

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Lecture 22:3

However, the first part of the commandment, “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), contains a further content and indicates a further component. In this “knowledge,” in which they give rise to a being similar to themselves, about which they can say together, “It is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones” (Gen 2:24), the man and the woman are “carried off” together, as it were, both taken into *possession by*

the very humanity which they, in union and reciprocal “knowledge,” want to express anew and take possession of anew by drawing it from themselves, from the marvelous masculine and feminine maturity of their bodies and in the end – through the whole sequence of human conceptions and generations from the beginning – from the very mystery of creation.

Lecture 22:7

In man, consciousness of the meaning of the body and consciousness of its generative meaning come into contact with the consciousness of death, whose inevitable horizon they carry, so to speak, within themselves. And yet, in man's history there always returns the “knowledge-generation” cycle, in which life struggles always anew with the inexorable prospect of death, and always overcomes it. *It is as if the reason for this unyielding strength of life, which shows itself in “generation,” were always the same “knowledge,”* with which man passes beyond the solitude of his own being, and even more, decides anew to affirm this being in an “other.” And both, man and woman, affirm it in the new man whom they generate. In this statement, biblical “knowledge” seems to take on a still greater

dimension. It seems to insert itself into that “vision” of God himself, which concludes the first account of the creation of man, concerning “male” and “female” made “in the image of God.” “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Despite all the experiences of his own life, despite the sufferings, the disappointments in himself, his sinfulness, and, finally, despite the inevitable prospect of death, man always continues, however, to place “knowledge” at the “beginning” of “generation”; in this way he seems to participate in that first “vision” of God himself: God, the Creator, “saw everything...and indeed, it was good.” And always anew he confirms the truth of these words.

Lecture 23:5

The questions raised by contemporary man are also those of Christians: of those who prepare for the sacrament of Marriage or of those who already live in marriage, which is the sacrament of the Church. These are not only the questions of the sciences, but even more so the questions of human life. So many human beings and so many Christians search in marriage for the fulfillment of their vocation. So many want to find in it the way of *salvation* and *holiness*.

For them, the answer Christ gave to the Pharisees, who were filled with zeal for the Old Testament, is particularly important. Those who seek the fulfillment of their own human and Christian vocation in marriage are called first of all to make of this “theology of the body,” whose “beginning” we find in the first chapters of Genesis, the content of their lives and behavior. In fact, on the road of this vocation, how indispensable is a deepened consciousness of the meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity! How necessary is an accurate consciousness of the spousal meaning of the body, of its generative meaning, given that all that forms the content of the life of the spouses must always find its full and personal dimension in

shared life, in behavior, in feelings! And this all the more against the background of a civilization that remains under the pressure of a materialistic and utilitarian way of thinking and evaluating. Contemporary bio-physiology can offer such precise information about human sexuality. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the personal dignity of the human body and of sex must still be drawn from other sources. A particular source is God's own word, which contains the revelation of the body, the revelation that goes back to the “beginning.”

How significant it is that, in his answer to all these questions, Christ orders man to return in some way to the threshold of his theological history! He orders him to place himself at the boundary between original innocence-happiness and the inheritance of the first fall. By doing so, does he not want to say that the way on which he leads man, male and female, in the sacrament of Marriage, namely, the way of the “redemption of the body,” must consist in *retrieving this dignity*, in which the true meaning of the human body, its meaning as personal and “of communion,” is fulfilled at the same time?