

Text: Mary Healy Men & Women are from Eden

A Study Guide to John Paul II's TOB

Please note that these notes have been compiled as a summary to guide us deeper into a Catholic understanding of Theology of the Body. In no way do they contain the complete breadth of St John Paul II's Theology of the Body. These contain my personal reflections and insights from the resources referenced below.

These are to be used for your own personal study and are not to be copied, emailed, posted on social media or distributed unless permission is sought first.

Key References:

- *Mary Healy, Men & Women Are From Eden: A Study Guide To John Paul II's Theology of the Body*, (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2005).
- *The Didache Bible: with commentaries based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ignatius Bible Edition*, (San Francisco Ignatius Press, 2014).
- Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007).
- Butler and Evert, *You: Life, Love and The Theology of the Body*, Student Guide (Ascension Press, 2016).
- John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, tr. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006).
- Jaroslaw Kupczak, *Gift and Communion: John Paul II's Theology of the Body*, (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

Chapter One: Back to the Beginning

- 1. In your own words, explain why in Matthew 19, Jesus goes back to "the beginning" to teach us why marriage is indissoluble?**

Jesus directs us back to God's original intention for humanity because our understanding has been clouded by sin. It is only in discovering God's original plan for us that we will be able to understand our own situation and know what our purpose is. God's plan for us is personal. Jesus comes to give us hope - that through Him we can be redeemed and through a life with the Holy Spirit we can experience what God really intended. Christ restores and elevates the innocence and beauty of God's original plan. In St JP2's TOB, God's plan is expounded in between two reference points: the beginning and the end. In order to know where we are going (our destination) we need to know what God's original plan was and therefore St JP2 highlights Christ's words pointing us 'to

the beginning'. Before sin clouded our vision, marriage (before the fall) was unbreakable and forever. After the fall there was a schism (which is repairable of course – thank you HS) but the confusion caused by sin led to a distorted idea of marriage which has moved from being a free, faithful, total, forever, unbreakable and fruitful covenant to being a contract that is restricted by a self-centredness/ selfish pleasure – sometimes leading to warped ideas, unfaithfulness and a temporary 'I will stay with you if' attitude. The sacramental view of marriage, that marriage is an icon that points the world to the eschaton (Christ's permanent/unbreakable union with us) has been lost. Christ points us back to the beginning to enable us once again to understanding the meaning and purpose of marriage.

"By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, [Christ] himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God." Therefore, " by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses ... spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ." CCC no 1615. ¹

Moses allowed divorce as a concession to sin because he could not do any more than he did. Moses could only do what he did because of the hardness of the people's hearts. Moses was not Christ. In the Gospel of John (1:1-18) we read about Christ *'from his fullness we have, all of us, received – yes, grace in return for grace, since, though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Christ'*. With Christ there is a 'new phase, a new reality in place, with a new power enabling us to experience what God intended'.² 'Christ can re-establish the original unity and indissolubility of marriage because he is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The scripture 'what God has joined, let man not separate' is decisive and in Genesis 2:24 'the two become one flesh' states the principle of the unity and indissolubility of marriage as the 'very content of the word of God expressed in the most ancient revelation (TOB 1:3). But Christ does not just say these words to 'lay down the law' and tell them (us) a bunch of rules. He comes to 'invite us to reflect on the beauty of God's original plan in order to awaken our consciences'.³ Because of Christ the innocence and beauty of God's original plan can be restored and in fact something even greater gained.⁴

¹ The Didache Bible: with commentaries based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ignatius Bible Edition, (San Francisco Ignatius Press, 2014), 1293-1294.

² *Mary Healy, Men & Women Are From Eden: A Study Guide To John Paul II's Theology of the Body*, (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2005), 10.

³ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007), 89.

⁴ *Mary Healy, Men & Women Are From Eden: A Study Guide To John Paul II's Theology of the Body*, (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2005), 10.

The plan of God is stamped on their hearts and Christ comes to re-awaken them/us. Christ knows that if we traced the 'echoes' of our hearts back to the beginning this norm would well up from within.⁵ That we would understand subjectively the reason for the objective indissolubility of marriage and if we lived according to this deeper heritage of our hearts, we would desire nothing else. We all want to be happy and Christ shows us how to be truly happy.

2. *What are some examples of ways our contemporary culture both idolizes and demeans the body?*

Contemporary culture often breaks the body up into parts which are either idolized, exploited or criticized. The body is also categorised and given value depending on age, shape, colour, size. Sometimes the body is seen as something to be used and so if it does not function or look 'perfect' it is seen as less valuable and therefore disposable. Celebrity culture dictates what is aesthetically pleasing to the masses and this rapidly changes, so if one does not keep up, one is left behind. The body is not seen as making visible the invisible mystery of God. It is not seen as inseparable from the soul, with unchanging innate value. The body can be thought of as insignificant – that is doesn't actually signify anything. Like it is a mere shell the houses the soul. However the body is not just part of the person – we are *body persons*. Our bodies transmit into the physical reality *who we are* – the body is the sacrament of the person – a visible sign of an invisible reality. The body reveals the person.⁶

3. *Read Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Have you ever thought about the fact that your body makes visible the invisible mystery of God? What changes does that call for in your attitude toward the body?*

After having created the plants and animals in the created world, God stopped, retreated into Himself, into the community that He is and then created man (male and female) in His image and after His likeness.

The body has been defamed so much that people have forgotten the value of it. The human body reveals the hidden mystery of the person but it has been overlooked because of previous experiences and influences. The body is seen to be the 'thing; that causes us to sin' and so often

⁵ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2007), 90.

⁶ *Mary Healy, Men & Women Are From Eden: A Study Guide To John Paul II's Theology of the Body*, (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2005), 14-15.

people associate shame with sin 'caused' by the body and fail to see that Christ came to redeem us completely – body and soul.

Sometimes the body is seen as the 'shell' around the more important 'soul'. However, knowing the body 'makes visible the invisible God' and that it is not a shell to be discarded and that the body is not the 'cause' of our sin - reveals the importance of *seeing the person*. The whole person.

In Genesis 2:7 we read '*then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*' God breathed into our nostrils – the Creator of the universe did not do that to any of His other creations but us. We became 'living souls'. The breath of God is within us – we are HOLY.

1 Cor 6: 19-20 "*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*" Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Our soul, which is spiritual, gives life to the body, forming a unity which is the human person. Although separated by death, body and soul are united in the resurrection of the dead. Our bodies are not temporary – like it is often thought. They are very important and are vital to serve the purpose for which we were created.

When God originally designed us, sexual desire was the desire to love in the image of God. Sexual desire was a pure desire to *give to the other*. Sexual desire was an expression of the person who desired to make a gift of self (a self-donation) to another person.

To make a gift of yourself you need a body!

"The devil knows your name, but calls you by your sin. God knows your sin but calls you by your name." Ricardo Sanchez – I think he said this but I'm not sure so please look this up!

4. Read John 3:34-35; 14:31; 15:9. What do these verses teach you about God as a communion of persons? In what ways can your marriage or other relationships be a reflection of the love of the Trinity?

John 3: 34-35 '*For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.*'

John 14:31 '*...but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.*'

John 15: 9 '*As the Father has loved me. So have I loved you; abide in my love.*'

Reflection:

There is a correct order of headship. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Son is obedient to the Father. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a GIFT out of the love of the Father and Son. The Trinity is a life giving community. Christ did not receive the HS later on in His ministry; the Holy Spirit, like the Father and Son exist. The Trinity is a communion of Persons. God is.

John 14:31: 'Christ's acceptance of his Passion and Death was a gift of love not just offered to every person but to God the Father himself (CCC607, 1825)'.⁷

John 15: 9: 'The New Commandment of Love summarizes the message of the entire Gospel. This command to love as Christ loves implies that our conduct and dispositions must reflect that of Christ. Christ must become our internal guide for how we live and what we chose to do'.⁸ So as Catholics our faith isn't about following rules/ laws. Our faith is in a Person- Christ. We ask God for the grace to live a life of LOVE. Love is the reason.

Love never exists in isolation. There is a lover, a beloved and the love between them. This can be seen in God. In the Trinity there is the Father, the Son and the fire of love between them, the Holy Spirit. God created human beings out of love to participate in His love both on earth and in heaven. We image God as individuals but more precisely as male and female. We image the love of God as male and female because we become a sincere gift to each other. Giving this sincere gift to one another creates a communion of persons, through which we share God's love.

The Trinity is an eternal exchange of love and no matter what our vocation – married or celibate for the sake of the kingdom, we are called to reflect this external exchange of love – life giving, self-less love – willing the good of the other as other.

⁷ The Didache Bible: with commentaries based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Ignatius Bible Edition, (San Francisco Ignatius Press, 2014), 1441.

⁸ Ibid, 1442.