

***“Theology of the Body” for Couples***  
**Talk 10: Conjugal & Family Spirituality**

**“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will have eternal life” (Jn. 6:54)**

**In Summary**

In this talk, we finished the last section of “Theology of the Body”, and with it, our retreat. We learned about “conjugal spirituality”: That spirituality which is lived uniquely by married couples, helping them to grow closer to God, and through God, to one another. The necessary strength for married couples to live this conjugal spirituality is not so much a natural state as a *supernatural* gift of grace. This grace comes through prayer and the sacraments, which open up a couple to greater intimacy with God and with each other, allowing them to live the total gift of self to one another that their marriage calls and empowers them to be.

The spiritual life is built upon the moral life. We are called to be *great*, literally to be *saints*. And in order to be great, to be the saints that we are called to be, we first (and always) have to be *good*. Moral goodness and integrity, then, is a foundation for an authentic conjugal spiritual life. Echoing Bl. Paul VI, St. John Paul II presents couples with three key ways of living their conjugal spirituality: 1) Prayer, 2) the Holy Eucharist, and 3) Confession. Prayer is a heart to heart dialogue with God, sometimes with words, sometimes without words. It is the fuel of our interior life, the fire of our spiritual life. In prayer, we empty ourselves to God, and allow Him to fill us with the gift of Himself.

The gift of God’s own self is made most fully known in the Eucharist: Christ’s Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity *really and truly present* under the form of bread. The Eucharist contains Christ’s *whole life*, and when we approach Him worthily in Holy Mass to receive Him, it is His *whole self* with which He feeds us. When we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we become “one flesh” with Him, and we renew the gifts of faith, hope, and love infused into our souls at our baptism.

In order to receive Jesus worthily in the Eucharist, we need to be in a state of grace, clean and pure in heart and soul, not guilty of any unforgiven serious sin. Sin is a reality of life after the Fall, and the sacrament of Confession directly heals this wound. Even if our sins are not so serious, Confession forgives whatever sins may be present, and strengthens us in the face of future temptation. It also helps *us* to forgive others—especially in married life, when the opportunities abound!—who may have hurt or offended us.

With these means available to them—prayer, the Eucharist, and Confession—spouses are mutually strengthened to live the free, full, faithful, and fruitful love which will help them toward their Heavenly home with God—and each other—*forever*.

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**TOB/JPII & related Quotes**

“[Sarah & Tobias] decide above all *to speak in unison*—and this unison is nothing other than prayer.” (TOB 115:4):

“The whole practice of the honorable regulation of fertility...is part of Christian conjugal and family spirituality” (TOB 131:6).

“Through the whole reciprocally conditioned dynamism of tension and enjoyment—whose direct source is the body—...*the person ‘speaks’*” (TOB 123:4).

“This...is the essential and fundamental ‘power’: *the love planted in the heart by the Holy Spirit*” (TOB 126:5).

“Prayer...the Eucharist... and the sacrament of Penance...are the means—*infallible and indispensable*—to form the Christian spirituality of conjugal and familial life. With their help, that essential and *spiritually creative “power” of love* reaches human hearts and, at the same time, human bodies” (TOB 126:5).

“To me, prayer is a continuous exhalation” (Bl. Charles de Foucauld)

“When I come to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, I simply place myself in such a way that I am bathing in the flames of love which issue from the Divine Presence.” (St. John Marie Vianney)

“The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Bridegroom & Bride”  
(St. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26)

“Grace...is...participation in the inner life of God himself...that mysterious gift made to man’s innermost being—to the human heart—that allows both the man and the woman to exist from the ‘beginning’ in the reciprocal relationship of the disinterested gift of self” (TOB 16:3).

**TOB/JPII & related Terms**

**Spirituality:** The enactment of love, flowing from the interior life of prayer to the exterior life of action, giving primacy to the life of the Holy Spirit within us.

**Conjugal Spirituality:** True communion of mind, heart, soul, and body between spouses, honoring the fullness of life to which husband and wife are called. At the center of this spirituality is the intimacy of the marital embrace, that bodily expression of self-gift intended to unite spouses in life-giving love.

**Prayer:** The lifting of the mind and heart to God; cultivating a living, loving, and *real* relationship with God.

**Kataphatic prayer:** Praying by using words, images, symbols, and ideas

**Apophatic prayer:** Praying by *letting go* of images, words, symbols and ideas

**Asceticism:** A training in human virtue; Cooperating with God by doing “our part” in the development of our moral integrity.

**Mysticism:** Our capacity to behold God, gain some understanding of His life and love, and communicate that reality to others by our way of being.