

The Domestic Church

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Theology of the Body

To enter into the topic of the *Theology of the Body*, one must (it seems to me) first map the terrain of the human person, according to an “adequate anthropology” which the Pope has referred to. This mapping is necessary because the days are gone in which our society held a clear and cohesive understanding of the human person based on Christian teaching. Today, much of what faithful Christians combat is a dysfunctional view of the human person, both in light of his or her relationship with God and in terms of the whole make-up of the human being: body, mind and spirit. The culture, stripped of its moorings in Catholic and Christian teaching is adrift on dangerous waters, and the operating view of the human person is debased.

And yet, the remedy is before us due largely to the dedication of John Paul II in restating a Christian anthropology in the language of our time. This has been a massive undertaking on his part, a work of genius for which we can be abundantly grateful. The implications of John Paul II’s vision for each of us, for society and for the human family are immense. They invite a re-ordering of our culture based on a renewed and clarified understanding of the human person--the crowning glory of God’s creation--and subsequently of the entire created order. *The Theology of the Body*, then fits into this larger context and focuses primarily on questions of marriage and sexuality in God’s plan for humanity, as He made us to be.

In this issue, our president Mark Andreas interviews Christopher West, a leading scholar in Pope John Paul II’s teaching entitled *Theology of the Body*. A copy of the text *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan* by John Paul II is available from the Daughters of St. Paul.

Ruth Andreas
Editor



Holy Conversations

Interview with Christopher West

This holy conversation recently took place between our president, Mark Andreas and Christopher West, a well-known speaker, author and teacher of the Theology of the Body. Mr. West is the former Director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Archdiocese of Denver and still participates in marriage preparation and deaconate formation there. He currently teaches Sexual Ethics at St. John Vianney Seminary. His book is entitled Good News About Sex and Marriage.

Andreas: Christopher, let's go right to your book, which is what most of your talks are about as you travel around the country. What is the Theology of the the Body, and why is it something important for Catholics to understand?

West: The Theology of the Body is a collection of 129 Wednesday audience addresses that the Pope delivered between 9/1979 and 11/1984. It was a response to something that Pope Paul VI said in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed the Church's constant teaching against contraception. Of course, this encyclical fell like a bomb on the Church in 1968; the world was basically expecting that the Catholic Church would change its position on contraception, and when Paul VI did not, this was a bomb, a shock to the Church and to the world. In that encyclical, Paul VI said that we cannot understand the Church's teaching on the regulation of births unless we see it in light of a total vision of the human person. Paul VI, however did not outline this total vision of the human person in his encyclical. John Paul II does, and this is what the first half of his Theology of the Body is, what he calls an "adequate anthropology". He does so by reflecting on key words of Jesus Christ, first in a passage from

Matthew 19, where Jesus discusses with the Sadducees the reality of divorce: "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of your hardness of heart, *but in the beginning it was not so.*" This forms the foundation of the entire Theology of the Body. We must go back to God's original plan for man and woman in the first place if we are to understand who we are and how we are to live. So in these 129 homilies, the Pope reflects on these two basic questions: who are we, and how are we to live?

In order to understand who we are, we have to go back to God's original plan and we have to understand how sin has distorted God's original plan, but how Christ redeems us. We also have to look to our heavenly destiny. So this view of the human person: God's original plan, how sin has distorted it, how Christ redeems it and how we will come to fulfillment in heaven; this forms the Pope's adequate anthropology, his understanding of human beings. Then he applies that to questions of Christian vocation: the celibate vocation, the marital vocation; then at the end of his catechesis he returns to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and gives us an entirely new context for understanding the importance of this teaching in the Church and in the world today.

Andreas: What brought you to the study of the thought of our Holy Father Pope John Paul II?

West: Well, I had been raised a Catholic, and had heard, growing up in Catholic school the "what's" of the Catholic Church's teaching, but never the "why's". I heard "Just don't do it!" but I never heard the beauty behind the teaching. When MTV and popular culture were saying, "Just do it", the popular culture was much more

attractive to me, so I bought into the lie for a number of years.

I had the tragic experience my freshman year in college of witnessing a date rape in a college dorm. This was a shock to me and a wake-up call to me to address some issues in my own life. I began begging God to help me understand why he had made me a man! I saw so many shattered lives from sexual immorality, including my own and I wanted answers. And I sought. Jesus says: "Seek and you will find." I sought, and I found. What I ultimately found was Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. It changed my view, not only of sexuality and the Catholic Church, but it changed my view of the universe! I knew that this Theology of the Body was the answer to the deepest issues and problems of the modern world. And I also knew that I had attended Catholic schools for 12 years and never heard it, and figured that nobody else had either or everybody else would be talking about it. So I devoted my life. I said, "This is my life's work. I need to study this man's thought and make it accessible to others."

Andreas: What have you learned most about us Catholics in terms of our understanding of the Church's teaching on human sexuality?

West: I would have to add "the lack thereof", in other words the lack of understanding of the Church's teaching on sexuality. There is a hunger to know why the Church teaches what it teaches. But there is a vast, vast ignorance. Most people have bought into the counterfeit that our culture has presented, and oftentimes to no fault of their own. There has been a silence from the pulpit. There has been a silence in much of Catholic catechesis and Catholic education. So, when I come

to a parish or go to a conference and present on the Theology of the Body, even good Catholics who love their Faith haven't heard this beautiful, wonderful vision that our Pope is giving us. So there really is no "choir" that I am preaching to. The whole world, Catholic and non-Catholic is a mission field ready to soak up this teaching! We have been so wounded by the sexual revolution. And people are beginning to wake up to that. They are looking for the deeper reasons behind the Church's teaching, and they are beginning to see the wisdom of the Church's teaching. And when they hear how this Pope articulates the beauty, the dignity of the reasons that God made us male and female and calls us to that one flesh union, people respond joyfully!

Andreas: Christopher, what questions do you most often get asked regarding sexual ethics in your travels around the country when you speak with various groups?

West: I'd say the biggest question on people's minds is the issue of contraception and why the Church is opposed to contraception. And on the other hand, why does the Church accept natural family planning, and what is the difference? The Pope's Theology of the Body, as stated earlier provides a beautiful new context for understanding the teaching from *Humanae Vitae* on contraception and the proper regulation of births.

What the Pope teaches is that the body has a language, and the language of the body proclaims the very mystery of God's love. God is a life-giving union of persons, or a communion of persons and we are made in this image as male and female. Here the pope brings a dramatic development of thinking to Catholic theology about the way in which we, as man and woman image God. Traditionally, theologians have said that we image God as individuals because of our rational soul. This is certainly true and the Pope isn't saying this is not true; he is building upon it. He is saying: yes, we image God as individuals. But we also image God in the moment of communion, when the

man and the woman give their whole selves to one another.

Right on this communion descended the blessing of fertility, right from the beginning. Indeed, the very first commandment to the human race from God was: to be fruitful and multiply. In other words, the very first commandment is to live" in the image in which I (God) made you." God Himself as a Trinity of persons is a life-giving communion of persons. We, male and female image God in our communion. Indeed, the marital embrace itself is an icon, you might say of the inner life of the Trinity. Of course, we have to be very careful here to recognize that we are speaking of an analogy. God is not sexual, in any way. He is beyond the difference of the sexes. But nonetheless, the difference of the sexes reveals something of the infinite perfection of God, and the life-giving union of man and woman is meant to be a reflection in the world of the life-giving love of the Trinity.

So the Pope addresses all questions of sexual morality through what we can call "the ethics of the sign." What does this mean?

Man and woman's relationship, their union itself is meant to be a sign in the world of the infinite life-giving love of God. We are meant to love as God loves. This is the ultimate meaning of human existence! Isn't this the commandment Christ gives us? "Love one another as I have loved you." What the Theology of the Body teaches us is that this great commandment to love as God loves is stamped right in our bodies. It is stamped in our masculinity and our femininity, in our call to union. So all questions of sexual morality boil down to one very simple question: Does this truly image the love of God, or does it not? That is what I mean by the ethics of the sign: does this behavior, does this thought, does this action participate in the love of God, does it image the love of God or does it not?

Then we have to ask a big question: what is the love of God like? There are numerous counterfeits on the market for the true love of God. In my book, *Good News About Sex and Marriage* I summarize God's love with

four basic qualities. First of all, God's love is *free*. We see the ultimate revelation of love in the Cross. On the Cross, Jesus is giving himself up freely. No one takes his life from him; he says, "I lay my life down of my own accord." If our love is to image God's love, and bring us the happiness we are looking for, it must be free. It can't be manipulated, it can't be coerced. And people understand that. If love is not free, it's not love.

Second of all, in order for our love to image God's love and for it to be true love, it has to be a *total*, irreversible gift of yourself, an uncompromising, unconditional gift of yourself. God loves us totally. Christ gives himself up on the Cross for us totally, without any reservation. So if our love is to image God's love, it must be free; it must be total.

Another quality: it must be *faithful*. "Though the mountains may fall and the hills turn to dust, I will never forget the covenant I have made with you. I have betrothed myself to you in fidelity," God says to His people. Christ says, "I will love you until the end of the age. I will never leave you; I will never forsake you." So if our love is to image God's love it must be free, it must be total, it must be faithful and (one more quality) it must be *fruitful*.

Christ said, "I came so that my bride might have life, and have it to the full." This is the love we are called to image in our bodies as man and woman. This is the love that husband and wife are called to participate in and renew with their bodies when they become one flesh. Indeed, this is exactly what a man and a woman commit to at the altar. They promise to love one another freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. These are the questions of the intention to marry. The priest or deacon will ask, "Have you come here freely, to give yourself freely and without reservation in marriage?" They answer, "We have." The priest or deacon then asks them, "Do you promise to love one another until death?" They say, "We do." The priest or deacon asks them, "Do you promise to receive children lovingly from God?" They say, "We do." And the beauty of the Theology of the Body is that marital love, this commitment to

love freely, totally, faithfully, fruitfully is the very language of sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is where the words of the wedding vows become flesh. And when we understand this, then all of the Church's teaching makes sense.

Especially on the issue of contraception: an intentionally sterilized union is saying, "I don't want to image God. I don't want the life-giving love of God to be part of this union." God's love is life-giving!

Andreas: And thus, we are not giving ourselves to one another in totality, which is so integrally bound in that sacrament. To hold back, to contracept is to...

West: ...is to deny the total gift of self. Marital love is meant to express this free, total, faithful and fruitful self-giving. Contraception not only denies the fruitful part of the self-giving; it also violates the freedom part.

Why do we spay or neuter our dogs and cats? Because they can't say "no". And if you can't say, "no" you are not free! I often like to point this out. Contraception was not invented to prevent pregnancy. We already had a 100% safe, reliable way of doing that: abstinence. Contraception was invented because people did not want to abstain. And now we have an entire culture of people who can't abstain, so they think. We've created a culture of sexual addiction. This is not freedom; this is bondage. And contraception is at the root of this bondage. So contraception violates the freedom of the love of a husband and a wife.

If you have a good reason to avoid having a child, the proper pursuit here is to abstain from the act that brings children into the world. That is the primary difference between contraception and natural family planning.

Andreas: I'm often asked by other couples: "When is enough enough?" When we reflect on *Humanae Vitae* we are called to be generous. We are called to give ourselves in totality to God, and consequently to one another. Maybe you can help our audience, those who are practicing natural family planning, with this

question.

West: *Humanae Vitae* calls all couples to a generous and responsible parenthood. The way it defines responsible parenthood is this.

A) A couple is behaving responsibly in their parenthood if they prudently choose to have a large number of children... The phrase "and they prudently choose" is important; it is not just throwing caution to the wind. It's discerning your life circumstances; it's discerning the good of the children already born; the good of the spouses; the health of the spouses; the financial situation of the family. It is not just a "throwing caution to the wind". It's a prudent consideration, where we have determined prayerfully that" we are called to have a large number of children". That couple is exercising responsible parenthood, according to the Church's understanding.

But so, too is B) a couple who, with due respect for the moral law, after considering their circumstances (maybe for the good of the children already born, maybe because of health considerations, maybe because of financial considerations; maybe just because you already have three children under the age of three and need to have a break!) determine they have valid reason to space their children. And the Church says that such a couple, so long as they are behaving with due respect for the moral law, that is, they are not "contracepting" is exercising responsible parenthood.

Let me just define contraception, in case there is any confusion on this: Contraception is the choice to impede the procreative potential of a given act of intercourse. In other words, you are engaging in an act of intercourse and then you are doing something else to render that act sterile. Natural Family Planning is acceptable, *not* because it is "natural" as opposed to "artificial". It's acceptable because it is not "contraceptive". Never does a couple who is using Natural Family Planning impede the procreative potential of their acts of intercourse, never *ever*. They simply do not engage in those acts of intercourse that could lead to children. They

simply abstain from the act, rather than rendering the act sterile.

Andreas: Could not the abstinence in and of itself lead to a contraceptive mentality?

West: Certainly natural family planning could be abused. It could be used for selfish motives: because you have a dislike for children. But there is a clear difference between those who do and those who do not have a good reason. To abstain from an act of intercourse for no other reason than to avoid having a child, this is an affront to God. Still, these couples are not "contracepting", they are not engaging in a contraceptive union, but they do have a mentality that is opposed to generous parenthood.

Andreas: The papal biographer George Weigel noted that the *Theology of the Body* is a theological time bomb set to go off sometime in the third millennium. What do you think he means by that?

West: This is one of my favorite expressions from Weigel. When the Pope's biography which Weigel wrote came out in 1999, I was just ecstatic, because here was a respected theologian who understood the importance of *Theology of the Body* for this pontificate. (Few before Weigel, I think understood this.) The phrase "theological time bomb" says it very well, and I'd like to say that it's my mission in life to fuse this time bomb. Because when it detonates, we are going to see the culture of life that this Pope has long been talking about.

Why is it a theological time bomb? If you trace the roots of the culture of death, it takes us back to the breakdown of man and woman's relationship. At the root of ethics and culture is the relationship of man and woman.

A very simple way to understand this is: what is the fundamental cell of society? The family. Where does the fundamental cell of the family come from, i.e. what is the origin of the family? It is the unity of man and woman in one flesh. This is where babies come from; this is how families

are formed. So when the union of man and woman is oriented towards life and towards love, it not only builds families that live the truth of life and love; it builds a culture of life and love.

When the marital embrace/the sexual act is disoriented against life and against love, not only does it break down marriage and the family; Society collapses. This is why the Holy Father says in his grand encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, it is an illusion to think that we can build a true culture of life if we do not accept and experience sexuality, and love and the whole of human life according to their true meaning and their close interconnection. Think how intertwined sex is with the very meaning and reality of human existence! No one would exist if it weren't for sexual union.

At the Lambeth Conference in 1930, the Anglican Church changed its teaching and said that contraception could be accepted within marriage. The Pope does not exaggerate when he says that the choices of men and women in the sexual union bear the weight of the whole of human existence! Every human being is the end result of thousands upon thousands of sexual unions. Go back in your own lineage 200 generations and remove one sexual union, and you would not exist. Nor would anyone else down your own lineage from that point. The world would be a different place.

Andreas: That's an awesome thing to contemplate.

West: I heard this once from an anthropologist that every human being on the planet is related, most distantly as 52nd cousins. Somebody in Zimbabwe is at most your 52nd cousin. The human family tree is closely knit!

Andreas: This would explain why the Pope, throughout his pontificate has insisted that we are of the same parents, we are part of the same family

West: This is why the Pope's Theology of the Body is a theological time bomb. Because it addresses the

crisis with pinpoint accuracy as to what the problem is and what the solution is. When people embrace this, it changes the world.

There will be no culture of life, there will be no renewal of the Church and the world without a renewal of marriage and family life. However, there will be no renewal of marriage and family life without a return to the full truth of the Christian sexual ethic. However, there will be no return to the full truth of the Christian sexual ethic without a bold, dramatic proposal that demonstrates to the modern world in a way that we can understand, that the Church's sexual ethic is not against us; it's for us. It is not a list of repressive prohibitions. It is a liberating ethos that, when we embrace it, it sets us free to fulfill the very meaning of our being and existence. This is what the Pope says. If we live according to the true meaning of love that is stamped in our sexuality (the nuptial embrace), we fulfill the very meaning and being of our existence. But if we don't live according to the meaning of our sexuality and the call to love, we destroy ourselves. This is why the Theology of the Body is a theological time bomb, because it is going to renew marriage and the family and, in turn its going to build a culture of life.

Andreas: It's very interesting that you should bring that up in a time when certain parts of Europe have been forced to bring workers into their countries because their own populations are dying out.

West: The consequences of contraception are dire. And we don't see the forest for the trees. I think it's Janet Smith who uses the analogy of a frog: If you put a frog in boiling water it will jump out right away. But if you put a frog in lukewarm water and very slowly turn up the heat, it will happily boil to death. We are a culture that is boiling to death, and we don't understand why. We don't even recognize it. If I were to point to one moment in history where that heat started to heat up, I would point to 1930, when the Anglican church accepted contraception. Indeed, it

was predicted at that time by wise men and women, and not just Catholics; but Protestants, secular writers, Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems. All around the world people understood the effect of contraception, not just on man and woman's relationship but in turn, on the whole of culture and society. It was predicted by Pius XI in *Castii Canubi* and by others as already mentioned that, if contraception were accepted we would see an increase in: adultery, divorce, pre-marital sex, out-of-wedlock births, abortion, fatherless children; which will lead to an increase in poverty, crime, violence, pornography and even homosexuality. This was all predicted.

Andreas: And here we are.

West: The promoters of contraception scoffed at these predictions; said it would never happen. It has happened. We've lived through it. Why? What is the connection with contraception? Let me sketch out the internal logic of this in simple fashion, although it is more complicated.

The internal logic is this. Human beings are often tempted to do things we shouldn't do. This is nothing new. But, there are deterrents within culture and society that prevent us often from doing things that we shouldn't do. For example, what would happen to crime rates in Portland if jail terms were taken away? They would skyrocket. The deterrent of the jail terms serves to curb the crime. Well, there is nothing new under the sun. People have committed adultery throughout history. But never in the numbers that we see today. Why? What was one of the main deterrents from committing adultery throughout history? Fear of an unwanted pregnancy. Take that deterrent away, and the rates of adultery will skyrocket, and women become objects for male gratification. What is one of the main causes of divorce? Infidelity. There you have an immediate connection between contraception, adultery and divorce. But it gets much worse. One of the main deterrents against pre-marital sex throughout history has been the fear of an unwanted pregnancy. Take that fear away, and

Gifts From the Magisterium

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Part Two, Section Two, Chapter Three: The Sacraments Article 7, V. The Goods and Requirements of Conjugal Love

1643 "Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter - appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands *indissolubility* and *faithfulness* in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to *fertility*. In a word it is a question of the normal characteristics of all natural conjugal love, but with a new significance which not only purifies and strengthens them, but raises them to the extent of making them the expression of specifically Christian values."

1647 The deepest reason (for inviolable fidelity in marriage) is found in the fidelity of God to his covenant, in that of Christ to his Church. Through the sacrament of Matrimony the spouses are enabled to represent this fidelity and witness to it. Through the sacrament, the indissolubility of marriage receives a new and deeper meaning.

rates of pre-marital sex will skyrocket. And they have. Pre-marital sex is also a key indicator of the future breakdown of a marriage. Why? Because it's like committing adultery in advance. We know, deep in our hearts that we are meant to express this intimate union with only one person.

We all know that no method of contraception is 100% effective. What is going to happen in a given culture where there are huge increases in rates of adultery and pre-marital sex, and these men and women have already determined by the choice of using contraception that they do not want this act to result in a child, what is going to happen when the contraception fails and they have an "unwanted" pregnancy? Get rid of the baby. So many people think that the way you solve the abortion problem is by getting more contraception out there. That is like throwing gasoline on a fire to try to put it out. There is one reason we have abortion. It is because we have men and women who are having sex, who do not love one another freely, totally, faithfully and open to children. That's it...

What is the connection between contraception and homosexuality? As soon as you sever sexual pleasure from openness to life, then why does a man's sexual pleasure have to be with

a woman? It's total self-gratification, and I can have my sexual gratification in any number of ways.

Is the Catholic Church crazy with its teaching, or is it on to something? You judge by the fruit...Contraception has done this to our culture, not singlehandedly, but it has played a major role.

Andreas: The Church, in my mind certainly seems to lend more to the dignity of the human being.

West: (concluding remarks) The Pope begins the *Theology of the Body* with Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees, when he said, "Moses allowed you to divorce because of the hardness of your heart. But in the beginning it was not so." Jesus is calling us back to God's original plan. He's calling us back to the beauty, the dignity, the greatness of our creation in the image and likeness of God. We must struggle against the tendency to sin, but through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the man and the woman *can* live out the original beauty of God's plan for marriage!

The Pope's *Theology of the Body* is not just about sex and marriage. When we understand the reason God made us male and female, we have a key to understanding the Christian

mystery as a spousal mystery. The union between Christ and the Church is referred to as a spousal relationship. The deepest meaning of human sexuality is "to love as God loves".

All of the sexual confusion in the world amounts to the human desire for heaven gone berserk. God stamped in each one of us the desire for Heaven. And the desire for sexual union with another is an earthly foreshadowing (is meant to be) of the great consummation, if we can say so as an analogy, of Christ and the Church for all eternity. This analogy helps us to understand the ultimate mystery of Heaven. And the Bible itself describes heaven as the marriage of the Lamb. This is what we all desire: the marriage of *Heaven*. Sex is meant to be an icon, an icon that points us to something much greater than ourselves, the union of Christ with the Church.

For Speaking Engagements, contact Scott Russell, Events Manager at 847-649-8222.

To Order Mr. West's Books: www.giftfoundation.org or christopherwest.com (under construction)

A Pious Perspective on the Celibate Life

Rev. Pius X Harding, O.S.B.

I love reading Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, because it is a simple, yet so very profound, reminder of how good man has been made by our Heavenly Father.

Pope John Paul insists that we look to the beginning, to God's original intention, in order to find the answers to the most significant questions about life, love and eternal happiness.

Saint Matthew's Gospel presents this so clearly in regards to marriage (19:12), but what does this have to say about celibacy as it is lived by priests and those vowed in the consecrated life? What does the Holy Father's *Theology of the Body* teach us about the celibate life?

I believe that the *Theology of the Body* requires us to be truly men, and not pretend to be angels. To embrace the vowed celibate life, one must be committed to forming, or re-forming, one's heart according to God's original intention for man. Our society promotes many vices, and all candidates for priestly and consecrated life are necessarily products of their society. However, the vices of lust, gluttony, pride, *et al*, so prevalent in our society, must be rejected as the attacks which they truly are against the heart of man which must be set on God alone in order to fully embrace the "radical gift of self" in Imitation of Christ, which is the very life-blood of the celibate life.

One must have a properly ordered heart – one set aright in God's original intention that one is to be a total and radical gift to another. It's plain enough in marriage that one finds his completion in his spouse. *The Theology of the Body* teaches us that man and woman are naturally to long for one another, and once again, to find their completion in their sacrificial gift of self. So too, it is true in the life of one who embraces celibacy. Man was created by God to be in relation to

another. He is "social" by God's design. Selfishness is not in God's original plan. It is the antithesis of the radical gift of self which we find so perfectly modeled in Christ.

I like to say that it takes the same qualities to be a priest or a dad, both must be fathers. Both must be willing to give themselves without reservation. Both must be open to new life. Both must be patient and kind. Both must work hard, provide for and protect those in their care.

In order for one to truly embrace the celibate life, one must first be properly disposed toward marriage. One of the spiritual pillars of the celibate life is the sacrifice of the "good" of marriage in order to embrace the call to love Christ exclusively, and yet love him equally in everyone: "to have no family of your own, yet a part of every family," as the old prayer goes. If one is not inclined toward marriage and family life, what is the pleasing and permitted "good" that he offers to God in sacrifice?

Yet some in our day say that "homosexuals" can be ordained priests. I believe that the *Theology of the Body* prohibits it, because attraction to the same sex is necessarily a perversion of human sexuality as it is designed and bestowed by our Heavenly Father. I'm making here no statement on the moral character of those who find themselves attracted to persons of the same sex, but I am saying that one who accepts any perversion of God's original intention for man as normal and good, disqualifies himself for acceptance into the celibate life.

A priest or consecrated religious cannot tolerate an on-going co-existence with any of the vices. My thoughts here are much influenced by Father Thomas Dubay, S.M. He teaches in a wonderful little work entitled *You are Christ's: the Charism*

of Virginity and Celibacy in the Church, (published by Ignatius Press), that the celibate is necessarily Poor, Chaste, and Obedient. This must be so, for all three of these evangelical counsels are essential to that radical gift of self which is at the heart of the celibate life. Another pillar of the celibate life is the offering of one's own will to God – the conformity of our own will to the Divine. Why would I give up the exalted good of marriage and then try to fill this very real void with material possessions, those vastly lesser goods? Only Christ belongs in that place. Certainly we can see what happens to the life of chastity if one fails to guard what he sees, reads, speaks about or the company he keeps. Or, if one embraces the culture of dissent and compromises obedience by undermining the authority of one's superiors or the anointed teachers in the Church. All of these things are perverted manifestations of the will, while the celibate life requires its radical submission to the Divine Will.

Anything less than the total and radical gift of self to Christ in His Church fails to give proper witness to that Kingdom of God where love reigns supreme. In the end, only love can motivate one to embrace and live fully the celibate life, and only the celibate life fully embraced can ever bring to our very human hearts, the satisfaction of love which everyone needs.

The Theology of the Body requires us to be that which God created us to be. Every Christian vocation is a call to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. At the heart of every true vocation is this calling to love – to love with our human hearts, inspired by the heart of Christ Who gave Himself without reservation for the salvation of souls. This imitation, more than anything, is the celibate life.

St. Joseph's Married Couple's Retreat is coming in Oct!

Fr. Brian Mullady O.P. will be the retreat master.
This year's theme will focus on marriage and the domestic church.
Set your calendar for the weekend of October 25th , and
treat you and your spouse to a weekend of intimacy, and
insight into the beautiful sacrament of matrimony,
at Our Lady Of Peace Retreat House in Beaverton, Or.
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Harding O.S.B.

Mission Statement
Founded in January, 1995, St. Joseph's Center for the Domestic Church is a Catholic apostolate dedicated to serving the family. Our mission is to help families recognize their role as the "domestic church," the Church at home, and to re-establish the home as a sacred refuge.

St. Joseph's Center for the Domestic Church
P.O. Box 718
Lafayette, Oregon 97127

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