

“Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology... through the main door.” -TOB 23:4

GOOD QUESTIONS deserve GOOD ANSWERS...

What is the Theology of the Body?

The book: 129+ scriptural reflections given to us by
St. Pope John Paul II from 1979-1984.

The phrase: **Our bodies teach us about God**, His love for us, and the call to love as He loves.

Who is God?

God is a Trinity: a Communion of Persons, who is an eternal exchange of Love (CCC 221).

The fullness of Love is constantly being poured out - *given & received* - by Father, Son & Holy Spirit for all eternity.

God is constantly inviting us to participate in His love; He made us to be in union with Him daily & into eternity.

God gives us **life** by pouring out a **total Gift of Self** in creation, redemption, and the Sacraments.

Who am I? | Why are we male & female? | Why do I desire love?

- Every single human being is **created in God's image**, thus has **great dignity** and is made to **love like God loves**. The fact that we image the Trinity (an “eternal exchange of love”, CCC 221) explains why our desire to give and receive love runs so deep.
- The simple fact that I *exist* is **very good**; **God made me as a gift to the world**, no matter what I can *do*.
- I am **unrepeatable**: no one has ever been - or will ever be - me. I change history by being here, as does every person.
- Being a **human person** means I am a **unity of body & soul**, created **male or female**. We are all *equal* in that we are **good & dignified**, set apart from animals by our **intellect & free will** – yet *different* in beautiful & complementary ways.
- **Our bodies have meaning!** Being male & female teaches us about the **life-giving love** of God through the *potential* of mother & fatherhood. We glimpse what it looks like to *receive* love from God, *give a gift* of ourselves to others & bring life to the world.
- **To love like GOD** means loving: **FREELY, TOTALLY, FAITHFULLY, & FRUITFULLY**. In everyday life, every person (single, married, or celibate) is called to *give & receive* love: thinking it through, freely choosing to make a total gift of self to others, and acting upon it (*through our bodies*) in faithfulness to God's law/vows/duties, etc... God makes this love fruitful!

Why is there evil in the world? | Is there hope? | Am I alone?

- **Evil** is the absence of love; God cannot create evil because He is love. Free will allows us to choose against real Love. The painful **consequences of sin** are division from God & each other, split of body & soul (death), disorder in head, heart, body, the world, *etc.*
- **The enemy** subtly twists the Truth & presents us with counterfeits, saying they are good & will fill our desires. We will always struggle with temptations against real Love (a.k.a. doing things our own way) because of **original sin**. Do not lose hope: **Jesus' crucifixion & resurrection** from the dead have **real power** to free us from slavery to our disordered desires & sins.
- **The Bridegroom** (Christ) **loves His Bride** (us) & provides for her good through life's battles. He offers unity, strength, and His **Real Presence** through one universal Catholic Church & the **gift of grace** in the 7 Sacraments: *physical signs of spiritual realities*.

What is the purpose of it all? | Where are we going?

- **Our desires** point to the purpose of life: *loving like God loves* & sticking together while walking toward **union & life** with Him.
- **How** we live this out looks different depending on if we are single, married (+/- kids), or a consecrated celibate (our total gift of self can be as small as smiling at a stranger or as big as dying on the cross). **Real love** brings about **union** with God, families, communities, etc.; it is **life-giving**. The **counterfeits of love** found in sin bring about **division & death**.
- When we **turn away from God** by grasping to fill ourselves with disordered desires or by settling for sin/counterfeits of love, the result is **division** from God & others that gives us a glimpse of **death** & what **hell** is like.
- We **turn to God** in love, prayer & for the reception of the Sacraments **through our bodies** (whole-person experience); which bring about **life-giving union** with God & others, granting us a tiny glimpse into the reality of **heaven**.

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

POINTS TO PONDER

Into the Deep

www.idretreats.org
Jen Messing ©2018

“The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.” TOB 19:4

If we *receive* from God & give a gift of self => union => life-giving

BRIEF EXAMEN

If we *grasp* to fill self & do things our way => division => death

- What are the **deepest desires** of my heart? DO I TRUST GOD TO FILL THEM? Do I try to fill them myself or fill them through other people?
- Do I know **LOVE** to be: a gift of myself for the good of the other? Free, Total, Faithful & Fruitful?
- Do I know **LUST** to be: use (in thought or in action) of another person (body or soul) as a means to my own end?
- Am I truly **FREE** to choose what is right & good, or have I become a slave to desires, habits, or sin?
- Is the **TOTAL** person – the soul & every part of my body/others’ bodies – seen as good? Honored? Respected?
- Do my thoughts, words & actions reflect the appropriate level of commitment (**FAITHFULNESS**) to others? (family, friendship, dating, engagement, marriage, other vows)
- Are my thoughts, words & actions **LIFE-giving** (**FRUITFUL**) - physically and spiritually?

STARTING POINTS in the CATECHISM

“[The *Theology of the Body*] will compel a dramatic development of thinking about virtually every major theme in the Creed.” – George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 853

- ❖ **THE STORY OF US: Created, Fallen & Redeemed**
CCC 282, CCC 51-52, 68-73, 1701- 1715
More in depth: 355-421
- ❖ **Emotions/Feelings:** CCC 1762-74
- ❖ **Love:** CCC 1766, 796
- ❖ **Free:** CCC 1733
- ❖ **Total:** CCC 604-06, 1469
- ❖ **Faithful:** CCC 55, 305
- ❖ **Fruitful:** (in Marriage) CCC 2366, (in Priesthood) 1565
- ❖ **Understanding Vocation:** CCC 1617-20

- ❖ **Masturbation:** CCC 2352
- ❖ **Pornography:** CCC 2354
- ❖ **Divorce:** CCC 2382-86
- ❖ **Non-Marital Sex:**
Fornication (CCC 2353) and **Adultery** (CCC 2380-81)
(compare with **MARITAL** union: CCC 2362-63)
- ❖ **Same Sex Attraction (“Homosexuality”):** CCC 2357-59
- ❖ **Contraception:** CCC 2370
- ❖ **In-Vitro Fertilization:** CCC 2376-79
- ❖ **Abortion:** CCC 2270-71
- ❖ **Euthanasia:** CCC 2276-79

Note: the word “disorder” means *out of the order for which God made us*. We are ALL *dis-ordered* because of the fall. We each struggle with the effects of original sin in some way; sexual attractions that are out of the original order of how God made us to love are just one example.

Can you explain the “why” behind the “what” of Church teaching?

A helpful resource for understanding morality issues: *Good News About Sex & Marriage* by Christopher West

Know that God is never trying to ruin our fun or intrude upon our lives by giving us commandments; it is always for the protection of our unfathomable dignity, the goal of our ultimate happiness, and the good of our eternal souls!

“Christian, recognize your dignity...” –CCC 1691