

# *Being Catholic Today*

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## Lecture 5: **Catholics & Sexuality**

Love is the power given to the human person to participate in the love with which God himself loves in the mystery of creation and redemption. (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them* 127:1, hereafter cited as TOB, i.e., “Theology of the Body”).

Starting from this gift of love [John 3:16] we can better understand and realize in us the eternal life of God, which consists in participating in the total and complete gift of the Son to the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit. (John Paul II, homily @ Buenos Aires, 3.10.87).

In God’s wise plan, he has chosen the ‘one flesh’ union of husband and wife to be the point at which his love comes into the universe to cooperate with the love of husband and wife in bringing about, according to the mystery of his own will, the creation of a new human person” (Archbishop Charles Chaput, “Serving as a Catholic in the Third Millennium,” Address to the Couple to Couple League, July 1, 1998).

Wojtyla sees the heart of the Council in the call to deeper personal awareness of love as self-gift rooted in the Trinity...Increased awareness of the mystery of trinitarian communion—this is what allows a correct growth of the believer’s consciousness of the nature of the church as the people of God. (Michael Waldstein, Introduction to TOB, pp. 89-90).

There is a strong link between the mystery of creation, as a gift that springs from Love, and that beatifying ‘beginning’ of man’s existence as male and female, in the whole truth of their bodies and of their sexes, which is the simple and pure truth of communion between the persons. When the first man exclaims at the sight of the woman, “she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones” (Gen 2:23), he simply affirms the human identity of both. By exclaiming this, he seems to say, *Look, a body that expresses the ‘person’!* Following an earlier passage of the Yahwist text, one can also say that this ‘body’ reveals the ‘living soul’ which man became when God-Yahweh breathed life into him (see Gen 2:7). His solitude before all other living beings began in virtue of this act. Exactly through the depth of that original solitude, man now emerges in the dimension of reciprocal gift, the expression of which—by that very fact the expression of his existence as a person—is the human body in all the original truth of its masculinity and femininity. The body, which expresses femininity ‘for’ masculinity and, vice versa, masculinity ‘for’ femininity, manifests the reciprocity and the communion of persons. It expresses it through gift as the fundamental characteristic of personal existence. This is the *body: a witness* to creation as a fundamental gift, and therefore a witness *to Love as the source from which this same giving springs*. Masculinity-femininity—namely, sex—is the original sign of a creative donation and at the same time the sign of a gift that man, male-female, becomes aware of as a gift lived so to speak in an original way. This is the meaning with which sex enters into the theology of the body. (TOB 14:4)

In the light of Ephesians [5:21-33]—precisely through participation in this salvific love of Christ—marriage is confirmed and simultaneously renewed as the sacrament of the human beginning, that is, as the sacrament in which man and woman, called to become one flesh, share in the creative love of God himself. (TOB 102:2)

The innate language of [intercourse] that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other” (John Paul II *Familiaris Consortio* 32).

Gift expresses the essential truth of the human body. (P. Ide, in TOB ,p. 124)

It is a question of such an ‘acceptance’ or ‘welcome’ in reciprocal nakedness that it expresses and sustains the meaning of the gift and thus deepens its reciprocal dignity. This dignity corresponds deeply to the fact that the Creator has willed (and continually wills) man, male and female, ‘for his own sake’ (GS 24:3). Innocence ‘of heart’—and as a consequence, innocence of experience—signifies a moral participation in the eternal and permanent act of God’s will. (TOB 17:3)

The sacraments infuse holiness into the terrain of man’s humanity: they penetrate the soul and body, the feminine and masculine of the personal subject, with the power of holiness. (TOB 117b:2)

The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly—and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being—he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into Him with all his own self, he must ‘appropriate’ and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and redemption in order to find himself. (John Paul II: *Redemptor Hominis* 10)

...the very basic qualities of an adult faith which the Second Vatican Council asks of us. This faith is to be personal, free and convinced, embraced with one’s entire being, an ecclesial faith, confessed and celebrated in communion with the Church, a praying and adoring faith, matured through the experience of communion with God. (John Paul II, *Maestro en la fe*, Letter on Saint John of the Cross, in Waldstein p. 84)

By giving himself as a whole to the self-revealing God in the obedience of faith, the believer grasps his own identity as a person who has come to share in the Person of the Son in relation to the Father by the gift of the Spirit. Mission is thus not in the first place an attitude of moral commitment in response to a moral duty, but a way of being that is rooted in the person of Jesus as the Son of God. (Waldstein, p. 93)

Through gestures and reactions, through the whole reciprocally conditioned dynamism of tension and enjoyment—whose direct source is the body in its masculinity and femininity, the body in its action and interaction—through all this *man, the person*, “speaks.” (TOB 123:4)

In this way, then, the eschatological situation in which ‘they will take neither wife nor husband’ has its solid foundation in the future state of the personal subject when, as a consequence of the vision of God ‘face to face,’ *a love of such depth and power of concentration on God himself* will be born in the person that it *completely absorbs the person’s whole psychosomatic subjectivity*” (TOB 68:3).

For a survey of the development of Natural Family Planning see

[www.crisismagazine.com/december2001/cover.htm](http://www.crisismagazine.com/december2001/cover.htm)

For counseling of persons with same sex attraction see *Homosexuality and Hope*, available at

[www.cathmed.org](http://www.cathmed.org)