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Theology of the Body Series **Week 4: Our Ultimate Destiny in Heaven**

Jesus' Teaching on the Resurrection (Matthew 22:23-33)

On that day Sadducees approached him, saying that there is no resurrection. They put this question to him, saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies without children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up descendants for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died and, having no descendants, left his wife to his brother. The same happened with the second and the third, through all seven. Finally the woman died. Now at the resurrection, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had been married to her." Jesus said to them in reply, "You are misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

Eschatological Man and the Virginal State of the Body

"Spiritualization" of The Resurrected Body

Following original sin, "historical" man experiences many imperfections of this system of powers as expressed in the well-known words of St. Paul, "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind" (Rom 7:23). "Eschatological" man will be free from this "opposition." In the resurrection, the body will return to perfect unity and harmony with the spirit: man will no longer experience the opposition between what is spiritual and what is bodily in him.

"Spiritualization" signifies not only that the spirit will master the body, but, I would say, that it will also fully permeate the body and the powers of the spirit will permeate the energies of the body. (TOB 67:1)

The Virginal State of the Body in the Beatific Vision

In this reciprocal gift of self by man, a gift that will become completely and definitively beatifying as the response worthy of a personal subject to God's gift of himself, the "virginity" or rather **the virginal state of the body will manifest itself completely as the eschatological fulfillment of the "spousal" meaning of the body**, as the specific sign and authentic expression of personal subjectivity as a whole. In this way, then, the eschatological situation in which "they will take neither wife nor husband" has its solid foundation in the future state of the personal subject when, as a consequence of the vision of God "face to face," *a love of such depth and power of concentration on God himself* will be born in the person that *completely absorbs the person's whole psychosomatic subjectivity.*" (TOB 68:3)

The Communion of Saints

The concentration of knowledge and love on God himself in the trinitarian communion of Persons can find a beatifying response in those who will become sharers in the "other world"

only through realizing reciprocal communion commensurate with created persons. And for this reason we profess faith in the “communion of saints.” (TOB 68:4)

Encouraging Religious and Priestly Vocations as Well as Marriages

Complete Freedom for Christ, An Eschatological Sign

"I should like to you be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

-1 Corinthians 7:32-35

This is also the opinion of the whole tradition, both doctrinal and pastoral. *The superiority of continence to marriage never means, in the authentic tradition of the church, a disparagement of marriage or a belittling of its value.* (TOB 78:1)

As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, *it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority.* Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity. The consecrated life proclaims and in a certain way anticipates the future age, when the fullness of the Kingdom of heaven, already present in its first fruits and in mystery, will be achieved, and when the children of the resurrection will take neither wife nor husband, but will be like the angels of God (cf. Mt 22:30). (Vita Consecrata #32, St. John Paul II, 1996)

Consecrated Life

In the consecrated life, particular importance attaches to the spousal meaning, which recalls the Church's duty to be completely and exclusively devoted to her Spouse, from whom she receives every good thing ... The consecrated life has always been seen primarily in terms of Mary — Virgin and Bride. This virginal love is the source of a particular fruitfulness which fosters the birth and growth of divine life in people's hearts. Following in the footsteps of Mary, the New Eve, consecrated persons express their spiritual fruitfulness by becoming receptive to the Word. (Vita Consecrata #34)

Conclusion

Christ the Bridegroom is ready to enter into marriages and renew them with his love, and to hold the hearts of his priests and religious steady in their promises. If we live this out in faith, we will be able to encourage young people to remain chaste, respond to their vocations in Christ, and not give in to the world's call for pleasure. We will keep our hope fixed on the glory of the resurrection of the body and the life which God has in store for us.

Further reading:

Theology of the Body online: www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp2tbind.htm