

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Tatiana Burger

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INTRODUCTION

The Theology of the Body is a series of 129 Wednesday General Audiences delivered by Pope John Paul II during the first five years of his pontificate. It is a catechesis on God's divine plan for human love. John Paul II develops a biblical anthropology on what it means to be a human person created male and female and called to become "one flesh".¹

As a young priest, Karol Wojtyla developed a very "special love for love".² He was deeply struck by the beauty of love between a man and a woman and so he committed himself to the service of it.

It is this vocation to love that naturally allows us to draw close to the young. As a priest I realized this very early. I felt almost an inner call in this direction. It is necessary to prepare

¹ The term 'theology of the body' is sometimes used by Catholics today as shorthand for any sort of sexual education or sexual ethics. This can be reductive or incorrect. Theology of the body is a systematic study of what God has revealed regarding the human person, created male and female, with inherent dignity, relational and called to communion. Theology of the Body is more than a theology of sexuality, attaining a profound understanding of the human person and providing a framework for integral formation in this area.

² Michael Waldstein's Introduction to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006), 2.

young people for marriage, it is necessary to teach them love...there is nothing else as important to learn! As a young priest I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood... If one loves human love, there naturally arises the need to commit oneself completely to the service of “fair love”, because love is fair, it is beautiful.³

The Theology of the Body is the fruit of John Paul II's life-long “service to love”. “He can surely be regarded as one of the greatest champions of the human person, marriage and the family of all time.”⁴

1. Theology of the Body and *Humanae Vitae*

Against the backdrop of a materialistic and utilitarian society that has led contemporary man to lose sight of who he is, the Theology of the Body has been given to us in a providential moment in history.⁵

John Paul II refers to *Humanae Vitae* as the true focus of his Theology of the Body. In *Humanae Vitae*

³ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, (NY: Knopf, 1995), 122-3.

⁴ William E. May, *Theology of the Body in Context: Genesis and Growth*, (Boston: Pauline Books, 2010), 2.

⁵ The texts we will refer to frequently use the word ‘man’ to mean humankind.

Paul VI considered problems of marriage and procreation in its responsible meaning on the human and Christian planes, within the context of the "total vision of man".⁶

The reflections carried out [in the Theology of the Body] consist in facing the questions raised about *Humanae Vitae*. The reaction the encyclical stirred up confirms the importance and difficulty of these questions. They are reaffirmed also by the further statements of Paul VI, where he emphasized the possibility of deepening the explanation of the Christian truth in this area.⁷

The "reaction the encyclical stirred up" among the faithful was largely one of opposition due to a misunderstanding of what "authentic development of the human person" entailed. Many believed that technical mastery over nature corresponded perfectly and entirely to God's will.⁸ Contraception could be considered legitimate "because of the duty of man to humanize and to bring to greater perfection for the life of man what is given in nature."⁹ To

⁶ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, 25 July 1968, n. 7.

⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 133.

⁸ See Waldstein, Introduction to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 100.

⁹ Commission on Birth Control, "Majority Report," in Daniel Callahan, ed., *The Catholic Case for Contraception*, (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 161.

“humanise nature”, then, was understood as controlling matter by technical means.

Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, stated that we

should take note *above all* that man has made such stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature that he tends to extend this domination to his own total life: that is, to the body, to the powers of his soul, to social life and even to the laws which regulate the transmission of life.¹⁰

John Paul II clearly explained the danger of this way of thinking in *Evangelium Vitae*,

Nature itself, from being ‘mater’ (mother), is now reduced to being ‘matter’, and is subjected to every kind of manipulation. This is the direction in which a certain technical and scientific way of thinking, prevalent in present-day culture, appears to be leading when it rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected.¹¹

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 2.

¹¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, n. 22.

At the heart of *Humanae Vitae* is the call to an “integral vision” of the human person, a vision that does not separate body and soul. The practical consequence of this is that love and life, the unitive and procreative dimensions of the human person, can never be separated because together they correspond to the dignity of the person. True progress will always consider the inherent dignity of the person, and this will then lead to authentic human development.

John Paul II develops this “integral vision of man” in the Theology of the Body. His main purpose is to defend the truth of the human body as integral to the human person. The body is not an added extra to the creation of the man but rather it is essential to what it means to be human. The human person does not only have a body but “*is a body*”.

2. Laying the Foundations for the Theology of the Body

2.1 John Paul II’s Personalistic Norm

John Paul II’s Personalistic norm states that:

The person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm

confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.¹²

This is the guiding principle for determining the nobility of an action towards another person. It sets the foundation for all human interactions, for a proper development of ethics and a genuine understanding of morality. The personalistic norm should be considered in every area of human life.

Every human person possesses an inalienable dignity (inherent worth or value) which must be respected in all our relations. Our dignity as human persons comes from the fact that we have been created in the image and likeness of God, by Love Himself, to participate in His eternal communion of love. The human person is created to love and to be loved. Therefore, the only adequate way to relate to another person is within a framework of love. “The command to love is rooted in the *personalistic norm*”.¹³

“Man’s capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good.”¹⁴ This liberates man from subjectivism and egoism. The

¹² Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 41.

¹³ May, *Theology of the Body in Context*, 6.

¹⁴ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 38.

value of the person is the ultimate common good that unites men and women in love. In other words, “an objective common good is the foundation of love”.¹⁵

“To love a person is to love and respect the *goods* meant to flourish in him or her, for instance life itself, bodily integrity and health, knowledge of the truth, friendship with others, and marriage, and to be unwilling intentionally to damage, destroy or impede these goods of human persons.”¹⁶

The opposite of the personalistic norm is utilitarianism. The utilitarian system of values places pleasure as the highest good and uses persons as mere means to attain this end. “‘Utilitarianism’ puts the emphasis on the usefulness (or otherwise) of any and every human activity. The useful is whatever gives pleasure and excludes its opposite, for pleasure is the essential ingredient of human happiness.”¹⁷

What does it mean to “use” another person? John Paul II explains that every person possesses him or herself. Human persons are in a sense, handed over to themselves by God. The attributes of intellect and will allow this self-possession which in turn allow for self-determination. This self-determining, or this

¹⁵ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 38.

¹⁶ May, *Theology of the Body in Context*, 13.

¹⁷ Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 35.

creating ourselves is ultimately the freedom to choose God or reject Him, the freedom to choose between right and wrong, between life and death, in essence the freedom to choose love. Persons are free to choose their actions, but the only choice that corresponds to a person's dignity is love.

Personalism and 'Gift'

Love is not love if it is not freely given. This leads us to the concept of "gift" which is central to John Paul II's personalism. Gift implies freedom. God has willed man as his own end precisely so that man can make a gift of himself to others.

John Paul II explains personalism by drawing on the Second Vatican Council document, *Gaudium et Spes*: "Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."¹⁸ This passage is central to John Paul II's philosophy and theology, and it is woven throughout the whole text of the *Theology of the Body*.

In contrast, to "use" another person implies depriving the other of that personal work of self-determination. The user "takes", "grasps" or "controls", for his or her own self; *something* that is not his own. There is no possibility of gift, and of receiving the gift.

¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, n. 24.

The opposite of love, therefore, is to use another person. JP II's personalism is constantly redirecting our thoughts and actions to the inalienable dignity of the human person as a subject of his or her own acts.

2.2 John Paul II and Phenomenology

John Paul II's thought was deeply influenced and formed by the mysticism and theology of St. John of the Cross. In particular St. John of the Cross' emphasis on personal subjectivity¹⁹ led Karol Wojtyla to the study of phenomenology.²⁰

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement or approach that focuses on the study of human experience, the study of phenomena. The reality of things is understood by studying the ordinary experiences of everyday life: how things appear in our experience, the way we experience them and the meanings they have in our experience. Phenomenology plays close attention to conscious experience in an effort to unpack its contents and

¹⁹ Subjectivity does not mean 'subjectivism', which is a type of relativism that holds there are no moral truths but only personal opinions. Subjectivity, rather, is about the experiencing person in reality.

²⁰ See Waldstein's Introduction to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*.

give us reality. An important part of knowledge is based on experience.

Karol Wojtyla's doctoral dissertation in theology was on faith as understood in the works of St. John of the Cross. The main question being how faith becomes *experience* according to St. John of the Cross.

Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II was aware that modern philosophy gives a prominent place to subjective experience, consciousness and feelings, often placing these in opposition to objective truth. Objective truth is the reality and order of things established by God that cannot be changed. Christian morality has at its centre objective truth. Something is right or wrong, not because I determine it to be but because there is an unchanging reality that exists outside of myself and of my experience of it. As a Thomist, John Paul II's thought is deeply rooted in objective reality. Without this grounding in objective reality, phenomenology can tend towards subjectivism.

John Paul II's genius was his ability to connect objective reality with human experience, enabling objective moral norms to be understood within a person's lived experience of their truth. He was able to explain Christian ethics and sexual morality in a way that resonated within the human heart.

For John Paul II the inner life of each person, the self-experiencing of things, is where objective truth

is confirmed and subsequently freely and wholeheartedly appropriated. The Church's moral teachings are not "imposed" but are rather in tune with his inner-life. If we go deep into our own experiences, we can find subjective confirmation of objective truths.

In the Theology of the Body, John Paul II gives us a Biblical analysis of what it means to be created man and woman. He does this in a way that speaks to the desires of modern men and women to understand what it means to be a subject in an objective world. Our subjectivity is placed within the objective context that we are creatures before our Creator and so there is a meaning to our subjective experience before God.

3. 'Cartesian Lenses' - Understanding Contemporary Man

The modern world we live in is characterised by the thought of the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), whose famous dictum was "I think, therefore I am." From this "motto of modern rationalism" as John Paul II calls it, Descartes inaugurates the "*great anthropocentric shift in philosophy*".

With Descartes, 'I', meaning my understanding and knowledge, replace God at the centre of existence,

giving birth to rationalism and modern philosophy that “identifies existence with reason itself”.²¹

For Descartes, the human being was a mind, a thinking substance (*res cogitans*). If the reality of existence is in thought alone, then there is a rupture between matter and spirit. Body and soul are two distinct realities, leading to a dualistic understanding of man. The intellect is absolute, and matter is what the human intellect ascribes to it. The body which, in this line of thought is purely matter, comes to be seen as an object. The body is biological; it is matter alone with no spiritual implications and as such can be understood, treated and used as one wishes.

Prior to Descartes, the Scholastic philosophers approached the world as “given” and man’s role as receiving and discovering it with awe. With this as a starting point, the study of philosophy and science led to God as Creator. Knowledge and subjective consciousness aligned to an objective reality.

Mystery no longer has a place in modern rationalism. Reality is determined by what the human intellect can conceive. Rationalism discards Christianity because human beings can live by reason alone. God is not necessary. The result is subjectivism and moral relativism. We clearly see the resulting chaos in the loss of sexual morality and identity.

²¹ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 51.

Man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit. The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualized body*, just as man's spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as *an embodied spirit*. The richest source for knowledge of the body is the Word made flesh. *Christ reveals man to himself*. In a certain sense this statement of the Second Vatican Council is the reply, so long awaited, which the Church has given to modern rationalism....The separation of spirit and body in man has led to a growing tendency to consider the human body, not in accordance with the categories of its specific likeness to God, but rather on the basis of its similarity to all the other bodies present in the world of nature, bodies which man uses as raw material in his efforts to produce goods for consumption. But everyone can immediately realize what enormous dangers lurk behind the application of such criteria to man. When the human body, considered apart from spirit and thought, comes to be used as *raw material* in the same way that the bodies of animals are used ... we will inevitably arrive at a dreadful ethical defeat.²²

²² John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 2 February 1994, n. 19.

4. The Triptych

John Paul II begins his catechesis by establishing what he calls, an adequate anthropology. To fully understand “who we are” we must know where we come from, where we are, and where we are going.

John Paul II refers to three distinct dimensions of man:

- 1) Original Man: The human person before sin
- 2) Historical Man: The human person after sin
- 3) Eschatological Man: The human person in the resurrection of the body

He calls these three dimensions of man a “triptych of words that are essential and constitutive for the theology of the body”.²³ They make up the foundation of the theology of the body because all three dimensions are critical in the establishment of an adequate anthropology.

In the next chapters we will follow John Paul II through his study of these three dimensions of man, in a biblical anthropology that examines where we come from, where we are, and where we are going, in order to fully understand ourselves.

²³ *TOB*, 64:1.

CHAPTER 1. ORIGINAL MAN

1. In “The Beginning”

The first step that John Paul II takes in establishing this adequate anthropology is to follow Christ’s lead when the Pharisees ask him about the legality of divorce.

Some Pharisees came to him to test him and asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” And he answered them, “Have you not read that *from the beginning* the Creator created them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh’? So it is that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined let man not separate.” They objected, “Why then did Moses order to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?” Jesus answered, “Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, *but from the beginning* it was not so.” (Mt 19:3-8)

If we are to understand who God created us to be, we must return to our “beginnings”. This is the first panel of the triptych that makes up John Paul II’s total vision of the human person. This “beginning” is God’s original plan at the moment of creation, before sin entered the world. The “tree of the knowledge of

good and evil” (Gn 2: 16-17) is presented as a boundary line between two original states: Original Innocence and Original Sin.

“Christ’s words, which appeal to the “beginning,” allow us to find an essential continuity in man and a link between these two different states or dimensions of the human being...Thus, historical man is rooted, so to speak, in his revealed theological prehistory; and for this reason, every point of his historical sinfulness must be explained (both in the case of the soul and of the body) with reference to original innocence.”²⁴

If we carry the effects of Original Sin in our humanity, then how can “the beginning”, that which preceded the Fall, be relevant to our life today? The fact that Jesus himself refers the Pharisees and each one of us back to “the beginning” is a sign that through him we find the possibility of redemption. “Christ...fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”²⁵

With Christ comes grace and the possibility of a total transformation of the heart. Through our redemption Christ is able to re-establish “the beginning” as our point of reference.

²⁴ *TOB*, 4:1,2.

²⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

The “perspective of the redemption of the body guarantees the continuity and the unity between man’s hereditary state of sin and his original innocence.”²⁶

The relationship between man and woman is often fraught with tension and conflict. Christ comes to tell us that “from the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19:8). In the beginning, man and woman lived a joyful unity. Christ calls all of us, who are burdened by sin, to re-establish that unity, and to make it the norm for our lives.

According to faith the discord we notice so painfully does not stem from the *nature* of man and woman, nor from the nature of their relations, but from *sin*. As a break with God, the first sin had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman.²⁷

In following Christ’s lead directing us back to the beginning, John Paul II gives us a detailed exegesis of the first two chapters of Genesis. He identifies three key original experiences: Original Solitude, Original Unity and Original Nakedness. In this chapter we will look at John Paul II’s analysis of Genesis 1 and 2, and unpack these original

²⁶ *TOB*, 4:3.

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1607.

experiences, and their contribution to Christian anthropology.

John Paul II tells us that these original experiences remain at the root of every human experience and as such we recognise “a certain ‘echo’”²⁸ of them in our hearts. “Indeed, they are so interwoven with the ordinary things of life that we do not generally notice their extraordinary character.”²⁹

In the state of Original Innocence these first three original experiences were lived out perfectly. This state was irrevocably lost through Original Sin. Nonetheless, it is the will of God, through the reality of redemption, that we return to these beginnings so that they are not just a distant echo in our hearts, but a wonderful lived reality.

John Paul II wants each one of us to have an experience of this solitude, unity and nakedness. If we can recognise these experiences and allow ourselves to experience them, then we begin to understand more fully the meaning of life, of our body and of relationships.³⁰

²⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 55.

²⁹ *TOB*, 11:1.

³⁰ Anthony Percy, *Theology of the Body Made Simple*, (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 36.

1.1 The First Creation Account

Then God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” ... So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...” (Gn 1: 26-28).

The first Creation account (Genesis 1) gives us the essential truths about man in the context of the creation of the world. It is concise, it “contains only the objective facts and defines the objective reality.”³¹ The essential truths we learn about the human person are that we are:

Created in the image and likeness of God.

Man is defined by his relationship with God. Although he is a body, it is impossible to reduce man to the visible world. The biblical narrative does not speak of man’s likeness to other creatures, but only of his likeness to God.³² That the human being is created in the image and likeness of God highlights straight away the exceptional dignity of the human person, a dignity unlike all other created beings.

³¹ *TOB*, 2:4.

³² See *TOB*, 2:3.

Created male and female

Genesis 1 specifically tells us that He created humankind male and female; “male and female he created them”. There are two ways of being human, male and female. Although the animals are called to multiply, sexual difference is underlined only in the creation of human beings.

Called to be fruitful and multiply

Immediately after the creation of humankind as male and female comes God's first blessing on them. God's blessing upon the union of the two shows that our sexuality is fundamentally good. The capacity to pro-create enables man and woman to participate in the creative love of God. “To the mystery of creation, corresponds the perspective of procreation.”³³ We are contingent beings and depend upon the relationship between one man and one woman.

“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gn 1:31).

John Paul II concludes that Genesis 1 forms an “incontrovertible” point of reference for ethics: and this is that *being and good are convertible*.³⁴

³³ *TOB*, 2:5.

³⁴ See *TOB*, 2:6.

1.2 The Second Creation Account

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being...The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Then the Lord God said, 'it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, '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. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." (Gn 2: 7, 15-25).

While the first account of creation gives us theological facts, this second account of creation is more subjective in nature, that is, it deeply penetrates the experiences of man and woman and gives us important psychological insights into the human person. It is within the second creation account that John Paul II develops the three foundational human experiences: Original Solitude, Original Unity, and Original Nakedness.

For John Paul II, the significance of two creation stories is in the interplay between the objective and the subjective. Before sin, Adam and Eve's subjective experiences corresponded to the objective reality of God's design.

In the interpretation of the revelation about man, and above all about the body, we must, for understandable reasons, appeal to experience, because bodily man is perceived by us above all in experience...we must reach the conviction that in this case, *our human experience is in some way a legitimate means for theological interpretation* and that, in a

certain sense, it is an indispensable point of reference to which we must appeal.³⁵

2. Original Solitude

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him' (Gn 2:18)

Original Solitude has two meanings:

- 1) The solitude of man (the human person) "deriving from man's very nature, that is, from his humanity."³⁶
- 2) The solitude of man (male) caused by the absence of woman and vice-versa "deriving from the relationship between male and female."³⁷

The first meaning of solitude is more fundamental than the second because the experience of being alone leads to man's self-awareness and to the discovery of his personhood.

2.1 Man in Search of His Essence

³⁵ *TOB*, 4:4.

³⁶ *TOB*, 5:2.

³⁷ *TOB*, 5:2.

In this sense, the experience of Original Solitude is not about 'loneliness'.

The fact that "man is alone" ... turns out to be a fundamental anthropological issue that is in some way prior to the issue raised by the fact that man is male and female... It is prior in the existential sense.³⁸

Created man finds himself from the first moment of his existence before God in search of his own being, as it were; one could say, in search of his own definition; today one would say, in search of his own "identity."³⁹

In his solitude, man searches for the answer to the question: who am I? He begins to answer this question through naming the animals and realising what he is not. After naming the animals he concludes that "there was no helper fit for him." This is the beginning of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is "the first and fundamental manifestation of humanity."⁴⁰ Man stands alone in the created world and this discovery, before God, reveals to himself that he is a *person*.

³⁸ TOB, 5:3.

³⁹ TOB, 5:5.

⁴⁰ TOB, 5:6.

2.2 Solitude and Subjectivity

The first creation account tells us that man has been created “in the image of God”. The second creation account highlights man as a one who actively participates in a relationship with God. This participation is made possible because of the subjectivity which characterises the human person. This subjectivity is revealed through self-consciousness (intellect) and self-determination (choice, free will).

This man... is manifested in the second account *as a subject of the covenant*, that is, a subject constituted as a person, constituted according to the measure of “*partner of the Absolute*,” inasmuch as he must consciously discern and choose between good and evil, between life and death.... Man is “alone”: this is to say that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself.⁴¹

Man “is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself”.⁴²

Of all visible creatures only man is “able to know and love his creator...he alone is called to share... in God’s own life. It was for this end that he was

⁴¹ *TOB*, 6:2.

⁴² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24.

created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity.”⁴³ It is through this experience of solitude that man discovers his great dignity.

2.3 Solitude and the Meaning of the Body

Man is a “body among bodies” in the visible world yet he differs radically from the rest of creation. It is through his body that he first experiences the dissimilarity with other creatures and his ability to recognise the dissimilarity points to the spiritual dimension of his being.

The spiritual aspect of man’s nature is revealed through the experience of solitude and through the fact that man is conscious of his body. This awareness of his body goes hand in hand with an understanding of the meaning of his body. God speaks to man, asking him to subdue and till the earth. This communication points to man’s call to communion with God. It is through his body that he is able to respond. Not only is he able to freely respond to his Creator but he is also the only creature able to cultivate and subdue the earth. Tilling the land is a specifically human activity and the way that it is achieved is through the body.

Man is a subject not only by his self-consciousness and by self-determination, but also based on his own body. *The structure of*

⁴³ CCC, 356.

*this body is such that it permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity. In this activity, the body expresses the person.*⁴⁴

The unity of body and soul is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the “form” of the body... spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.⁴⁵

2.4 Original Solitude and the Alternative between Death and Immortality

“You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for when you eat of it you shall certainly die.” (Gn 2:16-17)

Up to this moment Adam’s experience has been one of only existence. An existence obtained from the Creator. The concept of death is new but he associates it with the life he has enjoyed. Death is a “radical antithesis” of all that he has experienced.⁴⁶

The words of God-Yahweh addressed to the man confirm a dependence in existing, so that

⁴⁴ *TOB*, 6:3.

⁴⁵ *CCC*, 365.

⁴⁶ See *TOB*, 7:3.

they show man as a limited being and, by his nature, susceptible to nonexistence.⁴⁷

The man, who had heard these words, had to find their truth in the inner structure of his own solitude. After all, it depended on him, on his decision and free choice, whether he would enter with solitude also into the circle of the antithesis revealed to him by the Creator, together with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and would appropriate the experience of dying and of death.⁴⁸

Freedom is now revealed to man in all its depth. Freedom is ultimately about the decision to love and trust God or turn away. To choose the latter would be to enter another dimension of solitude – one of separation and alienation from God.

As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of *choosing between good and evil*, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning.⁴⁹

To choose to love and trust God is life. To reject God and turn away is to choose death. John Paul II tells us that “the alternative between death and

⁴⁷ TOB, 7:3.

⁴⁸ TOB, 7:3.

⁴⁹ CCC, 1731.

immortality enter, right from the outset, the definition of man and belongs ‘from the beginning’ to the meaning of his solitude before God himself”.⁵⁰

2.5 In Summary

The first human experience is one of being a body-person. This happens before the experience of sexual differentiation because each and every human person stands before God as “willed for his own sake”.⁵¹ Solitude before God indicates a personal and intimate relationship with Him. This communion with God precedes the call to communion with another.

This is why John Paul II states that “*the fact that man is a “body” belongs more deeply to the structure of the personal subject than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female.*”⁵²

3. Original Unity

This first experience of solitude prepares man for communion with another.

Adam has now discovered his personhood, he has discovered the unity of his body and soul, and he

⁵⁰ TOB, 7:4.

⁵¹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24.

⁵² TOB, 8:1.

knows that he stands face to face in an intimate relationship with God the Father. He also discovers that, after naming all the animals, he “did not find a helper suited to him (Gn 2:20).” He recognises his desire to find a being similar to himself. He is now ready for the “other”.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘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’. (Gn 2:21-23)

The circle of the human person’s solitude is broken, because the first “man” reawakens from his sleep as “male and female.” The creation of man is now complete. The human person is “definitively created as male and female.” Man emerges in his “double unity as male and female.”⁵³

3.1 Adam’s Rib

Encountering a Person

⁵³ See *TOB*, 8:2,3.

The fact that woman is made from the rib of man symbolises the common nature and dignity of man and woman. Adam's words "this time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones" express his joy at encountering another being who shares in his humanity. Adam recognises Eve first and foremost as another *person*, another human being like him and immediately accepts her as the help suited to him.

For the first time, the man (male) shows joy and even exultation, for which he had no reason before, due to the lack of a being similar to himself. Joy for the other human being, for the second "I," dominates in the words the man (male) speaks on seeing the woman (female).⁵⁴

Adam's deep joy is a manifestation of the human heart's desire for union with others.

Masculinity and Femininity

It is only after recognising Eve as another "like him", as another *person* that Adam then rejoices in her femininity. The human person has been created in two ways: the masculine and the feminine which allows for complementarity, for a unity that could not be achieved if there were no difference. Original unity is based on masculinity and femininity.

⁵⁴ *TOB*, 9:1.

The knowledge of man passes through masculinity and femininity, which are, as it were,...*two reciprocally completing ways of “being a body” and at the same time of being human*...Femininity in some way finds itself before masculinity, while masculinity confirms itself through femininity. Precisely the function of sex [that is, being male or female], which in some way is “constitutive for the person” (not only “an attribute of the person”), shows how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the uniqueness and unrepeatability proper to the person, is constituted by the body as “he” or “she”.⁵⁵

Our sexuality is constitutive to who we are. This means that the fact that we are male or female is not accidental or secondary to our personality. The way we think and feel and relate in the world are defined by our sexuality.

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *TOB*, 10:1.

⁵⁶ *CCC*, 2332.

3.2 The Communion of Persons

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Gn 2:24)

The creation of the human person as male and female reveals man and woman's call to an intimate communion of persons.

God did not create man abandoning him alone, for from the beginning 'male and female he created them' (Gn 1:27), and their union constitutes the first form of the communion of persons.⁵⁷

The solitude through which man discovers himself as a person also prepares him to open himself up to another. In his solitude he recognises the yearning for a "communion of persons". The negative dimension of the experience of solitude indicates the "*existence of the person "for" the person.*"⁵⁸

Man and woman have been created to exist with and for each other. John Paul II highlights that this union does not diminish the unique and unrepeatable character of each person, but rather, through

⁵⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 12.

⁵⁸ *TOB*, 9:3.

communion, they rediscover themselves and there is an affirmation of all that it means to be a person.

3.3 The Communion of Man and Woman as Image of the Trinity

Man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning. The function of the image is that of mirroring the one who is the model, of reproducing its own prototype. Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. This “Trinitarian concept of the “image of God”... constitutes, perhaps, the deepest theological aspect of everything one can say about man... On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fruitfulness descended, linked with human procreation (cf. Gn 1:28).”⁵⁹

This paragraph marks a development of Catholic thought on how human beings image God. Historically our image of God was posited in our reason and will, our ability to know God and his creation, and our ability to choose Him and choose what is good. But in essence God is a communion of three Divine Persons,

⁵⁹ *TOB*, 9:3.

'God is love': God's very being is love...God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.⁶⁰

Referring to Genesis 1 where God speaks in the plural, "let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gn 1:26), John Paul II says that we can deduce "that *man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons*, which man and woman form from the very beginning".⁶¹ Through his Theology of the Body and then later through his authoritative church documents, John Paul II developed and consolidated the notion that the relationship between man and woman images God in and through their communion.

3.4 The One-Flesh Union as the "Incarnate Communion of Persons"

The unity that is realized through the body indicates from the beginning not only the "body," but also the "incarnate" communion of persons – *communio personarum* – and

⁶⁰ CCC, 221.

⁶¹ TOB, 9:3.

requires this communion right from the beginning.⁶²

‘One flesh’ refers to the conjugal act, which is not only about the joining of bodies. This would be to stop at the surface of sexuality. The *communion of persons* is at the heart of the call to become one flesh. “In marriage, the physical intimacy of spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.”⁶³

John Paul II explains that,

man is *in some sense unable to express* this singular language [that of communion of persons] of his personal existence and vocation *without the body*. He is constituted in such a way from the “beginning” that the deepest words of the spirit – words of love, gift, and faithfulness – call for an appropriate “language of the body.” And without this language, they cannot be fully expressed.⁶⁴

All of married life, including the ‘one-flesh union’ as the regular sign of communion between husband and wife, become iconic of the Trinity. “Human love in its beauty and fragility allows us to see, like a living

⁶² *TOB*, 9:5.

⁶³ *CCC*, 2360.

⁶⁴ *TOB*, 104:7.

icon, the Glory within God.”⁶⁵ This does not mean that God is sexual, and in fact one must point out the infinite difference between God and man.

In no way is God in man’s image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective “perfections” of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God.⁶⁶

4. Original Nakedness

Now both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame. (Gn 2:25)

Original Nakedness, which is nakedness without shame, indicates the full awareness of the meaning of the body as the revelation of the person. This is only possible due to a perfect unity between body and soul which allows both Adam and Eve to see each other in all the truth of their being as created by God in His image and likeness. John Paul II calls this the “peace of the interior gaze”. Adam and Eve see, together with the body, the inner mystery and dignity of the other, and they respond to this vision with love. This creates the fullness of intimacy.

⁶⁵ Cardinal Marc Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WB Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶⁶ CCC, 370.

Intimacy is the reciprocal experience of being seen and loved in all the truth of one's being, including all that makes us unique and unrepeatable.

The words “they did not feel shame” can only signify...an original depth in affirming what is inherent in the person, that is, what is “visibly” feminine and masculine, through which the “personal intimacy” of reciprocal communication is constituted in all its radical simplicity and purity. To this fullness of “*exterior*” perception, expressed by physical nakedness, *corresponds the “interior” fullness of the vision of man in God, that is, according to the measure of the “image of God.”*⁶⁷

5. Man in the Dimension of Gift: the Spousal Meaning of the Body

5.1 Hermeneutics of the Gift

Hermeneutics refers to a method of interpretation. “Gift” is the essential lens by which to interpret creation and all of our existence.

The dimension of gift is decisive for the essential truth and depth of the meaning of original solitude-unity-nakedness. It stands also at the very heart of the mystery of

⁶⁷ TOB, 12:4.

creation, which allows us to build the theology of the body “from the beginning,” but at the same time demands that we build it in precisely this way.⁶⁸

God “establishes the world in existence and man in the world, *because “he is love”* (1 Jn 4:8).”⁶⁹ God, the eternal exchange of self-giving love between the three Divine Persons of the Trinity, chooses to share his Divine life with man. Creation “signifies *gift*; a fundamental radical gift, that is, an act of giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.”⁷⁰ The gift of creation and our existence is undeserved, unmerited and unnecessary. God’s only motive for creation is love. Only man, as “image of God”, is able to receive the gift of God’s gratuitous love by his ability to respond to it, establishing thus a relationship of communion with his Creator, his Father. After having received the gift of God’s love, man is then able to repeat this dynamic of gift by becoming gift to others.

5.2 The Spousal Meaning of the Body

We arrive at the central concept of John Paul II’s catechesis – the spousal meaning of the body.

⁶⁸ *TOB*, 5:2.

⁶⁹ *TOB*, 13:3.

⁷⁰ *TOB*, 13:3.

The human body, with its sex – its masculinity and femininity – seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains “from the beginning” the “spousal” attribute, that is ***the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift*** and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.⁷¹

The human person was created as gift and with the purpose to become gift for another. ‘Gift’ is the full revelation of what it means to be a body-person. The sign of gift is imprinted in our bodies. “The man’s body is a sign that he is meant to be a gift to his wife, and her body is a sign that she is to be a gift to her husband.”⁷² This interior orientation of gift that we bear is exteriorly manifested by our masculinity or femininity.

Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift. And with it he carries into the world his particular likeness to God, with which he transcends and also rules his “visibility” in the world, his bodiliness, his masculinity or femininity, his nakedness. A reflection of this

⁷¹ *TOB*, 15:1.

⁷² May, *Theology of the Body in Context*, 9.

likeness is also the primordial awareness of the spousal meaning of the body pervaded by the mystery of original innocence.⁷³

The sincere gift of self is the guiding star for the voyage through the Theology of the Body. In the words of St. Therese of Lisieux, “to love is to give everything and to give oneself”.⁷⁴

5.3 The Beauty of the Body.

The human body, oriented from within by the “sincere gift” of the person, reveals not only its masculinity or femininity on the physical level, but reveals also such a value and such a beauty that it goes beyond the simple physical level of “sexuality”.⁷⁵

The beauty of the body is precisely the gift that it signifies. This is very different to the “beauty” of the body as the pornographic “perfection” of *body parts*.

5.4 Freedom of the Gift

⁷³ *TOB*, 19:3.

⁷⁴ St. Therese of Lisieux, *Why I Love You, Mary*, stanza 22; quoted in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 124.

⁷⁵ *TOB*, 15:3.

One can say that, created by Love, that is, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, both are 'naked' because they are *free with the very freedom of the gift*. This freedom lies exactly at the basis of the spousal meaning of the body.⁷⁶

Adam and Eve's nakedness without shame symbolises the absence of constraints in their communication of love. There are no barriers to their communication. Each loves the other as "willed for their own sake" and not as someone to be possessed. Sexual attraction expressed itself as a desire to make a sincere gift of self to the other and to receive the other as gift. In this way original nakedness indicates a complete trust in the other.

5.5 Original Happiness

The revelation and discovery of the spousal meaning of the body explain man's original happiness and, at the same time, they open the perspective of his own earthly history, in which he will never withdraw from this indispensable "theme" of his own existence.⁷⁷

Once again John Paul II highlights the interplay between the objective facts and the subjective

⁷⁶ TOB, 15:1.

⁷⁷ TOB, 15:5.

experiences found in the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. God reveals in an objective way the spousal meaning of the body when he creates man as male and female.

He then allows Adam and Eve to discover this spousal meaning for themselves. The words “both were naked... but they *did not feel* shame” points to their subjective experience. Through their nakedness, Adam and Eve recognise the spousal meaning of their bodies straight away. They know they have been created as gift to be freely given and received. In giving and receiving each other as “willed for their own sake” they experience the deep affirmation of their person. Everything that makes them unique and unrepeatable is received, affirmed and loved. The gift is complete. The fruit of this gift is communion which brings with it original happiness. John Paul II calls this man and woman’s “beatifying beginning”.⁷⁸ This perfect happiness was possible because of man’s state of original innocence which was the state of man and woman full of God’s grace.

Original happiness, the beatifying “beginning” of man, whom God created “male and female,” the spousal meaning of the body in its original nakedness: all of this expresses rootedness in Love.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *TOB*, 15:5.

⁷⁹ *TOB*, 16:1.

Happiness is being rooted in Love. We have been created by Love, to love and to be loved. John Paul II affirms that

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 it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.⁸⁰

One must clarify a proper understanding of sexual intimacy within the broader context of love. John Paul II is insistent that “we are more relational than we are sexual”.⁸¹ Recall the experience of original solitude in which man first enters into communion with his Creator. This relationship takes precedence over the subsequent relationship with Eve. Also, recall that Adam rejoices in Eve’s *personhood* before rejoicing in her femininity. The desire to be loved and to love goes much deeper than the desire for sexual intimacy. Sexual intimacy is a means to an end, the end being the intimate communion of life and love which marriage is. Therefore sexual intimacy is always “subservient to the higher value of marriage and celibacy.”⁸² Not everyone is called to sexual union in marriage but *everyone* is created to love and to be loved, to be gift, to be received and affirmed and thus to enter into communion with others. The body’s “power to express love” and to be gift is expressed in a myriad of

⁸⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, 4 March 1979, n. 10.

⁸¹ Percy, *Theology of the Body Made Simple*, 4.

⁸² Percy, *Theology of the Body Made Simple*, 4.

ways in all of our relationships, from a simple smile to a helping hand the body is ever communicating.

6. Fatherhood and Motherhood

Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.' (Gn 4:1)

This occurs after original sin, but John Paul II includes it in his reflections on Original Man because the words “to know” or “knowledge” sum up all the reflections of “the beginning”. In this way he establishes the link and the continuity between original man and historical man.

6.1 Knowledge and the Mystery of the Person

In Sacred Scripture, conjugal union is defined as “knowledge”. John Paul II notes that the use of this term is a sign of the poverty of expression of the ancient language (the Semitic term *yada*), and yet from this poverty of expression “there seems to arise a specific depth of meaning that derives from all the meanings analysed up to this point.”⁸³

The word “knowledge” speaks to what is distinctly human, that is, the intellectual capacity to know and

⁸³ *TOB*, 20:2.

then to choose. In this way knowledge is “an expression of human intentionality”.⁸⁴ The term knowledge “raises the conjugal relation of man and woman, that is, the fact that through the duality of sex they become “one flesh,” *and brings it into the specific dimension of the person*”.⁸⁵ Animals cannot know one another. They are determined by biological instinct, whereas humans are not. Only humans can “know” one another in all the depth of their personal “I”. And so the word “knowledge” reaches the mystery of the other as unique and unrepeatable; it penetrates the experience of communion of persons.

In Genesis 4:1, when they become one flesh, the man and the woman experience the meaning of their bodies in a particular way. Together, they thus become one single subject, as it were, of the act and that experience, although they remain two really distinct subjects in this unity.⁸⁶

This unity that is so intimate does not diminish or annihilate the other. Rather as a sincere gift of self, each discovers himself more fully. This is unity in distinction of which the Trinity is the prototype.

The divine persons are really distinct from one another. "God is one but not solitary."

⁸⁴ *TOB*, 20:4.

⁸⁵ *TOB*, 20:2.

⁸⁶ *TOB*, 20:4.

"Father", "Son", "Holy Spirit" are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: "He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son." They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: "It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds." The divine Unity is Triune.⁸⁷

6.2 Knowledge and Procreation

"I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." (Gn 4:1)

This reciprocal "knowledge", that implies the intimacy of a true communion of persons, brings forth yet another dimension of knowledge: "the man and the woman know each other reciprocally in the "third," originated by both".⁸⁸

In this "third" the man and woman again recognise each other, they recognise their humanity, they recognise that this "third" is flesh of their flesh and bone of their bones. Moreover they recognise in this "third" the image of God. "Every time, both man and

⁸⁷ CCC, 254.

⁸⁸ TOB, 21:4.

woman take this image again, so to speak, from the mystery of creation and transmit it “with the help of God-Yahweh”.⁸⁹

Thus man and woman become aware of the meaning of the human body bound to fatherhood and motherhood. They become conscious of their participation in the mystery of creation. “The eternal mystery of generation, which is in God himself, the one and Triune God (cf. Eph 3:14-15), is reflected in the woman’s motherhood and in the man’s fatherhood.”⁹⁰

6.3 Knowledge Stronger than Death

“You will return to the earth, for out of it you were taken; dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” (Gn 3:19)

“The horizon of death opens before man together with the revelation of the generative meaning of the body in the spouses’ act of reciprocal ‘knowledge.’”⁹¹ Because Eve conceived for the first time after the fall, the consciousness of the generative meaning of the body comes to light together with the consciousness of death. John Paul II reflects that

⁸⁹ *TOB*, 21:7.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 15 August 1988, n. 18.

⁹¹ *TOB*, 22:5.

with every “knowledge-generation” cycle, life struggles with the “inexorable prospect of death, and always overcomes it”.⁹² Despite sin and death, the goodness and strength of life is affirmed. God’s original plan of life-giving communion has not been destroyed by sin.

6.4 Eulogy of Motherhood

The whole exterior constitution of woman’s body, its particular look, the qualities that stand, with the power of a perennial attraction, at the beginning of the “knowledge” about which Genesis 4:1-2 speaks (“Adam united himself with Eve”), are in strict union with motherhood. With the simplicity characteristic of it, the Bible (and the liturgy following it) honors and praises throughout the centuries “the womb that bore you and the breasts from which you sucked milk” (Lk 11:27). These words are a eulogy of motherhood, of femininity, of the feminine body in its typical expression of creative love.⁹³

7. Conclusion

⁹² *TOB*, 22:7.

⁹³ *TOB*, 21:5.

This analysis of man's beginning, concludes John Paul II, is the foundation for an "integral vision of man", without which no adequate answer can be given to the questions of contemporary man regarding human sexuality, marriage and procreation. This integral vision of man has been replaced by deconstructed and partial truths of the human person resulting in man becoming "more an object of certain technologies than the responsible subject of his own action".⁹⁴ The fundamental truths set forth to us "in the beginning" must be placed at the "basis of the whole contemporary science about human sexuality in the biophysiological sense." The "single elements of contemporary science" will serve to further enlighten our understanding of man and woman only if they help us arrive "at what is fundamental and essentially personal, both in every individual, man or woman, and in their reciprocal relations."⁹⁵

Those who seek the fulfilment of their own human and Christian vocation in marriage are called first of all to make of this "theology of the body," whose "beginning" we find in the first chapters of Genesis, the content of their lives and behavior. In fact, on the road of this vocation, how indispensable is a deepened

⁹⁴ *TOB*, 23:3.

⁹⁵ *TOB*, 23:4.

consciousness of the meaning of the body in
its masculinity and femininity!⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *TOB*, 23:5.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL MAN

1. Christ Appeals to the Human Heart

“You have heard that is 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)

This biblical passage frames the section of the Theology of the Body devoted to Historical Man.

After Original Sin, man (male and female) loses his state of Original Innocence. His reality is one of a wounded, fallen nature. John Paul II analyses the body and sexuality as we experience them now.⁹⁷ Our historical reality is influenced by sin but redeemed in Christ. John Paul II guides us towards a deep reflection on the human heart which has become the battlefield between good and evil.

At the Sermon on the Mount, Christ brings to fulfillment the moral law of the Old Covenant: “Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;

⁹⁷ In his Theology of the Body, John Paul II mostly uses the term ‘sexuality’ to refer to the fact that human beings are sexually differentiated, i.e. male and female, and, secondarily, to refer to conjugal relations between a man and a woman. In contemporary society, ‘sexuality’ almost always has this second meaning, not the first.

I have not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17). Christ reveals to us the “soul” of human morality. Abiding by the law as a set of rules and regulations is not enough to bring about the Kingdom of God, for although they are a necessary condition, they can remain soulless and void of the inner justice that God has willed. The very purpose of morality is to allow the human person to flourish according to God’s Will, and to “enter into his full image”⁹⁸ This is the justice required by the moral law. Moral value is found in the human heart, in man’s innermost being. “It is not enough to stop “on the surface” of human actions, but one must penetrate precisely the interior.”⁹⁹

Christ appeals to the inner man. Abiding by the law is not enough, rather he delves deep into the inner recesses of the human heart, because it is here that our moral choices are made. These choices are made prior to any manifestation of them in the flesh.

2 The Man of Concupiscence

“You will not die at all. Rather, God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gn 3:4-5)

⁹⁸ *TOB*, 25:2.

⁹⁹ *TOB*, 24:3.

Until this moment Adam and Eve received all of creation and each other, in their masculinity and femininity, as a gift from their Creator. They recognised in the gift of creation a manifestation of the ultimate Gift – God Himself. They recognise “love as the specific motive of creation”.¹⁰⁰

John Paul II explains that the temptation of Original Sin was a doubting of the love of God. Original Sin was a denial of the Gift.

By casting doubt in his heart on the deepest meaning of the gift, that is, on love as the specific motive of creation and of the original covenant, man turns his back on God-Love, on the “Father.” He in some sense casts him from his heart. At the same time, therefore, he detaches his heart and cuts it off, as it were, from that which “comes from the Father”: in this way, what is left in him is what “comes from the world.”¹⁰¹

If God is not a God of love, then he is a God of domination, and man’s position towards him becomes one of battle and fear of enslavement. If our understanding of God is that of a loving Father, then man’s position is one of filiation, of childlike trust

¹⁰⁰ *TOB*, 26:4.

¹⁰¹ *TOB*, 26:5.

and receptivity towards his infinite and gratuitous love. Original Sin “attempts to abolish fatherhood.”¹⁰²

When we reject God as Father, then what is left is a grasping at what comes from the world ruptured from its dimension of gift. St. John explains this as the threefold concupiscence: “all that is in the world, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, come not from the Father but from the world.” (1 Jn 2:15-17)

After Original Sin, we battle with this concupiscence, understood as an inclination to sin. Concupiscence itself, though, is not a sin. “It is left for us to wrestle with, [but] it cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰³

Although it is proper to each individual, original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin - an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence". Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the

¹⁰² John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 228.

¹⁰³ CCC, 1264.

consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.¹⁰⁴

The man of concupiscence now recognises within himself an interior struggle between the flesh and the spirit, between what “comes from the world” and what “comes from the Father”. We recognise concupiscence in the manifestation of our disordered passions.

3 Original Shame

It is as if the “man of concupiscence” experienced that he had *simply ceased*, also through his body and his sex, to remain above the world of living beings or “animalia”. It is as if he had experienced a specific *fracture of the personal integrity of his own body, particularly in that which determines its sexuality* and which is directly linked with the call to that unity in which man and woman “will be one flesh” (Gn 2:24).¹⁰⁵

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized that they were naked; they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths (Gn3:6).

¹⁰⁴ CCC, 405.

¹⁰⁵ TOB, 28:4.

The experience of shame is the first consequence of sin. It is a “manifestation... - in both the man and the woman – of what “does not come from the Father, but from the world.”¹⁰⁶

Together with shame, there appears for the first time in man a fear of God. John Paul II calls shame the “boundary experience” between Original Man and Historical Man.

Then they heard the sound of the Lord God, who was walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves among the trees of the garden from the presence of the Lord God. The Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of your step in the garden, and I was afraid, because I am naked, and I hid myself’. (Gn 3:8-10).

John Paul II explains that although Adam’s response refers to his bodily nakedness, this is a cover up of the true origin of fear. It is God who then names the origin of man’s fear: the fact that in his heart he turned away from His Creator. The body is not the source of shame, it is the heart. Man has now alienated himself from Love. He has deprived himself from participation in the Gift and shame

¹⁰⁶ *TOB*, 26:5.

manifests itself “as a symptom of man’s detachment from love”.¹⁰⁷

3.1 Change in the Meaning of Original Nakedness

“I was afraid because I am naked, and I hid myself.” (Gn 3:10)

Sin brings about a radical change of the meaning of original nakedness. Nakedness before sin revealed full participation in God’s grace – holiness. Nakedness revealed man participating fully in the Gift being given to him. Nakedness now reveals a loss, a deprivation.

In the mystery of creation, the human body carried within itself an unquestionable sign of the ‘image of God’ and also constituted the specific source of certainty about this image, present in the whole human being. The original acceptance of the body was in some sense the basis of the acceptance of the whole visible world.¹⁰⁸

Concupiscence now obscures the spousal meaning of the body. “Man in some way loses the original

¹⁰⁷ *TOB*, 29:4.

¹⁰⁸ *TOB*, 27:3.

certainty of the “image of God” expressed in his body.”¹⁰⁹

Three dimensions of shame arise from this alienation from love.

3.2 Cosmic Shame

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the earth, for from it you were taken.” (Gn 3:17-19)

This leads to what John Paul II calls “cosmic shame”. By turning his heart away from God, man turns away from the Gift and all manifestations of that Gift (creation). In so doing, man loses in a certain sense, his “right to participate in the visibility of the world, which he enjoyed in the mystery of creation”.¹¹⁰

The world now becomes a hostile place. Man who was called to subdue the earth and rule over it, is now subjected to the earth. He is aware of being

¹⁰⁹ *TOB*, 27:4.

¹¹⁰ *TOB*, 27:4.

defenceless “in the face of the processes of nature that operate with an inevitable determinism”.¹¹¹

3.3 Immanent and Relative Shame

Immanent and relative shame manifest themselves within the person’s interiority. This is the shame produced in humanity itself. This shame indicates a fracture within the human person, “a breakup, as it were, of man’s original spiritual and somatic unity”.¹¹²

St. Paul expresses this fracture: “I joyfully agree with the law of God in my innermost [being], but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind” (Rm 7:22-23). This other law is a source of “humiliation mediated by the body”.¹¹³ St. Paul’s words express the reality of immanent shame, that experienced within oneself.

In the state of Original Innocence, the body was subject to the spirit. They were one and the same, both oriented in perfect harmony towards the gift of self and the good of the other. After sin,

the body is not subject to the spirit as in the state of original innocence, but carries within

¹¹¹ *TOB*, 27:4.

¹¹² *TOB*, 28:2.

¹¹³ *TOB*, 28:2.

itself a constant hotbed of resistance against the spirit and threatens in some way man's unity as a person...The concupiscence of the body is a specific threat to the structure of self-possession and self-dominion, through which the human person forms itself.¹¹⁴

This threat of losing self-possession is what leads man and woman to feel the need to cover themselves and to cover from each other especially what constitutes the visible sign of femininity and masculinity. Man and woman now experience a *reciprocal* or *relative* shame. Man's shame is "not so much of the body, but more precisely of concupiscence: *he has shame of the body motivated by concupiscence*".¹¹⁵

Thus a double meaning of shame arises: "it indicates the threat to the value and at the same time it preserves this value in an interior way".¹¹⁶ Shame reflects the consciousness of concupiscence, while at the same time reflecting the consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body. Shame thus tries to protect the spousal meaning of the body from concupiscence.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ *TOB*, 28:3.

¹¹⁵ *TOB*, 28:5.

¹¹⁶ *TOB*, 28:6.

¹¹⁷ See, Michael Maria Waldstein, *Glory of the Logos in the Flesh: Saint John Paul's Theology of the Body*, (Ave Maria, Fla: Sapientia Press, 2021), 709.

That shame, which shows itself without any doubt in the “sexual” order, reveals a specific difficulty in sensing the human essentiality of one’s own body, a difficulty man had not experienced in the state of original innocence.¹¹⁸

The man of concupiscence now struggles to recognise the body as the revelation of the person and consequently its spousal meaning. The beginning of shame is marked by the extortion of the gift from the other, by reducing the other to a mere “object for me”. “Shame corresponds, in fact, to a threat inflicted on the gift in its personal intimacy”.¹¹⁹

4. The Insatiability of the Union

“Your desire shall be for your husband, but he will dominate you.” (Gn 3:16)

While man and woman are still called to that original one-flesh union, the power to communicate love to each other, through their bodies, has been shattered.

Before the fall there was no “suspicion” towards the body. The body clearly revealed the call to communion and this was lived with simplicity and

¹¹⁸ *TOB*, 28:2.

¹¹⁹ *TOB*, 17:3.

ease. After the fall the body is “called into doubt”.¹²⁰ Self-donation becomes difficult. Trust has been broken. Masculinity and femininity had once naturally beckoned to a full communion of persons. The difference has now become a difficulty and a source of tension. With concupiscence, lust has entered the man-woman relationship. The presence of this lust transforms the relationship from one of communion of persons to one “of possession of the other as an object of one’s own desire.”¹²¹ Lust is the obstacle to the communion of persons and this inability to achieve it is what John Paul II calls the “insatiability of the union”. In other words, when the one-flesh union is lived out in lust, it is impossible to achieve a real communion of persons, and what is left is a void, a dissatisfaction - the experience of the “insatiability of the union”.

Sexual shame ... attests to the loss of the original certainty that through its masculinity and femininity the human body is precisely the “substratum” of the communion of persons, a substratum that simply expresses this communion and serves to realize it (and thus also to complete the “image of God” in the visible world).¹²²

¹²⁰ *TOB*, 29:2.

¹²¹ *TOB*, 31:2.

¹²² *TOB*, 29:3.

The body is no longer clearly experienced as the “substratum of the communion of persons”.¹²³ Rather, the “mere sensation of ‘sexuality’ with regard to the other human being” is now highlighted. Sexuality has now become an obstacle in the personal relationship between man and woman.

4.1 Reciprocal Appropriation: “Your Desire Shall be for Your Husband, but He Will Dominate You”

Both man and woman now struggle with the reality of concupiscence, but John Paul II reflects that this concupiscence manifests itself slightly different in each of them. Woman experiences the lack of full unity in a deeper way, and not only in the moment of the one-flesh union, but in the conjugal union as a whole. Perhaps this is due to the fact that woman had been presented to man as gift and it was his responsibility to welcome her femininity as such.

The man ought to have been ‘from the beginning’ *the guardian of the reciprocity of the gift and of its true balance*. The analysis of that “beginning” (Gn 2:23-25) shows precisely the man’s responsibility in welcoming femininity as a gift...and in receiving it in a mutual, two-sided exchange.¹²⁴

¹²³ TOB, 29:2.

¹²⁴ TOB, 33:2.

Due to concupiscence, the tendency in man is now one of an impulse to dominate the woman for the “appeasement of the body”.¹²⁵ Woman then becomes an object to be appropriated rather than a gift to be received. This experience of domination then manifests itself in the woman as the “insatiable desire for a different union”.¹²⁶ This “insatiable desire for a different union” will often manifest itself in an analogous way in the woman by domination over the man through the arousal of his desires.¹²⁷

The deepest meaning of sexual shame is the failure to realise and satisfy the aspiration for a reciprocal communion of persons through the one-flesh union of the body.

5. The Corruption of the Spousal Meaning of the Body

5.1 Meaning: “Measure of the Heart”

The spousal meaning of the body (the complete gift of self) is an objective reality. When we understand this objective reality then it becomes the “measure of the heart”. The spousal meaning of the body indicates where our hearts should be.

¹²⁵ *TOB*, 31:3.

¹²⁶ *TOB*, 31:3.

¹²⁷ See *TOB*, 31:3.

Due to the deformation that has occurred in the human heart “the body is left only as an object of attraction, in some sense as it happens “in the world” of living beings, which like man have received the blessing of fruitfulness.¹²⁸ Before sin, the body was by all means attractive but this attraction “fully expressed the call of man and woman to personal communion”. After sin human sexuality manifests itself “as a quasi self-generating force marked by a certain “constraint of the body” operating according to its own dynamics, which limits the expression of the spirit and the experience of the exchange of the gift of the person”.¹²⁹

If the root of concupiscence is found in the heart and not in the body, then John Paul II asks the question “Should we then distrust the human heart?”¹³⁰ His answer is very clear: no. We must not distrust the human heart; rather we must remain in control of it. Although the spousal meaning of the body has become veiled, this meaning has not become completely foreign to the human heart. “It has not been totally suffocated in it by concupiscence, but only habitually threatened. The “heart” has become a battlefield between love and concupiscence.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ *TOB*, 32:1.

¹²⁹ *TOB*, 32:2.

¹³⁰ *TOB*, 32:3.

¹³¹ *TOB*, 32:3.

5.2 Loss of the Freedom of the Gift

John Paul II recalls the words of *Gaudium et Spes* 24 once again: “man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self”, and then points out that lust “attacks precisely this “sincere gift”.¹³² Lust “tramples on the ruins of the spousal meaning of the body...and aims directly toward one and only one end as its precise object: *to satisfy only the body’s sexual urge.*”¹³³

Man and woman must now master themselves in order to exist in a reciprocal relationship of gift. With the rupture of sin, manifested in the human person’s heart by an “opposition between the spirit and the body”, there is now a constant danger in the way that we see others and love them. The danger is that the “desire of the body” seems to be stronger than the “desire of the mind”.¹³⁴ Man and woman must now master themselves in order to recover, and to exist, in a reciprocal relationship of gift.

5.3 The Inner Measure of Belonging

John Paul II then goes on to explain what it means to “belong” to another. Husband and wife “belong” to each other. They belong to each other because each

¹³² *TOB*, 32:4.

¹³³ *TOB*, 40:4.

¹³⁴ See *TOB*, 33:5.

has made a gift of self to the other. In this sense, one can use the word “my”. But there is a distinction between the way a material belonging, a thing, “belongs” to me and is “mine” and how a husband and wife “belong” to each other. When referring to an object, the belonging expresses a relation of possession and property. When referring to a human person in the language of love (my husband, my wife, my beloved, “I belong to my beloved and my beloved belongs to me” (Song of Songs 2:16). “It expresses the equilibrium of the gift in which the reciprocal *communio personarum* is established”.¹³⁵ “My” in this sense has no connotation of object, of possession or property.

Concupiscence of the flesh robs the term “my” of its proper meaning within the relationship of human love. Once the “my” indicates possession, then what follows is use and enjoyment. “The object I possess gains a certain significance for me inasmuch as it is at my disposal and I put it to my service, I use it.”¹³⁶

“Concupiscence...pushes man toward the possession of the other as an object, pushes him toward “enjoyment,” which carries with it the negation of the spousal meaning of the body.”¹³⁷ The husband and wife’s body belong to each other inasmuch as they have made a *free* gift of self to the

¹³⁵ *TOB*, 33:3.

¹³⁶ *TOB*, 33:4.

¹³⁷ *TOB*, 33:5.

other. It is not a possessive ownership but rather it is a receiving of the other as gift.

Being created “for her own sake, for his own sake” a husband and wife must always respect each other as masters of their own mystery. This means that they can never demand, take, grasp, appropriate for themselves what is intrinsically gift. To take from another is a violation of freedom. To receive from one another is an affirmation of their dignity.

6. Commandment and Ethos

“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)

After establishing the reality of concupiscence and the interior struggle that pervades our historical reality, John Paul II then takes us on the journey of purification that God, in His infinite mercy and love, has established for us. With these words of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ begins to establish a new ethos, an ethos that penetrates the depths of the human heart, in order to bring forth the healing fruits of redemption.

6.1 It Was Said, “Do Not Commit Adultery”

The first step is to “transform the ethos of the people of the Old Testament” into the “ethos of the Gospel”.¹³⁸ Due to “the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Mt. 19:8) Christ makes reference to “the hardness of heart” that had given rise to a situation, among the people of the Old Testament, contrary to the design and original plan of God. This “hardness of heart” led to a deformation of the laws of Moses: while adultery was recognised as decisively wrong, polygamy was in fact supported and indirectly legalised.

[Christ] clearly sees the fundamental contradiction contained in the marriage law of the Old Testament inasmuch as it accepted effective polygamy, that is, the institution of concubines in addition to legitimate wives, or the right to cohabit with a slave woman. One can say that this law, while *combating sin*, at the same time contained in itself the “*social structures of sin*”; in fact, it *protected* and legalized them.¹³⁹

Christ wants to correct a “human interpretation of the law that cancels and does away with the right meaning of good and evil specifically willed by” God.¹⁴⁰ This right meaning is the justice due to God

¹³⁸ TOB, 34:1.

¹³⁹ TOB, 36:1.

¹⁴⁰ TOB, 35:1.

and one another. The Scribes and Pharisees adhered to the law but there was a justice that was lacking in their hearts. The Chosen People lived by the Decalogue, but due to concupiscence and weakness of will a casuistic interpretation of the law prevailed. “The prohibition of adultery is marked – one might say – by a compromise with the concupiscence of the body.”¹⁴¹

The prophets revealed the truth about adultery and the sixth Commandment. They spoke of God as the Bridegroom and Israel as the bride. God’s love for Israel is a spousal love as expressed ‘in the beginning’. Monogamy was the sign of the way God loved His people. The prophets explain Israel’s betrayal and infidelity in abandoning God to turn to idolatry, as adultery. For the prophets, adultery was a sin because it broke the covenant of spousal love; for the Chosen People, however, adultery was considered a violation of property rights.

A covenant is born from love and “monogamous marriage actualizes itself in the inter-personal covenant of man and woman. The one flesh union is the spouses’ “regular *sign* of the communion of persons...adultery committed by either of them...is a radical *falsification of the sign*”.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ *TOB*, 36:2.

¹⁴² *TOB*, 37:4.

6.2 “Whoever Looks to desire”

Christ’s words, “but I say to you” indicate a “direct transition to the new ethos”.¹⁴³ This transition is marked by a “shift in the center of gravity”.¹⁴⁴ Christ shifts “*the meaning of adultery from the “body” to the “heart”*”.¹⁴⁵

The look of desire “*expresses what is in the heart...through the look, man shows himself on the outside and to others; above all he shows what he perceives in his ‘interior’.*”¹⁴⁶ The look becomes then the threshold of man’s inner truth.

‘Looking to desire’ indicates an experience of the value of the body in which its spousal meaning ceases to be spousal precisely because of concupiscence. What also ceases is its procreative meaning... which - when it concerns the conjugal union of man and woman - is rooted in the spousal meaning of the body and comes forth organically, as it were, from it. So then, when man “desires” and “looks to desire” he *experiences* more or less explicitly *the detachment from that meaning of the body* which stands at the basis of the communion of persons: both outside of marriage and – in a particular way – when

¹⁴³ *TOB*, 38:2.

¹⁴⁴ *TOB*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ *TOB*, 38:1.

¹⁴⁶ *TOB*, 39:4.

man and woman are called to build the union
'in the body'.¹⁴⁷

The detachment from the meaning of the body that occurs with "the look" is a deception of the human heart in regard to the "perennial call of man and woman to communion". This perennial call to communion is manifested in the reciprocal attraction between man and woman mediated by the body. This attraction or perennial call is very different to "the look" of concupiscence. Concupiscence represents an intentional reduction, a restriction, and a closing of horizons of the mind and of the heart.¹⁴⁸

It is one thing to have the consciousness that the value of sex is part of the whole richness of values with which a feminine being appears to a man; it is quite another thing to 'reduce' the whole personal richness of femininity to this one value, that is, to sex as the fitting object of the satisfaction of one's own sexuality.¹⁴⁹

Through this intentional reduction of the value of femininity (and masculinity), John Paul II states that the intentionality of the very existence of man and woman changes, that is, *who* the woman becomes for the man and vice-versa changes. "Woman

¹⁴⁷ *TOB*, 39:5.

¹⁴⁸ See *TOB*, 40:2.

¹⁴⁹ *TOB*, 40:3.

ceases to exist as a subject of the eternal attraction and begins to be only an object of carnal concupiscence for the man who 'looks' in this way."¹⁵⁰

This change in the intentionality of existence comes to be in the heart to the degree in which it has come to be in the will. When concupiscence gains mastery of the will, then what manifests is the "constraint of the body", or in other words, the compulsions of the body. These compulsions bring with them "the loss of the freedom of the gift".¹⁵¹

John Paul II clarifies that the "sexual urge" itself is not called into question. The sexual urge is an objective aspect of human nature, oriented towards the communion of persons and the procreative finality that is proper to it.¹⁵²

Christ's words on the Sermon on the Mount are concise but attribute great weight to man's interiority, to the heart. "Here lies the very core of the transformation of ethos aimed at by Christ's words according to Mt 5:27-28, words expressed with such great power and, at the same time, wonderful simplicity."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *TOB*, 40:5.

¹⁵¹ See *TOB*, 41:2-3.

¹⁵² See *TOB*, 41:4.

¹⁵³ *TOB*, 41:6.

6.3 “Has Already Committed Adultery with Her in His Heart”

The nature of concupiscence is what defines adultery in the heart. Technically, a man cannot commit adultery with his wife, therefore some would argue that he cannot commit adultery with her in his heart either. But Christ knows the interior of every heart, and he makes it clear that man commits adultery in the heart when he looks at a woman in a reductive way, whether or not she is his wife. By penetrating the heart, John Paul II tells us that Christ is identifying each one of us “in a singular manner, even more than by name.”¹⁵⁴ He is reaching us in what determines us as unique and unrepeatable. He is reaching us from deep within. It is within the recesses of the heart that Christ establishes the new ethos of the Gospel and the ethos of Redemption.

6.4 The Relationship Between Ethics and Ethos

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them.” (Mt 5:17)

Christ comes to restore the right meaning of the law by enabling us to live the proper ethos, which is “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34).

¹⁵⁴ *TOB*, 34:4.

'Ethics' refers to a set of moral principles that govern a person's behaviour. It is concerned with establishing what is right and wrong. 'Ethos refers to the inner desires of our heart. It refers to "the interior perception of values".¹⁵⁵

Ethos makes us, at one and the same time, enter into the depth of *the norm itself and descend into the interior of man, the subject of morality*. Moral value is connected with the dynamic process of man's innermost [being]. To reach it, it is not enough to stop "on the surface" of human actions, but one must penetrate precisely the interior.¹⁵⁶

Ethics, therefore, must spring from a correct *ethos* of the heart. A correct ethos will reflect what John Paul II calls the "superabundance of justice" in man himself.¹⁵⁷ This superabundance of justice is found in "loving one another as I have loved you". When our hearts are in the right place then the need for laws diminish. A heart filled with God's grace naturally desires what is true, good and beautiful. The moral law is not a constraint for this person. The will no longer has to overpower the senses or the desires of the heart. "Perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his 'heart'."¹⁵⁸ When the heart

¹⁵⁵ *TOB*, 24:3.

¹⁵⁶ *TOB*, 24:3.

¹⁵⁷ *TOB*, 25:5.

¹⁵⁸ *CCC*, 1775.

naturally wants to love the other person faithfully, in full justice, then the very thought of adultery is repulsive. This is what John Paul II calls a “living morality”;¹⁵⁹ this is “the freedom for which Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1); this is the new “ethos of redemption”.

6.5 The Ethos of Redemption

This new “ethos of redemption” takes place in the human heart through God’s saving grace. The fulfillment of the law is only possible through grace. In the words of St. Augustine, “the law was given that grace might be sought; and grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.”¹⁶⁰

Love and life according to the Gospel cannot be thought of first and foremost as a kind of precept, because what they demand is beyond man’s abilities. They are possible only as a result of a gift of God who heals, restores, and transforms the human heart by his grace.¹⁶¹

Due to our wounded nature and the reality of concupiscence within us, oftentimes our ethos and

¹⁵⁹ *TOB*, 44:2.

¹⁶⁰ St. Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1510.htm>.

¹⁶¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Veritatis Splendor*, 6 August 1993, n. 23.

God's ethics are not aligned. Christ wants to transform our hearts so that God's law becomes written on our hearts. In this way the moral norms are not extrinsically imposed upon us but rather arise naturally from within. There is no burden, only freedom. Hence the words of St. Augustine, "love God and do whatever you please: for the soul trained in love of God will do nothing to offend the One who is Beloved".¹⁶²

The law "does not of itself give the strength, the grace of the spirit, to fulfill it. Because of sin, which it cannot remove, it remains a law of bondage".¹⁶³ The Law of the Gospel reforms "the heart, the root of human acts, where man chooses between the pure and the impure."¹⁶⁴ The "ethos of redemption" offers us the possibility of an ongoing conversion of the heart.

Christian ethos is characterized by a *transformation of the human person's conscience and attitude*, both the man's and the woman's, *such as to express and realize the value of the body and sex* according to the Creator's original plan, placed as they are at the service of the 'communion of persons',

¹⁶² St Augustine, *Sermon on 1 John 4:4-12*,
<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/augustine>.

¹⁶³ CCC, 1963.

¹⁶⁴ CCC, 1968.

which is the deepest substratum of human ethics and culture.¹⁶⁵

7. The 'Heart': Accused or Called?

Christ's words on the Sermon on the Mount are demanding. A question that naturally arises is this: "How 'can' and 'should' someone act who accepts Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, someone who accepts the ethos of the Gospel and who accepts it particularly in this area?"¹⁶⁶ Do we condemn the body? Do we hold the heart in constant suspicion? John Paul II guides us through some erroneous 'solutions' to the problem of concupiscence.

7.1 Condemnation of the Body? Manichaeism

John Paul II identifies Manichaeism as a strong dualistic current of thought that influenced Christianity in the area of "the theology and ethos of the body"¹⁶⁷ and that led to an erroneous

¹⁶⁵ *TOB*, 45:3. John Paul II generally uses the term 'sex' to refer to the fact that human beings are sexually differentiated, i.e. male and female, and, secondarily, to refer to conjugal relations between a man and a woman. In contemporary society, 'sex' almost always has this second meaning.

¹⁶⁶ *TOB*, 44:1.

¹⁶⁷ *TOB*, 44:5.

interpretation of Christ's words regarding sexual morality.

In its original form, Manichaeism... saw the source of evil in matter, in the body, and therefore condemned all that is bodily in man. And since in man bodiliness manifests itself above all through [one's] sex, the condemnation was extended to marriage and conjugal life and to all other spheres of being and acting in which bodiliness expresses itself.¹⁶⁸

Among many Christians, the strictness of the Manichean system seemed to harmonise with the demands of Christ's words in the Gospels. At times, this led Christians to look for condemnation of the body in the Gospel. This misinterpretation has often led to a depreciation of sexuality among Christians. It is a common misconception that the Church regards sex as bad.

Another danger that John Paul II points to is that the condemnation of the body "might – and may always be – a loophole to avoid the requirements set in the Gospel by him who 'knew what was in every man' (Jn 2:25)."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ *TOB*, 44:5.

¹⁶⁹ *TOB*, 44:6.

Christ's words on the Sermon on the Mount regarding adultery do not carry within them a condemnation of the body. Rather, his words speak to the heart. Christ calls the man of concupiscence to a "self-critical examination": is his heart yielding to concupiscence of the flesh or not? This judgement about lust is not a negation of the body but rather the affirmation of the body. "The judgment about the concupiscence of the flesh has thus a meaning essentially different from the one that Manichaeon ontology is able to presuppose and that necessarily springs from it."¹⁷⁰

The body, in its masculinity and femininity, is fundamentally good. It remains part of the Creator's original plan. It retains its objective spousal meaning (the complete gift of self), although this meaning has been partially lost and confused with concupiscence.¹⁷¹ John Paul II is emphatic that any correct interpretation of Christ's words "must be absolutely free from Manichaeon elements in thought and attitude."¹⁷² A proper Christian ethos strives towards a transformation of the heart, so that man and woman can "realize the value of the body and of sex according to the Creator's original plan".¹⁷³ In this consists "the redemption of the body". Historical man is at once fallen and redeemed.

¹⁷⁰ *TOB*, 45:1.

¹⁷¹ See *TOB*, 45:2.

¹⁷² *TOB*, 45:3.

¹⁷³ *TOB*, 45:3.

7.2 Anti-Value or Value Under-Appreciated?

While for the Manichaeon mentality, the body and sexuality constitute, so to speak, an 'anti-value,' for Christianity, on the contrary, they always remain 'a value not sufficiently appreciated'.¹⁷⁴

Although Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount contain a certain accusation of the human heart, they are above all an appeal: an appeal to detach oneself from lust and to recognise the evil of such an *act*. "*One must never transfer the negativity of this act to its object*"; to do so would signify a certain acceptance of the Manichaeon "anti-value". The evil of a lustful act is spiritual by nature. In other words, the evil of a man's action is found in the distortion of his heart, not in the woman.¹⁷⁵

The appeal Christ makes to the human heart is to strive to discover the authentic value of the body, to rediscover the body as sign of the person and its spousal meaning; essentially, to reaffirm the dignity of the human person.

The call to master concupiscence of the flesh springs precisely from an affirmation of the

¹⁷⁴ *TOB*, 45:3.

¹⁷⁵ See *TOB*, 45:4.

personal dignity of the body and of sex and only serves such dignity. Anyone who wants to see a Manichaean perspective in these words would be committing an essential error.¹⁷⁶

7.3 The 'Heart' and Suspicion

It is also important to clarify some “contemporary positions that interpret the meaning of man and of morality”¹⁷⁷ to accuse the human heart and hold it in constant suspicion. Paul Ricoeur, a French philosopher of the twentieth century, has called Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche “the three great destroyers”, and “masters of suspicion”.¹⁷⁸ John Paul II discusses them because of the influence they have had and continue to have in contemporary thought and in evaluating the human person. They judge and accuse the human heart based on the reality of concupiscence.

In Nietzschean hermeneutics, the judgment and the accusation of the human heart correspond...to what biblical language calls “pride of life”; in Marxist hermeneutics to what it calls “concupiscence of the eyes”; in

¹⁷⁶ *TOB*, 45:5.

¹⁷⁷ *TOB*, 46:1.

¹⁷⁸ See *TOB*, 46:1.

Freudian hermeneutic, by contrast, to what it calls “concupiscence of the flesh.”¹⁷⁹

Although the Bible uncovers these three types of concupiscence in the human heart, the fundamental difference is that Christ does not “allow us to turn such concupiscence into the absolute principle of anthropology and ethics or into the very nucleus of the hermeneutics of man”.¹⁸⁰ It is important to understand the nature of concupiscence in order to understand the human person and his actions but by no means does concupiscence define man. Christ’s words are much more than an accusation of the human heart, they are ultimately an appeal addressed to the heart that derives from the ethos of redemption.

The words of Christ testify that the original power and grace of the mystery of creation becomes the power (the grace), of the mystery of redemption.¹⁸¹ Man carries in his heart the inheritance “of the beginning” which is deeper than the inheritance of sin. Christ’s words have the power to re-activate this deeper inheritance of the beginning.¹⁸² Through the grace of redemption man can rediscover and realise once again the spousal meaning of the body.

¹⁷⁹ *TOB*, 46:2.

¹⁸⁰ *TOB*, 46:2.

¹⁸¹ *TOB*, 46:5.

¹⁸² See *TOB*, 46:6.

8. Eros and Ethos

John Paul II asks, how does *eros* fit into Christ's words on the Sermon on the Mount and the *ethos* of the Gospel? Although the meaning of the Greek term has taken on different nuances throughout time, can we find in the meaning of *eros* the reciprocal attraction and call of man and woman to the one-flesh union as described in Genesis?

For Plato, *eros* was the "inner power that draws man toward all that is good, true, and beautiful".¹⁸³ By contrast, the common understanding of *eros* is an attraction of a sensual nature and it aims at the union of bodies. To interpret *eros* properly one must have a very clear understanding of concupiscence as discussed in the Sermon on the Mount.

If we used the word *eros* simply in the common psychological or sexological sense, as a subjectively intense attraction of the body that extends its mastery over the sphere of emotions, then Christ's words about adultery in the heart would seem to express a negative judgement about everything that is erotic.¹⁸⁴

John Paul II defines 'erotic' phenomena as "those actions and reciprocal forms of behaviour by which

¹⁸³ *TOB*, 47:2.

¹⁸⁴ Waldstein, *Glory of the Logos*, 719.

man and woman approach each other and unite so as to be 'one flesh'".¹⁸⁵ If we keep the Platonic meaning of eros in mind, then it is possible to find within *eros* the *ethos* of the Sermon on the Mount. And in fact, the many nuances given to the erotic over time, "can help us understand the specific and complex richness of the 'heart' to which Christ appealed"¹⁸⁶ in the Sermon on the Mount.

Although Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount carry an accusation, they are actually more an appeal to the heart; an appeal to transform, in the heart, what has been weighed down by concupiscence. This is the ethos of redemption. Within this context then, if *eros* is the inner power that attracts the human person to what is true, good and beautiful, and if, through redemption, the heart has the real possibility of transformation, then "in the erotic sphere *eros* and *ethos* do not diverge, are not opposed to each other, but *are called to meet in the human heart and to bear fruit in this meeting*".¹⁸⁷ In this way the Sermon on the Mount is not a prohibition of eros and the erotic, but rather, by prohibiting concupiscence, man and woman can "rediscover the spousal meaning of the body and the true dignity of the gift in what is 'erotic'".¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ *TOB*, 47:4.

¹⁸⁶ *TOB*, 47:4.

¹⁸⁷ *TOB*, 47:5.

¹⁸⁸ *TOB*, 48:1.

This is the task of the human spirit, and it is by its nature an ethical task. If one does not assume this task, the very attraction of the senses and the passion of the body can stop at mere concupiscence, deprived of all ethical value, and man, male and female, does not experience that fullness of 'eros,' which implies the upward impulse of the human spirit toward what is true, good and beautiful, so that what is 'erotic' also becomes true, good and beautiful. It is, therefore, indispensable that ethos becomes the constitutive form of eros.¹⁸⁹

Does ethos take away spontaneity from the erotic? With a full and deep consciousness of their interior acts man can identify and evaluate the impulses of his heart in a mature way.

Man must learn to distinguish between what makes for the masculine and feminine richness of the perennial call, and that which only bears the sign of concupiscence. This discernment leads to the full and mature spontaneity to which Christ calls.¹⁹⁰

There cannot be such spontaneity in all the movements and impulses that spring from mere carnal concupiscence, deprived as it is of choice and of an adequate hierarchy. At the price of mastery over these impulses, man

¹⁸⁹ *TOB*, 48:3.

¹⁹⁰ See *TOB*, 48:4.

reaches that *deeper and more mature spontaneity* with which his “heart,” by mastering these impulses, rediscovers the spiritual beauty of the sign constituted by the human body in its masculinity and femininity.¹⁹¹

9. Purity: Life according to the Spirit

The words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount demand purity, and the reflection on purity completes Christ’s words about adultery in the heart: “blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.” (Mt 5:8)

Christ makes it clear that purity is born exclusively in man’s interior, in his heart, just as impurity also comes from within. Nothing makes a man impure from the outside, and no amount of ritual washing can produce moral purity. “Purity of heart... is realized precisely in life ‘according to the Spirit’.”¹⁹²

I say to you, live by the Spirit and do not satisfy the desires of the flesh; for the flesh has desires contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires contrary to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want. (Gal 5:16-17)

¹⁹¹ *TOB*, 48:5.

¹⁹² *TOB*, 50:5.

The ‘Spirit’ St Paul refers to is in fact the Holy Spirit. When using the term ‘flesh’ he refers to the whole person – body and soul, deprived of the Holy Spirit. “The man who lives ‘according to the flesh (*sarx*)’ is the man disposed only to that which comes “from the world”: he is the man of the ‘senses,’ the man of the threefold concupiscence.”¹⁹³ Although we struggle with a predisposition for living a life “according to the flesh”, St. Paul looks to Christ’s resurrection, which is a sign and pre-announcement of the victory over sin and death.¹⁹⁴ Through Christ’s death and resurrection there is “a real power at work in man that reveals and affirms itself in his actions.”¹⁹⁵ To live according to the Spirit is to live an integrated life of body and soul by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is manifested in self-mastery over the threefold concupiscence.

If mastery in the sphere of ethos manifests and realizes itself as ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-mastery’ – as we read in Galatians – then behind each of these realizations, these forms of behaviour, these moral virtues, stands a *specific choice*, that is, an effort of the will, a fruit of the human spirit

¹⁹³ *TOB*, 51:1.

¹⁹⁴ See *TOB*, 51:4.

¹⁹⁵ *TOB*, 51:4.

permeated by the Spirit of God, which manifests itself in choosing the good.¹⁹⁶

By living a life “according to the Spirit” man discovers that freedom for which Christ “has set us free” (Gal 5:1), because freedom is linked to the commandment of love. Freedom is subordinated to love. The man who subordinates himself to concupiscence is not free to love and to make a sincere gift of self, he cannot live the spousal meaning of the body.

‘The whole law’ (the moral law of the Old Testament) “finds its fullness” in the commandment of love, the dimension of the new ethos of the Gospel is nothing other than an appeal to human freedom, an appeal for its fullest realization and in some way for the fullest ‘use’ of the powers of the human spirit.¹⁹⁷

9.1 Purity: Keeping the Passions Away or Keeping the Body with Holiness and Reverence?

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you knows how to keep his own body

¹⁹⁶ *TOB*, 51:6.

¹⁹⁷ *TOB*, 53:1.

with holiness and reverence, not as the object of lustful passions. (1 Thess 4:3-5)

In analysing the words of St. Paul, John Paul II points out firstly that purity is an ability, a virtue. It entails a practical ability to abstain from unchastity so as to reverence the body. Purity must take root in the will. In holding back lustful impulses, purity is part of the virtue of temperance.¹⁹⁸

The positive function of purity is keeping one's body and that of others "in holiness and reverence". The *abstaining* from unchastity and the *keeping* of holiness and reverence are dependent upon one another. It is impossible to keep the body holy and reverent without abstinence from unchastity. The dignity of the body is what gives meaning and value to abstinence. Purity then is not only an aptitude (temperance) but a manifestation of life "according to the Spirit". Man's ability is made fruitful in his heart. This "fruit of the Spirit" is the *reverence* which springs forth towards everything bodily and sexual. This reverence becomes the "essential power" for keeping the body with holiness. This interior power, reverence, gives full dimension to purity as a virtue.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ See *TOB*, 54:2.

¹⁹⁹ See *TOB*, 54:4.

9.2 St. Paul's Description of the Body

God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he willed... the members of the body that seem weaker are more necessary, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater modesty; whereas our more presentable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the member that lacked it, so that there may be no disunion within the body, but the members may have care for one another. (1 Cor 12:18, 22-25)

Although this quote from St. Paul is about the Church as the body of Christ, nonetheless he contributes at the same time to a “deeper understanding of the theology of the body”.²⁰⁰ When speaking of the body, St Paul has before him the truth of creation and of redemption. When speaking of the “less honourable” or “weaker” members of the body “we find, it seems to us, *the testimony of the same shame* that the first human beings, male and female, had experienced after original sin.”²⁰¹ Let us recall the positive and negative meanings of shame. From this shame, as a manifestation of the disunity brought about by sin, but also as a protective instinct of the dignity of the body, is born *reverence* for one's body and that of

²⁰⁰ *TOB*, 54:6.

²⁰¹ *TOB*, 55:4.

others. Modesty is an expression of reverence for the body. Purity leads to the “gradual victory over this ‘disunion in the body’”, it is “a victory that can and should be realized in the human heart”.²⁰²

9.3 Purity: A Virtue and a Gift

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you do not belong to yourselves? (1 Cor 6:19)

The fruit of Christ’s redemption in man is the “indwelling and continuous presence of the Holy Spirit in man – in his soul and in his body.”²⁰³ Therefore a man’s body is no longer just ‘his’ body, the human body is now a temple of the Holy Spirit that dwells within.

Through redemption, every human being has received himself and his own body anew, as it were, from God. Christ inscribed in the human body – in the body of every man and of every woman – a new dignity, because he himself has taken up the human body together with the soul into union with the person of the Son-Word... The fruit of

²⁰² *TOB*, 55:7.

²⁰³ *TOB*, 56:3.

redemption is indeed the Holy Spirit, who dwells in man and his body as in a temple.²⁰⁴

Among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of piety is most congenial to the virtue of purity. Piety serves purity by making man more “sensitive to the dignity that belongs to the human body in virtue of the mystery of creation and of redemption”.²⁰⁵ The gift of piety opens the human person to what is sacred. In the spousal meaning of the body and through the freedom of the gift, “the deep face of purity and its organic link with love reveals itself”.²⁰⁶

Purity as a virtue or ability of ‘keeping one’s own body with holiness and reverence,’ allied with the gift of piety as a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in the ‘temple’ of the body, causes in the body such a fullness of dignity in interpersonal relations that *God himself is thereby glorified*. Purity is the glory of the human body before God. It is the glory of God in the human body, through which masculinity and femininity are manifested. From purity springs that singular beauty that permeates every sphere of reciprocal common life between human beings and allows them to express in it the simplicity and depth, the

²⁰⁴ *TOB*, 56:4.

²⁰⁵ *TOB*, 57:2.

²⁰⁶ *TOB*, 57:2.

cordiality and unrepeatable authenticity of personal trust.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ *TOB*, 57:3.

CHAPTER 3. ESCHATOLOGICAL MAN

1. The Resurrection of the Body

For when they rise from the dead, they take neither wife nor husband, but are like angels in heaven.” (Mk 12:24-25)

A new dimension of the mystery of man is revealed by Christ when he appeals to the resurrection in his dialogue with the Sadducees.

“There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. In the resurrection, when they will rise, whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.” (Mk 12:20-23)

Just as Christ spoke to the Pharisees who questioned him about the indissolubility of marriage, pointing them to “the beginning”, Christ now speaks to the Sadducees about marriage, pointing them to the resurrection.

Christ responds by referring to the power of God.

“Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they take neither wife nor husband, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” (Mk 12:24-27)

The moment would come when Christ would give the full answer to this question with his resurrection, but as a starting point he appeals to the Old Testament in which can be found the truth about the resurrection.

Life does not end with death. To read Scripture correctly one must believe in the “power of the Giver of life, who is not bound by the law of death, which rules over man’s earthly history”.²⁰⁸ God continues to be the “inexhaustible fountain of existence and of life, just as he revealed himself at the “beginning” in Genesis”.²⁰⁹ And “Christ is God’s final word on this subject; in fact, the covenant established with him and through him between God and humanity opens an infinite prospect of Life: an access to the tree of Life – according to the original plan of the God of the

²⁰⁸ *TOB*, 65:3.

²⁰⁹ *TOB*, 65:5.

covenant – is revealed to every man in its definitive fullness.”²¹⁰ This is the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection.

1.1 The New Meaning of the Body

“When they rise from the dead, they take neither wife nor husband” (Mk 12:25)

These words have a key meaning for the theology of the body. Marriage, established in ‘the beginning’, belongs exclusively to this world. Marriage and procreation do not constitute man’s eschatological future because in the resurrection they lose their *raison d’être*, or reason for being. At the end of time we find the definitive fulfillment of the human race and a quantitative closure of human beings created in the image and likeness of God. In this “other world” (Lk 20:35) God himself will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).²¹¹

That “other world” which is “the kingdom of God”, man’s definitive and eternal “fatherland”, “the Father’s house” is reached through the resurrection. The resurrection will constitute, not only the recovery of bodiliness, but a whole new state of human life itself.²¹² The body will preserve its masculine or

²¹⁰ *TOB*, 65:6.

²¹¹ See *TOB*, 66:2.

²¹² See *TOB*, 66:3.

feminine character, but “the *meaning* of being male or female in the body will be constituted and understood differently”.²¹³

1.2 Spiritualization

“They will be like angels in heaven.” (Mk 12:25)

What will this newly constituted dimension of masculinity and femininity look like? John Paul II tells us that Christ’s words allow us to understand more. The words “they will be like angels in heaven” point towards a spiritualization of man, but do not imply leaving the body behind, or else it would not make sense to speak of the resurrection. Christ is not speaking of a transformation of man’s nature into an angelic and purely spiritual nature. Rather he is referring to a new submission of the body to the spirit.²¹⁴

The truth about the resurrection clearly affirms that man’s eschatological perfection and happiness cannot be understood as a state of the soul alone, separated...from the body, but must be understood as *the definitively and perfectly ‘integrated’ state of man* brought about by such a union of the soul

²¹³ *TOB*, 66:4.

²¹⁴ See *TOB*, 66:5.

with the body that it definitively qualifies and assures this perfect integrity.²¹⁵

In the resurrection man will experience a “perfect system of powers” between what is spiritual and bodily in him, as opposed to “historical man” who experiences many imperfections of this system of powers. Eschatological man will be free of the opposition between body and spirit. He will experience the return of a perfect unity and harmony between body and spirit. Hence “*spiritualization signifies [that] the powers of the spirit will permeate the energies of the body*”.²¹⁶

Although in earthly life “historical man” can, through persevering work, achieve mastery of the spirit over the body and thus attain a spiritually mature personality, nonetheless there is always the *possibility* of their reciprocal opposition, whereas in the resurrection this possibility is completely eliminated. Once again, this in no way signifies any ‘disincarnation’ of the body, which would lead to man’s dehumanization. Neither does it imply a “victory” of the spiritual over the bodily but a “perfect participation of all that is bodily in man in all that is spiritual in him”.²¹⁷ It signifies his perfect realization.

²¹⁵ TOB, 66:6.

²¹⁶ TOB, 67:1.

²¹⁷ TOB, 67:2.

1.3 Divinization

“And, being sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God.” (Lk 20:36)

“Man’s state in the ‘other world’ will not only be a state of perfect spiritualization, but also of the fundamental ‘divinization’ of his humanity.” God will communicate his very divinity, “not only to the soul, but *to the whole of man’s psychosomatic subjectivity*.”²¹⁸ “Even the human body will participate, in its own way, in this eschatological experience of truth and love, united with the vision of God “face to face”.²¹⁹ The human person will experience what John Paul II calls a “divinizing spiritualization”, in which the Holy Spirit will fully permeate his being, body and soul.

The words “they take neither wife nor husband” unveils the new meaning of the body. John Paul II asks, “is it possible to think of *the discovery of the “spousal” meaning of the body above all as the “virginal” meaning of being male and female in the body?*”²²⁰

Perfect communion with God implies perfectly mature subjectivity. This perfectly mature subjectivity is the complete gift of oneself to God as a response

²¹⁸ *TOB*, 67:3.

²¹⁹ *TOB*, 67:4.

²²⁰ *TOB*, 67:4.

to God's gift of himself to man. In this gift of self, man will "concentrate and express all the energies of his own personal and at the same time psychosomatic subjectivity" on God. In this way, the fact that "they will take neither wife nor husband" has its foundation in man when "as a consequence of the vision of God 'face to face,' *a love of such depth and power of concentration on God himself* will be born in the person that it *completely absorbs the person's whole psychosomatic subjectivity*". "In this way the virginal state of the body will manifest itself completely as the eschatological fulfillment of the 'spousal' meaning of the body, as the specific sign and authentic expression of personal subjectivity as a whole."²²¹ In this intimate union with God, the uniqueness and unrepeatability of every human person will shine forth more fully. Each person will "not only keep their authentic subjectivity, but will acquire it in a much more perfect measure than in earthly life."²²²

Our union with God "will be nourished by the contemplation of that more perfect communion...which is the trinitarian communion of the divine Persons". In other words, by contemplating Love, we will respond fully with love. This is the beatific vision.

1.4 The Communion of Saints

²²¹ *TOB*, 68:3.

²²² *TOB*, 68:1.

“We should think of the reality of the ‘other world’ in the categories of the rediscovery of a new, perfect subjectivity of each person and at the same time of the *rediscovery* of a new, perfect *intersubjectivity of all*.” This is the communion of saints, the perfect communion of all created beings, united with each other through perfect union with God. It is the “image and likeness of God” in each one of us, realized in the perfect communion of persons (the communion of saints).²²³ “That ‘spousal’ meaning of the body will, therefore, be realized as a meaning that is perfectly personal and communitarian at the same time.”²²⁴ Here we find the definitive fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the body. This is also the “perfect realization of the ‘trinitarian order’ in the created world of persons.”²²⁵

Man, male and female, finds at one and the same time the fullness of personal giving and of the intersubjective communion of persons, thanks to the glorification of his whole psychosomatic being in the eternal union with God.²²⁶

1.5 The Full Revelation of the Body

²²³ See *TOB*, 69:4.

²²⁴ *TOB*, 69:4.

²²⁵ *TOB*, 68:4.

²²⁶ *TOB*, 73:1.

For the full revelation of the body we must pass, in two directions, beyond the sphere of the experience of historical man. We must pass beyond the present, to the beginning and to the end of God's plan for the human person. "*What the human body is in the realm of man's historical experience is not completely cut off from these two dimensions of his existence revealed by Christ's word.*" The theology of the body is based on the "coherence of the theological image of man in these three dimensions".

It is the same human being, male and female, that Christ speaks about when he appeals to original man, historical man and eschatological man.

The meaning of being male and female in the future world lies outside of marriage and procreation but not outside of what derives from the mystery of creation; namely, the spousal meaning of the body"²²⁷

In other words, although Christ says "they will take neither wife nor husband," he does not say that there will no longer be male or female in the 'future world'. Masculinity and femininity correspond to the fact that man is created as a person and is called to a communion of persons. This is the essence of the spousal meaning of the body. Marriage and procreation do not definitively determine the meaning of being a body – male and female.

²²⁷ Waldstein, *Glory of the Logos*, 731.

Marriage and procreation only give concrete reality to that meaning in the dimension of history. The dimension of history ends with the resurrection and, therefore, so does marriage and procreation. But the spousal meaning of the body remains and is realised in perfect union with God and in the full and perfect communion of all persons (communion of saints).²²⁸

In his glorified body, man will experience the perfect freedom of the gift. The “perfect freedom of the sons of God” (Rom 8:21). This perfect freedom of the gift will nourish all the communions that will make up the great community of the communion of saints.²²⁹

2. Celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven

Christ speaks about celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven at the end of his dialogue with the Pharisees on the indissolubility of marriage. When the disciples express their concern that if marriage is indissoluble, then “it is not advantageous to marry”, Christ answers by pointing them to those who have “made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:12). Christ is opening up the possibility of another vocation, he is not in any way making a negative judgement about marriage. The person who feels called to celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven” expresses “*a particular sensibility of the human spirit*”

²²⁸ See *TOB*, 69:4.

²²⁹ See *TOB*, 69:6.

that *seems to anticipate*, already in the conditions of temporality, what man will share in the future resurrection”.²³⁰

Not all can understand it, but only those to whom it has been granted. For there are eunuchs who were born this way from their mother’s womb; there are some who were made eunuchs by men, and there are others who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone understand this who can. (Mt 19:11-12)

These words of Christ do not express a commandment binding for all but rather a counsel that regards only some. The reason some are “able to understand it” is because to them “it has been granted”. One must highlight the importance of personal choice together with a particular grace.²³¹

Christ does not speak about celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven when speaking to the Sadducees about the resurrection; rather he links his words to the dialogue with the Pharisees about the indissolubility of marriage and his appeal to “the beginning”. The context of the words about celibacy are within the same dialogue in which Christ gives the value of marriage its highest affirmation. This is significant, says John Paul II, because one must see

²³⁰ *TOB*, 73:1. It is correct to describe celibacy for the kingdom of God as continence, however this is a greater virtue than continence considered as mere abstinence.

²³¹ See *TOB*, 73:4.

in the vocation to celibacy “a kind of exception to what is, by contrast, a general rule of this life”.²³²

By comparing the unmarried state for the kingdom to two kinds of eunuchs, Christ emphasizes that the unmarried state he proposes is voluntary and supernatural. The Old Testament tradition had not handed down the ideal of celibacy or virginity because marriage and procreation carried the promise of the covenant of God made to Abraham. In addition, the awaited Messiah was to be the “son of David” making it even more foreign and difficult to understand the ideal of celibacy. Thus, continence was associated to individuals who could not marry due to physical defects. This was ingrained in the consciousness of the people of the Old Testament, and so this is why Christ refers to these eunuchs directly.²³³

Christ’s words bring about a decisive change of direction, a turning point towards a whole new understanding of the meaning of the body.

Continence ‘for’ the kingdom of heaven...*is a charismatic sign*. To be a living human being (male and female) who – in the earthly situation, in which ‘they take wife and take husband’ (Lk 20:34) – of his own free will chooses continence ‘for the kingdom of

²³² TOB, 73:5.

²³³ TOB, 74:1-4.

heaven' shows that... in the 'other world' of the resurrection, 'they will take neither wife nor husband' (Mk 12:25), because God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28). This way of existing as a human being... points out the eschatological 'virginity' of the risen man, in which...the absolute and eternal spousal meaning of the glorified body will be revealed in union with God himself, by seeing him 'face to face,' glorified moreover through the union of a perfect intersubjectivity that will unite all the 'sharers in the other world,' men and women, in the mystery of the communion of saints. Earthly continence 'for the kingdom of God' is without doubt a sign that *indicates* this truth and this reality. It is a sign that the body, whose end is not death, tends towards glorification; already by this very fact it is...a testimony among men that anticipates the future resurrection. Yes, *this charismatic sign* of the 'other world' *expresses the most authentic power and dynamics* of the mystery of the 'redemption of the body'...Thus continence 'for the kingdom of heaven' carries *above all the imprint of likeness to Christ* who himself, in the work of redemption, made this choice 'for the kingdom of heaven.'²³⁴

²³⁴ TOB, 75:1.

2.1 The Marriage of Joseph and Mary – “Fruitfulness from the Spirit”

There is an important relation between celibacy “for the kingdom of God” and supernatural fruitfulness of the human spirit, which comes from the Holy Spirit.²³⁵ The perfect example of this was the virginal marriage of Joseph and Mary. Joseph and Mary, who lived the mystery of Christ’s virginal conception and birth, “became the first witnesses of a fruitfulness different from that of the flesh, that is, the fruitfulness of the Spirit. ‘What is begotten in her comes from the Holy Spirit’ (Mt 1:20)”.²³⁶

*The marriage of Mary with Joseph conceals within itself the mystery of the perfect communion of persons, of Man and Woman in the conjugal covenant and at the same time the mystery of this singular ‘contenance for the kingdom of heaven’: a continence that served the most perfect ‘fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit’.*²³⁷

Mary’s motherhood perfectly reveals the fruitfulness made possible by the Holy Spirit when man freely chooses continence “in the body”, that is, continence “for the kingdom of heaven”.²³⁸

²³⁵ See *TOB*, 75:4.

²³⁶ *TOB*, 75:2.

²³⁷ *TOB*, 75:3.

²³⁸ See *TOB*, 75:3.

2.2 A Clear Motivation

The continence that Christ is referring to is specifically “for the kingdom of heaven”. It has a “single supernatural finality”. This choice is connected with renunciation and also with spiritual effort.²³⁹ It requires a clear and strong motivation which is “for the kingdom of heaven”. To discover in celibacy the particular fruitfulness that comes from the Holy Spirit, one must will it and choose it in the power of a deep faith.

The one who consciously chooses such continence chooses in some sense a particular *participation in the mystery of the redemption (of the body)*; he wishes to complete it in a particular way in his own flesh (see Col 1:24), finding in it also the imprint of a likeness with Christ.”²⁴⁰

It is motivation in understanding the meaning “for the kingdom of heaven” that influences the choice made for continence.

²³⁹ See *TOB*, 74:5.

²⁴⁰ *TOB*, 76:3.

3. Celibacy and Marriage: The Vocation of Historical Man

Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being "created in the image of God".²⁴¹

Both continence for the kingdom of God (celibacy) and marriage preserve the essential elements of the vocation of the human person created "in the image and likeness of God": the dimension of solitude before God and of communion with others. Those who are called to celibacy discover in their solitude before God "a new and even *fuller form of intersubjective communion with others*". "For the kingdom of heaven" implies the development, in the man who chooses continence, of the image and likeness of God in its trinitarian meaning of communion.

When he chooses continence for the kingdom of heaven, man has the awareness that in this way he can realize himself 'differently,' and in

²⁴¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981, n. 11.

some sense ‘more’ than in marriage, by becoming “a sincere gift for others.”²⁴²

Celibacy for the kingdom of God and marriage do not eclipse each other’s values. In fact, in choosing celibacy it is clear that the person “breaks away” with full awareness from “*that within man which, by the will of the Creator himself, leads to marriage*”. He consciously chooses to renounce the good “that marriage and the family constitute in themselves because of their divine institution” so as to respond to a particular call and gift “for the kingdom of heaven”.²⁴³ Christ acknowledges that the breaking away from this good requires self-sacrifice but “accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God”.²⁴⁴

3.1 Right Understanding of the “Superiority” of Celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven

“The ‘superiority’ of continence to marriage never means, in the authentic tradition of the Church, a disparagement of marriage or a belittling of its essential value.”²⁴⁵ The superiority of continence is dictated by the motive of the kingdom of heaven. There is absolutely no room for any Manichaean

²⁴² Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24.

²⁴³ See *TOB*, 77:2.

²⁴⁴ *CCC*, 1579.

²⁴⁵ *TOB*, 77:5.

undercurrent in this understanding. The superiority of continence does not come from the fact that it consists in abstaining from conjugal union in an 'inferior' or evil body.

The words "'superiority' and 'inferiority' are held within the limits of the complementarity of marriage and continence for the kingdom of God".²⁴⁶ Within this complementarity the whole Christian community is ordered towards the resurrected state signified by the celibate state.²⁴⁷ In this sense celibacy is understood as superior.

The phrase "state of perfection" used traditionally to refer to the celibate state in religious life, is not used on the basis of continence itself, but on the evangelical counsels that form this state of life (poverty, chastity and obedience). "*The perfection of Christian life is measured, rather, by the measure of love.*"²⁴⁸ The evangelical counsels help us reach a fuller love and so those who are married also reach the perfection of love through faithfulness to the spirit of these counsels.²⁴⁹ The perfection in love that every person is called to is possible and accessible to every human being regardless of their vocation to celibacy or marriage.

²⁴⁶ *TOB*, 78:2.

²⁴⁷ See Waldstein, *Glory of the Logos*, 737.

²⁴⁸ *TOB*, 78:3.

²⁴⁹ See *TOB*, 78:3.

Both states of life, celibate and married, “*complete each other and in some sense interpenetrate*”. The nature of both vocations is spousal in that they are expressed through a complete gift of self. In this way both express the “spousal meaning of the body, which has been inscribed ‘from the beginning’ in the personal structure of man and woman”.²⁵⁰

Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes it and confirms it. Marriage and virginity or celibacy are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the covenant of God with His people. When marriage is not esteemed, neither can consecrated virginity or celibacy exist; when human sexuality is not regarded as a great value given by the Creator, the renunciation of it for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven loses its meaning.²⁵¹

In virginity or celibacy, the human being is awaiting, also in a bodily way, the eschatological marriage of Christ with the Church, giving himself or herself completely to the Church in the hope that Christ may give Himself to the Church in the full truth of eternal life. The celibate person thus

²⁵⁰ *TOB*, 78:4.

²⁵¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 16.

anticipates in his or her flesh the new world of the future resurrection.²⁵²

By virtue of this witness, virginity or celibacy keeps alive in the Church a consciousness of the mystery of marriage and defends it from any reduction and impoverishment.²⁵³

3.2 The Spousal Meaning of the Body as the Foundation of Christ's Call to Celibacy

It is a characteristic feature of the human heart to accept even difficult demands in the name of love, or an ideal, and above all *in the name of love for a person* (love is, in fact, oriented by its very nature toward the person). And so, in this call to continence 'for the kingdom of heaven,' first the disciples and then the whole living tradition of the Church quickly discovered the love *for Christ himself as the Bridegroom of the Church, Bridegroom of souls*, to whom he has given himself to the end (cf. Jn. 13:1; 19:30) in the mystery of his Passover and in the Eucharist. In this way, continence 'for the kingdom of heaven,' the choice of virginity or celibacy for one's whole life, has become in the experience of the disciples and followers of Christ and act of

²⁵² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 16.

²⁵³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 16.

*particular response to the love of the Divine Bridegroom, and therefore acquired the meaning of an act of spousal love, that is, of a spousal gift of self with the end of answering in a particular way the Redeemer's spousal love; a gift of self understood as a renunciation, but realized above all out of love.*²⁵⁴

The basis of Christ's call to celibacy is "*the awareness of the freedom of the gift, which is organically connected with the deep and mature consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body*",²⁵⁵ inscribed by nature in man and woman's subjectivity. We recall in the analysis of Genesis 2, that through the spousal meaning of the body and the freedom of the gift, man and woman live in a reciprocal "*for*" one another, thus realising the communion of persons they have been created for. Christ's words show "*that this 'for,' which has been present 'from the beginning' at the basis of marriage, can also stand at the basis of continence 'for' the kingdom of heaven!*" Relying on the same disposition of the personal subject, thanks to which man fully finds himself through a sincere gift of self, man is able to choose the gift of self to another in marriage or to freely renounce this gift so as in choosing continence for the kingdom of heaven he may give himself completely to Christ.

²⁵⁴ *TOB*, 80:1.

²⁵⁵ *TOB*, 80:5.

3.3 The Hope of Everyday

The redemption of the body, brought about by the death and resurrection of Christ, affords us the hope of victory over sin. This can also be called “the hope of everyday”. The redemption of the body expresses itself not only in the final resurrection, but in the life of “historical man”, in our here and now. Christ’s words, which we have listened to carefully and prayerfully, spring forth from the divine depth of the mystery of redemption and allow us to discover and strengthen the bond that exists between the dignity of the human being, man or woman, and the spousal meaning of the body. They allow us to understand and live the mature freedom of the gift, expressed either in indissoluble marriage or continence for the kingdom of God. Through the revelation of these two vocations, Christ “fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme vocation clear”.²⁵⁶

3.4 Filial Love and Spousal Love in the Thought of St. Josemaría²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ See Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; *TOB*, 86:8.

²⁵⁷ Ideas taken from ‘Filial Love and Spousal Love’, in E. Burkhart and J. López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness in the Teaching of St Josemaría: A Study in Spiritual Theology*, v. 2, (NY: Scepter, 2020), 435-444. The original text is reproduced in the Appendix.

St. Josemaría speaks of divine filiation, the awareness of being children of God, as the foundation of our relationship with God and thus of the spiritual life. Although historically many mystics used the term spousal love to describe the love of God, St. Josemaría hardly used this term. He preferred the term filial love as the defining relationship between a Christian with God because it expresses a reality and not a metaphor. In Baptism a Christian is truly made an adoptive son or daughter of God, “in an analogous way to how the Son is begotten in the Holy Trinity”.²⁵⁸ When one speaks of “spouse of God” this is done only metaphorically “because there is no ‘spouse’ in the Holy Trinity”.²⁵⁹ With divine filiation acquired through Baptism as a Christian’s underlying reality, the term “spousal love” can then be used to represent the covenant of love established with God through Baptism and the commitments this covenant requires. In the life of a Christian, this covenant with God takes on *characteristics* of spousal love in that it is a call to a total gift of self that is indissoluble and spiritually fruitful.

Therefore, the reality of supernatural divine filiation carries within itself traits of spousal love. Expressed another way, the characteristics of spousal love describe aspects of divine filiation. It is in this way that the metaphor of human love is present in some

²⁵⁸ Burkhardt and López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness*, 438.

²⁵⁹ Burkhardt and López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness*, 438.

of St. Josemaría's writings. When he writes about human love in reference to divine life he also does not limit it to the love of spouses but refers to any love that a person holds dear to his heart (siblings, friends, etc).

One can understand then that the reason St. Josemaría does not use the spousal metaphor when speaking of a Christian's love of God is because he prefers to use proper terms and not metaphorical language. The *reality* of divine filiation indicates its priority over the spousal *metaphor* and as such St. Josemaría did not want divine filiation to be "relegated to a second plane"²⁶⁰ or replaced by the sentiments of spousality. A further aspect of this is that St. Josemaría prefers not to use the spousal metaphor among the laity so as to avoid confusion between the lay vocation and the religious vocation. Those entering religious life have historically used spousal language to express their consecration made by means of vows after which they "remove" themselves from the world.

Finally, one can also add that the reality of divine filiation was deeply impressed upon the soul of St. Josemaría by an extraordinary experience of it given to him by God. He "experienced the supernatural reality of divine filiation by means of a gift from God"²⁶¹. Having received this gift from God, together

²⁶⁰ Burkhardt and López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness*, 444.

²⁶¹ Burkhardt and López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness*, 441.

with a preference for more accurate language, it is only natural that this was his preferred path towards the divine depths of God's love for himself and for the laity.



APPENDIX: FILIAL LOVE AND SPOUSAL LOVE

'Filial Love and Spousal Love', in E. Burkhart and J. López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness in the Teaching of St Josemaría: A Study in Spiritual Theology*, v. 2, (NY: Scepter, 2020), 435-444.

When discussing divine filiation and charity (among other topics), we saw that St. Josemaría speaks of a Christian's love for God as "filial love." We refrained from using the term "spousal love" because, unlike other masters of the spiritual life, St. Josemaría hardly employs the term even though he was undoubtedly familiar with it. Here, we would like to put forth some reflections on this noteworthy fact, but we would like to do so by way of an appendix to this volume because it is a subject that does not appear in St. Josemaría's writings.

Let us consider this issue in the following way: Throughout history many great spiritual masters such as St. Bernard, St. Teresa of Ávila, and St. John of the Cross have compared the Christian's union with God to a "spiritual marriage."²⁶² More generally,

²⁶² . A synthesis of this subject, in general, can be seen in Pierre Adnès, "Mariage spirituel" in *Dictionnaire de ascétique et mystique*, 10 (1980): cols. 388-408 (with bibliography); Tomás Álvarez, "Matrimonio spirituale" Ermanno Ancilli (dir), *Dizionario enciclopedico di spiritualità*, v. 2 (Rome: Città Nuova, 1990), 1542-1547.

many spiritual authors speak of the love of God as "spousal" or "nuptial" love. After refining the terminology from what simply refers to what is earthly, these authors elevate it to a spiritual sense and apply the idea of the love between spouses on earth (which implies mutual self-giving, indissoluble commitment, openness to life, etc.) to speak of the love of God.

St. Josemaría often applies to the Virgin Mary the title of "spouse of the Holy Spirit" or "spouse of God," and according to Pauline doctrine (see Eph. 5:23-28), he also refers to the Church as the "spouse of Christ."²⁶³ But when he deals with the relationship of a Christian with God, with Christ, or with the Church, St. Josemaría hardly ever uses the term "spousal." At first sight, it may be surprising he does not. Since he calls the Christian "another Christ, Christ himself," one might think that the Christian could be called a "spouse" of the Church just as Christ is. And vice versa; given that the Christian is a member of the Church, the spouse of Christ, it appears reasonable to claim that he or she is a "spouse of Christ," and

²⁶³ . See *The Way*, 496; *Furrow*, 801; *The Forge*, 227, 461, 555, 584, 833; *Conversations*, 23; *Christ Is Passing By*, 34, 73, 136, 145, 171, 176; *Friends of God*, 274, 316; the homily "Loyalty to the Church". We have the Church as spouse of Christ in the teaching of St. Josemaría in chapter three, section 1.4. The Blessed Virgin is "spouse" in the same sense because she conceived the Son through the action of the Holy Spirit and because through her mediation we Christians are engendered to supernatural life (see chapter three, section 4).

therefore also "spouse of God," as Jesus Christ is God.

Nevertheless, as we said above, St. Josemaría does not address God as "spouse," nor does he refer to the Christian's relationship with the Church in spousal terms. In the following text, for instance, he calls the Church "Spouse of Christ" but he calls her "Mother of the Christian" at the same time: *You have to love the Spouse of Christ, your Mother. She is, and always will be, pure and spotless.*²⁶⁴

In speaking of the union of the Christian with Christ, St. Josemaría still does not generally employ spousal terms. He does not say, for instance, that "the soul is a spouse of Christ," nor that the Christian should love Christ as a "spouse." He does this neither in his published works nor in the drafts of these works. He does it occasionally in his oral preaching on seven occasions from 1956 to 1959, the period immediately following Pius XII's encyclical *Sacra Virginitas* (March 25, 1954), where the Pope addresses lay women who have given themselves to the Lord, embracing apostolic celibacy. Choosing words of St. Ambrose, St. Athanasius, and other Fathers cited by Pius XII, St. Josemaría calls them *spouses* of Christ.²⁶⁵ After these years, St.

²⁶⁴ *The Forge*, 461. He habitually said "my mother the Church" or "our mother the Church" or other filial: see *The Way*, 518, 750; *Furrow*, 49, 275, 354, 369, 409, 920; *The Forge*, 461, 471, 583.

²⁶⁵ Notes taken from preaching, November 12, 1956 (AGP, P02 XI-1956, 9); the same, for example, in AGP, P02 V-1957, 13 and in AGP,

Josemaría does not use this metaphor except for two or three times in the 1970s and always in short phrases without stopping to explain them.²⁶⁶

The few texts we have just quoted indicate that he is familiar with the "spousal" terminology, something that is not surprising for an avid reader of the spiritual classics. At the same time, it is significant that he rarely employs this term in the almost 13,000 pages which comprise the sum of his writings and notes from his oral preaching.²⁶⁷ Instead, he constantly addresses God as Father, following Jesus' words, "*When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be thy name [...]*" (Lk 11:2), and he speaks of God's love as a "*filial love*", a "*love of God's sons or daughters*," a love founded on the reality of adoptive divine filiation.²⁶⁸ Undoubtedly, it is these "filial" expressions that dominate his preaching. As we did in chapter four, here we are referring obviously to the supernatural divine filiation of a Christian, not to the natural

P02 XI-1957, 11. The encyclical *Sacra Virginitas*, n. 7, cites, for example, St Athanasius: "Those who profess this virtue [virginity] the Catholic Church usually refers to as spouses of Christ" (*Apologia ad Constantium*, 33).

²⁶⁶ In the written texts taken from his oral preaching we have only found two instances in which he refers to the soul as spouse of Christ. It is possible that there are a few more in the complete recordings of his meetings with people.

²⁶⁷ See Flavio Capucci, *Josemaría Escrivá, Santo. L'iter della causa di canonizzazione* (Milan: Ares, 2009), 20.

²⁶⁸ In chapter four we have cited numerous texts in this sense.

filiation to God every person enjoys by virtue of his or her created human condition.

How should we interpret these facts? What is St. Josemaría's reason for not describing more frequently the union between the Christian and Christ as a spousal union? Does this imply a rupture with previous spiritual teaching? Or, is there some relation between "filial love" and "spousal love"? And finally, what is the meaning of the few times he did employ the term "spousal" to describe the relation between the Christian and Christ?

In our opinion, it is useful to distinguish between two ways of speaking of a Christian's "spousal relation with God" and therefore of "spousal love for God." One way refers in general to the ordinary Christian (man or woman, married or celibate); the other refers specifically to the proper state of "consecrated virginity." To these two ways, we need to add a third, the "spousal" nature of the priesthood by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Traditionally, however, this is considered a spousal relation with the Church that derives from the fact that the priest (or bishop) is acting in *Persona Christi Capitis*, and therefore is acting like Christ, as the spouse of the Church. It is a "ministerial spousality" that originates in the sacrament of Orders, which is not applicable to the

lay faithful, and therefore we will not discuss it in further detail here.²⁶⁹

As far as the first two ways are concerned, they differ in virtue of their foundation. In the case of ordinary Christians, the spousal relation derives only from baptism, while in the second, it derives specifically from the religious consecration, which, though different from that of baptism, pre-supposes it. This consecration takes place by the profession of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and their formal acceptance by the Church.

Let us consider the first case. Upon being adopted as a child of God in the waters of baptism, every baptised person is committed to live in accord with that dignity by assuming the "baptismal commitments." These commitments unmistakably represent a covenant with God. This covenant bears a certain resemblance to marriage because by its very nature, it is a pact of a love of friendship that incorporates a person to the Church as the body of which Christ is the Head. This covenant, moreover, requires indissolubility and is ordained toward fruitfulness, that is, to the transmission of supernatural life by means of the exercise of the common priesthood, a participation of Christ's priesthood. This is why we can confidently lean on a

²⁶⁹ On this subject we refer to Laurent Touze, *L'avenir du celibat sacerdotal et sa logique sacramentelle* (Paris: Parole et Silence-Lethielleux, 2009).

sound scriptural basis (see Song 4:8-12; Hos. 3:1 ff; Eph. 5:22-32; 2 Cor. 11:1-3; etc.) in speaking of a spousal relation with God through baptism. St. Thomas writes: "*in Baptismo fit quoddam spirituale connubium animae ad Deum*" [In Baptism, there is a certain spiritual marriage of the soul with God].²⁷⁰ Every Christian can assume this spousal relation in his spiritual life precisely because it derives from baptism.

This spousal condition is in close relation to adoptive divine filiation. In reality, the term does not seem other than a different way of referring to the fact that filial union with God is established by an "adoption" that takes place in baptism itself because the one adopted as a child has a covenant with God. But the terms "filiation" and "spousal relation" are not on equal footing when it comes down to expressing the relation of a Christian with God. When we speak of a "spousal relation" to God, we use a metaphor to highlight a certain aspect implied by divine filiation; when we speak of "divine filiation," on the other hand, we do not use a metaphor, but rather proper language referred to God in an analogical sense. We can say that in baptism, the Christian is really made a "son or daughter of God" in an analogous way to how the Son is begotten in the Holy Trinity. However, saying that the Christian is made a "spouse of God" can only be said in a metaphorical way because there is no "spouse" in the Holy Trinity. In this latter

²⁷⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 6, q. 1, a. 2, sc.

case, we are not speaking by means of proper language, but rather metaphorically.²⁷¹

Stated differently, when we say that a Christian is a son (or daughter) of God, we are using proper language in an analogical way, because there does exist a "subsistent Filiation" in the Trinity (i.e., the person of the Son), and the Christian indeed participates in it. (The Christian's filiation is called "adoptive" only to distinguish it from the natural filiation that exclusively belongs to the person of the Son.) When we say, however, that the Christian is a "spouse of God" we are speaking metaphorically because in the Trinity there is no "subsistent spousality" in which man can participate. "Spousality," or matrimony, is a created reality and when it is applied to God, it cannot be done by means of analogy with a subsistent reality in God, but only in a metaphorical way. Nevertheless, although adoptive filiation is also a created reality, it is a participation in the subsistent Filiation in God. For this reason, a Christian is a son (or daughter) of God in a proper sense, and not in a metaphorical one. St. John underscores this when he writes, "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." (1 Jn 3:1).

²⁷¹ On the use of analogy and metaphor, see Rafael Díaz Dorronsoro , *Los nombres de Dios, de Jesucristo y de La Iglesia: el recurso a la metáfora y a la analogía* (Valencia: Edicep, 2009), 17-66.

All throughout St. Josemaría's preaching, we find adoptive divine filiation with all its implications: filial love for God, identification with Christ, fraternal love, the apostolic mission, etc. Nevertheless, St. Josemaría also turns to human love to describe the love of the children of God. He often says, for example, *I like all the songs about pure holy love, for in them I find, interwoven, both human and divine love.*²⁷² He does not have any problem in applying what is said about the noble human love between a man and a woman in courtship or marriage to the love for God. This love for God, like that of those who are in love on earth, falls within the spirit of divine filiation that he preached because adoption as children leads all Christians (men and women, celibate, married or widowed) to a covenant of love with God.

In St. Josemaría, love for God (charity) is a "filial" virtue. This filial quality includes a generic spousality that, as we have noted, corresponds to the "adoptive" character of filiation. In effect, adoption means assuming as a son or daughter someone who was previously not. Filial adoption is a sort of assumption like that of the Incarnation in which the Son assumes a human nature. The Incarnation is traditionally called the "marriage" of the divine Person [of the Word]

²⁷² *Conversations*, 92. Other examples are *The Way*, 824; *The Forge*, 435; *Christ Is Passing By*, 166; *Friends of God*, 184.

with human nature and the basis for the "wedding" of Christ to the Church by which he joins her to himself as his mystical body (see Eph. 5:25; Rev. 19:7-9). In this sense, we could say metaphorically that whoever is adopted by God is "wedded" to him not in virtue of being a son (or daughter) but in virtue of being "adopted." The only-begotten Son is not the "spouse" of the Father because he is not adopted; He is eternally engendered, and when he assumes a human nature and unites the Church to himself as his spouse, his "spousal love" is none other than an aspect of his filial love for the Father. So too in the Christian. Since his or her supernatural filiation is a participation in subsistent Filiation (i.e., in the Son), his or her love is, properly speaking, filial. Within this filial kind of love, the fact of being "adopted" (or "assumed as a child") carries with it a trait that, in metaphorical terms, can be called "spousal." We say "in metaphorical terms" because a term that is properly used to describe relations between creatures [i.e., the spousal relationship between a man and a woman] is being applied to describe an aspect of our relation to God (i.e., our filial adoption).

Note that the position we have proposed regarding the relation between "adoption" and "spousality" is not held by those who reserve the former term for the moment when the

Christian receives divine filiation (at baptism), and the latter term for the moment in which he commits himself freely to God. This manner of considering "spousality" as a further development of "adoptive filiation" is in the line of religious consecration that we will discuss later on. This position is not simply about referring to adoption metaphorically (lest the term "spousality" simply meant the discovery of the Christian vocation without any further commitment besides the one taken on at baptism). If the term "spousality" is understood, rather, as a commitment different from that which is proper to baptism, then we ought to state that St. Josemaría does not speak of it. He distinguishes between "being made adoptive children of God" in baptism, and "becoming aware of that filiation" and making a radical decision to live in accord with those baptismal commitments. The latter he calls "self-giving to God," not "marriage to God": it is the self-giving of the children of God who decide to love him with all their heart as well as with deeds.

But why does St. Josemaría hardly use the spousal metaphor? A conjecture that seems coherent with his biography and teaching is that, upon discovering the radical nature of the filial condition of the baptised, the spousal metaphor takes on a secondary role. Once God made him experience in

a deep way his divine filiation as the foundation for the spiritual life, this gift led him to a profound contemplation of the Christian mystery in proper, filial terms, which can be expressed as follows: *each Christian is not simply alter Christus: another Christ, but ipse Christus: Christ himself!*²⁷³ The understanding of the union with Christ implicit in these words transcends the metaphor of the spousal union *in the flesh* (see Mt. 19:5) even though it does not negate its worth for illustrating certain of its aspects.

St. Josemaría chooses to use proper (and not metaphorical) language more out of a spontaneous intuition than speculation; a choice that corresponds with a basic theological rule (especially in spiritual theology). Garrigou-Lagrange enunciates it in the following way: "Metaphorical terms are necessary where proper terms do not exist, especially to express particular relations of God with souls of interior life. For this reason mystics speak metaphorically of the spiritual wedding and marriage to designate the rather transforming union of the soul with God."²⁷⁴

²⁷³ *Christ Is Passing By*, 104.

²⁷⁴ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Three Ages of the Interior Life*, v. 2, (Rockford, IL Tan Books, 1989) part III, ch.1, 9-10 (within the section "The Bases of the Spiritual Writers"). The author presents this after having distinguished between "analogy" (which he employs in saying God and creatures are good and wise) and "metaphor" (which he uses in saying that the Christian is a "spouse of God). See St. Thomas, *S. Th*, I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3.

Our hypothesis is that the mystics to which Garrigou-Lagrange refer (especially St. John of the Cross, although before him were St. Bernard Richard of St. Victor, and others) needed to turn to the spousal metaphor more than St. Josemaría after he experienced the supernatural reality of divine filiation by means of a gift from God. The Holy Spirit leads soul along different paths. He takes some to the divine depths by the beautiful spousal image and others through the more simple and direct path of our filial reality. In any event, filial adoption is also present in St. John of the Cross (even though he describes union with God in terms of a spiritual marriage), just as the metaphor of human love is present in St. Josemaría even though he uses it exclusively to illustrate some aspects of the spiritual life founded on the sense of divine filiation.

To this we must add that for St. Josemaría, the metaphor of human love to refer to the divine life is not limited to the love of spouses. What he wishes to emphasise with this metaphor is, above all, that a Christian should love God with the same heart with which he loves people dear to him on earth. For this reason, St. Josemaría turns also to other forms of human love (between parents and children, or among siblings and friends) and he does so more than to spousal love. He states, for instance,

We have to love God with the same heart with which we love our parents, our brothers and

*sisters, the other members of our family, our friends. It's the only heart we have.*²⁷⁵

Moreover, elsewhere, he writes,

*Love our Lord passionately. Love him madly, Because if there is love, I would dare to say that not even resolutions are needed. My parents-think of yours-did not need to make any resolutions to love me: and what an effusion of tenderness they showed me, in little details every day. With that same human heart we can and should love God.*²⁷⁶

Now let us take a look at the second way of speaking of the spousal union with God: that which is proper and specific to the consecrated life.²⁷⁷ Already in the second century we see formally appear in the Church the *Ordo virginum*, constituted by women who made a public profession of virginity for the kingdom of God and who were consecrated in a liturgical ceremony in which they received a distinguishing sign. Such a consecration was considered a "spiritual marriage" or "wedding" with

²⁷⁵ *Christ Is Passing By*, 142.

²⁷⁶ *The Forge*, 503.

²⁷⁷ We use the "consecrated life" in the sense that it has in StJohn Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 25 March 1996, n. 10 to designate the state of life of those who consecrate themselves to God by the profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

God"²⁷⁸ and is considered to be the precedent for religious life, which tradition will consider as a sign of the "admirable wedding established by God in the Church."²⁷⁹ The metaphor of the spousal union with God has thus remained for centuries closely tied to the religious vocation.²⁸⁰

St. Josemaría refers to this spousal union with God when he preaches to women religious. For example, in 1972 he addresses a Cistercian community, encouraging them to have the great joy of knowing themselves to be *brides of Christ*.²⁸¹ However in general, he does not speak in this way to the common faithful. We believe he keeps the spousal metaphor for the religious state and does not apply it to the laity to avoid confusion between the lay

²⁷⁸ See Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Ordo consecrationis virginum*, May 30, 1970; CIC, c. 604; CCC, 923-924; St. Ambrose, *Exhort. virg.* 31; *De virginibus* III, 3, 9; Pseudo Ambrose, *Laps. virg.* 5, 20. A brief synthesis of the subject in the Fathers can be seen in Carlo Tibiletti, "Vergini - verginità - velatio" in *Dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane* (Casale: Marietti, 1983), col. 3560.

²⁷⁹ CIC, c.607. The sources of this canon are: *Lumen gentium*, n. 44; Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 112 (see *Codex iuris canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus: fontium*, Vatican City, 1989, *ad loc.*)

²⁸⁰ In recent times, St John Paul II made wide use of this metaphor, extending it to all the faithful: see Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, August 15, 1998, n. 25. In this sense, it is founded on baptism alone, not on the post-baptismal religious consecration, and thus what we have said in the previous paragraphs is valid.

²⁸¹ Notes taken from preaching, October 1972 (AGP, P04 1972, vol. II, 830)

vocation and the religious vocation, and between the specific characteristics of the spiritual life particular to each. We must reiterate that he teaches people to establish their spiritual life on the divine filiation received at baptism, cultivating at every moment an awareness of being children of God. In the religious life, the spiritual life is founded on a consecration made after baptism (ie, the religious consecration by means of vows understood as a "spousal union" with God). This "spousal union" carries with it a certain "distancing" of oneself from the world, which means that a new relationship with temporal realities is established. This relationship has as its end to give witness of future goods; an eschatological witness, which is different from that of those whose mission is to sanctify the world from within.

In the final analysis, it is about two different ways to approach the spiritual life. Although they differ, they do not stand in opposition to one another as both originate in baptism and both look toward future glory. For this reason, the spousal metaphor is not entirely foreign to the laity; in fact, we have seen that there is a generic spousal relation founded on baptism. And even less is the spirit of divine filiation foreign to the religious: it belongs to them by baptism, and their specific spousal consecration rests on it²⁸².

²⁸² Think, for example, of the testimony of St Theresa of Lisieux, who felt herself to be a small daughter of God. Despite this, after a review of what the mystery of filial adoption meant in the Patristic period, Jean Galot asked himself: "Has the filial perspective been

For the rest, we should not leave out that St. Josemaría recommended to the laity the reading of the great masters of the spiritual life, not only for them to admire their lofty expressions of love, but also for the laity to draw example and benefit from the substance of their spiritual doctrine which certainly possesses a universal value.

Before concluding, what should we say about the few occasions when St. Josemaría calls ordinary Christian women "spouses of Christ"? Throughout his life, St. Josemaría strove to recover a certain number of terms for the Christian faithful, which in practice were reserved to the religious vocation (even though in antiquity they belonged to all Christians). For example, the term "perfection" had become tied to the "state of perfection" proper of the religious in such a way that people did not think that life in the middle of the world (and particularly in marriage) could be a "path of perfection." For this, he sees the need to remind people: *Your duty is to sanctify yourself. Yes, even you. Who thinks that this*

sufficiently maintained and developed in the mystical tradition since then?" (a tradition, we should note, mostly by religious). His response was negative, on finding that "the figure of Father does not seem to have received all the attention that it merits; the paternal has not been in all of its value. We hope that the of divine filiation will put more in evidence the face of That One whom Christ has taught us to call 'Father'" Jean Galot, "Adozione divina" in Luigi Borriello (dir) *Dizionario di mistica* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 55.

task is only for priests and religious? To everyone, without exception, our Lord said, "Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect."²⁸³

In our opinion, the few "spousal" texts to which we have referred are an attempt to apply the spousal metaphor to the life of ordinary faithful by referring to the spousal relation based on baptism. It is a specific application of the metaphor that helps to illustrate some aspects of our filial adoption in baptism. But speaking in this way is ambiguous and could lead to misunderstanding if the term is not distinguished from the religious consecration. The same cannot be said of the term "perfection" given that it refers to everyone even though it is reached by means of different paths. There is a spousality specific to the religious, and it is necessary to recognize and protect its identity as a good for the entire Church. It is perhaps for this reason that St. Josemaría abandoned the term when addressing the laity.

It could happen that if the laity were introduced to the ideal of union with God tied to baptism in spousal terms, the concepts could be confused once again as had happened before in history, relegating divine filiation to a secondary plane. We must keep in mind that the metaphor of "marriage with God" awakens sentiments and interior attitudes that can replace divine filiation unless they are properly set under a "filial" framework.

²⁸³ *The Way*, 291.

In closing, we should note that this subject remains open for future reflection. Here, we have not examined the content of the (baptismal) spousal metaphor since St. Josemaría does not do so. Neither have we tried to consider how it can add to an understanding of the reality of divine filiation. We have limited ourselves to showing the priority of the latter. If we were to carry out a future study, we would take as our starting point the analogy of divine filiation but attempt to explore the light that the metaphor of spousal love can shed on the mystery of the union between man and God.

GLOSSARY²⁸⁴

Anthropocentric From the Greek *anthropos* (human) + *kentron* (centre). An approach in which everything revolves around human beings.

Anthropology From the Greek *anthropos* (human) + *logos* (study). The study of human beings.

Casuistry Analysing rules and comparable cases to determine morality in a particular situation. The word is often used negatively to imply that someone is more interested in clever argument or in reaching the desired result than in seeking truth.

Celibacy* The state or condition of those who have chosen to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, in order to give themselves entirely to God and to the service of his people.

Chastity* The moral virtue which, under the cardinal virtue of temperance, provides for the successful integration of sexuality within the person leading to the inner unity of the bodily and spiritual being (2337). Chastity is called one of the fruits of the Holy

²⁸⁴ Definitions marked * are taken from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Glossary in the 2nd English edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 886-906.
<https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/866/#zoom=z>

Spirit (1832). [Everyone is called to live the virtue of chastity within their own state.]

Concupiscence* Human appetites or desires which remain disordered due to the temporal consequences of original sin which remain even after Baptism, and which produce an inclination to sin (1264, 1426, 2515).

Contingent A contingent being is one whose existence is not necessary, but is caused by something else. All created beings are contingent.

Continence Generally referring to abstention from conjugal relations, continence is the virtue by which a person controls the concupiscence in relation to sexual desire or other bodily emotions. For unmarried people, continence is part of the virtue of chastity, but continence itself is not chastity. When continence is freely chosen for love of God, *for the sake of the kingdom of heaven*, it is known as celibacy.

Covenant* A solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being involving mutual commitments or guarantees. The Bible refers to God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses as leader of the chosen people, Israel. In the Old Testament or Covenant, God revealed his law through Moses and prepared his people for salvation through the prophets. In the New Testament or Covenant, Christ established a new and eternal

covenant through his own sacrificial death and Resurrection. The Christian economy is the new and definitive Covenant which will never pass away, and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (56, 62, 66).

Decalogue* The Ten Commandments ... given by God to Moses on Sinai. In order to be faithful to the teaching of Jesus, the Decalogue must be interpreted in the light of the great commandment of love of God and neighbour (2055, 2056).

Dignity The inherent worth or value of a human person. Dignity is inalienable (cannot be lost) and the foundation for equality and human rights. The Church defends the dignity of every person from conception to natural death.

The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator.' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 19).

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He

is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. Further, he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.' (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 108).

Dualism A belief system that divides reality into two separate and sometimes opposing types of beings. In early dualistic religions, Good and Evil, Light and Dark, were supreme contending principles, unlike Christianity which acknowledges one good God, and evil as the absence, or privation, of good.

Mind-Body Dualism: philosophical or religious beliefs about human beings that regard the soul/mind and body as separate and distinct entities. Persons are sometimes identified as minds, somehow connected to bodies that are non-essential and inferior. Christianity affirms the human being as a *substantial union of body and soul (duality, not dualism)*. A person is not a soul/mind that 'has' or 'uses' a body.

Eros From the Greek *eros* (love, desire). Plato defined it as the "inner power that draws man toward all that is good, true, and beautiful". John Paul II defined *eros* as "those actions and reciprocal forms of behaviour by which man and woman approach

each other and unite so as to be 'one flesh'. By contrast, the common understanding of *eros* is an attraction of a sensual nature that aims at the union of *bodies*. If *eros* is used simply in the common psychological or sexological sense, as a subjectively intense attraction of the body that extends its mastery over the sphere of emotions, it could be misunderstood as something completely negative. Instead, *eros*, ethics and *ethos* should meet in the human heart.

Eschatological* From the Greek *eschaton* (last). The area of Christian faith which is concerned about the 'last things', and the coming of Jesus on 'the last day': our human destiny, death, judgment, resurrection of the body, heaven, purgatory, and hell – all of which are contained in the final articles of the Creed (1001, 1020-1050, 2771).

Ethics The study of moral principles that govern a person's behaviour. Ethics is concerned with establishing what is right and wrong.

Ethos Guiding beliefs, the interior perception of values, or inner desires of the heart.

Evangelical Counsels* In general, the teachings of the New Law proposed by Jesus to his disciples which lead to the perfection of Christian life. In the New Law, the precepts are intended to remove whatever is incompatible with charity; the evangelical counsels are to remove whatever might

hinder the development of charity, even if not contrary to it (1973). The public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience is a constitutive element of state of consecrated life in the Church (915).

Exegesis The branch of theology which investigates and expresses the true sense of Sacred Scripture (see CCC, 115-119).

Hermeneutics The study of the science of interpretation of texts, especially Sacred Scripture.

Immanent Acts Acts that begin within a living being and whose effects remain within (eg thinking or loving compared to fleeing an enemy or eating a pie). In modern philosophy 'immanence' has come to imply self-sufficiency, that the person can be realised and perfected through thought.

Manichaeism A dualistic heresy proposed by Manichaeus (Mani) in the 3rd century that gained a large following, including, for a time, St Augustine. There are two principles of creation in constant battle: God, creator of good things, including the spiritual (and the soul); and Satan, the principle of evil and creator of evil things, including matter (and the human body). Ways of being and acting that come with a body were condemned, including marriage and conjugal life.

Person, human* The human individual, made in the image of God; not some thing but some one, a unity of spirit and matter, soul and body, capable of knowledge, self-possession, and freedom, who can enter into communion with other persons – and with God (357, 362, 1700). The human person needs to live in society, which is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them (1879).

Personalism A broad philosophical movement that affirms the centrality of the person. The personalism of John Paul II defends the inviolable dignity of the human person as subject who is free, transcendent, unique and irreplaceable, valuable for his or her own sake, and never to be treated or used as a means to an end. The human person is also social by nature and flourishes in relationships and communion.

Phenomenology A philosophical method that studies reality as it is subjectively lived and experienced by persons.

Psychosomatic From the Greek *psyche* (mind) + *soma* (body). Relating to the interaction between mind and body.

Rationalism A philosophical position in which knowledge can be attained by reason alone, without the need for sense experience (*a priori* reason can reach certitude without experience or verification).

Nor, as human reason is self-sufficient, does it need the help of divine revelation.

Relativism The theory that there are no moral truths. There are various forms of relativism, for instance subjectivism (ethical beliefs are mere opinion) and cultural relativism (ethical beliefs are entirely dependent on culture).

Resurrection of the Dead* The raising of the righteous, who will live forever with the risen Christ on the last day. The 11th article of the Christian creed states, 'I believe in the resurrection of the body'. The resurrection of the body means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our 'mortal bodies' (Rom 8:11) will come to life again (988).

Sex/Sexuality John Paul II generally used the term 'sex' to refer to the fact that human beings are sexually differentiated (male and female), and, secondarily, to refer to conjugal relations between a man and a woman. In contemporary society, 'sex' almost always has this second meaning.

Soul* The spiritual principle of human beings. The soul is the subject of human consciousness and freedom; soul and body together form one unique human nature. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated

by death, and with which it will be reunited in the final resurrection (363, 366, 1703).

State of Perfection Stable forms of life in which some of the faithful bind themselves by vows, or equivalent promises, to practice the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience (consecrated life). Those who live in these states agree to follow a particular rule of life, approved by the Church, whose faithful observance leads to Christian perfection. See Evangelical Counsels.

Subjectivism A theory that holds that there is no such thing as objective moral truth. Ethical beliefs are personal opinions.

Subjectivity The personal experience of consciousness, agency, and of one's own life, developed in relationship with objective reality.

Theology From the Greek *theos* (god) + *logos* (study), the study of God. A systematic study of God and of God's creation, using reason enlightened by faith, based on the deposit of Divine Revelation (Scripture and Tradition) entrusted to the Church to safeguard, study and teach. ('Magisterium' is the teaching office of the Church, from the Latin *magister* teacher).

Triptych An artwork in three parts or panels, that can be opened or folded. Frequently used in Christian art.

Utilitarianism An ethical theory where the morality of an action is decided according to what will achieve the greatest overall good or pleasure. Generally, no action is inherently right or wrong; rather its morality is evaluated according to the outcome. This differs from Christian morality in which the morality of an action depends on the end (intended outcome), the object chosen (the act or means by which the end is achieved), and the circumstances (see CCC, 1750-1756).

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