

Why I Am Catholic

"Theology of the Body"

This beautiful teaching comes from 129 lectures Pope John Paul II gave between September 1979 and November 1984 during his Wednesday audiences. It is based on the Bible, Church teaching, and Greek and modern philosophy and focuses on the reason we have a body and the purpose of the body.

In Genesis 1:26-27, we are told that we are "created in the image and likeness of God." "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We are told in the first chapter of the Bible that the human body is sacred, special, and intended for a Godly purpose.

We are later told in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians: "The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? . . . Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." (I Cor 6:13, 15, 19-20) St. Paul prays in his Letter to the Philippians that "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." (Phil 1:20)

The Pope's writings and talks cover "such topics as the unified corporeal and spiritual qualities of the human person; the origins, history and destiny of humanity; the deepest desires of the human heart and the way to experience true happiness and freedom; the truth about man's need and desire for loving communion derived from the revealed understanding of humanity in the image of a Triune Creator; the truth about God's original design for human sexuality and thus the dignity of the human person, how it was distorted through sin, and how it has been restored and renewed through the redemption of Jesus Christ; and Catholic teachings about the sacramentality of marriage." (*Wikipedia*)

Author Christopher West has written books, given talks and done presentations on the Pope's teaching. The Pope and West cover the Christian ideal of marriage, the distortion of adultery, the Resurrection of the body, celibacy and virginity, the sacrament of marriage, and why contraception is wrong and Natural Family Planning (NFP) is good when properly used.

Pope John Paul II specifically explains how spiritually and logically wrong is current thinking against absolute truths and how it contradicts moral right and wrong. He also explains how God gives us free will but how freedom becomes slavery when it is misused. Responsible freedom is true freedom and joining our will to God's will is how we realize our purpose and God's plan. It also reminds us of God's call in marriage is to "be fertile (or fruitful) and multiply." (Gen 1:28)

Nowhere does God issue a commandment saying "only have two children." Married couples are called to: listen to God's voice and His plan for their marriage, to cooperate, and to continually pray about God's desire at each stage, given their life spiritually, physically, economically, and psychologically. As we approach Mother's Day it is important to reflect on the role of mothers and fathers, the call to mature parenting, and the baptismal obligation to discipline our bodies and to resist the temptations of lust and acting merely on feelings.