concept which John Paul II refers to throughout the whole text of the theology of the body. In the beginning man was interiorly free. He was not affected by the tendency to sin, the temptation to act selfishly. In giving themselves to one another Adam and Eve were only concerned with loving the other. Seeing the truth about the other person, made in God's image, and knowing that a person can never be merely a means to an end, they did not act from self-seeking motivations but freely gave to the other out of love.

“That original nakedness, mutual and at the same time not weighed down by shame, expresses this interior freedom of man.... At the root of their nakedness is the interior freedom of the gift - the disinterested gift of oneself.” (TOB Jan. 9 & 16, 1980) p. 62, 64

“The freedom of the gift is the response to the deep awareness of the gift... Through this truth and freedom that love is built up, which we must affirm is authentic love.” (TOB May 30, 1984) p. 372

Summary of Original Unity of Man and Woman

“Interior innocence as purity of heart made it impossible somehow for one to be reduced by the other to the level of a mere object. The fact that they were not ashamed means that they were united by awareness of the gift. They were mutually conscious of the nuptial meaning of their bodies, in which the freedom of the gift is expressed and all the interior riches of the person are manifested...After original sin, man and woman will lose the grace of original innocence. The discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body will cease to be for them a simple reality of revelation and grace. However, this meaning will remain as a commitment given to man by the ethos of the gift, inscribed in the depths of the human heart, as a distant echo of original innocence. From that nuptial meaning [authentic] human love in its interior truth...will be formed. Through the veil of shame, man will continually rediscover himself as the guardian of the...freedom of the gift. This is so as to defend it from any reduction to the position of a mere object.” (TOB Feb. 20, 1980) p. 75

Blessed are the Pure of Heart

Adultery in the Heart

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt. 5:27-28) By saying this Christ took the discussion from merely outward actions to the heart. True holiness consists in a purified heart, and from that heart, pure, authentically loving actions will flow. Therefore Christ appeals to man’s heart, to his deepest interior being, and calls him to experience and live the redemption of the body!

“Lust itself (more exactly: looking at lustfully), is defined as ‘adultery committed in the heart.’ ...I would say that lust is a deception of the human heart in the perennial call of man and woman...to communion by means of mutual giving... Lust has the internal effect, that is, in the heart...of obscuring the significance of the body, of the person itself.” (TOB Sept. 17, 1980) p. 148-149

“According to Christ’s words, real purity (as also impurity) in the moral sense is in the heart and comes from the heart of man.” (TOB Jan. 7, 1981) p. 195

“If man wishes to respond to the call expressed by Matthew 5:27-28. he must learn, with perseverance and consistency, what the meaning of the body is, the meaning of femininity and masculinity... It should be added that this task can be carried out and is really worthy of man.” (TOB Nov. 12, 1980) p.172

Shame

Shame entered the world through sin. Turning his back on God, man no longer saw with God’s vision and loved with God’s love. Man and woman began to look at one another not only as a person to be loved, but as an object to be used. The break in their relationship with God also caused a break in their relationship with each other. Complete and total trust and self-gift were replaced with shame.

Shame is an indication of sin, but at the same time it serves a positive purpose in ensuring that we cover ourselves to protect ourselves from being seen and used as an object. Through the redemption of the body man and woman with God’s help are able to overcome this shame in their relationships through a love and a purity that refuse to objectify the other. Shame is no longer necessary where trust and unity are present.

“Questioning in his heart the deepest meaning of the donation, that is, love as the specific motive of the creation and of the original covenant (cf. Gen. 3:5), man turns his back on God-Love, on the Father. In a way he casts God out of his heart.” (TOB April 30, 1980)

“The third chapter of Genesis [‘I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ Gen. 3:10] shows without any doubt that shame appeared in man’s mutual relationship with woman. By reason of the shame itself, this relationship underwent a radical transformation... This shame confirms that the original capacity of communicating themselves to each other, which Genesis 2:25 speaks of, has been shattered. The radical change of the meaning of original nakedness leads us to presume negative changes in the whole interpersonal man-woman relationship... Shame...is a symptom of man’s detachment from the love in which he participated in the mystery of creation.” (TOB June 4, 1980) p. 118, 119

“Only the nakedness that makes woman an object for man, or vice versa, is a source of shame.” (TOB Feb. 20, 1980) p.75

“This shame took the place of the absolute trust connected with the previous state of original innocence in the mutual relationship between man and woman.” (TOB June 18, 1980) p. 120

“Nakedness does not have solely a literal meaning. It does not refer only to the body; it is not the origin of a shame related only to the body. Actually, through nakedness, man, deprived of participation in the gift is manifested, man alienated from that love which had been the source of the original gift, the source of the fullness of the good intended for the creature. (TOB May 14, 1980) p. 112

Lust

Lust is disordered sexual desire. In the beginning, sexual desire was experienced as the desire to make a gift of oneself to the other and to be united with the other in God's image. Now, because of sin, man is constantly tempted to desire the other as an object for his own pleasure, to use the other.

"Lust is explained as a lack....The words of Genesis 3:10 [I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself] bear witness directly to a radical change of the meaning of original nakedness. In the state of original innocence, nakedness...did not express a lack, but represented full acceptance of the body in all its human and therefore personal truth." (TOB May 14, 1980) pp. 112, 113

By means of it [lust], a certain woman begins to exist for a certain man not as a subject of...personal attraction or as a subject of communion, but exclusively as an object for the potential satisfaction of the sexual need. (TOB Sept. 24, 1980) p. 151

"The body is not subordinated to the spirit as in the state of original innocence...Lust, and in particular the lust of the body, is a specific threat to the structure of self-control and self-mastery, through which the human person is formed... The structure of self-mastery, essential for the person, is shaken to the very foundations in him... Man is ashamed of his body because of lust. In fact, he is ashamed not so much of his body as precisely of lust." (TOB May 28, 1980) pp. 115, 116

"For the man, shame united with lust will become an impulse to 'dominate' the woman... Subsequently, the experience of this domination is manifested more directly in the woman as the insatiable desire for a different union. From the moment when the man 'dominates' her, the communion of persons – made of the full spiritual union of the two subjects giving themselves to each other – is followed by a different mutual relationship. This is the relationship of possession of the other as the object of one's own desire." (TOB June 25, 1980) p. 123

Concupiscence

Concupiscence refers to the fact that we lost original innocence through the Fall, which creates a situation in which it is easier for us to sin and to desire to sin rather than always seek the good. St. Paul characterizes it as the battle of the "flesh" against the "spirit." It is often associated with the "lust of the flesh." (cf. 1 Jn. 2:16)

"Concupiscence entails the loss of the interior freedom of the gift. The nuptial meaning of the human body is connected precisely with this freedom. Man can become a gift – that is, the man and the woman can exist in the relationship of mutual self-giving-if each of them controls himself.... Concupiscence...reduces self-control. For that reason, in a certain sense it makes impossible the interior freedom of giving... In itself, concupiscence is not capable of promoting union as the communion of persons. By

itself, it does not unite, but appropriates. The relationship of the gift is changed into the relationship of appropriation." (TOB July 23, 1980) p. 127

"As much as concupiscence darkens the horizon of the inward vision and deprives the heart of the clarity of desires and aspirations, so much does "life according to the Spirit" (that is, the grace of the sacrament of marriage) permit man and woman to find again the true liberty of the gift, united to the awareness of the spousal meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity." (TOB Dec. 1, 1982) p. 349

The Heart

The heart is where we experience at the deepest level disordered desire, lust, and self-seeking, as well as trust, love, and union with God and with the other. It is the heart to which Christ appeals when he calls man to live the redemption.

"Man is unique and unrepeatable above all because of his heart, which decides his being from within." (TOB Dec. 2, 1980) p. 177

"The nuptial meaning of the body has not become completely suffocated by concupiscence, but only habitually threatened. The 'heart' has become the battlefield between love and lust. The more lust dominates the heart, the less the latter experiences the nuptial meaning of the body, and the less it becomes sensitive to the gift of the person... Does this mean that it is our duty to distrust the human heart? No! It only means that we must keep it under control." (TOB July 23, 1980) p.126

"The satisfaction of the passion is one thing, and the joy that man finds in mastering himself more fully is another thing. In this way he can also become more fully a real gift for another person. The words Christ spoke in the Sermon on the Mount direct the human heart toward this joy. We must entrust ourselves, our thoughts and our actions to them, in order to find joy and give it to others." (TOB April 1, 1981) pp. 213-214

Redemption

The power of the redemption that John Paul II speaks of is the power of the death and resurrection of Christ which truly gives us the power to live as we were intended to live in the beginning. Everything in the theology of the body must be seen through the lens of the redemption since it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit can man really live a life worthy of his call and his dignity as a person, made in God's image and likeness.

"Christ's words...do not allow us to stop at the accusation of the human heart to regard it continually with suspicion. But they must be understood and interpreted above all as an appeal to the heart... On the basis...of the redemption of the body, we cannot stop only at the accusation of the

human heart on the basis of desire and lust of the flesh. Man cannot stop at putting the heart in a state of continual and irreversible suspicion... Redemption is a truth, a reality, in the name of which man must feel called, and 'called with efficacy.' Man must feel called to rediscover, nay more, to realize the nuptial meaning of the body." (TOB Oct. 29, 1980) p. 167

Everything we have tried to do in the course of our meditations in order to understand Christ's words has its ultimate foundation in the mystery of the redemption of the body." (TOB July 21, 1982) pp. 303

"[Man] is called precisely to that supreme value that is love. He is called as a person in the truth of his humanity, therefore also in the truth of his masculinity or femininity, in the truth of his body. He is called in that truth which has been his heritage from the beginning, the heritage of his heart, which is deeper than the sinfulness inherited, deeper than lust... The words of Christ, set in the whole reality of creation and redemption, reactivate that deeper heritage and give it real power in human life." (TOB Oct. 29, 1980) p. 168

Purity

True purity sees in each and every person, in the spirit and the body, God's image. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." (Mt. 5:8) Purity desires only to love and never to use the other. Purity is not only the capacity to act chastely and overcome lust; it is at the same time the "control of one's body in holiness and honor." This respect and honor for the dignity of the human body manifests the power of the Holy Spirit working in a person.

"Purity is a requirement of love. It is the dimension of its interior truth in man's heart." (TOB Dec. 2, 1980) p. 177

"Victory over that discord in the body...can and must take place in man's heart. This is the way to purity, that is 'to control one's own body in holiness and honor.'" (TOB Feb. 4, 1981) p. 205

"In [St.] Paul's eyes, it is not only the human spirit...that decides the dignity of the human body. But even more so it is the supernatural reality [of] the indwelling and continual presence of the Holy Spirit in man - in his soul and in his body - as the fruit of the redemption carried out by Christ. It follows that man's body is no longer his just his own. It deserves that respect whose manifestation in the mutual conduct of man, male and female, constitutes the virtue of purity." (TOB Feb. 11, 1981) p. 206

"Purity is the glory of the human body before God. It is God's glory in the human body, through which masculinity and femininity are manifested. From purity springs that extraordinary beauty which permeates every sphere of men's common life and make it possible to express in its simplicity and depth, cordiality and the unrepeatable authenticity of personal trust.'" (TOB March 18, 1981) p. 209

Summary of Blessed are the Pure of Heart

"Christ's words are realistic. They do not try to make the human heart return to the state of original innocence, which man left behind him at the moment when he committed original sin. On the contrary, they indicate to him the way to a purity of heart which is possible and accessible to him even in the state of hereditary sinfulness... However, he is inspired by the word of the Gospel and open to life according to the Spirit... For this reason we find in the words of the Sermon on the Mount the reference to the heart, that is, to the interior man. The interior man must open himself to life according to the Spirit, in order to participate in evangelical purity of heart, to rediscover and realize the value of the body, freed through redemption from the bonds of lust." (TOB April 1, 1981) p. 212-213

The Resurrection of the Body

The Resurrection of the Body Brings About the Fulfillment of the Nuptial Meaning of the Body

"The children of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." (Lk. 20:34-35) It cannot be forgotten that our bodies will be resurrected in the end. In this section, John Paul II delves into what that resurrected, glorified state will look like and what role our masculinity and femininity will play in the life to come, especially since procreation will not be part of it. Our bodies were not only created to be in union with another human person, but also to share in spiritual union with God, which is the ultimate goal of human existence. In this way, the nuptial (spousal or conjugal) meaning of the body is fulfilled in the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. In heaven we will be in communion with all of the saints, and all of us together will participate in the communion of Persons in the Holy Trinity.

"Marriage...belongs exclusively to this age.... In the resurrection they [marriage and procreation] lose, so to speak, their *raison d'être*.... According to Christ's words reported by the synoptic Gospels, the resurrection means not only...the re-establishment of human life in its integrity by means of the union of the body with the soul, but also a completely new state of human life itself... Human bodies, recovered and at the same time renewed in the resurrection, will keep their masculine or feminine peculiarity. The sense of being a male or a female in the body will be...understood in that age in a different way from what it had been from the beginning..." (TOB Dec. 2, 1981) pp. 238, 239

"In that condition, man, male and female, finds at the same time the fullness of personal donation and of the...communion of persons, thanks to the glorification of

his entire...being, [body & soul], in the eternal union with God." (TOB March 10, 1982) p. 262

"Spiritualization means not only that the spirit will dominate the body, but, I would say, that it will fully permeate the body... The resurrection will consist in the perfect participation of all that is physical in man in what is spiritual in him." (TOB Dec. 8, 1981) pp. 241

"The words of the synoptic Gospels testify that the state of man in the other world will not only be a state of perfect spiritualization, but also of fundamental divinization of his humanity... Participation in divine nature, participation in the interior life of God himself...will then reach its peak, so that the life of the human spirit will arrive at such fullness which previously had been absolutely inaccessible to it. This...will therefore be the fruit of grace, that is, of the communication of God in his very divinity, not only to man's soul, but to his whole psychosomatic subjectivity [person, body and soul]." (TOB Dec. 8, 1981) pp. 241-242

Summary of the Resurrection of the Body

"The original and fundamental significance of being a body, as well as being, by reason of the body, male and female – that is precisely that nuptial significance – is united with the fact that man is created as a person and called to life in *communio personarum*. Marriage and procreation in itself do not determine definitively the original and fundamental meaning of being a body or of being, as a body, male and female. Marriage and procreation merely give a concrete reality to that meaning in the dimensions of history...The nuptial meaning of the body in the resurrection to the future life will correspond perfectly both to the fact that man, as male-female, is a person created in the 'image and likeness of God,' and to the fact that this image is realized in the communion of persons." (TOB Jan. 13, 1981) p. 247

Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom

Continenence for the Kingdom of Heaven

"Not all men can receive the precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." (Mt. 19:11-12) If the meaning of life consists in making a gift of self to others and living in a communion of persons, should not all people marry? The answer is that all are called to "marriage," but not necessarily in the physical sense. Some are called to marriage as we usually understand it. Others

are called to be the spouse of Christ (women religious) or the spouse of the Church (male religious) and live a celibate life for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Men and women who live this commitment are a sign to us that we are all made for union with God, which is the ultimate fulfillment of the human person. They remind us by their lives that we will all fully participate in this union in heaven. Their gift of self to the world bears spiritual fruit through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Continenence for the kingdom of heaven...is a charismatic sign. The human being...who, in the earthly situation where people usually marry, freely chooses continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, indicates that in that kingdom, which is the other world of the resurrection, people will no longer marry. This is because God will be 'everything to everyone.' In him [the risen man] there will be revealed, I would say, the absolute and eternal nuptial meaning of the body in union with God himself through the 'face to face' vision of him..." (TOB March 24, 1982) PP. 267

"Earthly continence...is a sign that the body, whose end is not the grave, is directed to glorification. Already by this very fact, continence for the kingdom of heaven is a witness among men that anticipates the future resurrection... [It] bears, above all, the imprint of the likeness to Christ. In the work of redemption, he himself made this choice for the kingdom of heaven." (TOB March 24, 1982) PP. 267-268

"On the basis of the same nuptial meaning of the body, male or female, there can be formed the love that commits man to marriage for the whole duration of his life. But there can also be formed the love that commits man to a life of continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." (TOB April 28, 1982) p. 284

"The nature of one and the other love [marriage and celibacy] is 'conjugal,' that is, expressed through the total gift of oneself. Both types of love tend to express that conjugal meaning of the body which from the beginning has been inscribed in the personal makeup of man and woman... Conjugal love which finds its expression in continence for the kingdom of heaven must lead in its normal development to paternity or maternity in a spiritual sense... For its part, physical procreation also fully responds to its meaning only if it is completed by paternity and maternity in the spirit, whose expression and fruit is all the educative work of the parents in regard to [their] children." (TOB April 14, 1982) p. 277-278

"It is natural for the human heart to accept demands, even difficult ones, in the name of love for an ideal, and above all in the name of love for a person... Christ has given himself...to the very limit, in the paschal and Eucharistic mystery. In this way, continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, the choice of virginity or celibacy for one's whole life, has become the experience of Christ's disciples and followers the act of a particular response of love for the Divine Spouse. Therefore it has acquired the

significance of an act of nuptial love, that is, a nuptial giving of oneself for the purpose of reciprocating in a particular way the nuptial love of the Redeemer. It is a giving of oneself understood as renunciation, but made above all out of love.” (TOB April 28, 1982) pp. 281, 282

Summary of Virginity for the Sake of the Kingdom

The redemption of the body is expressed not only in the resurrection as victory over death...but [as the] hope of victory over sin, which can be called the hope of every day. In his daily life man must draw from the mystery of redemption of the body the inspiration and the strength to overcome the evil that is dormant in him under the form of the three-fold concupiscence [the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life].

Penetrating daily life with the dimension of human morality, the redemption of the body helps first of all to discover all this good in which man achieves the victory over sin and concupiscence. Christ's words spring from the divine depths of the mystery of redemption. They permit us to discover and strengthen that bond that exists between the dignity of the human being (man or woman) and the nuptial meaning of the body. They permit us to understand and put into practice, on the basis of that meaning, the mature freedom of the gift. It is expressed in one way in indissoluble marriage and in another way through abstention from marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God. In these different ways Christ fully reveals man to man, making him aware of his sublime vocation... (TOB July 21, 1982) pp. 302

The Sacramentality of Marriage

“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love

his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (Eph. 5:21-33)

The Analogy of Christ and the Church and the Sacramentality of Marriage

The above Scriptural passage contains the great analogy of human marriage with the marriage of Christ and his Bride, the Church. Each union sheds light on the other. The faithfulness and devotion of human marriage is meant to give us a glimpse into the nature of Christ's love for the Church, for us. On the other hand, Christ's total gift of himself on the Cross demonstrates the depth of love and sacrifice necessary for an earthly marriage to survive and thrive. The Sacrament of Marriage is a sign of God's saving power and his covenant with mankind. Through Christ's redemption, it also gives man the grace to live what it signifies: total self-gift and union.

Marriage is the “most ancient revelation (manifestation) of the plan [of God] in the created world, with the definitive revelation and manifestation – the revelation that “Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her,” conferring on his redemptive love a spousal character and meaning.” (TOB Sept. 8, 1982) p. 321-322

“The analogy used in Ephesians, illuminating the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the Church, contemporaneously unveils the essential truth about marriage. Marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it reflects the love which Christ the Bridegroom gives to the Church his Bride, and which the Church...attempts to return to Christ. This is redeeming love, love as salvation, the love with which man from eternity has been loved by God in Christ (Eph. 1:4)... Marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians as spouses only if that love is reflected and effected therein.” (TOB Aug. 18, 1982) p. 312

“Marriage is the primordial sacrament, reborn in a certain sense in the spousal love of Christ and of the Church.” (TOB Dec. 1, 1982) p. 350

“Marriage...is the sacrament in which man and woman, called to become ‘one flesh,’ participate in God's own creative love. They participate in it both by the fact that, created in the image of God, they are called by reason of this image to a particular union (communio personarum), and because this same union has from the beginning been blessed with the blessing of fruitfulness.” (TOB Dec. 15, 1982) p. 351

Mutual Submission

This Scripture passage is often viewed with suspicion by women since it tells wives to be submissive to their husbands. But the first line of the passage, which tells both spouses to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” is often overlooked. The following lines are

devoted to explaining how that mutual submission is lived in marriage. John Paul II makes it very clear that the wife's "being subject" to the husband does not mean that she is dominated by him. It might even be argued that the husband's task is harder. He is the one who is commanded to die for his wife as Christ died for the Church.

"The mutual relations of husband and wife should flow from their common relationship with Christ." (*TOB Aug. 11, 1982*) p. 309

"Love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or a slave of the husband, an object of unilateral domination. Love makes the husband simultaneously subject to the wife, thereby subject to the Lord himself, just as the wife to the husband... It is certain that when the husband and wife are subject to one another 'out of reverence for Christ', a just balance will be established, such as to correspond to their Christian vocation in the mystery of Christ." (*TOB August 11, 1982*) p. 310

"Christ manifests the love with which he has loved her [the Church] by giving himself for her. That love is an image and above all a model of the love which the husband should show to his wife in marriage, when the two are subject to each other 'out of reverence for Christ.'" (*TOB Aug. 25, 1982*) p. 316

"The husband is above all, he who loves and the wife, on the other hand is she who is loved. One could even hazard the idea that the wife's submission to her husband, understood in the context of the entire passage of Ephesians, signifies above all the "experiencing of love." This is all the more so since this submission is related to the image of the submission of the Church to Christ, which certainly consists in experiencing his love." (*TOB Sept. 1, 1982*) p. 320

The Language of the Body

Through the words marriage vows man and woman give themselves to each other until death. Since the visible body reveals the invisible, those vows can only be fully consummated through marital union. Through marital union they say to each other with their bodies what they promised at the altar. As with any other language, the language of the body must always speak the truth. (This is why intercourse does not belong outside marriage. In pre-marital union one speaks "total, faithful self-gift until death" with one's body when that gift hasn't actually been given.)

"The body itself 'speaks.' It speaks by means of its masculinity and femininity. It speaks in the mysterious language of the personal gift...the body speaks through fidelity and conjugal love. When it commits adultery it speaks lies; it is guilty of falsity." (*TOB Jan. 12, 1983*)

"The sacramental sign of marriage...is manifested by the language of the body, a singular language of love originating in the heart." (*TOB May 30, 1984*) p. 370

"Precisely on the level of this language [of the body], man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the fullest and most profound way possible to them by the corporeal dimension of masculinity and femininity. Man and woman express themselves in the measure of the whole truth of the human person." (*TOB Aug. 22, 1984*) p. 398

"The human body is not merely an organism of sexual reactions. But it is, at the same time the means of expressing the entire man, the person, which reveals itself by means of the language of the body... Participating in the eternal plan of love ('sacrament hidden in God'), the language of the body becomes a kind of prophetism of the body." (*TOB Aug. 22, 1984*) p. 397

Summary of Sacramentality of Marriage

"Those who seek the accomplishment of their own human and Christian vocation in marriage are called, first of all, to make this theology of the body, whose beginning we find in the first chapters of Genesis, the content of their life and behavior. How indispensable is a thorough knowledge of the meaning of the body, in its masculinity and femininity, along the way of this vocation! A precise awareness of the nuptial meaning of the body, of its generating meaning, is necessary." (*TOB April 2, 1980*) p. 89

Reflections on *Humanae Vitae*

"This particular doctrine, often expounded by the Magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act." (*Humanae Vitae* 12)

Fundamental Structure of the Marriage Act

John Paul II seeks to help explain Pope Paul VI's controversial and misunderstood encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life) by illustrating why contraception is not in accordance with the dignity of the person. It is because the marital act in its very nature, as God created it, both unites the couple and is open to life. When a couple engages in intercourse they are therefore implicitly saying that they desire union with each other and are open to the possibility of procreation. Contraception denies the procreative aspect and therefore the integral truth of the act itself. In this way the couple is not speaking the truth with their bodies, but a lie. Rather than accepting the other person fully as God made him or her, with the ability to unite as well as procreate, there is the rejection of the other person through the rejection of his or her fertility.

"The aforementioned words of Pope Paul VI's encyclical concern that moment in the common life of the spouses

when both, joining each other in the marriage act, become, according to the biblical expression, 'one flesh' (*Gen. 2:24*). Precisely at such a moment so rich in significance, it is also especially important that the language of the body be reread in truth. This reading becomes the indispensable condition for acting in truth, that is, for behaving in accordance with the value and the moral norm." (*TOB July 11, 1984*) p. 387

"The marriage act...' at the same time 'unites husband and wife in the closest intimacy' and together makes them capable of generating new life.' Both the one and the other happen 'through the fundamental structure.' Since this is so, then it follows that the human person (with the necessity proper to reason, logical necessity) must read at the same time the 'twofold significance of the marriage act' and also the 'inseparable connection between the unitive significance and the procreative significance of the marriage act. Here we are dealing with nothing other than reading the language of the body in truth." (*TOB July 11, 1984*) p. 388

Responsible Parenthood

Pope John Paul II quotes both the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World) and *Humanae Vitae* to explain responsible parenthood. Married couples exercise responsible parenthood by making prudent decisions regarding their families, based on their health and circumstances, as well as that of society and the Church. Even when, because of serious reasons, this involves avoiding more children for a time or indefinitely, the couple must not violate the dignity of the person and the dignity of the conjugal act by the use of contraception. Rather they may use the modern and very effective means of Natural Family Planning by which they can cultivate an appreciation of the woman's fertility and abstain during the fertile times. The biological self-knowledge and self-mastery that this requires is truly worthy of man.

"The right and lawful ordering of the births of children presupposes in husband and wife first and foremost that they fully recognize and value the true blessing of family life, and secondly, that they acquire complete mastery over themselves and their emotions." (*HV 21*) quoted in *TOB* p. 399

"The concept of responsible parenthood contains the disposition not merely to avoid a further birth but also to increase the family in accordance with the criteria of prudence." (*TOB Aug. 1, 1984*) p. 394

"Anyone who would only see in *Humanae Vitae* the reduction of responsible fatherhood and motherhood to mere biological rhythms of fertility would certainly read and interpret the encyclical erroneously... Responsible fatherhood and motherhood, understood integrally, is none other than an important element of all conjugal and family spirituality... The sacrament of marriage strengthens them

and...consecrates them to [the] fulfillment [of their vocation]." (*TOB Oct. 3, 1984*) p. 404, 405

Continence and Marital Spirituality

In order to exercise responsible parenthood, it may be necessary for the couple to practice continence (abstention from sexual union) during the woman's fertile periods. Perhaps surprisingly for some, there are many benefits to the couple's relationship that can come from practicing continence. John Paul II recognizes the challenge that continence may present to couples. It is only through the love given by the Holy Spirit that couples can face not only this challenge, but the many other challenges of married life.

"The role of conjugal chastity, and still more precisely that of continence, lies not only in protecting the importance and dignity of the conjugal act in relation to its procreative meaning. But it also lies in safeguarding the importance and the dignity proper to the conjugal act as expressive of interpersonal union, revealing to the awareness and the experience of the couple all the other possible manifestations of affection that can express this profound communion of theirs." (*TOB Oct. 24, 1984*) p. 410

"The essential and fundamental 'power' is the love planted in the heart...by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the encyclical [*Humanae Vitae*] points out how the married couple must implore this essential power and every other divine help by prayer; how they must draw grace and love from the ever-living fountain of the Eucharist; how 'with humble perseverance' they must overcome their deficiencies and sins in the Sacrament of Penance. These are the means – infallible and indispensable – for forming the Christian spirituality of married life and family life." (*TOB Oct. 3, 1984*) p. 405-406

What is Worthy of Man

John Paul II points out that the Church teaches as she does because of her concern for the true good of man. Too often we tend to think that she only wants to control us, while in reality she desires true freedom for all of her children. Man can only truly be free while living in accord with his dignity as a human person.

"Man is precisely a person because he is master of himself and has self-control. Indeed insofar as he is master of himself he can give himself to the other." (*TOB Aug. 22, 1984*) p. 398

"Love...is therefore the power given to man in order to participate in that love with which God himself loves in the mystery of creation and redemption. It is that love which 'rejoices with the truth.'" (*1 Cor. 13:6*) (*TOB Oct. 10, 1984*) p. 406

"Pastoral concern means the search for the true good of man, a promotion of the values engraved in his person by God. That is, it means observing that rule of understanding which is directed to the ever clearer discovery of God's

plan for human love, in the certitude that the only true good of the human person consists in fulfilling this divine plan.” (TOB July 25, 1984) p. 392

Summary of Reflections on *Humanae Vitae*

“In the conjugal act it is not licit to separate the unitive aspect from the procreative aspect, because both the one and the other pertain to the intimate truth of the conjugal act...Therefore, in such a case, the conjugal act, deprived of its interior truth because it is artificially deprived of its procreative capacity, ceases also to be an act of love. It can be said that in the case of an artificial separation of these two aspects, as real bodily union is carried out in the conjugal act, but it does not correspond to the interior truth and to the dignity of personal communion – communion of

person. This communion demands that the language of the body be expressed reciprocally in the integral truth of its meaning. If this truth be lacking, one cannot speak either of the truth of self-mastery, or of the truth of the reciprocal gift and of the reciprocal acceptance of self on the part of the person. Such a violation of the interior order of conjugal union, which is rooted in the very order of the person, constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.” (TOB Aug. 22, 1984) p. 398

“The truth and the power of love are shown in the ability to place oneself between the forces of good and evil which are fighting in man and around him, because love is confident in the victory of good and is ready to do everything so that good may conquer... Love...is victorious because it prays.” (TOB June 27, 1984) p. 376

Freedom, Truth, Gift...

Cover essay, continued from front page

and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.” (From the encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* — “Redeemer of Man”)

What does the human body have to do with all of this? In a world which so often portrays the body as an object for one's pleasure or as a machine which doesn't have much to do with our spiritual side, John Paul II again seeks to present the truth as it is found in Scripture.

The body is not some little “add-on” to creation. Rather it is a vital part of who we are as human persons. Why? Because the physical body reveals the spiritual part of the person. For example, you can tell that someone is happy through the smile on his face. Happiness is not a physical, tangible, visible thing, so you need a physical sign to express it.

“Adam and Eve could see...they were called to union and communion”

In the same way, Adam and Eve could see from the difference in their physical bodies (remember that they were naked) that they were called to union and communion – that they were called to LOVE, to give themselves in a total gift to each other, both body and soul, in the most complete way possible for a human being, i.e. sexual union.

This physical union points to and expresses a deeper spiritual union. In the same way that a smile is empty if one is not really happy, sexual union is empty without spiritual union. Not only does their physical communion point to an invisible communion between the man and woman, but it actually shows us that this love, this self-gift, is what we are called to, what we were created for.

John Paul II says that God created our bodies the way He did specifically to show us that we are called to love, that

our reason for existence is to love, to make a gift of ourselves to others. He calls this the “nuptial (or spousal) meaning of the body.”

He explains, “The human body includes right from the beginning...the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift – and by means of this gift – fulfills the meaning of his being and existence.” (TOB Jan 16, 1980) (This pope is not “down on sex”!)

“Through sexual union the body speaks a ‘language’ ...this language must be spoken in truth”

Perhaps even more surprisingly for some, John Paul II goes on to say that conjugal union itself is meant to be a sign of God's desire for complete union with us (which is intimate, though not sexual). It is a sign of Christ's love for his bride the Church.

How crucial it is then, that couples live their relationships as they were intended to in order to accurately image to the world God's eternal plan for mankind. St. Paul instructs, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her...” He then refers back to the beginning, as Christ does in the Gospels and says, “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church.” (Eph. 5:25, 31-32)

John Paul II explains that through sexual union the body speaks a “language” and that this language must be spoken

“The most wonderful of all”

To create something, to reflect the absolute Existence and Love,
must be the most wonderful of all!
But one lives in ignorance of it.

— Teresa, in the Holy Father's play “The Jeweler's Shop”

in truth. Since the very nature of the conjugal act as designed by God includes both the interpersonal union of the couple as well as the potential for procreation, man and woman cannot contracept their union without violating their dignity as persons and the dignity of the conjugal act itself.

Because of his continual concern for what is truly worthy of man, John Paul II uses the *Theology of the Body* to further explain the reasons behind Pope Paul VI's controversial encyclical on contraception, *Humanae Vitae*:

“Man and woman carry on in the language of the body that dialogue which, according to Genesis 2:24,25, had its beginning on the day of creation. This language of the body is something more than mere sexual reaction. As authentic language of the persons, it is subject to the demands of truth, that is, to objective moral norms. Precisely on the level of this language, man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the most profound way possible to them...Man and woman express themselves in the measure of the whole truth of the human person.” (TOB Aug. 22, 1984)

“A Manner Truly Worthy of the Person”

If the procreative aspect of conjugal union is excluded, then that truth of the person and of the act itself is destroyed. On the outside it may look like the man and woman are completely giving themselves to each other, but in reality they are not since they refuse to accept everything about the other, including his or her fertility. On the other hand, exercising self-mastery and promoting respect for each other and the conjugal act, couples are called to practice responsible parenthood and in this way act in a manner truly worthy of the person.

The other way of living out the self-gift to which each and every human person is called is through the vocation of celibacy. The celibate person shows the rest of the world

what we are ultimately called to and destined for in heaven: complete union with God. Contrary to what many people think, celibacy is not a repression of one's sexuality. Rather, celibate men and women are called to use their sexual energy to make a gift of themselves to others in different ways: in service, in evangelization and spiritual parenthood, to name only a few.

John Paul II knows that living either calling is not easy. It is not even possible without the grace of Christ's redemption. But, through the power of his death and resurrection, living true purity of heart in relationships is really possible, and not only possible, but necessary!

John Paul II is telling us we cannot let lust weigh us down!

John Paul II is telling us that we cannot let lust weigh us down! Christ does not condemn us but calls us to purity. “[Man] is called precisely to that supreme value that is love. He is called as a person in the truth of his humanity, therefore also in the truth of his masculinity or femininity, in the truth of his body. He is called in that truth which has been his heritage from the beginning, the heritage of his heart, which is deeper than the sinfulness inherited, deeper than lust... The words of Christ, set in the whole reality of creation and redemption, reactivate that deeper heritage and give it real power in human life.” (TOB Oct. 29, 1980)

Christ appeals to our hearts and calls us to freely choose a life that is in accord with our dignity as persons made in the image and likeness of God! Only in living our true dignity as men and women created in the image of God will we be truly fulfilled, will we be happy in the deepest possible sense, because this is the life that we were designed and created to live from the beginning.

— Anastasia M. Northrop

The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan

Shortly after his elevation to the papacy, Pope John Paul II delivered a series of Wednesday “audiences” over a five-year span presenting what was to become known as the “Theology of the Body.” Themes addressed in these extraordinary talks included:

- The Unity and Indissolubility of Marriage
- The Meaning of Man's Original Solitude
- The Original Unity of Man and Woman
- By the Communion of Persons Man Becomes the Image of God
- The Nuptial Meaning of the Body
- The Human Person Becomes a Gift in the Freedom of Love
- The Mystery of Man's Original Innocence
- Man and Woman: A Gift for Each Other
- A Fundamental Disquiet in All Human Existence
- Spontaneity: The Mature Result of Conscience

- The Positive Function of Purity of Heart
- Marital Love Reflects God's Love for His People
- Reverence for Christ is the Basis of the Relationship between Spouses

- The Sacredness of the Human Body and Marriage Truth and Freedom—The Foundation of True Love
- Love is Ever Seeking and Never Satisfied
- The Importance of Harmonizing Human Love with Respect for Life
- Responsible Parenthood
- A Discipline that Ennobles Human Love
- Prayer, Penance and the Eucharist are the Principal Sources of Spirituality for Married Couples

— “*The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*,” by Pope John Paul II, can be purchased through Our Father's Will Communications: www.theologyofthebody.net.