

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

BUILDING BLOCKS

Into the Deep

www.idretreats.org

Jen Messing ©2022

“[M]an is in some sense unable to express this singular language of his personal existence & vocation without the body.” TOB 104:7

Each person is a particular gift to the world. You are here for a reason and so are the people around you. You learn together with people along your path – which means family, friends, co-workers, or even strangers should be seen as important. *As messy as it can be*, receive the gift of the people around you and make a gift of who you are to them. You may be the one person they know who gives them a glimpse of what is *true, good, and beautiful* in life, so spend time thinking about which words could be said to touch the *head and heart* of each person you encounter. The *universal language* of the Theology of the Body applies (and appeals) to *all of us* because it is about who we are as human persons.

FOR ALL (including non-Christians)

The “*theology of the body*” means that our bodies teach us something about God, who is Love.

- You are *unrepeatable*; no one can replace YOU and by being here you change history!
- You have great dignity/you are *very good* at the core; *you are not defined by your struggles or flaws*.
- Your life/your body is profoundly good/has great meaning.
- You are not just a collection of body parts, you are a *whole* person who thinks, chooses, and acts.
- You are *not an animal*, you are a human person.
- You have a *conscious intellect* (aware that you are aware/ more than just the ability to learn) and a *self-determining will* (no one can choose interiorly for you/ different than instinct).
- True *freedom* includes not being a slave to our desires; it is being free to choose what is right and good.
- Our *heads* and our *hearts* are meant to work together; *one should not dominate us*.
- You are *made to love*; it is a good thing to love (but it’s important to learn what real love is):

MARRIAGE is the free, total, faithful body-soul union of one man and one woman, open to the gift of life. Because life intrinsically flows from this deep bond, cultures of all times have required couples to declare their intent publically before coming together.

LOVE goes deeper than an emotion – it is a choice to want & work toward the best for someone else, even when it is difficult. It is freely given, a total gift of self, faithful, and life-giving.

- You are a person with a *body-soul* unity (your soul animates you & your body expresses you); both are important.
- There is *meaning* in being male & female; *complementarity* brings *life* to the world.
- You are wired to *give* (pour out) *love & receive* (open up to) *love*.
- You being here (right here, right now) and all of your choices (good or bad) *shape history*.
- When you *make a gift of self* to others (as small as a smile, as big as laying down your life), it brings *life* to the world.
- When you *refuse* to make a gift of self, you *deprive* the world of your life and love.
- Each of us has a *deep desire to love & to be loved*; this is a good desire, but must be directed toward life (not death) & what is best for us & others (genuine love upholds our dignity & the dignity of those around us).
- We are each drawn to/ hungry & thirsty for what is *True, Good & Beautiful*.
- Love within marriage is meant to be *free* (not forced or enslaved to urges), *total* (100% of both persons), *faithful* (permanent) & *life-giving* (physically *and* spiritually).
- *Fertility awareness* (i.e. *Natural Family Planning/NFP*) uses scientific knowledge of the woman’s fertility cycle to avoid or achieve pregnancy & teaches *conscious* parenthood.
- We were never meant to be used, lusted after, hurt, divided/divorced from others, only *loved*.
- *Your body speaks a language*: are you speaking the *truth* of love or are you engaging in *counterfeits*?

“The human body – the naked human body in all the truth of its masculinity & femininity – has the meaning of a gift of the person to the person.” TOB 61:1

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

BUILDING BLOCKS

Into the Deep

www.idretreats.org
Jen Messing ©2022

“Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology... through the main door.” TOB 23:4

Each person is a particular gift to the world and God has made you who you are for a reason. He puts people in your path so you can learn together with others – which can mean family, friends, co-workers, or even strangers. *As messy as that can be*, receive the gift of the people around you and make a gift of who you are to them. You may be the one person they know who can plant seeds of what is *True, Good, and Beautiful* for God to build on, so spend time in prayer asking the Lord for the words that are needed to bless the *head and heart* of each person you encounter. The *universal language* of the Theology of the Body applies (and appeals) to *all of us* because it is about who we are as human persons.

IN CHRISTIAN LANGUAGE

The “*theology of the body*” means that our bodies teach us something about God, who *is* an eternal exchange of Love (CCC 221).

- *You are made in the image of God* – a Trinity:
Love is given & received from Father to Son to Holy Spirit for all eternity; God is *life-giving*.
- *Individually & together* we image God and can be in union with God.
- The meaning of life is stamped in the “*sign*” of our bodies: men as givers of the gift, women as receivers of the gift (but in giving we receive & in receiving we give).
- God *is* love, so He demonstrates the definition and we participate in it:

LOVE goes deeper than an emotion – it is a choice to will & work toward the best for the other, even when it involves crucifixion. It is freely given, a total gift of self, faithful, and fruitful.

- Real love between persons is a *sign* of God’s love & gives us a glimpse of *Heaven*.
- The union of man & woman in marriage gives us a little *glimpse* of how intimate our union with God will be in heaven. Though union with God is not sexual, it does involve our whole person, body & soul.
- Sacraments *physically express a spiritual reality*; they bring about physical-spiritual *unity*, grace/strength for battle, & *life* through the *real* physical-spiritual presence of Christ.
- In order for it to be love & not an act of use/lust, a sexual act must be both *unitive* (a total body-soul gift of self to the other in marital union) & *procreative* (open to the fact that life is possible through this act).
- *Fertility awareness* (i.e. *Natural Family Planning/NFP*) protects a couple’s faithfulness to marriage vows, especially ‘openness to life’ (*the concepts of loving freely, totally, faithfully, & fruitfully are found within the vows*).
- Making a gift of ourselves & bringing life into the world can be *physical* &/or *spiritual*: a smile, praying, being helpful, laying down your life for another, bringing a baby into the world, etc.
- We are *all* called to be mothers or fathers in some way: biologically, physically present &/or spiritually – even celibates: *Mother* Teresa, *Father* ____, *Pope* (“papa”) ____.
- Because of *original sin* we will always struggle with temptations against what is right & good – but we must remember our baptism & who we were created to be “in the beginning”.
- We were not created for suffering, division, death, disease, disabilities, or disorder but we did inherit these *effects* of original sin.
- Satan can only offer *counterfeits*; he will twist the Truth to make his version look better/more fulfilling.
- Do not strip the cross of its power (redemption is real): *we are not defined by our sins or flaws*
- We never stop yearning for God, nor He for us. Behind every sin is a *good desire* that has been twisted; there is an *echo* in our hearts of the love we were made for. *Jesus, untwist the lies & show me the Truth.*

MARRIAGE is the Sacrament of the free, total, faithful body-soul union of one man and one woman, open to the gift of life. Because life intrinsically flows from this union, the Church protects the dignity of all the people involved by requiring couples to declare their intent publically before coming together.

“The body, in fact, and only the body, is 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 mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.” TOB 19:4