

Theology of the Body - January 15, 2023

I want to begin by wishing everyone a good morning and especially our guests who are joining us. It is a blessing and a great joy to share with you what I have learned from studying Saint John Paul's 130+ audiences from 1979 through 1984 on his subject.

Several years ago, I wandered through the books and gifts section at the Prime Osborn Center during an Eucharistic Congress. On the table was this book titled Theology of the Body. I thought, as many of you may be thinking, "that's a strange

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juxta position." Is it an exercise or diet book?

Theology is the science of the study of God. It deals with the most spiritual and sublime elements of our

faith. "Body?" The body is what exists in this

world -- not heaven. My body is what is growing

old and frail. It is what gets me in trouble.

Clearly, theology and body seem like contrary

terms.

But then I thumbed through Christopher

West's introduction and learned that the Theology

of the Body was one of Saint John Paul's first

teachings when he became Pope John Paul II

Well, I have always admired Saint John Paul

this side of idolatry, so I thought, "Hmm, I'll
purchase this book and see what it's all about. Let's
Plus George Weigel - Denver Catholic
bomb set to go off light
In a sentence, it blew my mind! the fuse!

Think of it this way, physicists devote their
careers working to discover the Unified Field
Theory. There are four fundamental forces of
nature: weak nuclear force, strong nuclear force,
electromagnetism and gravity. Physicists seek one
equation to explain and draw these four forces
together.

I would suggest that in Saint John Paul's
Theology of the Body we have the Unified Field
Theory of our Catholic Faith

"The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible, the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial, and thus to be a sign of it."

There is a lot to unpack in that Unified Field Theory, and we will live into it.

First, what inspired John Paul to take up this subject?

Before he became Pope, John Paul began writing a treatise titled, "Male and Female He Created Them." John Paul had celebrated the Mass at an Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia ^{in 1976} in which he expressed sorrow for the culture of death

that America had become. This Congress was only a few years after Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* shook the Earth. Coming at the height of the sexual revolution, the beatnik generation of the 50's, the free love of the 60's and the generational rejection of authority, it is fair to say that *Humanae Vitae* went over like a lead balloon. It was ridiculed, mocked and scorned by Christians inside and outside the Catholic Church. Two of the hit songs at that time had lyrics that said, "Do your thing, whatever it is" and "do it until you're satisfied."

In 1930, at the Church of England, the Arch bishop of Canterbury together with the other Anglican bishops reversed nineteen centuries of moral teaching and approved the use of contraception.

By 1968, everyone, including many bishops, priests and cardinals, expected the Catholic Church to do the same. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Pope Paul VI rejected contraception. I remember many people saying, "He no plays the game; he no makes the rules."

Contraception, we were told would usher in the following wonderful things:

No unwanted children.

Every child would be loved.

It would avoid or eliminate abortions.

It would eliminate or reduce sexually transmitted diseases.

It would lead to better relations between men and women.

It would eliminate or reduce illegitimate children.

And many more wonderful things to follow in the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

Not quite. In paragraph 17 of

Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul warned that, in fact, contraception would unleash all of

these evils.

Lets

Fast forward to 2023.

Today, we live in a culture of the
utmost depravity, sexual perversion and
evil that has brought hellish pain and

suffering ^{touching} ~~that has touched~~ virtually every
soul on this planet. NFL \$14b - porn - \$15b
73% of 12 yr olds.

Saint John Paul thought that his
predecessor was not only correct, but the
subject deserved a fuller and more comprehensive
exegesis. Male and Female He Created Them
was his response that evolved into ^{TOB}

But I would suggest that Saint John
Paul's teaching authority is part of a

broader perspective.

First, John Paul is exercising the apostolic teaching authority granted by the Holy Spirit to reveal in greater wonder the mysteries of the deposit of faith left to us in the canon of scripture, sacraments, tradition and creeds of the early church.

These are things
Deacon Henry
shares with us in
our RCIA
classes.

Second, John Paul's teaching must be seen in the continuous effort to combat heresy and preserve the truths that the Parable was promised to lead us into.

Throughout this Church Age, there have been many heresies that keep getting re-cycled.

We studied many of them recently when we had our class on the Trinity. There has been been one development, however, that I believe the Church has struggled to respond to.

For many centuries, theology was kind of a metaphysical, deductive process of argument and authority whereby principles and teachings and the authority of the Church was a scholastic, perhaps top-down matter. Not to say those teachings were wrong; just that such teachings were delivered in a certain manner to be accepted without debate from the general cross-section of the faithful. There was

Certainly lively debate among the scholars and doctors of the faith with the discovery that we have a helio centric rather than geo centric heavens above us -- contrary to what many in the Church believed and taught -- and with the development of the inductive method of scientific research, ^{these damned} a period of skepticism, questions and rejection of truths long part of the deposit of faith.

Thomas Paine's Age of Reason ridiculed the teachings of Christianity. Thomas Jefferson fabricated his own Bible in which he redacted miracles and anything that smacked of the

divine. But they were just the front crest of a wave that had been surging from the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment.

The Church has struggled I believe to form a response; to engage with such a skeptical, agnostic and atheistic mindset.

Simply saying we are the Church and we know what is true so accept it in faith and be quiet did not work.

Gradually, I believe the mindset of the Age of Enlightenment has itself morphed into a religion of its own if you will. Because we are fallen beings whose

nature has been wounded by original sin,
reason, rationality and science can themselves
take us in the wrong direction if we are
not careful.

If we look around, we see the
consequences of the cult of scientism.
We are told there are 98 different genders.
We impose poisonous hormonal treatments
on the pre-pubescent bodies of little girls
and boys. We have professors with doctorates
in biology teaching that men can have
wombs. We have a Canadian ship teacher
mincing around with a blonde wig and size

90+ triple z breast prosthetics and the School Board demands that parents and students respect that.

In Exodus, God revealed Himself in the burning bush saying "I am that I am." Well, now we have Dr. Fauci proclaiming "I am science."

Scientism says that we are just material atoms programmed by the laws of physics to behave and respond through impersonal laws of causation that resulted from random interactions and evolutionary development over eons. We are

just like any other primate or lower order mammal except we have a few more neural synapses

Interestingly, it is scientists inspired by God who have come to reject Darwinian teachings; discover the evidence for the big bang or creation from nothing; and believe that the fantastically fine-tuned nature of sub-atomic particles and physical constants can only mean there is a Designer behind all of creation. Young scientists, using right reason, are believers. Even Richard Dawkins, for years a well-known

advocate for atheism has announced he is now an agnostic. Yes not there yet, but, if I know the Hound of Heaven, He is relentlessly and lovingly after Mr Dawkins.

Third and final in my introductory comments, we should see John Paul II's ^{more} Theology of the Body in a somber and disturbing context. In chapter 3 of Genesis, Satan went right after the family. He did not attempt to persuade Adam and Eve that there is no God. Instead, he persuaded through the three-fold concupiscence of the

flesh, the eyes and pride of the heart that God did not really love them and did not want them to have what God had.

Satan tempted them to take from God what God, as we know, most desired to give them: knowledge and love of all creation and life eternal in Him.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was tempted in the desert. We read in Luke that Jesus rejected Satan who then departed until a more opportune time.

I am sure Satan was at the Cross again tempting Jesus. I can imagine Satan

Saying, "Come down and save yourself;
+ these people don't love you; they don't
even like you."

I believe we are living in another
opportune time for Satan. In his
Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortia,
John Paul warned that "The Future of
humanity passes by way of the family."

As with Adam and Eve, Satan is
attacking directly at the heart of man.
In our masculinity and femininity as men
and women, in what should be the unitive
and genitive relationship between man

and woman in holy matrimony, Satan is, as Milton wrote, spitting at God from Hell's hearth by clawing into Hell as many souls created and formed in the image and likeness of God as he can.

~~THE~~ Theology of the Body is

John Paul's inspired rebuke, his beguene Satan response. Using the tools of phenomenology and anthropology, John Paul takes as his departure point the phrase, "in the beginning," found in Chapter 19 of Luke's Gospel. Jesus is asked if it is acceptable for a man to

divorce his wife because Moses said it was
ok. Jesus rejects that saying it was
because of the hardness of our hearts
that Moses wrote that.

Jesus then says but in the
beginning it was not so. "Have you not
read that from the beginning the Creator made
them male and female and for this reason
a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife and the two shall
become one flesh."

We will follow John Paul's lead
and look at the first three chapters of

Genesis. In these three chapters, we will look at how God created us in His image and likeness and His plan for us; the life of man and woman as originally intended; ⁺ how man and woman feel.

John Paul takes verses that we have read countless times and brings out the profound wisdom and mystery of God's plan. John Paul does this using the tools of Christian anthropology inspired by scripture. Ephesians Chapter 5 tells us of the beginning in Chapter 5 and points us toward the closing chapters of the Book

of Revelation.

The Song of Songs illustrates for us the love with which we were created in His image and likeness and the erotic love God blessed man and woman with. Lastly, the Book of Tobit gives us a re-play of the sad fall in the Garden of Eden.