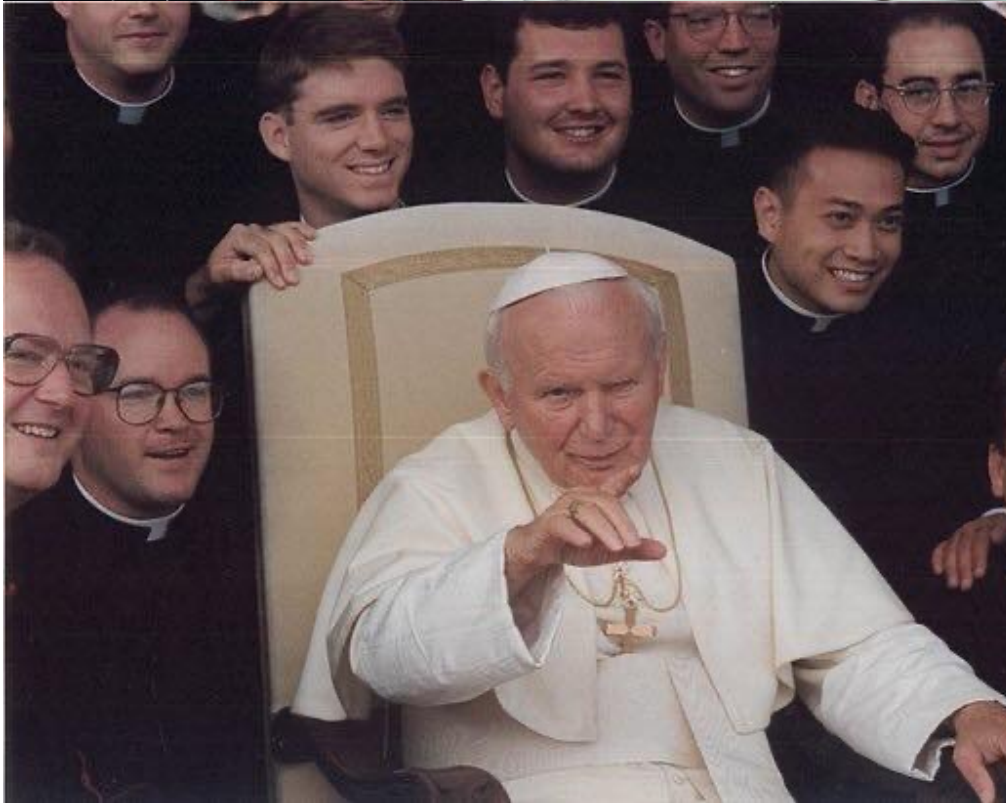


Overview of John Paul II's Theology of the Body



Fr. Roger J. Landry • Merton Institute for Catholic Life • October 21, 2024





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Man and Woman He Created Them



A Theology of the Body

John Paul II's Call Within a Call

- John Paul II said in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994) that he “felt almost an inner call” from early in his priesthood to help young people live their vocation to love, by helping them to learn from Christ.
- “As a young priest,” he said, “I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood – my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional and also in my writing.”
- He wrote as Pope, “Man cannot live without love. ... His life is senseless if ... he does not find love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”

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Introduction

- The Theology of the Body (TOB) describes the teaching of Pope St. John Paul II about the human person and human sexuality given during his Wednesday catecheses between Sept. 5, 1979 and Nov. 28, 1984.
- He said that these catecheses could be called “Human Love in the Divine Plan” or “The Redemption of the Body and the Sacramentality of Marriage.”
- The TOB continues the project of Love & Responsibility, ultimately to show why the Church’s teaching with regard to contraception is valid. L&R did so with philosophical anthropology and ethics; The TOB does so with a Biblically rich, adequate Christian anthropology.

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Introduction


- The first part of the TOB was written during the first of two conclaves in 1978. He finished the rest after the second conclave. One could say he was elected the successor of St. Peter with a manuscript in hand...
- Prior to Michael Waldstein's rediscovery of the original Polish manuscript and notes, there was confusion about the structure of the TOB. The notes showed clearly what the original structure was. Two triptychs:
 - The Words of Christ
 - Christ appeals to the beginning (1-23)
 - Christ appeals to the human heart (24-63)
 - Christ appeals to the Resurrection (64-86)
 - The Sacrament of Marriage
 - The dimension of covenant and grace in marriage (103-107)
 - The dimension of sign (113-117)
 - He gave them the law as their inheritance (118-333)

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Christ Appeals to the Beginning


- In his dispute with the Pharisees (Mt 19:3ff), Jesus takes marriage back to God's plan in the beginning, which reveals the proper understanding of man and woman, made in God's image, and the unity and indissolubility of marriage.
- Mt 19:3-9: Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, And I say to *you* but from the beginning it was not so. ou, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery."

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Christ Appeals to the Beginning

- Man is created in the image and likeness of God, not creatures, with sexual differentiation. God pronounced the human person “very good.” Genesis established the solid basis for metaphysics, anthropology and ethics.
- In teaching on marriage, Christ goes back to the state of original innocence. We cannot understand our situation today without reference to the beginning.
- The proto-Gospel of Gen 3:15 introduces the history of salvation and the “redemption of the body” (Rom 8:23), which links our state now to our original innocent.

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Original Solitude & Unity

- “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18).
- Naming of creation convinced man he was not a creature and he was also not God. He was in search of his own identity and felt alone.
- Original solitude leads to the joy of original unity. Eve’s creation breaks the solitude. She is a fit helper, of the same flesh and bone. Woman is for man and man for woman. He discovers his humanity through her help.
- There is unity and duality present: Unity in human nature; duality in masculinity and femininity.

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Original Solitude & Unity

- The image of God involves this communion of persons, which is “probably the deepest theological aspect that can be said about man.” From the deep unity flows the blessing of fertility and procreation (Gen 1:28)
- Body reveals the human person, allowing for the discovery of the other and self-discovery.
- The TOB is a theology of sex (noun), of masculinity or femininity, made in God’s image.
- Unity through the body (“the two will become one flesh”) is ethical and sacramental, indicating the incarnate communion of persons.
- The body allows the man and woman to find themselves in the communion of persons and becomes the constituent element of their union when they become husband and wife.

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Unity and Indissolubility

- The unity of “they became one flesh” is what happens in the conjugal act as they submit their communion to the blessing of fertility.
- When man and woman unite in one flesh, they rediscover the mystery of creation, of their humanity, as flesh and bones of each other. Sex surpasses man’s bodily solitude, assuming the solitude of the other as one’s own.
- Man and woman created for unity in the flesh. Happens by choice to leave father and mother and cling to each other in a conjugal pact. The body allows for mutual self-giving of persons. Body is meant to unity.

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Original Nakedness and Shame


- Originally, they were “naked and unashamed.”
- After the first sin their eyes were opened, they recognized they were naked, became afraid and ashamed, and hid themselves.
- Original Shame is a “boundary” experience. Fear of the second self and of one’s own self. Shame, and the appearance of modesty, is connected to loss of original fullness. Original nakedness shows the body as a sacrament of their unity through mutual self-gift. The body allows for communion of persons.
- Original lack of shame showed capacity to see the other as God does, as “very good.” Purity involved. Shame brings a limitation in seeing with the eyes of the body.

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Nuptial Meaning of the Body


- Genesis allows us to ground an adequate anthropology in the human person as gift.
- Creation is a radical giving by God and every creature is a sign of this original giving: a Giver, a gift, and the relationship. God created the world as a gift to man, and we can perceive that in creation. But man waits for a being with whom he can exist in a relationship of mutual giving, living with and for someone. Communion of persons is a mutual “for,” and mutual gift, which is the fulfillment of man’s original solitude.
- The body is the original sin of a creative gift and of man’s and woman’s awareness of this. The male and female body is a sacrament of this gift. This is the nuptial meaning of the body, which is the sign and means of that gift.

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Nuptial Meaning of the Body

- This nuptial meaning was clear from the beginning and hence no shame in nakedness.
- Procreative finality is part of the nuptial meaning of the body.
- The nuptial meaning of the body, expressive of the nuptial nature of the person, will remain after the fall, but will undergo many distortions as it awaits the “redemption of the body.”
- The nuptial meaning can be fulfilled in the vocation to marriage, but also in making a gift of themselves for the kingdom of heaven.

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Mystery of Man's Original Innocence

- Fullness of nuptial meaning of the body in its original nakedness is rooted in love. It's grounded in original innocence, which excludes the shame of the body.
- Original innocence is a particular “purity of heart” that preserves the nuptial meaning of the body.
- It permits the mutual donation and acceptance that creates the communion of persons. “Gift” is the opposite of lusting for the other as an “object” for myself.
- We are created with an ethos to our body, meant for self-gift in love. Original innocence determines the perfect ethos of the gift in marriage.

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Mystery of Man's Original Innocence

- If man and woman cease to be disinterested gifts for others, they will recognize that they are naked and shame will spring in their hearts.
- Man is the highest expression of divine self-giving and the nuptial meaning of the body is the primordial sacrament, which transmits the mystery of God's truth and love.
- After original sin, grace of original innocence is lost and the nuptial meaning of the body is obscured but it remains an echo of original innocence through love.
- Shame allows for the rediscover that we are the guardian of the mystery of the other, of the freedom of the gift.

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Biblical Knowledge

- Conjugal union is defined as reciprocal knowledge. The deepest essence of married life is the meaning of one's body in becoming one flesh with another through love. Man and woman are given to be known and come to know themselves and the full meaning of their body.
- The knowledge that was at the basis of original solitude is not at the basis of unity.
- Mystery of femininity is revealed through motherhood, although it is initially hidden. Woman stands before man as a mother. The generative and fatherly meaning of man's body is likewise revealed. This is part of Biblical knowledge.
- They come to know each other even more in the third person, sprung from them both.

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Biblical Knowledge

- They recognize they conceived “with the help of the Lord.”
- There is a generative meaning to the body, connected to the nuptial meaning.
- Adam and Eve take each other through a non-possessive eros; after the Fall, they’ll have to reconstruct the meaning of the unselfish mutual gift.
- Knowledge allows the human person to surpass his solitude and affirm his being in the other and with the other in the new creation.

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Summary of Chapter 1


- We continue to question Christ about marriage and divorce. Christ's original answer, pointing to the beginning, remains fundamental.
- We discover man's identity from the beginning in the mystery of Creation in Christ within the mystery of the redemption. This is Christ's total vision of man to which we must return to build a theological anthropology and theology of the body from which the full Christian view of marriage and family can emerge.
- The beginning reveals the meaning of the TOB, which is a pre-scientific knowledge of the body in the structure of the personal subject, which must be the basis of the science of human sexuality.
- Christians, especially those with the vocation to marriage, are called to make this TOB the content of their life and behavior. They need to discover the nuptial and generative meaning of the body. The redemption of the body, to which Christ leads in the sacrament of marriage, is the rediscovery of the body's dignity meaning and call to communion.

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Chapter 2 – Christ Appeals to the Human Heart

- Mt 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ fundamentally revises the way to follow the commandments, to please God. Jesus seeks to interiorize the law. It’s a battle for man’s heart.
- Man become a subject of morality; morality is no longer just about a law. The Old Testament focused on the “act of the body,” whereas Christ on man. Man is called to rediscover in his heart the nuptial meaning of the body.
- We got a glimpse of this in the ninth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

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Christ Appeals to the Human Heart

- Adultery is a breach of the one-flesh unity between man and woman, either physically or in the heart. It flows from lust, as it did with David and Bathsheba, as it did with Herod.
- St. John describes the lust of the eyes, of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).
- To understand historical man, we must go back to the beginning with Christ.
- The fall, sin, transformed man into a lustful man. We see it in Genesis, when man began to fear God, himself and the other. It alienated him from love and from participation in the gift.
- There was a radical change in the meaning of original nakedness; before it allowed for mutual self-gift in communion and was a sign of the image of God. Sin causes one to lose this certainty. Man and woman hide their masculinity and femininity from each other. There is no longer self-mastery in the lustful man.

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The Man of Concupiscence


- The meaning of original shame — Shame has a double-meaning: it indicates a threat to the value of the human person and at the same time preserves this value interiorly. Lust and shame exist side-by-side. Shame tries to protect from the harm of lust.
- With original sin, there is a loss of original purity and a breakdown in the relationship between man and woman.
- An insatiability develops — Man and woman will fail to satisfy the aspiration to realize the communion of persons in the conjugal union of the body.

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The Man of Concupiscence


- There's a corruption of the spousal meaning of the body.
- Lust distorts the body's objective way of existing as a gift in communion. Lust attacks this sincere giving and therefore attacks the nature of the human person, reducing interpersonal relations to the body and limiting self-control.
- The lust, the body becomes the ground for "appropriating the others," to "use" and "enjoy" the other.
- The body and spirit becomes the battleground between lust and love, which is why Christ appeals to the human heart.

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Commandment and Ethos

- In the commandment not to commit adultery and in Christ's update about whoever looks with lust committing adultery in the heart, Christ refers to the "hardness of heart" at the time of Moses, affected by the three-fold lust. History became a battleground, with adultery, polygamy, divorce.
- Christ came to straighten out the error of Old Testament times.
- Christ gets to the core of Old Testament errors by addressing man's heart. He doesn't focus just on the external act but on its interior cause.
- Lust changes the entire intentionality of human existence. Man becomes a taker rather than a giver. He becomes a consumer of the other. The body becomes a means for using the other to satisfy one's own needs, rather than a call to communion.

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Eros and Ethos

- Christ wants to build a new ethos than lust. He calls us to “purity of heart.”
- He puts “ethos” into “eros,” which for Plato dragged someone toward the good, true and beautiful (like the sexual urge in L&R).
- Purity of heart must mark relations within marriage.
- This leads to St. Paul’s discussion of the means to overcome lust and obtain purity of heart, from living not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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Ethos of the Redemption of the Body

- Life according to the Holy Spirit versus Life according to the Flesh.
- Rom 8:5-23: For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. ... We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
- Life according to the Spirit is a synthesis and a program.
- The flesh refers to the interior subjection to the world.

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Ethos of the Redemption of the Body

- The fruits of the Spirit versus the works of the flesh.
- Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law
- Life according to the Spirit is real freedom; the life of the flesh kills the Spirit (mortal)

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Ethos of the Redemption of the Body

- Sacred Scripture calls us to purity of heart.
- 1 Thess 4:3-5: This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality, that each of you know how to acquire a wife for him self in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not know God
- In the Incarnation, the human body has entered mysteriously into the life of the Trinity. We become members of Christ's body. We have to be conscious of to whom or what we join this body. We're called to the unity of the spirit in the Body.

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Ethos of the Redemption of the Body


- 1 Cor 6:13-20: “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food,” but God will do away with both the one and the other. The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take Christ’s members and make them the members of a prostitute? Of course not! [Or] do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For “the two,” it says, “will become one flesh.” But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

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Purity and the Glory of God in the Body

- Purity is the glory of God in the body. Life according to the Holy Spirit is the means.
- The human person is not called to original innocence, but to purity in his historical reality. This purity allows the human person to rediscover the nuptial value of the body and hold it in holiness and honor.
- The Gospel of Purity of Heart, yesterday and today, provides the context for the re-reading of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Humanae Vitae*. GS talked about polygamy, divorce, free-love, selfishness, hedonism and contraception; HV about the harm to women from contraception.
- Christ speaks to them about unity and indissolubility and Paul about purity of heart and mastering the lust of the flesh.

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The Ethos of the Body in Art and Media


- St. John Paul II explores the difference between porno-vision and purity of heart, between modesty versus exhibitionism.

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Chapter 3 – Christ Appeals to the Resurrection

- Matt 22:24-30: “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies without children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up descendants for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died and, having no descendants, left his wife to his brother. The same happened with the second and the third, through all seven. Finally the woman died. Now at the resurrection, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had been married to her.” Jesus said to them in reply, “You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven.”
- The third element of the triptych of Christ’s words constitutive for the TOB is an appeal to the future.

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Christ Appeals to the Resurrection

- Christ says that in heaven, there is no marriage or giving in marriage. Marriage and procreation constitute the “beginning” but not the eschatological future of man.
- There will be a new condition of the body. Human nature will be spiritualized or divinized.
- There will be a new “nuptial” or “virginal” meaning of the body, flowing from the vision of God. The bodies will still be male or female, still meant for communion of persons, but without procreation.
- There will be a perpetual “intersubjectivity” in the communion of saints within the communion of persons who is God.

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St. Paul's Interpretation of the Resurrection

- 1 Cor 15:42-49: So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one. So, too, it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being," the last Adam a life-giving spirit. But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one."
- St. Paul contrasts the resurrected body with the historical body (perishable, weak, in dishonor, decay).
- We await inwardly the redemption of our bodies.
- Life according to the Holy Spirit will prevail

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Contenance for the Kingdom of Heaven

- Mt 19:11-12: Jesus answered, “Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.”
- There is a vocation to continence “to whom it is given... for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.”
- There can be life without marriage, as we will see in heaven, where personal gift and communion of persons is still possible. This is where celibacy for the kingdom is grounded.

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Contenance for the Kingdom of Heaven

- Contenance is a gift. It's not for everyone.
- In the Old Testament, being unmarried was considered a curse.
- Contenance for the kingdom is an eschatological sign pointing to the kingdom of heaven, to the nuptial, virginal meaning of the glorified body in union with God through face-to-face vision and the communion of saints.
- The nuptial meaning of the body is more than animal sexual instinct, but includes the "freedom of the gift" in mature knowledge. Man and woman can give themselves freely and totally to Christ, but to be free, it must be done with knowledge of this meaning.

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Continence for the Kingdom of Heaven

- Mary and Jesus were both continent for the kingdom and show its great spiritual fruitfulness. They chose it not because it's inexpedient to marry, but for the supernatural motive of the kingdom.
- Marriage and continence are both gifts. "Each has his special gift from God, one of one kind, and one of another" (1 Cor 7:7).
- The self-gift of the celibate for the kingdom is to the King, Spouse of the Church and Spouse of souls. Continence for the kingdom is a particular response of love for the Divine Spouse, a nuptial love, reciprocating his.
- This is an affirmation of the good of marriage, because it reaffirms nuptial meaning and points toward the goal of the sacrament of marriage: heaven. Christ teaches spouses how to love in accordance with this gift as well.

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The Relation Between Virginity and Marriage


1 Cor 7: I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do, but if they cannot exercise self-control they should marry, for it is better to marry than to be on fire. ... Now in regard to virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ... It is a good thing for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek a separation. Are you free of a wife? Then do not look for a wife. If you marry, however, you do not sin, nor does an unmarried woman sin if she marries; but such people will experience affliction in their earthly life, and I would like to spare you that. I tell you, brothers, the time is running out. ... I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ... So then, the one who marries his virgin does well; the one who does not marry her will do better.

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The Relation Between Virginity and Marriage

- St. Paul's understanding of the relationship is a pastoral look toward man's historical situation.
- Continenence is a counsel, not a command. One who chooses continence "does better" because the time is "short" and the "unmarried person is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, about pleasing the Lord."
- To please the Lord is a synthesis of holiness.
- St. Paul knows that, in man's fallen situation, marriage often won't be to please the Lord. That's the challenge for married couples.
- St. Paul is also aware that the form of the world is passing away and everyone needs to live with that in mind.

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The Redemption of the Body

- Rom 8:22-23: We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
- The redemption of the body is not just an eschatological victory over death but a moral victory over sin, the overcoming of concupiscence.
- The human person must draw from the redemption of the body to overcome the three-fold concupiscence, both in marriage as well as in continence for the kingdom.
- In both vocations, Christ reveals man to himself and makes his “sublime vocation” clear, inscribed in Him through the mystery of the redemption of the body.

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The Sacrament of Marriage: Covenant and Grace

- Eph 5:22-33: “Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.”

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The Sacrament of Marriage: Covenant and Grace


- Eph 5:22-33 crowns what Jesus said about the “beginning,” the human “heart” and the future resurrection.
- It speaks about Christ’s marriage and about human marriage. The meanings converge. The passage allows man and woman to understand the revelation of themselves and of the other.
- The relationship of marriage is grounded in mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. Reverence for Christ should lead to mutual subjection out of Christ-like love.
- The mystery of Christ and the Church is lived out in marriage, in which the spouses are called to love each other and give of themselves to each other to make the other holy.
- It points to the unity in one flesh, loving the other as one’s own body, as oneself.
- There is a union, effected by love, that is like head and body. A moral unity in love.

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The Sacrament of Marriage: Covenant and Grace


- There is a three-fold analogy:
Christ:Church::Head:Body::Husband:Wife.
- The love of Christ for the Church is the model for spousal love. Christ gives it all for his bride. This is the culmination of “introducing love (*agape*) into love (*eros*)” from L&R.
- Marriage is a sacrament of Christ’s love for his bride, a mystery hidden within it. It efficaciously brings about what is signified in the couple’s marriage.
- The divine plan of espousing each of us and the whole human race was foretold by the prophets.
- Ephesians leaves us with a profound sense of the “sacredness” of the human body that is called to be holy and sanctified. Nourishing and caring for the body leads some to refer to the Eucharist.

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The Sacrament of Marriage: Covenant and Grace

- We can “re-read” Genesis on the basis of Eph 5, to see divine espousal as part of God’s hidden plan from the beginning. “God chose us in him before the foundation of the world...”
- The body is a sacrament of the person, but also of the mystery hidden in God.
- In Jesus, the sacrament of creation and the sacrament of redemption merge, as the latter assumes the form.
- The sacrament of redemption is a permanent dimension of the life of the Church, and sacramental marriage fits in here, as they are helpers fit to make each other holy.
- Marriage, as the primordial sacrament, is inserted into the integral structure of a new sacramental economy.
- Marriage involves an ethos of redemption and a participation in it.

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Chapter 5 – The Dimension of the Sign


- There is a “language of the body” pointing to the reality of the sacramental sign.
- Couples administer the sacrament by verbally expressing their mutual consent, leaving mother and father and clinging to the spouse.
- For the sacramental sign to be constituted, reality must correspond to words. The words must be true.
- Consummation constitutes marriage in its fullest reality, in which they become one flesh. Marriage is constituted in its fullest reality by the language of the body, which also must be true.

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The Language of the Body


- Our actions express a message, like kissing, hugging, punching. But the sign of the gesture can lie, like Judas' kiss of Jesus.
- The language of the body in making love is meant to express what happens when marriage is entered into, that they are wholly for each other, for the rest of their lives.
- The language of the body expresses the nuptial meaning of the body. Anything short of this is a lie — contraception, premarital sex, etc.
- The language of the body is geared toward the communion of persons and is a constitutive element of it. It expresses that they are a gift for each other.

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The Language of the Body


- There was a prophetism of the body in the Old Testament, like Israel being the wife of God. There were also the objective dimension of language in which their prophetic deeds could be interpreted by all because they had a message.
- The language of the body has a grammar, a truth and falsity, where it corresponds adequately to reality. The body is meant to speak the truth with regard to fidelity and conjugal love.
- The spouses renew this language in daily life, bearing witness in body language to spousal and procreative love.
- The person both “reads” this language in the other and “speaks” this language to the other. But it has to be true.
- Because of concupiscence, man can express and read this language adulterously. Lust distorts this language and there can be errors in reading it.

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The Language of the Body

- The Song of Songs shows us how to read this language of the body well, as a sign of the gift who is the person.
- This language can become liturgical, as we see in Tobit. Tobiah's and Sarah's love becomes the language of the liturgy; real love becomes worship.
- In Ephesians, we see that the body is called to speak a holy language of love and marriage is meant to inject sanctity into human persons.
- The spiritual acts and duties constituting the spirituality of marriage become a liturgical language. Expressing the sacramental sign of marriage in the language of the body, man and woman encounter the “great mystery” and transfer the light of that mystery to the language of their practice of love, fidelity and honesty. Conjugal life thus becomes liturgical, an act of worship.

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Chapter 6: The Inheritance of the Law of Life

- JP II rereads *Humanae Vitae* in light of these reflections on the TOB.
- There is an inseparable connection established by God between the unitive and procreative meanings inherent to the marital act. “The marital act simultaneously unites husband and wife in closest intimacy and makes them capable of generating new life.”
- This is the language of the body that gave rise to the moral norm. The norm belongs not just to the natural law, but to the moral order revealed by God in biblical anthropology. The TOB helps confirm the truth of the norm.

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The Inheritance of the Law of Life


- For HV, responsible parenthood means discovering the biological laws of the human person, having reason and will dominate innate drives.
- Responsible Parenthood means the prudent and generous decision for a large family or, respecting the moral law, to choose to have no more children for an indefinite period. Not merely avoiding another birth, but deciding along with God, according to his creative intention and plan manifested in the “intimate structure of the conjugal act” and the “inseparable connection of the two meanings to it.”

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Periodic Continence Versus Contraception


- Contraception is defined as “any action that, either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation” (HV 14).
- It is morally licit to have recourse to infertile periods if there are “reasonable grounds from the physical or psychological conditions of husband or wife or from external circumstances” (HV 16).
- Periodic continence rightly uses a faculty provided by nature; contraception obstructs the natural development of the generative process.
- There can be a moral reason to space births but the means must also be moral.

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Periodic Continence Versus Contraception

- Man is called to master himself, not like he masters nature, but through virtue.
- Artificial contraception treats man as if he is a thing or an object of manipulation.
- Since the human body expresses the person and should express the language of the body in the eternal plan of love, man and woman are called to be witnesses and interpreters of that eternal plan of love as ministers of the sacrament.
- Expressed in body language, the conjugal act signifies not only love, but potential fecundity.
- Deprived of its procreative component, the conjugal act ceases to be an act of love. It ceases to be an act of personal communion and reciprocal acceptance.
- The importance of “method” tied to “ethos.”

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Conjugal Chastity


- Self-mastery through periodic continence is life according to the Spirit. This is conjugal chastity.
- Continence is a moral virtue, which leads to a virtuous character. It's not just a technique but an ethos, which respects the order of the Creator and not just creation. One is a minister, not a master, of life.
- Conjugal chastity re-reads the language of the body in truth, especially the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions.
- It can be an abuse if the couple, for unworthy reasons, seeks through periodic continence, to avoid having children. Periodic continence is more than an adequate "method" for acting, but a "method" tied to the ethical dimension proper to it.

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Conjugal Spirituality

- There is a need for a spirituality of the couple based on the truth of marriage, masculinity and femininity. Human love is meant to help couples enter more deeply into God's love.
- Love isn't able to be realized in body language until concupiscence is overcome.
- Continence is part of the virtue of temperance and consists in the capacity to control and direct drives of a sexual nature and their consequences in the psychosomatic subjectivity of man. It requires self-mastery, prudence, justice, fortitude and charity to battle concupiscence.
- Rather than multiplying tensions for the human person, continence is the only way to free the person from these tensions.

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Conjugal Spirituality

- Periodic continence can point to the proof of a mature conjugal love, which involves ethics and spirituality.
- Chastity is a virtue tied with the gift of piety and gives reverence to Christ by living in the Spirit. Piety, love and chastity mold the couple's spirituality to protect the body language of the act and its procreative potential within God's plan and the other person's dignity.
- The antithesis of conjugal spirituality is the contraceptive practice and mentality, which greatly harms man's interior culture.
- Concupiscence restricts the mutual freedom of the gift manifested in the spousal meaning of the body.

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Conjugal Spirituality

- The spiritual identification with the other through "affectionate manifestations" helps the other remain faithful and chaste, guided by respect for what is created by God.
- This is the interior climate suitable for personal communion, in which "responsible" procreation rightly matures. They live in interior harmony, the interior truth of the "language of the body," which speaks inseparably truth and love.

Fr. Roger J. Landry
Espirito Santo Parish
Fall River, MA
Lent 2003 (updated in structure, 2014)

Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body *A Cliff Notes' Version*

Introduction

- A. The Theology of the Body is the term used to describe the teaching of Pope John Paul about the human person and human sexuality given during his Wednesday Catecheses in St. Peter's Square between September 5, 1979 and November 28, 1984. John Paul II says that these catecheses could be called "Human Love in the Divine Plan" or "The Redemption of the Body and the Sacramentality of Marriage."
- B. Before Michael Waldstein's rediscovery of the original Polish manuscript and notes, there were various framings of the structure of the TOB. Waldstein has helped us see what was in Wojtyla's mind.
- Two main parts:
 - Words of Christ (on the Redemption of the Body)
 - Sacramentality of Marriage
 - Words of Christ
 - I. Christ appeals to the beginning (TOB 1-23)
 - II. Christ appeals to the Human Heart (TOB 24-63)
 - III. Christ appeals to the Resurrection (TOB 64-86), including chastity
 - The Sacrament — He takes the insights and applies them:
 - IV. The dimension of covenant and grace in marriage (103-107)
 - V. The Dimension of Sign (TOB 113-17)
 - VI. He gave them the Law of Life as Their Inheritance (TOB 118-33)
- C. My aim is to summarize accurately and clearly the central themes that the Holy Father examines in each of the sections. This will help those who want to become familiar with the main ideas of the theology of the body to do so rather quickly — in 30 pages rather than 400 — as well as assist those who are already students of the theology of the body to have them presented in an annotated outline form to facilitate their passing on this Gospel of Human Love in the Divine Plan to others. Eventually, I hope to do a commentary to accompany the various sections, but that will come later!

I. Christ Appeals to the Beginning

(Catechesis on the book of Genesis)

- A. The "beginning" of marriage in God's plan.
- 1) In his dispute with the Pharisees (Mt 19:3 ff), Christ takes marriage back to God's plan in the beginning, seen in Genesis, which sets forth a proper understanding of the nature of man and woman, made in God's image, as well as the unity and indissolubility of marriage.
 - 2) Man is created by God in the image and likeness of God, not in the image of creatures. This image involves sexual differentiation: "God created man in his image ... male and female he created them." God pronounced the human person "very good." Genesis established a solid basis for metaphysics, anthropology and ethics, which has importance for the theology of body.
 - 3) The tree of the knowledge of good and evil separates the state of original innocence of Adam and Eve (in which they were "naked and unashamed") from the state of human sinfulness, which is man's historical state. In his teaching on marriage, Christ goes back to the state of original innocence and his words are normative for the theology of man and for the theology of body. We cannot understand man's present state without reference to his beginning. The proto-Gospel of Gen 3:15 also puts man in the theological perspective of the history of salvation, to the "redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23), which guarantees the

Resource

- Many have used this resource to get to know the TOB much better.
- Available at CatholicPreaching.com

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A screenshot of the Catholic Preaching website. The header features the logo 'Catholic Preaching' with a red cross and the text 'Fr. Roger J. Landry, Diocese of Fall River'. Below the logo is a small portrait of Fr. Landry. The navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Homilies', 'Articles', 'Plan of Life Book', 'Retreats', 'Teaching', 'Biography', and 'Search Q'. The main content area has a 'Welcome!' section with a photo of Fr. Landry speaking at a microphone. The text in the welcome section reads: 'I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends. During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels: "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach." Those words have never lost their resonance. Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit. This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and iHeart Podcasts. It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (jn 6:1-14). In Christ, Fr. Roger J. Landry'. Below the welcome section are three columns of 'Most Recent Homilies', 'Most Recent Articles', and 'Most Recent Talks' with their respective dates and titles.

The background of the slide is a reproduction of Michelangelo's famous fresco, "The Creation of Adam." It depicts Adam on the left, reclining on a rock, and God on the right, reclining on a cloud and surrounded by other figures. The two hands are just inches apart, creating a sense of tension and divine spark. The text "Overview of John Paul II's Theology of the Body" is overlaid in white serif font at the top.

Overview of John Paul II's Theology of the Body

Questions and Comments

Fr. Roger J. Landry • Merton Institute for Catholic Life • October 21, 2024