

## Theology of the Body – RCIA Talk – 4/11/18

- I. Intro – Why did you join the Church? So many controversial stances. Are you gluttons for punishment? I admire each of you. Be AWESEOME Catholics. NO PRESSURE. But be AWESEOME Catholics. We need you IN!
- II. What is THEOLOGY OF THE BODY and WHO CARES?
  - a. Theology of the Body (TOB) is the topic of a series of 129 lectures given by Pope John Paul II during his Wednesday audiences in St. Peter's Square and the Paul VI Audience Hall between September 5, 1979 and November 28, 1984
  - b. Essentially it's a dive into Theological Anthropology – the study of humanity, i.e. what the human person truly / essentially "is" from God's perspective.
  - c. TOB has become super famous because it provides great answers to today's hardest questions for the honest inquirer about why the Church teaches what it does.
    - i. What are today's hardest questions typically about? SEX!
    - ii. TOB provides intellectual scaffolding.
    - iii. It helps make tremendous sense of God's plan for SEX in a way that moderns can understand.
    - iv. It provides a framework to articulate why we believe what we believe on many controversial issues like, divorce, contraception, gay marriage transgender issues, etc.
- III. That will be my focus tonight....I'm going to use TOB to dive into a few of the most controversial issues of our time. NO PRESSURE!
  - a. Before we even start.....PLEASE don't hold any deficiencies of understanding against JPPII or TOB.
  - b. If you're finding it hard to follow the internal logic of my presentation tonight then it's significantly more likely that I'm just doing a poor job of explaining.
  - c. Many of these concepts I'll share tonight are taken directly from Christopher West's Good news about Sex and Marriage, which is an unpacking of JPPII's TOB with tons of practical application. I highly recommend.
- IV. Body
  - a. As far as I can tell, the main premise of TOB seeks to answer the PROTO question: Who are we?
    - i. Gen 1:26-27: We are beings made in the image and likeness of God, male and female, each expressing a specific dimension of God by that which is stamped into our very bodies – our "Maleness" and "femaleness." Meaning...our biological sexual identity expresses something about WHO God is. What does that mean?
    - ii. Obviously God is gender neutral – but something about being a man, something about being a woman, expresses something intrinsic to WHO God is, in himself. So what does THAT mean?

- iii. Well, what does being a man and woman allow for most essentially?
    - 1. Gen 1:28 – BEING FERTILE AND MULTIPLYING! Lol.
    - 2. It allows for sexuality. It allows for LOVE. It allows for family. It allows for a communion of love that generates new life. That's the image of GOD stamped into our very bodies!!!!
- b. Who is God?
  - i. 1 Jn 4:8 – God is Love
  - ii. This makes sense only when you understand the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God is a COMMUNION OF LOVING PERSONS. In Himself, HE IS A LOVING FAMILY! Father Son and Holy Spirit. Father loving son, Son receiving and returning the love of the Father, so that the shared LOVE between them is the holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity...alive...active...and efficacious.
  - iii. That's how God could still be LOVE before he created anything else. Love can't exist in a vacuum. Love must have an object of love. Because God himself is a loving family (Father to the son, son returning to the father, and that love being the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity, the HOLY Spirit).
  - iv. And what's so cool about TOB is JP II helps us understand that our creator has left evidence of himself throughout creation. Even in our own bodies! We find that the image of the TRINITY is stamped into our very bodies – that's why Gen 2:24 –Read it - The TWO BECOME ONE in love. And from that loving oneness comes a third person...new life...a baby.
- c. OK – then what is Love? What is it REALLY? And while we're at it, what ISN'T LOVE?
  - i. What does the world say that love is?
    - 1. I-phone Dictionary says it's a feeling – “an intense feeling of deep affection.” Like Passion. So is love synonymous with feelings? With passion? What about when it doesn't feel good anymore?
    - 2. Dictionary also says it's “a great interest and pleasure in something.” What about when I receive no pleasure from you anymore?
    - 3. Funny side point: Dow Chemical Co. implies on their commercials that Love is a chemical reaction – the human element commercial – What about when chemicals are removed from the equation...ie. when you're old and chemicals aren't working the same....does love cease to exist? Interesting point to think about.
  - ii. What does the Bible say? 1 Cor 13:4-8 – YES. Love IS patient, kind...love never fails....and all those things. Yes. But these are all still descriptive words about love. Is it a true definition? Not really. We're all STUCK! Soooooo.....
  - iii. Short of an actual definition, maybe it would help to ask ...What ISN'T love.

1. Can love be forced? NO.
  2. Can love be partial? Accepting some of the beloved but not all? Not those inconvenient parts? Not the ugly parts? No.
  3. Can love be temporary? Here today and gone tomorrow? No.
  4. Can love have zero impact or bear zero fruit? No. This will be especially important in the study of a particular form of love, married love.
  5. Can love be irresponsible? No.
- iv. No. Love must be...
1. Free
  2. Total
  3. Faithful/Permanent
  4. Fruitful
  5. Real Love always takes Responsibility for the good of the beloved!
- v. **Does our failure to love this way imply the lack of a real definition of love? Or does it provide a standard for imperfect love to judge itself by? The later.**
- vi. So let's go back to the world's definition? Is love, particularly married love, contingent on feelings? Is it contingent on pleasure? Is love reducible to a mere chemical reaction? No. Most would say that some of the most easily recognizable forms of love are actions NOT done because they felt good, but precisely when they didn't feel good. And they were not merely chemically induced instinctual behaviors either. In fact the greatest acts of love overcome many chemical reactions and instincts.
1. We find that Love is an act of the will. It is a free choice.
  2. No greater Love hath any man that to lay down his life....
- vii. And so we find tremendous insight in the Catholic Church's wedding vows....
1. "(Name) and (name), have you come here **freely** and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?" **(FREE)**
  2. "Will you honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?" **(TOTAL, FAITHFUL, AND PERMANENT)**
  3. "Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?" **(FRUITFUL)**
  4. Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church. **(RESPONSIBLE)**
  5. **Groom:** I, (name), take you, (name), to be my wife. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

6. **Bride:** I, (name), take you, (name), to be my husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.
- viii. The sacrament of Marriage is the best earthly image of the Trinity here and now on earth. A communion of loving persons. That's why Paul says in Ephesians 5:31-32 that "Marriage is a great mystery revealing Christ and the church." It's because we are the BRIDE of Christ. It's why heaven is described in Revelation as the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, where Christ marries his Church! Under this new understanding, real marriage, by default, identifies all counterfeits.
- ix. That's also why the Eucharist, COMMUNION, is the source and summit of our Christian faith. In the Eucharistic meal we consummate our marriage to our groom, the Lamb of God. As we partake of the new paschal Lamb, our groom, we take Christ into our very selves, and by the efficacious power of his life within us we bear new life in the world. Christ's love for us is free, total, faithful, and fruitful. He takes ultimate responsibility for our welfare on the cross. He feeds us and sustains us, as any lover is obliged to do. As TOB makes clear, we were made for COMMUNION....Complete ONENESS...Complete Unity with God IN, WITH, and THROUGH LOVE. Our Destiny is to become ONE with LOVE in heaven, but also here and now on earth through the sacrament of the Eucharist. The CCC quotes St. Irenaeus and St. Athanasius when they basically say "God became man so that man could become God." It's only in this sense of communion that we understand that statement from 130 AD. Christianity is about becoming a "Partaker of the Divine Nature" as 2 Pt 1:4 states. In communion we become PARTAKERS of the Divine nature.
- d. How does this relate to all those controversial issues we mentioned at the beginning?
  - i. We find the true purpose of Sexuality. It is a language of love. And Sexuality is a language only spoken truthfully in marriage.
    1. Sexuality is a particular type of language...it's a body language...
    2. To be good, language must be true.
    3. The language of love spoken during sex is only truthful when it is free, total, faithful, fruitful, and responsible. Sexual language is a language of permanence by its very nature. It expresses a total gift of self. In other words, when it is spoken within a permanent marriage covenant, it's true. Because sex says one thing. I LOVE you. And love is permanent. It says "I love you so much that there is no other way to express this kind of love than to give you ALL of me. And I take ALL of you. I want to become ONE with you." That kind of love can't happen temporarily. It is permanent. That's why

sexuality is a fundamental part of marriage. The TWO become ONE. And let no man separate what God has joined together. Anything that makes sex a lie ... is wrong. It's a betrayal. It makes an abuse of the sexual language.

e. Give me some examples:

- i. Premarital sex – is it free? Total? Faithful? Fruitful? Responsible? No. That's one is easy.
- ii. Divorce – is divorce consistent with true LOVE? No. It's easy to see that divorce betrays the permanence and totality of real authentic love.
- iii. Contraception – Is it free? Hmm. Maybe? Is it total? No. Is it fruitful? Nope. Is it responsible or is it trying to avoid responsibility? By its very nature contraception seeks to divorce responsibility from the sexual language. By its very nature contraception allows for pleasure without consequence.
- iv. Homosexuality – Is it free? Perhaps. Is it Total? Potentially but probably not in that it fails to recognize the ontological end of the person's gift of sexuality. But let's leave that aside for now. Is it Faithful? Sometimes (but certainly no more than most heterosexual marriages which have a 50%+ divorce rate). Is it Fruitful? Here the answer is intrinsically no. And that "no" has a huge consequence on the intrinsic potential for the act itself to be truly loving. Why? The potential for bearing fruit (or the lack thereof) renders each act intrinsically responsible (or irresponsible) for the long term and permanent welfare of the beloved. Homosexuality, by default, pursues sexual pleasure for its own sake. Same with contracepted heterosexual sex. Each are examples of sex pursued for its own sake. Both are devoid of the necessity of taking permanent responsibility for the good of the beloved. So they each devolve into usury. Using another person for one's own pleasure. Permanence and responsibility are substituted for passion and momentary pleasure. (See John Paul II's LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY for a fuller explanation of these important topics).
- v. Transgender, Bisexual, etc. etc. etc. – all these issues pound like waves against God's law of permanent, responsible, fruitful, LOVE.

V. Conclusion –That's the point of it all. God's commandment is that we LOVE ONE ANOTHER as Christ has loved you. But this is not an easy, or cheap kind of love. This is real love. It demands everything. It will destroy your flesh. But ironically, it brings about new LIFE. And this is MOST ESPECIALLY TRUE IN MARRIAGE. Marriage is a COVENANT OF LOVE. Understanding what is NOT love helps us define what Love IS. In articulating the errors of premarital sex, divorce, contraception, homosexuality, etc., the church is not creating her own rules to hurt people or make their lives hard. The church is only being faithful to LOVE. The church didn't invent love. It is merely being faithful to the authentic definition of love. The church has no authority to

change the definition of love. That's why it has no authority to give out divorces. (Another study for another day, but note that Catholic annulments are NOT Catholic divorces. They are a declaration that the necessary elements of a true marriage never existed to begin with. It publically declares to the other members of the church that a true marriage never existed in the first place. Which bespeaks the dignity of marriage rather than to the right to a divorce. Marriage is a real thing. It has a real definition. And therefore certain relationships which don't contain those particular elements are NOT real marriages, despite what any government says.) The church has no authority to say contraception (for the sake of preventing pregnancy) is ok. The church has no authority to say homosexual marriage is ok. The church doesn't create ANY of these realities. Therefore they exist independently in themselves because they were created by God. The Church's job is simply to be a faithful witness (to reflect as the moon reflects the sun) to what Christ has revealed about these things. It merely receives Christ, the Way, The TRUTH, and the LIFE until she becomes ONE with Him perfectly, and invite others into that same life.