

## Introduction to Theology of the Body (5/9/2007)

### What is Theology of the Body?

- Collection of 129 talks given by Pope John Paul II between 1979-1984
- Exposition of the Church's teaching on sexuality – but also much more
- Attempts to answer two important questions:
  - Who is man?
  - How is man to live?
- Deeply theological and deeply philosophical
- Why philosophy?
  - Modern man is constantly on a philosophical pursuit, asking the “big questions” of existence
    - What is the meaning of life? How did the world begin? Do I have a soul? Will it survive my death? What things really exist? Could nothing have existed? Etc.
  - “Modern”-isms
    - Pre-modernism – truth came from some authority (usually gods)
      - Teachings were enforced by religious officials
      - Tradition was viewed as sacred, valued above all else
      - People accepted and lived as they were told
    - Modernism – Traditions just get in the way of understanding truth
      - Scientific explosion – all truth could be rationally observed, explained and understood
      - Faith was based on myth – not rational thought
    - Post-modernism – There is no truth
      - Physical reality as described by science is the only reality
      - Determinations of right and wrong are completely subjective or relative
      - Faith is not only mythical, but completely opposed to post-modern thought and as such must be removed
  - It is obvious we live in a post-modern society. How did we get here?
    - Church functioned for most of history in a pre-modern fashion
      - Church's dictates were given to people in a black & white manner
      - Frequently little insight as to the question of “why?”
    - Two events symbolize how the philosophy of the modern world separated itself from the Church
      - Galileo – Church appears opposed to rational scientific thought
        - Modern philosophy rejects traditional teachings for observable fact
      - Descartes – “I think, therefore I am”
        - Basic principle of post-modern philosophy
        - Philosophy prior to Descartes (Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc) asked the “big questions” from a standpoint that started outside of man, implying some sort of universal objective (in Christian thought – God)

- Descartes turned the entire focus around, stating that man and his perceptions the center of philosophical thought
  - If reality is strictly determined by perception, then relativism is fact
- How does all this philosophy apply to Catholic teachings on sexuality?
  - Pre-modern teachings were highly legalistic with little information as to why
    - “No sex outside of marriage,” “Keep the marriage bed holy,” “Sex is for procreation” etc
    - Still see this approach used today – with little to no effectiveness
  - Church did not change this approach until the 20<sup>th</sup> century
    - Vatican II was, on one level, to put the 2000 year old teachings of the Church in a way that post-modern man thinks.
    - Sexual ethic still remained highly legalistic, an approach which was pretty much destroyed during the “sexual revolution”
  - In his Theology of the Body, JP2 aimed to unite the *objective* teaching of the Church with the *subjective* experience of man
    - Objective – truth that exists outside, independent of man
    - Subjective – man’s experience of the truth
    - Another way to put it is that the objective teaching is Truth, and the subjective experience is man’s freedom to seek the truth
    - Truth can only have meaning in a person’s life if he freely embraces it
    - Post-modern thought has divorced freedom from truth. If there is no truth, then freedom is simply the reality to choose what you want with no right and wrong.
    - JP2 demonstrates that the Church’s teaching of man is not something forced on him from “the outside,” but that it complete corresponds to his experience as a person on “the inside.”
- How does JP2 approach this subject?
  - Theology of the Body consists of 6 “cycles” divided into two sections
    - First section “Who is man?”
      - Cycle 1 – Original Man – focuses on the experience of the first man and woman before original sin
      - Cycle 2 – Historical man – the experience of man after sin becomes a reality in the world
      - Cycle 3 – Eschatological man – the experience of man at the resurrection
    - Second section “How is man to live?”
      - Cycle 4 – Celibacy for the Kingdom – religious and ordained life
      - Cycle 5 – Sacramentality of Marriage
      - Cycle 6 – Love and Fruitfulness – reflects on *Humanae Vitaue*” in light of everything he’s taught so far
  - Frequently repetitious
    - Probably not a good idea to read Theology of the Body “linearly,” from point A to Z.

- Teaching is more like a spiral, each time taking us deeper into the basic themes.
- Additional theological and philosophical points
  - Kant – “ethics of pure duty”
    - Man must remove any subjective or emotionally-felt value.
    - Any ethical action is purely a willing of the law
    - Only relevant “feeling” is that which arises from duty, from the law
  - Scheler – “ethics of experience”
    - Ethical action is a result of feeling that it is the right thing to do
    - Duty and legalistic approaches must be removed
  - Neither approach can correctly describe the Christian moral ethic
    - A person not only feels value, but also aspires to value
  - Phenomenology – a philosophical approach that studies experiences of life as we experience them
    - JP2 uses human experience as the departing point, and using this technique demonstrates how the experience relates to the objective reality that is God
  - *Humanae Vitae*
    - Reaffirmed Church’s teaching on the immorality of contraception
    - Throughout history, most people understood that the key for sexual morality was respect for procreation.
      - Therefore, if “liberation” were to happen, this respect needed to be removed
    - Post-modern thought sees the body only as a biological reference point, where the Church has always taught the body is an integral part of the human person
      - Two completely different views of man and his reason for being
    - HV dropped like a bomb on the Church
      - Huge uproar among Church members – proves how far postmodern thought crept into theology
    - HV was in 1968 – *still* fighting the same fight in 2006, both inside and outside of the Church
    - Theology of the Body sets up a much deeper background in sexuality, particularly with the subjective experience of man. Using that framework, JP2 shows what amazing insight Pope Paul VI provided with *Humanae Vitae*.