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Theology of the Body Series **Week 3: Marital Chastity, a Sign of Redemption**

- Last week we discussed the effects of the Fall and the distortion of the meaning of the body
 - Concupiscence regards another person as an object of pleasure
 - Giving and receiving concupiscent love falsifies the language of the body, which is meant to be total giving of the self
 - Christ teaches the indissolubility of marriage as God's plan for the human person, even though to fallen man this fidelity seems too difficult
- The ideal of marriage is the promise of exclusive love and the fulfillment of the spousal meaning of body
 - What does any marriage involve, Christian or not? The "three goods" of marriage
 - 1) **Indissoluble bond**: Free consent total commitment to one spouse for life
 - 2) **Fidelity** to one's spouse, excluding any other partner
 - 3) **Procreation and education of offspring**, intended in general and not excluded
 - Christ restores marriage and elevates it to a sacrament by his presence at the wedding of Cana in order to bring about:
 - truer communion, total, faithful, and pure
 - fruitfulness in both nature and grace: rearing children for Heaven, not just for this world
 - sanctification of husband and wife
- Contraception separates the **procreative and unitive ends of marriage**
 - sexual intercourse outside of marriage defeats both of these ends: it does not intend either a life-long union or the conception and rearing of children
 - within marriage, contraception renders a potentially fertile act infertile, seeking pleasure apart from the natural end of the act
 - sterile couples, aged couples, and those engaging in intercourse outside fertile periods (NFP) respect the natural structure of the act, which remains oriented *in kind* toward procreation
 - intentionally withholding fertility from one's spouse in the marital act falsifies the total giving that the act signifies

John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 32 (1981):

“When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as "arbiters" of the divine plan and they "manipulate" and degrade human sexuality—and with it themselves and their married partner—by altering its value of "total" self-giving. **Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other.** This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.”

- Marriage is a sign of Christ and the Church
 - Christian marriage is much more than natural marriage, because as a sacrament it communicates the grace of Christ's redemption of the human race
 - Ephesians 5:31-32: “ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.”
 - The Christian marriage reflects the great mystery of salvation: the total and faithful love of Christ for his bride, the Church

“One can say that the visible sign of marriage “in the beginning,” inasmuch as it is linked to the visible sign of Christ and the Church on the summit of God’s saving economy, *transposes* the eternal plan of love into the “*historical*” dimension and makes it *the foundation of the whole sacramental order.*” (TOB 95b:7)

- “Body” in Ephesians 5 signifies both the Body of Christ (the mystical body of the Church) and the body of husband and wife given to each other in marriage
- By living out marriage faithfully, the Christian spouses work out their own salvation and give hope to others who have despaired of faithful love in the world
- The Christian husband and wife always point to Christ as the source of their strength and unity
- Equality, headship and complementarity
 - In Ephesians 5, both headship and complementarity apply to marriage
 - Headship in a negative sense was part of the curse: “Your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16). Headship needs to be purified of domination.
 - **Headship** in a Christian sense follows the model of Christ, who is the head of the Church: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her” (Eph 5:25)
 - Headship is for the sake of family unity, so that there can be a final decision in debated matters. But the husband should always decide based on the good of the family, not his own selfish good.
 - **Complementarity** is based on the equal dignity of husband and wife as persons, and the mutuality of their giving in marriage
 - “Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21)

“The reciprocal relations of husband and wife must spring from their common relation with Christ. The author of the letter speaks about the “fear of Christ” in a sense analogous to his words about the “fear of God.” In this case, it is not a question of fear or fright that is a defensive attitude in the face of the threat of an evil, but a question of reverence for holiness.” (TOB 89:1).

- Husband and wife help each other develop their masculinity and femininity, especially in supporting each other as father and mother
- Complementarity requires discussion, consultation, and the just division of labor between roles