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Every couple wants a deeply committed marriage and a happy family. All of us want to reverse current trends in no-fault easy divorce, broken families, single moms, and fatherless families. But how?

We can rediscover God's plan for spousal love. If we do this, and use all the helps He provides to make this plan possible, then there will be a return to successful marriages, committed relationships, and healthy-happy families.

That is why Karol Wojtyla wrote the Theology of the Body in the early 1970s, and then used it for the content of 128 Wednesday audiences during the first four years of his pontificate. He wanted to probe into what Jesus taught us about spousal love in divine revelation. To this, he added his own insights gleaned from his studies in philosophical ethics and moral theology, especially using Christian Personalism and phenomenology. John Paul wanted to provide us with a "total picture" of marriage and spousal love, using divine revelation, teachings of the Magisterium, and good reasoning.

In many ways, the Theology of the Body (TOB) can be seen as providing a massive background for understanding the key teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, that every act of spousal love must be open to the unitive (love-giving) dimension and to the procreative (life-giving) dimension of the act. And this is highly important because spousal love is expressed most concretely and poignantly by the spousal act.

The TOB concentrates upon the significance of the fact that we are bodied-persons, either male

or female, endowed with fertility and sexuality. But there are many ways to be confused about this, and to miss the true meaning of spousal love.

If we are bodied-persons, then how close to our core identity is our body? Modern trends, since Francis Bacon, Descartes and Kant, regard the human body as something sub-personal, not part of my real self. My real self, they think, is my self-awareness, consciousness, and the ability to think and communicate. My body is simply part of the material world, over which we have greater and greater control. Thus we see the trend to accept all sorts of interventions and controls over our bodies: contraception, sterilization, abortion, artificial procreation, cloning, eugenics and euthanasia.

Michael Waldstein provides a good treatment of this in his extensive introduction to a new and more complete translation of the TOB. See pp. 34-77 of his *Man and Woman He Created Them* (Pauline Press, Boston: 2006).

A true anthropology views the human person as a composite of an immaterial (and eternal) spirit united with a material body. My body is an integral part of my identity. I do not have a body; I am my body. What you do to my body, you do to me. We are bodied-persons, not disembodied spirits. We are incarnate spirits, and spirit-filled bodies.

Thus we cannot view, or treat, our bodies as something extraneous to our very selves. We should not redefine sex as a mutual search for pleasure in intimacy while sterilizing its life-giving dimension. We should not reject the meaning God has written into spousal love and its most characteristic act, which is a language of total self-giving and fruitfulness. True human fulfillment in the sexual sphere can only be found by following this divine plan for human love. Authentic growth in learning how to love comes not by way of technology, but by way of personal gift and total surrender.

In his Wednesday audience of 22 Aug 84 (TOB 123:7), Pope John Paul explains the essential evil of contracepted sex. "In the case of an artificial separation of these two meanings in the conjugal act, a real bodily union is brought about, but it does not correspond to the inner truth and dignity of personal communion, 'communio personarum.' This communion demands, in fact, that the 'language of the body' be expressed reciprocally in the integral truth of its meaning. If this truth is lacking, one can speak neither of the truth of the reciprocal gift of self nor of the reciprocal acceptance of oneself by the other person. Such a violation of the inner order of conjugal communion, a communion that plunges its roots into the very order of the

person, constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.”

If we do not understand what the spousal act was designed to express and accomplish, then we will never arrive at a true understanding of spousal love, marriage, or a family.