

Why Sexual Desires?



God speaks to man through the visible creation (CCC 1147)

This concerns the entire Bible, the whole Gospel, in fact, of the whole Mission of Christ (JP II)

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

The Pope's biblical reflection on embodiment, sexuality, love and marriage.

1.2 SEXUALITY & EROTICISM

Catholicism is a bodily & sensual religion. Through it, our eros are transformed to be agape. Our sexual desires are to lead us to discover God's plan.

1.3 CALL TO COMMUNION

We have been created for union and Communion with God. This is our deepest calling. The Spousal analogy serves this calling.

1.4 ANTHROPOLOGY

A Total View of Man that looks at his Origin, his History and his Destiny.

1.5 VOCATION TO LOVE

Looking at both the Marriage and the Celibate Vocations as means of living out our vocation to love so as to find ourselves and our destiny.

1.1 The Theology of the Body is the name given by Pope John Paul II to his first major catechetical project of his pontificate. It consists of 129 general audience addresses, which he gave from September 1979 to November 1984. It has been described as the first major reconfiguration of Catholic theology in centuries.

Employing phenomenology as a philosophical tool to understand reality and traditional Church teaching on morality, he has offered the faithful a powerful method to internalize these teachings. The individual can find through his own subjective experience a resonance of these truths. Another innovation is the Pope's introduction of his 'personalism', the moral philosophy that says that people are persons that should always be loved and never used.

Like St Augustine of Hippo in the fourth century who combined the Greek Platonic philosophy with Christian revelation to produce a theology that provided the Church with a theological vocabulary, and St Thomas Aquinas in the fourteenth century who combined Greek Aristotelian philosophy with Christian revelation to produce another new understanding of traditional theology. (viz scholasticism), the Theology of the Body will also be considered a true Christian classic. Future generations of theologians will still be reading and studying this Theology for many centuries to come.

Once that happens, it has been said that there will be a dramatic development in thinking of every major theme in Catholic beliefs. And that is much more than just on sexual morality.

The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) Sexuality & Eroticism

1.2 Sexuality and Eroticism are at the root of all our human sexual desires. They are in fact a basic instinct but they were meant to be our conjugal instinct. We can say that sexual desires were intended by God to ultimately lead us to Him. These very basic human and bodily experiences are like programmes in our humanity, designed by God to reveal to us the very meaning of life, and how we are to live this meaning to find our human destiny and fulfillment in life.

Since they were meant to lead us to God, the devil who is the enemy of God and all man, deliberately attacks and profanes this area of our humanity. Later we shall see how sexual desire before the Fall or Original Sin was experienced differently from after Original Sin as in now.

Then now perhaps we can see why our culture and morality has been led down a path of sexual degradation especially ever since the sexual revolution of the 60's. Satan attacks purity because he knows where we are the weakest. That's why in the spiritual battle, St Paul ad-

vices us to “gird our loins with the truth” (Eph 6: 14). The Christian life challenges us to transform our eros (our passionate desire for the true, good and beautiful) to agape.

And I will betroth you to me for ever (Hos 2:19)

Call to Communion

1.3 The Call to Communion is stamped on our bodies through our being made male and female. Sexual complementarity and our longing for union is intended by God to remind us of our fundamental call to love others in self giving love. God has made Man (as male & female) in his image, (Gen 1:27) with the commandment to be fruitful and multiply.

God himself has a self giving loving spirit, and in fact He is in an eternal exchange of love, as a Communion of Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 221) So when we say that man images God, it is not only as an individual being but also as a communion of persons in the loving nuptial embrace of man and wife, with the child being the fruit of that loving union as the third person. Thus we can say that Man in his sexual complementarity is also an image of the Blessed Trinity.

The one flesh union of marriage and the family is a great mystery that refers to Christ and His Church. (cf Eph 5:31) This spousal analogy as a theology is evident throughout the bible, beginning with Genesis which speaks of the marriage of the first Adam to Revelation which speaks of the marriage of the Second Adam.

Our sexual desires which comes from our conjugal instinct is to remind us of the spousal meaning of our body. This in turn allows our body to be a sacramental sign of God’s eternal plan for us, that we are called to give ourselves in love, and that we are all called to the ultimate marriage of the lamb which is heaven.

“The body, in fact, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible; the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus to be a sign of it” (JP II)

Sexual desires properly understood are signs of our divine vocation to give ourselves in love.

The total vision of man ... (HV 7) An Adequate Anthropology

1.4 An Adequate Anthropology is required to understand the role of Man and his true destiny. The Theology of the Body was really inspired by Pope Paul VI’s call for a “total vision of man” in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Pope John Paul II provided this total vision through his “adequate anthropology” in the first 72 of his addresses. These could be sub divided into three sections entitled;

Original Man (23 addresses) begins by looking at Christ’s words about man’s “hardness of heart” in response to the question on divorce in Mt 19:8. Christ by his reference to “the beginning” allowed the Pope to reflect on three “original human experiences” of original solitude, original unity, and original nakedness.

Historical Man (40 addresses) begins again by looking at Christ’s words about committing adultery in the heart (Mt 5:27). Here the Pope speaks of fallen but redeemed man, beginning with Original Sin, but redeemed by Christ through the Redemption of the Body.

Eschatological Man (9 addresses) begins with looking at Christ’s words about the resurrection in response to the question of marriage (Mt 22:30). Here the Pope dealt with the Eschaton and heaven, and the communion of saints. This phase of our anthropology repre-

sents our ultimate destiny, the wedding feast of the lamb.

This total view of man, looking at his origin (Original Man), his history (Historical Man) and his destiny (Eschatological Man) allows us to see the ‘big picture’. Based on this larger and ‘divine’ perspective, we can then see how we are to live our lives if we are to become the persons God has meant us to be.

Applying the total vision Our Vocation to Love

1.5 Our Vocation to Love is revealed by this total view of man, who is made in God’s image with sexual complementarity and a longing for union.

“Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is in its own proper form an actuation of the most profound truth about man, of his being created in the image of God” (JP II). So the Pope now applies this anthropology by speaking of these two vocations.

The vocation of Celibacy for the Kingdom (14 addresses) begins with Christ’s words in Mt 19:12 about those who “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven”.

The vocation of Marriage (22 addresses) begins with a reflection of the key and classic text of Eph 5: 21-33. This text forms the basis of the Theology of the Body.

The sixth and final section of the catechesis (21 addresses) speaks about Love and Fruitfulness. The Pope refers to questions raised in *Humanae Vitae* and considers the entire Theology of the Body as “an ample commentary on the doctrine contained in this encyclical.”

This brief notes cannot do justice to the richness and depth of the entire catechesis.