

# I. Introduction to “Theology of the Body”

## Objectives

- Explain significance of the “Theology of the Body.”
- Why did Pope John Paul II give this catechesis?
- What was the purpose of Vatican II?
- What is the historical context of the Theology of the Body?
- How does the “Theology of the Body” propose to respond to the crisis in the understanding of the human person?

## Vocabulary

**Anthropology**—The study of Man

**Humanae Vitae**—Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI on human reproduction, which condemned the use of artificial contraception.

**Nuptial meaning of the body**—the ability of the human body, in its masculinity or femininity, to express and realize our call to a communion of persons through self-giving love. Whether we are single, celibate or married, we discover through the body that the meaning of our existence is to be a gift.

**Personalism**—the school of thought that consists of three main principles about the human person: they are real (in the ontological sense), they have value, and they also have free will.

**Theology of the Body**: John Paul II’s reflections on the meaning of the human person, love, sex and marriage in light of the body, as given in his general audiences from 1979 to 1984. These reflections, rooted in Scripture, recognize the fact that we do not just have bodies but are body persons, whose inner life is expressed through the body.

**Theology**—The study of God

**Sacrament**—outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace (in the broad sense, a visible sign of invisible grace (St. Augustine))

## Notes

### I. The Second Vatican Council

- Two world wars, the threat of nuclear destruction, the intellectual bankruptcy of the academic world
- Blessed John XXIII opened The Council to allow the world receive the richness of the teachings and life of the Church
- It was not to conform the Church to the modern world

### II. Aftermath of the Council

- 1968 Paul VI writes *Humanae Vitae*.
- The majority opinion at the time was to accept contraception.
- Many rejected *Humanae Vitae* after it was promulgated.
- Time of turmoil and confusion for many members of the Church.
- Karol Wojtyla’s thought anticipates and responds to these problems

### III. Influences on Wojtyla’s Thought

- John of the Cross.
  - Speaks of the experience of the Love of God.
  - It is lived in the experience of faith.
  - The believer experiences God in the mutual exchange of self-donation.
- Kant-ethics of pure duty. (boooo)
- “Phenomenology” of Max Scheler.
  - Begins with human experience.
- Personalism-the individual human person has dignity and value
- Sometimes church's doctrine is rejected because it seems to conflict with 'real life' experience, e.g. WWI

### IV. Why the Theology of the Body?

- Love
- We have been created by Love for love.
- Therefore, if we do not understand something about the relations in the Trinity we will not understand love.
- JP II's pontificate was all about teaching us to love.

#### V. Our Hero

- Meanwhile, JPII is already laying the groundwork to respond to this crisis.
- In 1960 he published *Love and Responsibility*
- His response is to gather a group to help him research deeper into marriage.
- At the time he was elected Pope, he was preparing a follow up book to *Love and Responsibility*.

#### VI. Theology of the Body

- This took shape in 129 Wednesday audiences given between Sept 1979 and November 1984.
- He wants to teach something.
- John Paul saw that the most pressing need was to develop an extended biblical theology of marriage and sexual love.

#### VII. Goals of JPII's Catechesis

- Provide a biblical defense of the Church's sexual ethic that would resonate with the modern world.
- Wanted to reframing question, not how far before I break the law, but "What does it mean to be truly human? What does it mean to love? Why did God make me male or female?"
- Develop an adequate anthropology that takes into account that we are embodied persons

#### VIII. Pope's Thesis

- The human body is a sign of the divine mystery.
- "A sign is something that points us to a reality beyond itself and, in some way, makes that transcendent reality present to us."
- The incarnation is a link between theology (study of God) and anthropology (study of man).
- Sacrament— in a broad sense makes visible what is invisible.
- Body is the sacrament of the person

#### IX. Pope's Thesis (continued)

- Christ's body is the sacrament of the Father
- Marriage is the prototype of all sacraments,
- This is because each sacrament has as its aim to unite us to Christ the Bridegroom in a fruitful and indissoluble union of love.

#### X. Structure of our Approach

- The Catechesis can be broken down into seven sections
- Part I – developing an adequate anthropology
- Original Man
- Historical Man Fallen
- Historical Man Redeemed
- Eschatological Man
- Part II – application of the adequate anthropology
- Reflections on Virginitiy for the Kingdom
- Reflections on Marriage
- Reflections on *Humanae Vitae*

#### XI. Nuptial Mystery (spousal analogy)

- Images of God's relationship to humanity:
  - Father and son, king and subjects, bridegroom and bride, shepherd and sheep, vine and branches, head and body: one of these constitutes a sacrament that efficaciously communicates the mystery it signifies--the nuptial image
- Caution: Nuptial image must be used top down not bottom up.
- We love like God, God doesn't love like us!

## X. Our View of the World

- Objective—world outside of us.
- Subjective—world as we experience it.
- Wedding the subjective and objective:
- Ethic of feeling: Scheler
- Ethic of duty: Kant
- Ethic of redemption: JPII

## XI. Ethic of Redemption

- John Paul's thought focuses on the human person as created in the image of God
- The key to understanding this is in the human body. "The only way to see the invisible vision of God is in the human body in its masculinity and femininity"
- "The body and it alone is capable of making visible what is invisible."

## XII. Ethic of Redemption (continued)

- Nuptial meaning of the body.
- Created to share in a personal communion.
- If that is true, the body must express the person. (we are *body persons*)
- Not angelism (I am not my body)
  - Angels are persons-no bodies
- Animalism (I am only my body)--animals have bodies but aren't persons.

## XIII. What are we making visible?

- Call to communion
- The image of God as communion.
- The love of God as it is shared through human love.