

“Theology of the Body” for Couples

Talk 3: Christ Appeals to the Human Heart (1): Life Before the Redemption

TOB Quotes

“[Christ’s words] demand...that man enters into his full image”
(TOB 25:2).

“The motivation suggested by the tempter...clearly implies casting doubt on the gift and on love” (TOB 26:4).

“The spousal meaning of the body has not been totally suffocated...but only...threatened” (TOB 32:3).

“The inheritance of [the human] heart...is deeper than the sinfulness inherited, [and]...Christ’s words...re-activate that deepest inheritance and give it real power in human life”
(TOB 46:6).

“The heart has become a battlefield between love and lust. The more concupiscence dominates the heart, the less the heart experiences the spousal meaning of the body” (TOB 32:3).

“Christ’s words demand...the personal sense of the spousal meaning of the body, which opens the interior space of the freedom of the gift” (TOB 48:3).

“When passion is set into the whole of the spirit’s deepest energies, it can also become a creative force” (TOB 39:2).

TOB/JPII Terms

Shame: The loss of the “freedom of the gift”. The man and the woman no longer see the body as the revelation of the person and of God. When we experience shame, we experience 1) a *threat* to the value of our personhood, and 2) a need to *protect and preserve* the value of our personhood; as the “flipside” of our capacity for love, shame is a witness to our capacity to fall prey to lust. It is “**the symptom of man’s detachment from love**” (TOB 29:4)

Concupiscence: The inclination toward sin; a lack of love in the human heart; inclines us toward lust, love’s “counterfeit.”

Lust: Uninspired (i.e. devoid of God) sexual desire; a desire to experience sexual pleasure *without* a communion of persons; the opposite of love, in that I want *pleasure* through *using* you, rather than your *good* through the *gift* of myself.

Chastity: Integrated love; undivided mind, heart, and body; sexual purity according to our state in life; authentic self-mastery; living one’s sexuality wholly and rightly by “**keeping the body with holiness**” (TOB 54:4). Excludes or moderates the indulgence of the sexual appetite, and nourishes purity of heart;

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“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*.” (Mat. 5:27-28)

In Summary

In this conference, we continued with our 1st half of Theology of the Body, “The Words of Christ.” In the *first* panel of our triptych, we saw how the body has revealed God “from the beginning.” *This*, the 2nd panel of our triptych, helps us to understand the human person *today*, but it does it in two parts: First—the bad news: who we are today as wounded by sin (that’s what this conference focused on). Second (which we’ll get to in our next conference)—the good news: who we are today as redeemed in Christ. Understanding the “bad news” first helps us to understand more deeply the *good news* of Christ’s redemption.

John Paul continues his “adequate anthropology” through the words of Christ, who, in this panel, appeals to the human heart. Christ places the “locale” of sin *not* in the body, but in the human heart. *And*, Christ appeals to the human heart because He knows that this is where the whole person will be healed by His love and redemption. Christ’s redemption comes to us as an answer to original sin, which struck humanity *through* the communion of man and woman in an attempt to undermine the “*original fatherhood*” of love and gift from which all of creation comes.

With original sin, our first parents lost the fullness of their “sacramental sight”. Though the body is a visible sign of the “invisible” person *and* the invisible Trinity, without their original divinely-inspired vision, this beautiful sign became obscured. The “spousal meaning of the body” is still there, but it is now more difficult to experience. This is where shame enters the picture. Shame is a realization that the body can now be “used” *apart* from the communion of love for which we were created. Thus, shame is an appropriate protective mechanism after original sin.

We also learned about lust. Man and woman now have to contend with lust, which is *uninspired* sexual desire. Lust is a threat to the “freedom of the gift,” because it has such power to fragment the communion of persons in which man and woman are called to live. This is why a joyful commitment to chastity—the virtue of living sexual purity according to my state in life—is so essential. Chastity impels us to live within the empowering dynamic of the Christian “ethos” and “ethic”: actively living the law of love with a spirituality that pervades our inner life and our surroundings. Love has demands, and personal responsibility—“self mastery”—helps us to consciously live this new life of love that Christ calls us to.