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Theology of the Body Series Week 1: The Garden of Eden

Introducing the *Theology of the Body*:

- Theology as a subject is based on God's knowledge, revealed to us in Scripture and Tradition
- God reveals to us:
 - What we can know on our own but is difficult or too important to allow ignorance: existence of God, immortality of soul, 10 Commandments
 - What we cannot know on our own and is necessary for salvation: the creation of the world, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery
- St. John Paul II taught *Theology of the Body* in 129 Wednesday Audiences from 1979-1984, based on a book manuscript he had finished in Polish before his election.
- St. John Paul II sought to explore meaning of Christ's teaching about the body and to show their beauty and deep intelligibility
- As a whole, ToB is structured around three "words" of Christ concerning past, present, and future: Matthew 19:3-9, Matthew 5:27-32, and Matthew 22:34-30
- Our four week outline:
 - 1) The Garden of Eden (Original Man)
 - 2) Original Sin and Its Effects (Historical Man)
 - 3) Marital Chastity, a Sign of Redemption (Historical Man cont.)
 - 4) Our Ultimate Destiny in Heaven (Eschatological Man; *eschaton* = 'the end')

The Garden of Eden

- Why look at Eden? Because Christ says to the Pharisees about divorce: "In the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8). Eden shows us God's plan for the human body.
- Grace of Original Justice
 - JPII pre-supposes the Catholic teaching on the grace of "original justice" in Eden, which means a state of undamaged human nature, enhanced by the grace of friendship with God (see *Catechism* 375-77).
 - St. Thomas Aquinas explains this as 1) Reason obeying God 2) the lower powers of the soul obeying reason 3) the body obeying the soul
 - After Original Sin, this justice was lost and human nature damaged by concupiscence, weakness, ignorance, and malice. Through the grace of Christ, we are re-united with God but must struggle against these effects of sin.
- Original Solitude
 - Unity of soul and body
 - Distinction from the animals
 - Unique status as a person, with spiritual powers of intellect and will

- Original Unity
 - Creation of man is not complete until woman is made as companion
 - Masculinity and femininity have a fundamental meaning for human nature
 - **JPII:** “The meaning of man’s original unity through masculinity and femininity expresses itself as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude and at the same time as an affirmation—for both human beings—of everything in solitude that constitutes ‘man.’” (TOB 9:2, pg. 162)

- Original Nakedness
 - “The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.” (Gn 2:25)
 - **JPII:** “They see and know each other, in fact, with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons.” (TOB 13:1, 178)

- The Spousal Meaning of the Body
 - Man is meant to live in a communion of persons, *for* another and not simply for himself
 - Communion is achieved by a “reciprocal gift,” belonging to the other person and receiving the other in turn: this is fundamental to what it means to be a *person* (vs. simply an animal).
 - the “spousal meaning of the body” is written into human nature, but must be developed and integrated in one’s personality.

JPII: One can say that, created by Love, that is, endowed in their being with masculinity and femininity, both are “naked,” because they are *free with the very freedom of the gift*. This freedom lies exactly at the basis of the spousal meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex – its masculinity and femininity – seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains “from the beginning” the “spousal” attribute, that is, *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.” (TOB 15:1, pg. 185)

Vatican II: “Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when he prays to the Father, ‘that all may be one...as we are one’ and thus offers vistas closed to human reason, indicates a certain likeness between the divine Persons, and the union of God’s sons in truth and love. This likeness shows that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self.” (Vatican II, *GS* 24:3)

- The spousal meaning of the body is intrinsically connected with the procreative meaning of the body.
 - Before sin, on the natural level, the spousal meaning of the body expresses what man’s friendship with God on the supernatural level also means
 - Our ultimate destiny is to express spousal love toward God in Heaven, along with the whole communion of saints.

Further reading:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 369-384
- Theology of the Body catecheses online: www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp2tbind.htm
- Best translation, with extensive introduction:
 - John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translated by Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).
- Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners* (West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2009)