

## THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY

(1 Cor 6:20)

*An introduction to the Theology of the Body, in the light of Advent  
Sr Sofie o.p. at the Studium Catholicum, 2018*

It is very fitting to reflect on the human body as a preparation for Christmas, since the mystery of Christmas means God taking up a human body, thus uniting himself with humanity in the most intimate way possible.

*Christ inscribed in the human body – in the body of every man and every woman – a new dignity,  
because he himself has taken up the human body together with the soul  
into union with the person of the Son-Word.<sup>1</sup>*

And yet, Incarnation is just the first step of Union between man and God, since its full accomplishment will take place in eternal life.

It is through baptism that we fully acknowledge this gift and let our own bodies be united to God. Our bodies no longer belongs to ourselves, as Saint Paul says (1 Cor 6:19). The most expressive image, or symbol, for this union between God and man, is the one-flesh union between man and woman in marriage. That's why, in the liturgy of hours, The Church gives us to read the Song of songs the last week of advent.

The theme of marriage runs like a red thread through the bible from creation until the very last page: Christ presents himself as the bridegroom. The whole Bible ends with the call of the bride: 'Come!' We are called to the wedding of the Lamb. It is the core truth of our salvation, and it is the core truth of Christmas. So this retreat will be an introduction to the Theology of the Body by John Paul II. It might seem at certain points that we are quite far away from the cosy advent-atmosphere, when we also will enter the theme of human sexuality. God is not sexual, our union with him is not sexual, and sexuality is not God. But as we will see, it is part of what makes man image of God, a means of personal union between two beings. It was created by God as a sign, to reveal the mysteries hidden in God from all eternity, reveal his plan of salvation.

Many people, maybe most of us, have this conscious or unconscious presupposition that our body is not so 'spiritual', that it is somehow of a 'lower degree' than the soul or that there is an opposition between body and soul.

*It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. Joh 6:63*

---

<sup>1</sup> § 56:4

*For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. Gal 5:17*

*Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Rm 7:24*

*I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified. 1 Cor 9:27*

*And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24*

There is like an implicit conviction among believers and unbelievers, that the Christian faith implies a dualism between body and soul. A famous Swedish professor in psychology of religion explained in *Dagens Nyheter*<sup>2</sup> that the sexual abuses in the Church were due to 'The Church teaching of body and soul as separated'. Even a famous professor can be fundamentally wrong.

Because it is just the opposite that is true. The Christian faith is the religion that has overcome this gap between body and soul that you'll find in almost all other religious traditions (except Judaism). Eastern religions consider the body to be an illusion, a 'skin' in which you are reincarnated for some time, and then you switch skins. According to the gnostic teachings, the body and all matter is evil. Man is a pure soul fallen in matter, trapped in matter, imprisoned there. The Bible, on the contrary, teach us that all that God has created is good. God forms man out of soil from the earth, breathing his spirit through his nose. Man is not a spirit trapped in matter, but matter filled with the spirit of life. A unity of body and soul.

And God became man, united himself with our bodily nature. Through his resurrection and ascension he brings mankind, each one of us with our bodily nature, back to God, in an eternal unity, a marriage. Already through baptism, in a hidden way, our human body is united to his glorified body. We are grafted into the Body of Christ, and our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has risen from the death and through him our lethal bodies will resurrect and become united to God in an eternal wedding feast.

*He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ... and to gather up all things in him. Ef 1:5+10*

Our body is called to be united with God, it has a spousal significance. It contains a message of love. No other religion offers the same promise.

---

<sup>2</sup> 1. Sexövergrepp på två svenska barn', SvD, April 14, 2010.

Still, there is a kind of ambivalence towards our bodies, and especially towards our sexuality. The oldest sisters in my convent in France told me that when they were to take the weekly bath, they had to wear a night gown. You were not even allowed to look at your own body. Not so long ago, a young woman didn't know anything of what was going to take place on the wedding night. And it could happen that she got the advice: 'Close your eyes and think of something else.' In Catholic countries there was a special habit, covering the whole body, and with an opening for the sexual union. And on this habit it was written: 'Dieu le veut.' Sexuality was a means to get children, a duty. (This was more due to Jansenism of the 19th century) The mutual love between spouses, which includes the joy of giving pleasure to the beloved, was taboo, looked upon with suspicion. Of course, this caused much harm in the marital relationship. Pope John Paul II, whose teaching I base my books, refutes this distorted picture. The human being must never be used as a means for something else – not even as a means to conceive a child – she must always be loved for her own sake. Not even God has the right to use man and woman as means for procreation. Free, gracious love is the core of human sexuality.

The point of view of Martin Luther was that sexuality is always sinful, but God forgives, because sex is necessary for the survival of the human race. This is not exactly a more positive outlook.

We need to know that this ambivalence towards our body, our urges, instincts and our sexuality, is not something unique for Christians. Auguste Comte, the father of scientific positivism, wrote that the sexual act could only be justified as a means for procreating children. Schopenhauer considered sexuality as the evil at the core of nature, because it caused reincarnation into matter. Jean-Paul Sartre mentions sexuality only as a base physiological reality or as something outright disgusting. We cannot only accuse the Church.

The reason why there is this shame attached to the body is that we are fallen creatures, inwardly broken. We might believe that there is something wrong with the body, but in reality it is our heart that is wounded, cut off from the source of love, which is God. Our relation to our own body has become dislodged, disturbed. There is a split between body and soul so that we do not perceive our bodies as God perceives them, we are not totally at home in our own bodies. The body does not obey us, it doesn't look as we would desire, it gets older, sick and so on. From this follows that also our sexuality is broken. We have the ability to abuse this wonderful creative power of love that God entrusted us, so that it does not lead to personal communion, unity, and life, but to isolation, degradation and even death. Out of this comes shame.

Many people today, at least in certain feminist circles, assert that there was a pre-Christian, original, natural way of living sexuality that was more free, more fulfilling for women. In the ancient world sexuality penetrated culture and religion in a way we can hardly imagine. In the fertility cults male and female prostitutes (*qadesh* and *qadesha*) acted as substitute gods. One could come to the Temple and unite with them by offering some money or other gifts. The people participated in these orgies. The children, who were the fruits of these acts, could be sacrificed in fire to the god Moloch. This was de-personified sex, anonymous sex, people's bodies used as tools to obtain benefits like good harvest, rain, cattle and so on. The sacred prostitutes were used, or abused, until they were discarded. This is the opposite of gracious love, to be loved for one's own sake.

The god Baal was pictured as a bull. This idolatry of the sexual drive, with humans as substitute gods is not at all what the Bible means when speaking about man and woman in the image of God. We are the image of God because we are persons, with the capacity of personal relation. Not in some kind of ecstatic cult of instinct, force and pleasure, but in being seen and known as persons, to get out of our loneliness.

It was Judaism that broke with the pagan cults, by de-sexualising God. The first phrase in the Bible is a revolution: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' God creates through his will and through his word, not through sexual behaviour. Sexuality could no longer dominate religion and social life. It was to be sanctified – which in Hebrew means separated – from the world and placed in the home, in the bed of husband and wife. The truth of human sexuality is in a personal covenant between a man and a woman.

This was not a popular message in Biblical times:

*'Do not prophesy to us what is right;  
speak to us smooth things,  
prophesy illusions,  
leave the way, turn aside from the path,  
let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'* (Is 30:10-11)

Judaism begins the long and arduous task of elevating the status of woman, from being the property of man, producer of children, sex object, to an equal partner, worthy of love for her own sake. The Song of Songs is the high point in the Old Testament of this transformation. And children were no longer to be killed. The law, the Torah, is therefore not a hindrance for love, but it is love. And as we will see, Jesus will fulfil the Torah as he brings love between man and woman to its perfection.

But why have there been so many misunderstandings among Christians and in the Church? We understood the notion of 'flesh' (St Paul) as equal to body, instincts or sexual drive. But the works of the flesh, in the writings of Saint Paul, means fallen

human nature. Evil inclinations as fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these (Gal 5:19-21). Sex falls under this category when it means using others to satiate my own drives. Unfortunately, the whole sphere of sexuality became taboo as something sinful, suspicious and forbidden.

Today though, we have ended up in the opposite trench, where sexuality is trivialised, and more or less forced upon young people as an amusing distraction or a physiological need like eating, that must be satisfied in a given time-frame. Joyful, funny, exciting, always allowed.

One thing that is clear here is that many young people do not at all do what they really want, but what they believe they have to do in order to fit in and be accepted. The Swedish author Bodil Malmsten wrote about 'all those sexual encounters that we had to get through, in order to be part of the sexual revolution'. And yet we call it freedom.

These two ways of understanding the reality of the body, either seeing it as sinful or as a neutral object for pleasure, an article of consummation, are two sides of the same coin, the same contempt for the body. The body is reduced to sheer matter, physiological functions, chemical substances, a purely animal organism. We *have* a body, instead of *being* bodies, incarnated souls. This view comes from the famous words: 'I think, therefore I am.' (Descartes) We perceive our bodies from outside, as a machine.

It is then quite easy to understand that you'll try to get out as much as possible from this machine. Our culture proposes a view of sex as entertainment, with no awareness of the very deep emotions that are set in motion in an act that involves the most intimate part of our personality. And if the body is only an object, and I am the proprietor of this machine, where no natural given limits are accepted, because I can change, then the notion of gender/sex is also changed. The body is just an envelope, the sexual organs are accessories. We become androgyne spirits imprisoned in a body.

I quote Judith Butler: 'I can get up in the morning, look into my wardrobe and decide what gender I will be today. I can take a piece of clothing and change my gender, give it a new style, and then in the evening I change it again and become something radically different.'

This is a radical break with the biblical view of man as a living soul, made up of body and spirit. Medieval theology, with St Thomas at the summit, taught that man is an incarnated soul. A spiritual reality that is made visible and concrete. Body and soul are one, just as matter and form are one. You cannot have matter without some kind of form. And no body without a soul imprinting a certain form to the body. Without the

soul the body disintegrates, just as it does after death, when the soul leaves the body. It is no longer a body, but a corps.

The human soul cannot exist to its fullest potential without a body. That's why our soul after death, await a new resurrection of the body. A glorified body.

*Your body is not a symbol of your person,  
like a sign on the road pointing to a city.  
Your body is you, reveals who you are.  
When your body is touched, you are touched.  
If someone takes your hand, you can be moved.  
But even deeper if the touch is of sexual nature.  
Your body is personal,  
never exclusively animal.  
In the deep personal encounter of the sexual union man get a glimpse  
of the mystery of God.  
For God is personal, not a diffuse energy.  
He is a YOU.*

During this retreat we will go deeper into this truth and explore the words of the Bible, concerning the human body.

## **The Story of Creation**

Some Pharisees came to him to test him and asked him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?' And he answered them, 'Have you not read that from the beginning *the Creator created them male and female* and said, '*For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be one flesh*'? So it is that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined let man not separate.' They objected, 'Why then did Moses order to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus answered, 'Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, *but from the beginning it was not so.*' (Mt 19:3-8)

Jesus quotes the first two chapters of the Bible, how it was *in the beginning*. He says that they reveal something decisive about human identity, he is actually putting up the conditions in paradise as a norm for us today. In this way he affirms that there is a link and a continuity between our present condition of brokenness and this unbroken and blessed origin. 'Historical man is rooted in his revealed theological prehistory' (§ 4:2)

And Jesus calls us back to this origin.

(‘If that beginning indicated only the creation of man as ‘male and female’, if Christ only led his interlocutors across the boundary of man’s state of sin to original innocence and did not open at the same time the perspective of a redemption of the body his answer would not have been understood adequately. Precisely the perspective of the redemption of the body guarantees the continuity and unity between man’s hereditary state of sin and his original innocence, although within history this innocence has been irremediably lost by him.’)

How are we to interpret the stories of creation? According to Jesus, they say something decisive about our identity. The Bible is not a scientific book that explains how creation took place. It tells you *why* creation took place, the very meaning of life. Mythical and symbolical language doesn’t necessarily imply that all this is phantasy and myth. A lover that describes the eyes of his beloved might say that they are like a deep well or like the sun in spring. A medical doctor who describes the same eyes talks about the cornea, the pupil, the lens and so on. Same eyes, same reality, but two very different languages. Whose description is more true? Who knows this person best, the medical doctor or the lover? The authors of the Bible know the human person very deeply, and in a different way than the biologist, the archaeologist or the medical doctor. Man is a great mystery, and the mystery can only be described/apprehended with symbols.

What then *is* ‘the beginning’? It is not first of all what happened so and so many billions of years ago. In that case Big bang would have refuted the bible. ‘Beginning’ also means origin, principle, your deepest, undamaged, core, your roots here and now! One could say God’s architectural design. The drawing of an architect can remain, even though the building might be damaged or even ruined.

When an artist gets an idea, he usually ‘sees’ something within himself. God also has a vision: ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness (Gen 1:27). This vision, he’ll never give up, the secret of his will (Ef 1:9).

*He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love (Ef 1:4).*

This secret will, this mystery, is rooted in you, as indestructible as your DNA. That is why we long for love more than anything else.

Jesus refers to this good, unspoilt origin in us. If we were irrevocably ruined, his norms would be extremely cruel. They would condemn us. In fact, the disciples react to this: Then it is better not to marry. You require the impossible.

But Jesus does not come with a beautiful idea, an ideal. He is not a Plato. He comes with Truth, the truth of whom we are. He is not coming with precepts and prohibitions, but with a gift and a possibility. Through Him, in union with Him, we have access to a renewed and restored humanity. This is Christmas!

The Theology of the Body is about this redemption of the body and of the human person. The ultimate goal is our eternal union with God, but even in this life God can and wants to redeem our bodies and the human sexuality. The human procreative force is not meant to be suppressed and squirmed by prohibitions. It is meant to be redeemed, so as to reveal the radiant image of God.

Each human person finds his roots in the original design of God. And that's why the whole creation groan inwardly, like in labour pains. *We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.*<sup>3</sup>

The redemption of the body is a key concept in the Theology of the body. It does not mean to be delivered *from* the body, but to be delivered from all the forces and tendencies that hinder man from realising his full human potential. With this focus in sight, we shall explore the stories of creation.

## II. THE PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING

The story of creation describes an original state of harmony and bliss, in stark contrast to human history as we know it from the fall and onwards, through the Bible. You'll find the whole spectre of brokenness in the bible: oppression of woman, betrayal, adultery, violence, polygamy, murder, prostitution, killing of children... This brokenness continues all through human history into our own lives, between man and woman, man and God and within ourselves, with our bodies... What has been revealed through #metoo is not so new. You'll find all this in the Bible. It is awesome to realise that it is to *this* humanity that God turns with his love. Comes with his love.

By quoting the first two chapters in the bible, Jesus asserts that they reveal something decisive about human identity. If the stories of creation are not fairy tales about a history that took place some six billion years ago, but describes who we are, we should reasonably be able to recognise ourselves in these texts. It should be possible to experience, what is being said during this retreat, if only as a deep longing: *This* is what I have been created for. I hope it will give you the hope that this is possible.

### Image of God

In the first chapter of the bible, man enters the scene in the last act, as the summit of the work of God, 'In His image'.

---

<sup>3</sup> Rm 8:23

God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. ... And God created man in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

When God creates the world, it is as if he is creating a temple of heaven and earth together. In a temple you always put an image of the godhead, so that all could see who they adored and have part in his divine life. By creating man and woman together as an image of God, he put an image of himself in the temple of creation, so that we can have an idea of God’s love, and actually take part in it.

God places man ‘above’ the visible world, to rule over it. Biology tells us that man is an animal. The bible confirms that we are part of the created world. But man does not resemble any other animal, he resembles God. He has a body, like the animals, but his identity is not to be found only in the visible and material world.

Man in Hebrew is *adam*, and this *adam* is created male – *zakhar* – and female – *nekevah*. The sexual difference of the animals is not mentioned, only the human sex is highlighted. In other words, there is a connection between our resemblance and likeness of God, and the fact that we are being created man and woman. The sexual difference, with the specific physical signs, must be understood and interpreted in the light of our likeness to God, rather than our likeness to animals. Man and woman are created absolutely equal, and their sexual difference is ‘very good’.

The word ‘sex’ comes from latin *secare*, to separate, distinguish (cf. scissors, secateurs). A fundamental polarity, inscribed in man, that the Bible highlights from the first page. Our sex is a constitutive part of the person. Masculinity and femininity are two ways of revealing the divine, God, who is the highest form of being: polarity in union.

## **Original Solitude**

In the second account of the creation of man the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I want to make him a help similar to himself.’ The animals did not fit as a partner for man, they were not similar. The animals are no personal subjects.

Man, formed from dust, is called *ha adam*, which means the human being, male as well as female. Man becomes a man – *ish* – only at the moment of creation of woman – *ishah*, a little later in the story. Pope John Paul II insists on these linguistic distinctions. What is said about *ha adam*, before the creation of woman, concerns the human being, man and woman, and not only the male human being.

It is not good that man should be alone. This solitude goes deeper than the longing of man for a woman, it's a solitude inscribed in human nature, both in man and in woman, in relation to the whole visible creation, a solitude that only God can fill.

Man is different from the whole creation. Through our capacity of knowledge, of understanding the essence of things by naming them, we are able to penetrate the mystery of being. Thus man becomes aware of himself, he has a capacity for self-consciousness. Man is a subject. God gives this subject a free will, he can choose to eat or not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. *It is exactly this freedom* that makes possible a relationship of love to God himself. Self-consciousness and freedom are the attributes of a subject, that which distinguishes us from the animals. The very condition of love, the capacity of knowing and to be known, of choosing and being chosen. The essence of love is not 'I feel for you. I am in love with you.' But: 'I choose you. And I know you.'

We will come back this afternoon to this prohibition and what it means.

Man becomes aware of a cosmic solitude, not because there is no woman, but because he is a free and conscious being. He is not like any other animal. He is like God. All in man longs for God. But something is still lacking. God and *Ha Adam* are not yet at the same wavelength. God seems so high, so distant, so different. He is transcendent. Man needs to realise in a concrete way how he is really like God. Adam needs a helper – *ezer* – a complement to achieve the image of God.

God wants to make man a partner, capable of relation to himself. He wants man to glorify God by resembling his creator and experience his love. Man is not yet fully in the image of God. This is realised when woman is created.

Here we stand before the mystery of the human person. The person, or the subject, is someone who knows himself and discovers himself in communion. And it is only when Adam realises that he is a person, that he will discover his likeness with God, God who is personal communion between Father, Son and Holy spirit.

Woman is created out of the rib of man. This is a symbolic way to express that man and woman are of the same human nature and perfectly equal. Woman appears as the final achievement of God, she is the last one. This means that she is the summit, the fulfilment. In a liturgical procession it is always the most important person who comes at the end.

The human being becomes a masculine man at the moment when woman is created. This is still a symbolical way of speaking. It does not indicate that man was first

androgynous, and a couple of days later God endowed him with sexual attributes. It's not a question of time here, of before and after, but of different levels within the human being. We are first and foremost beings that can reflect on ourselves and make free choices. This is the level where we realise ourselves as human beings. If you are a man or a woman does not matter here. We meet at the same level. We are both very alike and very different.

Man recognises himself in woman: 'She is bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh!' In the Song of songs, the bridegroom calls his bride sister, which is an echo of the account of Creation. 'Before they become husband and wife, man and woman come forth from the mystery of creation first of all as brother and sister in the same humanity' (§ 18:5).

But the woman is not an exact mirror of man. She is different. When God creates man the verb *jatsar* is used, forming like a potter. Woman, on the contrary, is not kneaded, but built, *bana*. This is more delicate work, which demands an architect. Woman has an inner room. She offers a home, a place of communion. In the Hebrew text man gets an *ezer ke negedo*. *Ezer*, in the Bible, refers everywhere else to God. God is the *ezer*, the helper. (Ps 27:9; 31:11; 54:6; 121<sup>4</sup>) *Ke negedo* contains the meaning of standing before as a vis-à-vis, a counterpart. It can be in opposition, but also difference. The same root as in the verb to speak, *lehagid*. Woman makes man open his mouth and speak the first words in the Bible. She is the dialogue partner that man needs.

This divine helper, this different vis-à-vis, helps Adam to get out of himself, not to look for his own image. The woman is a helper because she is different, and she enables man to give himself completely.

When the man sees the woman, he feels longing and wonder, he understands that he is called to give himself to her. And in this joy is reflected the glory of God. *Now* Adam can see in whose image he has been created!

Man exists for the other – we need to live in mutuality. This is the only way to self-realisation, the only way of realising the image of God. This is how woman is a helper to man, and the man to the woman. In this mutual communion, man and woman reveal the deep communion of the Holy Trinity, where the Father reveals the Son and the Son the Father in a communion that bears fruit in the Holy Spirit. To know each other in a third person, originated by both. This is, according to John Paul II, constitutes the deepest theological aspect of everything one can say about man. (9:3).

---

<sup>4</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Ps 121:1-2)

In his sexually determined identity man achieves finally the total consciousness of being image of God. Now man has become a perfect partner, capable of entering in relationship with the eternal Master. In the union of man and woman, the first covenant with God is sealed. Man and woman live in intimate communion with God.  
(This is the first cell of the Church)

## **Original Nakedness**

*Now both were naked, the man and his wife, but they did not feel shame.*<sup>5</sup>

The absence of shame means absence of fear from the other's gaze. Man and woman do not need any defence towards each other. They recognised each one's deepest personal truth, made visible in and through the body. They experience longing, but not lust – *concupiscentia* – and therefore they do not need to hide the parts of their bodies that are created for self-giving. They need no protection from the other's longing, from the other's sexuality, because there is no tendency to grasp and consummate. Only to give and to share.

'Nakedness signifies the original good of the divine vision, which shows the 'pure' value of man as male and female, the 'pure' value of the body and of its sex as an expression of the whole person, a person that must be loved for his own sake.' (Cf. § 13:1 January 2, 1980)

## **Man as a Gift**

The Creator calls the world into being from nothing, *ex nihilo*. This means Creation is a *gift*, a fundamental and radical giving. Man, created in the image of God, is called to exist as a gift. Here we can see the link between the creation as gift and man created male and female. Through the sexual difference man and woman discovers that they have the capacity to give themselves totally. The meaning of sexuality is giving, to abandon one's person to another and fully receive another. On this ground man is sure to be image of God. Masculinity and femininity, i.e. sex, is the original sign of a creative donation (§ 14:3)<sup>6</sup>.

In this relation there is no shame: here is revealed the original innocence, which means *the pure gift of self*.

John Paul II does not hesitate to call the union between man and woman 'the original sacrament'. The body is a sign 'capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the

---

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:25

<sup>6</sup> General Audience, January 9, 1980.

mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus be a sign of it' (19:4, 20 February 1980). The body reveals the mystery of Truth and Love, the mystery of divine life, in which man really participates.

This could make us believe that only the married person realises the image of God. But creation has a higher destiny than to marry and live happily ever after. God imprints his own image in creation, through the union of man and woman. But this union is only a sign of the ultimate plan of creation: the union between God and each human being, like a bridegroom with his bride. The union between man and woman is a sign of a greater reality to come, in eternity. We are called to the wedding banquet in heaven. Human love is the most adequate symbol, sign, image of what God has promised. A sign, not the ultimate goal.

Among the friends of Jesus, we do in fact not find so many who lived in ordinary families (John the Baptist, Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Saint Paul...) Jesus was not married, and his life was far from sterile. He was the seed that fell into the ground and gave more fruit than any other, ever. This tells us that a life in sexual abstinence is meaningful and can be very fruitful. Jesus is also broadening the notion of family. (Mark 3:31-35) If someone had to choose, Jesus requires that the person choose God's new family before the biological family.

Marriage and family are a wonderful reality, but the family is not Heaven on earth, simply a way to get there. But there are other ways. Common to all the ways is self-giving. Docility to the will of God, fidelity, truth, justice...

True self-realisation cannot be found in another human being nor in any achievement, but only in our ability to obey and respond to Someone greater than ourselves. Here you open the gates to a meaningful life, full of love for anyone. And full of peace.

After the fall, the language of the body, i.e. to be a gift, is darkened. But its inner meaning is inscribed in the heart of man and woman as a distant echo from the beginning. When Christ refers to the beginning, we receive a new hope, the hope that the divine plan will lead to the redemption of the body, its fulfilment and glorification.

### **III. THE FALL**

We are now going to pass the threshold from a 'prehistorical' state of original innocence – a state we know through faith in the word of Christ, but also through a deep inner longing – to the present human experience.

When we speak about the fall, first of all we need to understand what this prohibition is all about. This limit that man is not allowed to transgress. When God creates the world, he reveals his greatness and power, not so much in his omnipotence and strength, as in limiting his own power, thus allowing freedom to his creatures. We can choose, we have a choice. The greatest power is, in other words, not the one who subdues everybody, but the one who limits himself to allow space to others. If man is to reflect the image of God, the God who gives space to others, he must give up the childish claim of omnipotence. He must accept limits.

There is a limit to our possibilities and desires – even though we could eat of all of the trees except one. Do we want to trust God and accept this limit, or do we want to grasp the whole creation out of the hands of God, and decide that we are our own origin? In that case, our ego becomes the centre of our life, our desires the norm. We get imprisoned in ourselves. Man has to accept a limit to his needs. He cannot have everything, eat everything, be everything, he must give space for other people's needs. This is the way to remain human. The limit is good.

The first limit we meet, and that the bible highlights, is that we are created as man and not woman, as woman and not man. None of us is everything. This limitation is inscribed in man as part of the divine image. The difference between the sexes is not just any difference. It is the 'otherness' that makes it possible for us to accept all other differences, all limits to our desire to be all powerful. The opposite sex represents the unknown and strange to the other. Already as children we learn to accept each human being as different and difficult to understand. There are limits between me and others. They are not my mirror. I cannot live in fusion. Others have needs that oblige me to refrain myself.

Here we find the explanation of the prohibition, the tree in the middle of the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The ancient languages did not have an expression for totalities. To express the concept of the whole world, they say: 'heaven and earth'. To say all knowledge, they say: 'knowledge of good and evil'. Man cannot possess the totality of all knowledge, thus determine what is good and what is evil, because man is created, not the Creator. *There is an order that precedes us.* (A human nature, from latin *natura*, to be born.) Claiming to create this order ourselves means rebellion against the fact that we are created beings. It is by respecting this limit between Creator and creature, by renouncing a being all, knowing all, and to trust this order of God, that man remains human. We are called to abandon ourselves to something greater than ourselves.

By renouncing of being all, living with others, giving place to the different, the opposite sex, man has part in divine wholeness. *The sexual difference is not a limitation of the gift of life, but the gift of a limit that makes life possible* (not only biological life).

When one person claims to be everything, to be the source of their own life, another person becomes a threat, because he or she might have desires that oppose mine. The relation between man and woman will be marked by a balance of power, dominance, desire/cravings and suspicion.

A key word here is desire, or concupiscence. It comes in after the fall. We shall try to understand what it means, by listening to a part of the sermon of the mount.

*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say unto you: Whoever looks at a woman to desire her [in a reductive way] has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:27-28).*

To commit adultery 'in the heart' is a new notion. You do not find it in the law of Moses. Marriage laws in the Torah regulate a social order, possessions, heritage and so on. The Torah limits the negative effects of the Fall, since you cannot dismiss your wife in just any way. The certificate of divorce was a way to ensure that the woman could remarry, so as to survive. But Christ's intention goes far beyond ensuring a certain social order; he turns to the inner man, our heart.

The law is brought to a completely new level, away from legalism, from what is permitted and what is forbidden. The issue at stake is a complete transformation of the relations between man and woman, a redemption of sexuality.

Desire does not mean sexual attraction, longing, *eros*, which is something good, a part of human nature. But *eros* seeks a beloved being, whereas desire seeks its own self-satisfaction. Desire/concupiscence does not mean our basic needs that must be fulfilled in order that we live and function. Our needs are forces that make us reach out for what we must have to survive, to sustain our existence. A need that is filled is something good. That's why God blessed it with pleasure. Pleasure is the crowning of a good act. Pleasure is not an end in itself, rather it is a consequence, a reward. I eat to live, and it is good that I live, so eating gives pleasure. But I cannot make the pleasure of eating the goal of my life. Or if I do, it's not a human life. When pleasure becomes an end in itself, we speak about desire/concupiscence. It becomes compulsive.

Desire/*concupiscentia* signifies instincts and needs that go astray, that get off the track, so that man becomes their slave. It can happen with all our intrinsically good instincts and needs. We have a natural need for influence, to succeed, to possess things, to be confirmed and so on. Any one of those needs can get off the track and become compulsive. In the sexual sphere, desire will blind the man for the personal beauty of a particular woman, and only seek his own satisfaction, thus reducing the woman to an object. This is the very opposite of self-giving, it is taking. And immediately the communication is broken, not only between man and woman, but also with God. The

Swedish author Hjalmar Söderberg made a very clear-sighted analysis of this phenomenon: 'I believe in the lust of the flesh, and in the incurable solitude of the soul.'

Where does this slavery come from? How could man and woman lose this blissful state of being a gift to one another?

Man broke the covenant with God, source of all goodness and satisfaction, He who gives the inner peace of order. Thus, the whole creation became a place of absence, a void, a constant gnawing dissatisfaction, a desire and thirst for something more. We start compensating the inner emptiness that appears when we take the place of God.

The words of Christ in the Sermon of the Mount are not a judgment nor a condemnation, but a calling, a forceful calling. By high-lighting the desire/concupiscence in our heart, he hints at the same time, as through a photographic negative, to the *Imago Dei* which is still our deepest identity. If purity of heart was not possible, the words of Jesus would be a condemnation. JP II encourages us to receive the words of Jesus as a powerful calling. They open up a possibility: man is not forever condemned to be a slave under his instincts and desires. Nor just to suppress them and despise them, by adapting to a moral code. Jesus is not satisfied only with exterior acts, in this case not to commit adultery, he calls us to purity of heart, *to discover the radiant image to which we have been created.*

Man do not need to turn away his gaze from the woman, but he must renew his gaze, contemplate her person.

### **Shame Enters the Picture**

When man, symbolically, eats of the fruit of all knowledge, he gives in to doubt. 'Did God really say...?' He distrusts God's loving intention for him. Man received the world and himself as a gift. Now he turns his back to the Giver, and grasps, in order to use Creation for his own benefit. Taking, instead of giving. He then ceases to be a gift, and loses all that he received from the Father. What is left is only what comes from the world. Man is cut off from his transcendent dimension.

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.<sup>7</sup>*

---

<sup>7</sup> Gen 3:7

This verse talks about the entrance of shame in man's life, and it shows that *shame does not come from God*. By doubting that creation is a loving gift from God, a suspicion appears towards the existentially good: masculinity and femininity.

The prohibition to eat of the fruit of all knowledge did not mean that God wanted to withhold knowledge. He endowed man with the ability to name things, i.e. to understand their essence. Eating of the fruit of all knowledge means conquering the power of God, and to reach self-fulfilment by our own power. Man succumbs to the lie: 'You shall be like God.' You shall be your own master. There mustn't be any limits to what you can do or be. Man makes himself independent of Him from whom he received his being, life and bliss. Thus he is destitute. And from this state of destitution springs shame.

Man hides his nakedness, this shows that he has lost the certitude of being created in the image of God. He has lost the intimacy with God. This indicates a kind of collapse of the whole human nature, and this has consequences not only for the relationship between man and woman, but also between man and the cosmos. Man no longer rules the Earth.

Nakedness is a symbol of helplessness and exposure. The pope speaks about a cosmic shame: man's transcendent being is being veiled.

Nakedness is connected to intimacy and closeness. But now man has lost his highest privilege: intimacy with God. Man becomes a being of lack/dearth. This is where desire/concupiscence comes in. It takes its roots from a severe lack in the spirit of man. It is never the body in itself that is evil.

Man will begin to seek for happiness in sheer pleasure (pleasure to eat, to rule, of sex...) disconnected from the profound meaningfulness of GIVING. And this can only give an illusory happiness. *This* is sin. Missing the point. Aiming for an illusion.

Man can never be happy just by satisfying urges, desires, because it closes man in on himself. It may be pornography, gaming or power, none of these satisfy deeply, and that is why one always wants more and more, stronger and stronger stimulants. Desire in itself is not wrong, but the place of desire is disordered when put highest in the hierarchy of values.

### **The Historicity of the Fall**

The story of the fall is a very realistic account. All humans without exception experience the effects of this catastrophe, both in the outer world and in our souls, except if we give in to self-deception or denial of reality.

A huge crack has appeared in the spiritual and physical unity of man. We are our body, and yet not. It is as if we had become strangers to our bodies. In this imbalance desire takes root, forces, impulses and feelings that are somehow out of our control. Shame has to do with this lack of control, we are not completely masters of ourselves. The fundament of our self-control has been shaken. Saint Paul writes: *I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*<sup>8</sup>

Sexual shame comes from *concupiscentia*, not from nakedness in itself. Man and woman hide the parts of their bodies who signifies self-giving, because they perceive that the gaze of the other reduces them to an object. The cause of shame can never be physiological sexuality, the fact that there is an animal part in us, but it goes back to the shattering of the unity of body and spirit. It has a spiritual cause. The body is no longer a pure instrument to communicate from person to person. The mutual, limpid communication between man and woman, expressed through nakedness, gives place to fear and suspicion.

### **Breaking of the Unity**

*Your desire shall be for your husband, but he will dominate you.* (Gen 3:16)

These words are not God's punishment of the woman. Rather it is a clear-sighted diagnosis. A diagnosis describes something that is not OK. Interpreting this phrase as an alibi to oppress woman is a serious misinterpretation.

Domination indicates a disorder of the unity of man and woman. Both are broken in their beings and driven by desires. They can abuse sexuality in a way that does not respect the design of God, i.e. that does not reveal the image of God in self-giving. We are born with a capacity to abuse this creative force that God endowed us with.

Man has a tendency to dominate woman, to possess her as an object in order to satisfy his needs. This can happen inside marriage. The woman feels like a used object. If they are married, one could say that they fulfil the law, but this is certainly not enough for Jesus. He sees into the heart.

Woman can also abuse man for her own needs. The Jewish young woman Etty Hillesum writes about the roaring possessive instinct she had towards men. 'I wanted to own him, he should be my possession.' In this kind of devouring love there was the desire to be adored and admired and the desire to control and possess. This is using a man.

---

<sup>8</sup> Rom 7:23

‘Your desire shall be for your husband’, says God. Her risk or weakness is to be bent towards the man, to seek her identity through him, her self-worth in being attractive. ‘Tell me who I am. Confirm that I have a value.’ Woman seeks to get something out of man, instead of giving herself to him. He is supposed to make her happy. But to seek my identity in someone, is using someone.

One says that man uses ‘love’ in order to get sex, and woman uses sex in order to get ‘love’. A mutual abuse. Conversion would sound like this: Instead of conquering a woman for his own sake, man needs to conquer himself for the sake of woman. Instead of finding her identity in a man, woman needs to find her identity in God, in order to be someone in herself and be able to give herself for the man’s sake.

Both man and woman are called to rise up and find their identity in God. Through desire, we are bent to creation, demanding that creation gives us the meaning of life. We have to straighten up and look to the Creator, in a vertical, listening, obedient position. This is freedom.

Etty Hillesum was a woman that found her identity in God. She writes at the end of her diary, just before her death in Ravensbruck: ‘This roaring instinct of possession has left me. A thousand bonds that weighted upon me have been broken. Now I am free and I no longer want to possess anything, because my inner riches are enormous.’ She was able to love in an astounding way.

Man and woman have lost the spontaneous and humble certitude of the spousal meaning of the body, the call to unity in love. The union of bodies does not automatically lead to personal union and communion. Physical desire incites man to satisfy his body, often at the price of personal communion. Sexual shame can be explained in this sense of loneliness, the incapacity, or rather wounded capacity, to fulfil our longing for unity.

In spite of our brokenness the body, in its profound structure, is what it is. We carry within us an unquenchable thirst for personal communion. (And this is Advent!!) The beauty and divine likeness of original masculinity and femininity can no longer be experienced directly via our bodies. But through modesty, which makes us conceal our nakedness, the authentic value of the body is protected. Thanks to the veil of modesty man can still discover himself as the guardian of a mystery: the freedom to give ourselves. The way back to this insight goes through the heart, the heart that Christ points at in the sermon of the mount.

## IV. THE WAY TO FREEDOM

We have seen why and how we are driven by desires to compensate our inner emptiness that comes from the broken covenant with God. We are slaves to our egoism, capable of abusing others as means. How do we become free?

We shall see that it is first of all a grace given to us, but we also have to collaborate with grace. It doesn't just fall over us like magic. It's not a question of either grace or works, but both. The redemption of the body implies a moral effort, but it is more profoundly a gift, a life in the Spirit.

In the beginning man and woman were filled with the love of God. When they doubted, they lost everything. If the root of the evil is unbelief, the solution must be faith. 'If you knew the gift of God,' says Jesus to the samaritan woman, who looked for love in so many ways. And this is what he says to each one of us. 'Do you want to receive me in your life? I will allow you to unite with my perfectly pure humanity so that you'll have part in the innocence from the beginning.'

This is Christmas! Pure gift.

Jesus said that our hearts are hardened, *sclerocardia*. One could say punctured, unable to hold the spirit of life. It is as if we are driving around on bicycles with deflated tires, not knowing what it means to have tires filled with air. But God still wants to give us his Spirit, the Spirit that makes us love with his love.

The words of Christ in the sermon of the mount might appear harsh. If you only have to look on a woman with desire in your heart to commit adultery, who will not be found guilty? Are we supposed to close our eyes and not look for the rest of our lives? Or squeeze our instincts into our shoes?

Jesus does not require that we turn away our eyes from what is beautiful and attractive, but to renew our eyes. He wants to transform us from within. That's why he appeals to our heart. (Heart in the Bible does not mean emotional life, but intellect, will, understanding. We have to change our view of things. Rom 12:2 *Let yourselves be transformed through the renewal of your thoughts.*) It is not enough to respect a law. That can be artificial, completely legalistic. Another artificial solution would be to put a burka over the woman and think that the problem is solved. But you don't change anything in the heart, and you can still go on abusing your wife as an object. In the sermon of the Mount Christ calls his disciples to reconquer the innocence from the beginning. 'Blessed are the pure of heart,' he says, pointing to a real possibility: 'They shall see God, they shall see the image of God in man and woman.' Jesus' words

presuppose that man has the freedom to resist egoistical desires, that he can radiate from his heart his inner truth, our original design.

The words of Christ, who in the Sermon of the Mount appeals to the 'heart', lead the listener in some way to an inner call. If he allows them to work in him he can at the same time hear in his innermost being the echo, as it were, of that 'beginning', of that good 'beginning' to which Christ appealed on another occasion to remind his listeners who man is, who woman is, and who they are reciprocally: one for the other in the work of creation. Christ's words spoken in the Sermon of the Mount are not a call hurled into emptiness. They do not address the man who is completely bound by the concupiscence of the flesh, unable to seek another form of reciprocal relations— [...] The words of Christ testify that *the original power* (and thus also the grace) *of the mystery of creation becomes* for each one of them *the power* (that is the grace) *of the mystery of redemption*. This concerns the very 'nature', the very substrate of the humanity of the person, the deepest impulses of the 'heart'.<sup>9</sup>

The ultimate truth of man is not the man of concupiscence. But we must become aware of the different movements of our hearts. 'When man leaves his interior act of looking at the mercy of the forces of nature, he cannot avoid the influence of the concupiscence of the flesh.'

Christ calls us to purity of heart, i.e. chastity.

The word chastity has not a very positive connotation. You associate it with contempt for the body, puritanism, a super-ego that controls dark and evil forces within us. Thanks to #metoo we can be more aware of what chastity is, because it is exactly what women are demanding. Respect for her as a person.

In fact, chastity is the very opposite of contempt for the body, it is a reverence for the body, created in the image of God, expressing a *person* with a non-violable dignity.

Self-constraint and self-possession/self-mastery are part of chastity. But to control and restrain yourself, in any area, does not mean frustration, to live in a constant tension, but to be free from tension. To be empowered. Self-control and power goes hand in hand. It is the person who cannot constrain himself that suffers from tensions and frustrations. Each time he gives in to desire, desire gets more and more power over him. And there is never any deep satisfaction, because he always wants more and more. Concupiscence is present in each human being, but it is only when we give in to it that it takes power over our heart. We have to understand that we are free. And to achieve control over impulses is the sign of a mature personality.

---

<sup>9</sup> October 29, 1980, § 46:5

Self-mastery does not mean contempt or suppression of positive values, like *eros*. It's a question of controlling yourself in order to live *eros*. Eros is the force that attracts us to what is true, good and beautiful. And the human person is exactly this. Concupiscence makes us blind to the person, degrades him or her. Eros sees the unique human being. Self-control, self-possession frees us to live out *eros*.

Christ is calling each human being to become aware of the inner impulses, so that he can discern them in a mature way. 'In all that concerns the body and the senses, he has to become an inner man, capable of controlling the instincts, like a guardian guarding a hidden well.'

### **Keeping the Body with Holiness and Reverence**

Self-possession/self-mastery is not the core of chastity, as if everything was a question of will power. A pure heart is a true heart, an unspoiled heart, a genuine, sincere heart, according to truth.

In the First Letter to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul writes: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you knows how to keep his body with holiness and reverence, not as an object of lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.' (Thes 4:3-7).

What does it mean to keep the body in holiness and reverence? When you revere a person you uphold the truth and dignity of him or her. You honour a president by showing respect for his office. You honour your parents by recognising that they are the source of your life, and thus you have a responsibility for them, when they are no longer able to care for themselves. You honour your body by recognising its truth, goodness and dignity. The body reveals the divine mystery of gift, it is an expression of a unique person, called to self-donation. Chastity is respecting this truth.

We decorate our bodies with clothes and jewellery to enhance its beauty and our own personal value. But some parts we hide. Not because of cold, but because nakedness expresses a self-donation that is so intimate and so deep that it requires an absolute confidence, expressed by a solemn promise. To wear clothes is not only a question of hiding something, but of revealing the truth of the person. To *honour* the body.

To expose a sexual act is perverse, not because sexuality is perverse, but because it's the expression of a most intimate gift that can only be entrusted to one person. It does not concern any other. To expose this act is to dishonour it, to make violence to its inherent truth.

To revere the body means respecting its truth, not manipulating it as if it were an object. Our fertility is not a sickness, not a threat against love, not a mistake of the Creator, not a biological side issue, but an integral part of our person, the body that witnesses of divine invisible mysteries, life-giving mysteries. Rightly understood, rightly integrated, it is a power and a treasure for a couple. Rightly understood and integrated, man and woman can master it by their free will.

The woman has a rhythm. Her sexuality is not linear and constant. Man is called – and capable – of revering the female nature of his spouse, this alternation which for him is supposed to be like a rhythm of love. Through the fall, man came to dominate woman. In the light of the redemption he is called to submit to the rhythm of woman, so that she will be respected in all her integrity. No woman wants to be ‘taken for granted’, always available. The woman is someone who deserves to be longed for. Time has an important meaning for her. She has this inner clock/watch, and a different relation to time. (Man conceives in an instant, woman conceives in nine months. Man is fertile from puberty onwards, woman has a limited time.)

The idea that God has created us so badly that we need to take medicine, with quite severe side effects, to correct our healthy bodies in order to have a fulfilling love-life, reveals a suspicion against the Creator. It’s saying, with the Gnostics, that the body is badly made.

To honour the body also means to respect the other person’s body as different, to respect his or her reactions. John Paul II writes: Man must be aware that woman is different, reacts differently, not out of a hedonistic motivation, but out of real care for the woman. The pope insists that this is never a question of technics, but a question of tenderness, the capacity to understand another persons soul. The most important point in all sexual education, says JP II, is to learn that the other is more important than myself. A quote from a married man, Peter Wiberg:

‘What is chastity? It is a tremendous change in the relationship. I move my focus from trying to get something, to giving something. I give my wife happiness. Sexuality means meeting and coming lose to the one you love. Yes, it is something physical, but the most important thing is to focus on the other person, her soul. If you allow yourself even to forget the body, you’ll discover that it will follow naturally.

Before I could try to persuade my wife to have sex, and I thought this was perfectly normal. Today this would be unthinkable. It is the mutual encounter I seek, which means the union of two wills.

The great change in our life is that the experience of a certain weariness is replaced by a constant experience of renewal. This is because I continuously discover more and more of my beloved wife. If I reduce her to a body, it does not take long before I have explored it and get bored.’

So, chastity does not mean abstinence, but truth. To respect the truth of the body as personal, as called to self-donation and as different. One could make a whole retreat about the differences of men and woman – and at the same time of how alike we are: bones of each other’s bones, flesh of each other’s flesh. With the same need for love and respect. We are both just as vulnerable, just as sensitive, although often to different things. We are brother and sister in the same humanity, with self-consciousness and endowed with freedom. But our physical and psychological prerequisites are rather different.

God conceived us for a mutual enrichment so that the goodness and beauty of man and woman be enhanced when they appropriate the other’s gifts, like two colours that enhance each other’s beauty.

If it is concupiscence that rules the sexual relationship, man might use feelings of the woman to get what he wants. He plays romantic. And woman concedes to give what he wants in order to get some tenderness. This is not self-donation. We can remember what Peter described, to move focus from getting to giving, to the other person’s soul.

There is a lot of confusion in this area. Many talk about chastity as if it was only a question of abstinence. They were never told that the sexual union could be a place of sanctity and honour, that God himself could be glorified through an act that is so human.

## **The Holy Spirit**

The redemption of the body is initiated through the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, giving the body a new measure of holiness. It is to this holiness St Paul appeals when he admonishes us to keep that body in holiness. We are grafted into the body of Christ, becoming his members. That is why we also need to be nourished from his body and blood in the eucharist. We need cleansing and forgiveness, through the sacrament of reconciliation, just as we normally clean our bodies. No one is ever too dirty, too disgusting to receive the mercy of God.

No rules can change our hardened hearts. Jesus comes with a new law, a new way of being: ‘You have heard that it has been said... but I say unto you...’ He will give us true freedom so that we can experience the purity of heart.

He has come to fulfil the law. He gives his own life to us. When we receive him, he starts living in us. He fills us with his Spirit, that helps us to live the new law, not as a constraint, but as a spontaneous inclination towards lasting happiness.

The Spirit begins to transform our inner selves, including our appetites, drives, needs, instincts, emotions and tendencies. Temperance inclines us to engage the appetites with reason – instead of letting reason follow the appetites.

If we are led by the Spirit, we are no longer slaves under rules, but free. Freedom does not mean giving in to any desire or impulse, but to realise our highest potential as human beings. To live for the other, by a sincere gift of self. We are so much more than beings who use and abuse others, or who are being abused. To fulfil the law means to integrate the truth about sexuality, in order to experience true love.

We might think that our bodies are our own, and that we can do whatever we want with them.

*Or you do not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you do not belong to yourself?*<sup>10</sup>

The Holy Spirit does not leave the body at the moment of physical union between spouses. The Spirit is rather more present and active in man when he is living a sincere self-donation through love.

Purity as a virtue or ability of ‘keeping one’s body with holiness and reverence,’ allied with the gift of piety as a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling in the ‘temple’ of the body, causes in the body such a fullness of dignity in interpersonal relations that *God himself is thereby glorified*.<sup>11</sup> Purity is the glory of the human body before God. It is the glory of God in the human body, through which masculinity and femininity are manifested.

From purity springs that singular beauty that permeates every sphere of common life between humans and allows them to express... personal trust.

The satisfaction of the passions is one thing, quite another is the joy a person finds in possessing himself more fully, since in this way he can also become more fully a true gift to another person. The words Christ spoke in the Sermon of the Mount direct the human heart precisely toward this joy. We must entrust ourselves, our thoughts, and our actions to Christ’s words in order to find joy and give it to others. (§ 58:4)

---

<sup>10</sup> 1 Kor 6:15, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Audiens den 18 mars 1981, § 57:3

*Lord I thank you for the gift of my sexual desires.  
I surrender this lustful desire to you and I ask you, please,  
by the power of your death and resurrection,  
to 'untwist' in me what sin has twisted  
so that I might experience  
the transformation of sexual desire as you intend  
- as the desire to love in your image.*

*Lord, help me to discern the movements of my heart.  
Help me to distinguish between the great riches of sexuality  
as you created it to be  
and the distortions of lust.  
I grant you permission, Lord  
to slay my lusts.  
Take them. Crucify them  
so that I may come to experience the resurrection of sexual desire  
as you intend.  
Grant me a pure heart.  
Amen.*

(Prayer from Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*)