

also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning.” (TOB, Nov 14, 1979)

“Man Cannot Live Without Love”

A “communion of persons” occurs when two people freely give themselves to each other and accept one another in love. In fact, true love consists precisely in this mutual self-gift. As we see in the Gospels, the main point of the Christian life is to love. *“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience love and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”* (Encyclical Redeemer of Man)

The Body Is Not Some Little ‘Add-on’ To Creation

What does the human body have to do with all of this? Today the body is so often portrayed as an object for one’s pleasure or as a machine which doesn’t have much to do with our spiritual nature. The body is not some little “add-on” to creation. Rather it is a vital part of who we are as human persons. Why? Because the physical body reveals the spiritual reality of the person. For example, you can tell that someone is happy through the smile on his face. Happiness is not a physical, tangible, visible thing, so you need a physical sign to express it.

The Spousal Meaning of the Body

The sexual union of man and woman in marriage is meant to be a physical expression of their spiritual union, of the union of their whole persons. In the same way that a smile is empty if one is not really happy, sexual union is empty without spiritual communion. Not only does their physical communion point to an invisible communion, but it actually shows us that love, self-gift, is what we are called to and what we were created for. God created our bodies as male and female specifically to show us that we are called to love, that the reason for our existence is to love, to make a gift of ourselves to others. This is the ‘spousal meaning of the body’: *“The human body includes right from the beginning...the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift – and by means of this gift – fulfills the meaning of his being and existence.”* (ToB, Jan 16, 1980) This gift of self is meant to be lived in all of our relationships, but the most concrete and profound physical expression of the gift of self is the sexual union of a man and woman in marriage.

The Language of the Sexual Union

Marital union is meant to be a sign of God’s desire for complete union with us (which is intimate, though not sexual). It is a sign of Christ’s love for his people. It therefore teaches us something about God. The married couple is called to be a witness to the whole world of this love. In their sexual union their bodies speak the language of love and total self-gift. We are called to speak the truth with our bodies: *“This language of the body is something more than mere sexual reaction. As authentic language of the persons, it is subject to the demands of truth, that is, to objective moral norms. Precisely on the level of this language, man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the most profound way possible to them.”* (ToB, Aug 22, 1984) The only way to speak the truth with the body is to reserve sexual union to marriage. In marriage the couple’s physical union is the outward expression of the commitment of their entire lives to one another, the commitment that they made with their wedding vows.

That Our Hearts Become Truly Free!

The opposite of love is not hate but use, the use of another as an object, as a means to an end. Lust is using a person as an object for sexual gratification. In this way, our hearts have become "battle places between love and lust" (ToB, 23. Juli 1980). Our hearts are like a deep well: There is a lot of muddy water, but when we go all the way to the bottom, we will find a fresh and living spring. The heart is a lot deeper than lust! For Jesus, it isn't enough to keep the commandments as if they were a heavy burden. He transforms us and our desires, so that it becomes quite natural for us to live according to His plan. Then, we are no longer under the law, as Paul writes to the Romans. Then, we are able to live with a spouse in love and truth.

Christ appeals to our hearts and calls us to freely choose to live our sexuality in accord with our dignity as persons made in the image and likeness of God! Only in living our true dignity as men and women created in the image of God will we be truly fulfilled, will we be happy in the deepest possible sense. This is the life that we were designed and created to live from the beginning.

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Further Reading

Christopher West. *Theology of the Body: Explained*. ISBN 0819874108

John Paul II, Michael Waldstein (Translator). *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology Of The Body*. ISBN: 0819874213 (Englische Übersetzung der Originalansprachen)