

THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF SEXUALITY

By Father Anthony Percy, S.T.D - For RECLAIM - #R009

Discovering the divine purpose of sexuality transforms the very nature of sex itself.

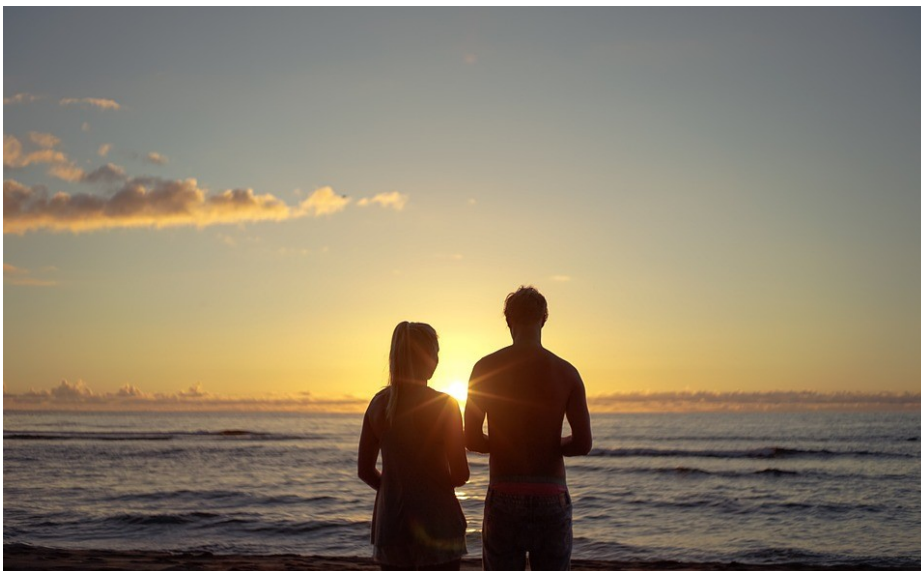
Sex is sacred and profoundly human because it was created by God. To understand the spiritual connection and divine purpose of sexuality we can turn to the Theology of the Body.

Theology of the Body

The Theology of the Body is a rather intriguing name given to a collection of teachings offered by Pope John Paul II between the years 1979 and 1984. It has much to say about human sexuality. This teaching does not deviate from the Church's traditional teachings on sexuality, but offers a way to better understand the reasons for the teaching.



The Church has always taught that adultery, fornication (sex before marriage), contraception, masturbation, prostitution, deviant sexual behaviours and fantasies are sinful, harmful acts. People trusted the Church in times past and accepted the teaching without a lot of explanation. Since the cultural and sexual revolution which gathered great momentum in the 1960's, the Church has generally struggled to impart the teaching of Christ. Trust has been broken and the influence of the scientific method has meant that the Church has not had a readily available language in which she can express the teaching of Christ. Simply stating the content of the sixth commandment – “thou shalt not commit adultery” – may be effective in some situations and circumstances, but often its negative mode does not “strike a cord” with modern men and women. Pope John Paul II has provided such a language. Throughout the RECLAIM recovery program, we will be able to explore these new insights on human love and sexuality. We will gain knowledge about the sacredness of sexuality.



The Theology of the Body begins with scripture. John Paul II utilizes some key scriptural texts that relate to marriage and the complementarity of man and woman. When Christ was asked about divorce by the Pharisees (*Matthew, 19, 3-12*), he called them back to the way it was in the “beginning.” The “beginning” is the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis and so John Paul II examines these texts closely and discovers something marvellous.

The Human Experiences

In essence, the pope discovers and develops three foundational human experiences prior to Original Sin. If we were asked to complete the phrase, “Original ...,” we would undoubtedly say, “Original Sin.” Most good catechized Christians would respond in this way. With his Theology of the Body, John Paul II discovers that our response is different. The Bible talks about “Original Solitude,” “Original Unity,” and “Original Nakedness” before it talks about Original Sin. It was St. Augustine who most contributed to the doctrine of Original Sin, but of course you can find it in many places in the Bible. An acknowledgement of sin is important. Christ comes to forgive it and heal it. It should not be brushed aside or forgotten. Certainly, John Paul II has some profound insights into the mystery of Original Sin.



However, as a starting point for understanding who we are as human beings, it is somewhat restrictive. Far better to start with what God has intended for us as human beings. This is exactly the starting point that John Paul II begins with in his Theology of the Body.

So, to be clear: John Paul II has gifted the Church with three original experiences prior to Original Sin. Asked by someone to complete the phrase, “Original ...,” we would respond:

Original Solitude

Original Unity

Original Nakedness

What is also truly significant for us is this: these original experiences are not restricted to Adam and Eve. Rather, they are *primordial* experiences. That is, they are the type of experiences that are the common heritage of every human being if they so desire. Adam and Eve experienced solitude, unity and nakedness, but everyone, precisely because they are human, has access to them. They are primordial.

Furthermore, if you have these experiences then you will come to understand that your body is *symbolic*, *spousal*, and *beautiful*. And thus you will come to understand, with experience and over time, that sexual activity is *symbolic*, *spousal*, and *beautiful*.

RECLAIM and Theology of the Body

RECLAIM fits nicely into the vision of John Paul II. For our experience of sexual sin is precisely an experience of disintegration and separation. And this disintegration and separation from God, others, and from our very selves, affects our entire beings. We need therapy for healing of mind, body, memory, emotions, and our God given appetites. This healing can only come, on the one hand, by interrupting our sinful, addictive sexual activity. Healing can only come, on the other hand, by embracing a new vision and experience of “new life.”

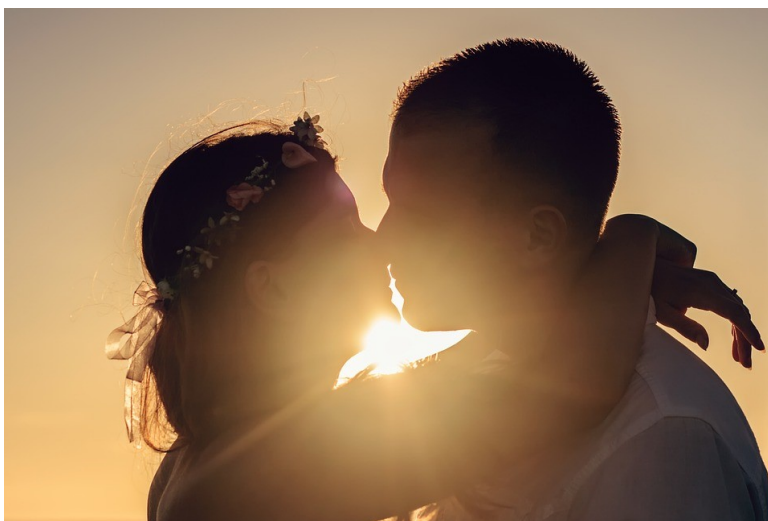
The elimination of the “old” way of life and the embracing of the “new” way of life takes courage, therapy, and grace. We can only put an end to what is destroying us by *turning away* from it, by saying, “this sin is not me and will no longer be part of my life.” But for this to happen, we need lots of courage, therapeutic help, and bucket loads of grace. Likewise, we can only begin to embrace what is life giving by *turning towards* what is actually in accord with our God-given human nature. Again, we need courage, touch from the divine-physician, and the grace of Christ.

Courage is one of the cardinal virtues. It helps us to face our fears and to face up to difficult situations. RECLAIM will provide the therapy we need. Sexual addictions affect us in ways unknown to us. RECLAIM will inform you of the nature of these addictions and how you can be free of them. It will show you a new “path.” Finally, we need the grace of Christ. And Jesus Christ will not disappoint us. He will help us put an end to sin. This is particularly true of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

Slowly, but surely, we will begin to experience a new life, a new way of living our life beyond sexual addiction. We need an alternative. We need to replace our old sinful, addictive experiences with the experience of liberation and freedom that God has originally intended for us. This is the experience of Original Solitude, Unity, and Nakedness as found in John Paul’s Theology of the Body. As we enter into these experiences we will gain courage, discover true and profound healing and certainly we will be able to “touch” Christ, since the Holy Spirit has “touched” us.

RECLAIM and Theology of the Body is a vision and experience of happiness, integration, and unity, precisely because it leads us to understand who we are as human beings and why we have been created. In this we will find freedom and happiness, including sexual freedom and sexual happiness.

We conclude with one of St. Paul’s great prayers as found in Ephesians 3, 14 – 21. It reminds us to rely not on our own strength, but on the “power at work within us.” In this way, the “inner man” is strengthened and fortified!



For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

RECLAIM

RECLAIM offers an opportunity to experience real spiritual growth. Anyone caught in the grip of unhealthy behaviors is living a life contrary to God’s plan for humanity. Spiritual growth is the process of getting rid of unhealthy concepts and beliefs about who we are and what the world is all about. RECLAIM recovery program will help you access an understanding of your goodness, beauty, and dignity. As you master the brain science of change, you will discover the process of shedding old negative habits, thoughts, and beliefs, while letting your true identity as a child of God shine out!

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