

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

- Pope John Paul II developed this teaching as his first major teaching project. He gave it the name of TOB. It is a collection of 129 short talks that he shared as part of his Wednesday audience. It has been described as a counter-revolution in sexual teaching. Why?
- It has been described as a theological time bomb set to go off after the Pope's death with dramatic consequences (Witness to Hope, p. 343).
- John Paul II focuses on the beauty of God's plan for the union of the sexes. This shifts the discussion from legalism ("How far can I go before I break the law?") to freedom ("What's the truth that sets me free to love?") This is what salvation in Christ is all about.
- Two universal questions have to be answered:
  - What does it mean to be human?
  - How do I live my life in a way that brings true happiness and fulfillment?
- John Paul II applies a distinctive Christian humanism to the vocations of celibacy and marriage.
- It can be summarized in three stages:
  - Our origin before sin (Mt 19: 3-8).
  - Our history darkened by sin, yet redeemed by Christ (Mt. 5: 27-28).
  - Our destiny when God will raise our bodies in glory (Mt 22:23-33).
- Why is the body a theology?
  - God created the body as a sign of his own divine mystery.
  - The human body makes this eternal mystery visible.
  - How? Through the beauty of sexual difference and our call to union.
- What is the original experience of the body and sex?
  - Before sin, it was a participation in God's eternal love.
  - Original innocence, original solitude, original unity, original nakedness, and nuptial meaning of the body.
- What is the experience after sin?
  - The entrance of shame that indicates the dawn of lust, of erotic desire void of God's love. To look for the sensation of sexuality apart from the true gift of themselves, apart from authentic love.
- What can we look forward to?
  - In the resurrection of the body we discover in an eternal dimension the same nuptial meaning but now with our God. This will be a completely new experience. Beyond anything we can imagine. Yet it will not be alienated from what happened in the beginning.
- How does it affect the Christian vocations?
  - Celibacy is not a rejection of sexuality and our call to union. It points to the ultimate fulfillment.
  - In a different way marriage also anticipates this same reality of heaven. Foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb.
- Marriage does not justify lust. It must respect the language of the body.
- TOB gives us a context to understand sexual morality.