

Man & Wife – Theology of the Body

Objective: The Theology of the Body is a deep, complicated, and rich source of wisdom about human nature, sexuality, and married life. Covering all of what the TOB teaches would (and does) take years of diligent study. One of the basic truths within it, however, is that God created our bodies as male and female to be a sign in the world that reveals God's own mystery, and this happens most specifically when husband and wife are united in marital sex. Husband and wife reveal God's trinitarian love in the unitive and procreative aspects of sex. This topic challenges us to think about the role of sex in our marriage and whether we are a reflection of God's love when we have sex.

Song Suggestion: When Love is Found (856)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Tobit 8:4-8

Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah, "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying, "Blessed are you, O God of our fathers.... You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the race of mankind has sprung. You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together." and they both said, "Amen, Amen."

Genesis 2:25

The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

Ephesians 5:21-32

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is Himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Catechism 1642

Christ is the source of this grace. Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony. Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb: How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father?...How wonderful the bond between two believers,

now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servant of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the Spirit.

Saint: Pope St. John Paul II

The Theology of the Body is the collective title of 129 homilies given by Pope St. John Paul II from 1979 to 1984. These discourses are a monumental work, sharing Catholic teachings of human nature, sexuality, and marriage with passion and a profound depth of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

Vignette: –

Pete and his wife have been married for over 20 years. Pete thinks he and his wife get along pretty well, but he complains to his friends about the amount and quality of sex. After months of complaints, one of Pete's friends, in a moment of alcohol-fueled honesty asks Pete, "Well, have you talked with her about it?". He stammers and says that, of course he tells her that he wants more sex and tells her ideas of making sex more exciting. Pete's friend responds that maybe, just maybe, there could be something a little deeper going on here. "Have you ever thought about why you are having sex? About what sex actually is?" Pete mumbles something about getting what he needs. Pete's friend makes a mental note to have a conversation with his wife about their relationship.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Is your view of sex the same as God's revealed in Scripture?

Do you find it hard to relate your views of sexual intimacy with how the Church describes sex?

Do you find it harder to discuss the procreative or unitive parts of sex with your wife?

Are you willing to talk with your wife about your sexual relationship, even if the response is critical?

Action Plan:

Have a meaningful conversation with your wife about sex. Challenge yourself to find out more about the Theology of the Body.

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