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The Theology of the Body in the Life and Ministry of Priests
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Conference 2: Christ's Appeal to the Beginning

- Overview
 - Earlier, in the introduction, I gave a general overview of the TOB, how it was the development of John Paul II's desire to guide men and women to understand the real meaning of human love in God's plan by taking them to Christ, who reveals the love of God and calls us to enter into that loving drama.
 - Now we will begin a more detailed journey into John Paul II's insights. We will first start by covering what he says in the TOB and then we will apply it to the life and ministry of the priest.
 - John Paul II was a big fan of what he called "re-reading." It was a chance to look at the same information again once one had new information. I'd like to do that with the priesthood, re-read some of our experiences on the basis of the insights of the TOB.
 - But first to the insights. The fundamental text he used to help us to grasp what human nature was intended to be was Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees about marriage:
 - Mt 19 — Matt. 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" 8 He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.
 - The Beginning in God's plan
 - In his dispute with the Pharisees (Mt 19:3 ff), Christ takes marriage back to God's plan in the beginning, seen in Genesis, which sets forth a proper understanding of the nature of man and woman, made in God's image, as well as the unity and indissolubility of marriage.
 - Man is created by God in the image and likeness of God, not in the image of creatures. This image involves sexual differentiation: "God created man in his image ... male and female he created them." God pronounced the human person "very good." Genesis established a solid basis for metaphysics, anthropology and ethics, which has importance for the theology of body.
 - We cannot understand man's present state without reference to his beginning.
 - Original Solitude
 - God said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). This "man" refers to the human person, and not just to the male.
 - God had put man through a test in naming all of creation, which in addition to revealing to man his freedom, allowed him to become aware of his difference from the rest of creation. He was also not God. Man is conscious that he belongs to the visible world as a body among different bodies, but he was self-consciously in search of his identity and felt alone (another sign of self-knowledge), because he was different from the rest of creation and from God. This indicates man's original subjectivity.
 - God's command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil provides man the moment of choice and self-determination, of free will.

- God's command to "fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen 1:28) by tilling the earth shows that man's capacity to dominate the earth lies within himself, transforming it to his own needs.
 - Original Unity (community of persons)
 - The analogy of Adam's falling asleep to wake up "ish-ishah" (man-woman) probably indicates a return to a non-being, to a moment preceding creation, so that solitary man may emerge in his double unity as male and female. This "definitive creation," which consists in the unity of two beings, breaks man's solitude.
 - Woman's being made from Adam's rib shows a bodily homogeneity, of the same flesh and bone (Gen 2:23). Woman was previously defined as a helper fit for him. Despite sexual differentiation, Adam recognizes this in his joyful exclamation over the presence of the female, which helps to establish the full meaning of original unity. Woman was for man and vice versa. Man discovers his own humanity through the other's help. This first and "original" emotion of the male in the presence of the female is noteworthy.
 - There was unity and duality present, unity in human nature, duality in the masculinity and femininity of created man. This original unity through masculinity and femininity overcame original solitude while affirming what constitutes the human person in solitude. Original solitude is the way that leads to the unity of the communion of persons. "Communion" points to the existential help derived from the other. One exists "for" the other. Prior to the creation of a helper, man was alone because he is by nature a being "for" another. The communion of persons is formed by the double solitude of man and woman distinct from creation and from God, in their mutual help for each other, flowing from their self-knowledge (subjectivity) and self-determination (free choice). Sex is a constituent part of the person.
 - They are mutual helpers of each other, teaching the other how to love.
 - Gen 1 speaks of man created in the "image of God" but Gen 2 points to this communion of persons. Man became the "image and likeness" of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons. He is an image in the solitude of a Person who rules the world, but also, and essentially, as an image of a Trinitarian communion of Persons. This latter point is probably the deepest theological aspect that can be said about man and about the theology of the body. There is a deep unity between male and female through the body. From this deep unity flows the blessing of fertility and human procreation (Gen 1:28).
 - The body reveals man, which allows the male to recognize the female as his flesh and bone. The theology of the body is also a theology of sex, or of masculinity and femininity, made in the image of God. Unity through the body — "the two will be one flesh" — is ethical and sacramental, because it indicates the incarnate communion of persons.
 - In marriage, man and woman cling to each other by choice, not by nature.
 - In sum, the body, through its masculinity and femininity, from the beginning, helps both to find themselves in the communion of persons. The body is meant to unite. "They were naked and unashamed."
 - Original Nakedness (shame)
 - The original lack of shame points to the original depth in affirming what is inherent in the person that allows for true mutual interpersonal communion. The "exterior" perception of physical nakedness corresponds to the "interior" fullness of seeing the other as God does, in his image, as "very good." Nakedness signifies the original good of God's vision, of the "pure" value of humanity as male and female, of the body and of sex. Man and woman see and know each other with all the peace of exterior and interior gazes, creating the fullness of interpersonal intimacy and communication on the basis of the communion of persons through a mutual self-gift. . The meaning of original nakedness corresponds to their understanding of the "nuptial" meaning of the body (created for each other in love). Shame brings with it a limitation in seeing with the eyes of the body through a disturbed interpersonal intimacy

- After the fall, Adam says “I was afraid because I was naked and hid myself.” Fear of the other using you, and fear of your using the other, has entered.
- Shame marks this new development and also tries to protect what was lost.
- The original meaning of the naked human body was as a call to communion, as a sign of the person, who was “for” the other. The other was seen as “very good” in God’s image.
- Man in the Dimension of Gift (nuptial meaning of the personality)
 - Nuptial meaning of the body
 - The human body was a sign of the gift who is the person, made in the image of the Divine Giver.
 - Creation is itself a fundamental and “radical” giving by God, in which the gift comes into being from nothingness. Every creature bears within him the sign of the original and fundamental gift. There is a Giver, a receiver of the gift and the relationship between the two. Man is created in the image of this Giver. God created the world as a gift to man, “for him.” Man is capable of understanding this gift which is creation. But man waits for a being with whom he can exist in a relationship of mutual giving. Both God and he recognize that it is not good for him to be alone; man realizes his essence only by existing “with someone” and “for someone.” The communion of persons means existing in a mutual “for”, in a relationship of mutual gift. This is the fulfillment of man’s original solitude. This explains, too, man’s original happiness. This mutual gift happens through love.
 - The body has the meaning of this gift, a nuptial meaning — man and woman are created for each other in love. There was no shame in the beginning because this nuptial meaning was not obscured. The body has a nuptial meaning because the person has a nuptial nature.
 - Man and woman were revealed as created for the sake of the other and find each other only in giving of themselves to each other. Man and woman have this original “nuptial” understanding of the body, that they are created for each other in love.
 - Implied here is an original self-mastery, which is the precondition to give oneself to another.
 - This nuptial meaning remains after the fall, but will be distorted as it awaits redemption.
 - The human person has a nuptial nature (seen in both marriage and continence for the kingdom), which will be fulfilled in heaven
 - Mystery of original innocence
 - This was an original “purity of heart” that allowed for the “seeing of God” in the nuptial meaning of the other’s body. They read the body purely as a call to self-giving.
 - Mutual donation and acceptance (“welcoming”) creates the communion of persons. The giving and accepting interpenetrate, so that the giving itself becomes accepting, and the acceptance is transformed into giving. The nuptial meaning of the body allows us to know who man and woman are and should be, and therefore how he should mold his activity.
 - Shame begins when this original “purity of heart” is lost.
 - Man entered existence with a body that has an ethos within it, meant for self-gift in love. The nuptial meaning allows man to know himself and woman and who they should be. Original innocence determines the perfect ethos of the gift. This nuptial union comes about through freedom, leaving “father and mother.” If man and woman cease to be a disinterested gift for each other, they will recognize that they are naked and shame will spring in their hearts. Woman is originally not an object for the man; only when the nakedness makes the other an “object” is nakedness a source

of shame. Purity of heart prevented this originally and allowed them to see in each other the nuptial gift.

- Man is the highest expression of divine self-giving, and the nuptial meaning of the body is the **primordial sacrament**, which efficaciously transmits the invisible mystery of God's Truth and Love. Man as the image of God revealed the sacramentality of creation. Because man and the world constituted a sacrament of God's truth and love, man and the world were holy. Man sensed this holiness in the nuptial meaning of body.
 - After original sin, this original meaning of the body is obscured, but remains an echo. Through shame, man will rediscover himself as the guardian of the mystery of the other, of the freedom of the gift.
- "Knowledge" and procreation
 - In Gen 4 (after Fall), Adam knew Eve and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." Conjugal union in one flesh is defined as knowledge, which is reciprocal. Husband and wife reveal themselves to each other through the body; they're given to be known. The individual person is known, not just the other sex. Man comes to know himself and the full meaning of his body through this reciprocal knowledge, which is at the basis of the theology of the body. The knowledge that was the basis of man's original solitude (in knowing himself different from God and the rest of creation) is now at the basis of the unity of man and woman. Man confirms Eve's name as "mother of all the living" (Gen 3:20).
 - The mystery of femininity is manifested and revealed completely through motherhood, although it is initially hidden. Woman stands before man as a mother. The mystery of man's masculinity, the generative and "fatherly" meaning of his body, is also thoroughly revealed. Knowledge conditions begetting for both. This knowledge allows the full truth ("objectivity") of the body to be obtained, as well as the full subjectivity of man and woman in mutual self-fulfillment in the gift. Knowledge is not passive but active..
 - Man and woman know each other in the third, sprung from them both, which is a new revelation and discovery of themselves.
 - In every child, the image of mother and father, there is reproduced the "image of God," which constitutes a basis of continuity and unity, even after sin. This knowledge "with the help of the Lord" reproduces and renews man as the image of God and helps to recognize humanity in the child.
 - The command "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!" (Gen 1:28) is fulfilled through nuptial bodily communion and mutual "knowledge." There is a generative meaning to the body, which is connected to the nuptial meaning. Masculinity conceals within it the meaning of fatherhood; femininity that of motherhood. The theology of the body has its roots in this beginning.
 - Christ's answer about marriage in the integral vision about man
 - Our generation continues to query Christ about marriage and divorce, but Christ's original answer, pointing to the beginning, is still fundamental. Christ continues to refer us to the beginning.
 - We discover man's true identity from the beginning in the mystery of creation in Christ within the mystery of redemption. This is how we construct a theological anthropology and a theology of the body from which the full Christian view of marriage and family emerge. This is Christ's total vision of man to which we must return in our day in which it is obscured.
 - The beginning reveals to us the meaning and necessity of the theology of the body, which we see is a pre-scientific knowledge of the body in the structure of the personal subject. This understanding must be the basis of all modern science on human sexuality. When the Word became flesh, the body entered theology (the science of God) and the incarnation and redemption became the definitive source of the sacramentality of marriage. Christians,

especially those with the vocation to marry, are called to make this “theology of the body” the content of their life and behavior. They need to rediscover the nuptial and generative meaning of the body. Christ leads man (male-female) in the sacrament of marriage along the path of the “redemption of the body” and the rediscovery of the body’s dignity, meaning, and call to communion.

- Application (rereading the TOB from the perspective of priestly life and ministry)
 - Original solitude in the life of the priest
 - Priest is called first to be alone with God, where we discover the uniqueness of our call and our mission. In the priestly life, just as in Christ’s life, there is a solitude in order to be alone with God. We must embrace, not run away from this.
 - This solitude is meant to lead to prayer.
 - We see in the experience of original solitude a form of the necessity of personal prayer.
 - GM: Before all else, the priest must indeed be a man of prayer, convinced that time devoted to personal encounter with God is always spent in the best way possible. This not only benefits him; it also benefits his apostolic work
 - About prayer, we can say that the TOB is almost like a journey into the *Lectio Divina* of JP II, as he follows the four stages:
 - the *lectio* not just of the relevant passages of Sacred Scripture but also of the “body” and of the mystery of so many fundamental human experiences.
 - *Meditatio* on how each of these relate to us.
 - *Oratio* on what we say in response to the Lord, in wonder, in supplication.
 - *Contemplatio* on how we will seek to change, to become one temple with God, in living out what God reveals.
 - *Actio* on how with the help of the HS we begin to put this into practice.
 - This type of *lectio divina* is a method that he gives us. Blessed John Paul II has done this in other places as well:
 - *Veritatis Splendor* with the RYM
 - Reconciliation and Penance with the Prodigal Son
 - *Evangelium Vitae* on Cain and Abel
 - His Letter to Families and the Wedding Feast of Cana
 - *Mane Nobiscum Domine* and the Emmaus journey
 - In all of this we see how familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures influenced his own prayer and then his magisterium. It’s meant also to happen with us. The spousal love we’re called to have, which we’ll discuss in greater depth below, is meant to be a gift of self in Christ seeking the sanctification of our bride by water (sacraments) and the word. This word has the power to wash us and others, to help bring about the redemption of the body by life according to the Spirit when that word takes on our flesh.
 - We see in the TOB that prayer is:
 - It’s Trinitarian, a personal encounter with Jesus, trusting dialogue with Father, deep experience of Spirit. It’s a relationship and communion with Triune God that constitutes the core of priestly identity and activity.
- Original solitude leads to original unity, to a communion of persons.
 - This solitude then leads us outward toward others.
 - Genesis also shows us that original solitude leads to the communion of persons.
 - Similarly prayer leads us outward. Prayer doesn’t isolate us, but it is meant to fire us with the love of the Lord, to will what he wills, *idem velle*, and he wills us to love others with his own heart.
 - Priests are called not to be isolated monads, but communion of persons in love. (Not just in this life but in the next, with the Trinity, with the saints.) 1 John: “so that you may have *koinonia* with God and with one another.”

- “It is not good for man to be alone” — priests are not meant to be loners.
- Priests are called fundamentally to be men of communion and instruments of God’s forming that communion in the Church, his family. This must be intentional and practical. We must want it. We must act on it and not be loners.
- For us as priests, this impacts not only our life as fathers of huge parish families, but also our relations with each other. Great concern of bishops and many of those on presbyteral councils in various dioceses about what to do for, with and about those priests who never come to priestly retreats, recollections or get-togethers, who seldom show up for events within their parish boundaries.
 - PDV 17: By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ through sacramental participation in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own Bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical "communitarian form" and can only be carried out as "a collective work". ... Each priest, whether diocesan or religious, is united to the other members of this presbyterate on the basis of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and by particular bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity. All priests in fact, whether diocesan or religious, share in the one priesthood of Christ the Head and Shepherd; "they work for the same cause, namely, the building up of the Body of Christ.
- John Paul II was very grateful for priestly fraternity.
 - GM: Bonds of deep friendship have united me to many [priests of Cracow.]. The example of their holiness and pastoral zeal has been immensely edifying to me. Certainly they have had a profound influence on my priesthood. From then I have learned what it means in practice to be a pastor. I am deeply convinced of the decisive role that the diocesan presbyterate plays in the personal life of every priest. The community of priests, rooted in a true sacramental fraternity, is a setting second to none for spiritual and pastoral formation. The priest, as a rule, cannot do without this community. The presbyterate helps him in his growth towards holiness and is a sure support in times of difficulty.
 - RLU: “The unity of the presbyterate has always been close to my heart.
- The theology of the body is a powerful restatement of whom we’re called to be and how God wants to unite us in a communion with him and with others and how the devil wants to divide us from God and each other.
- It’s not without reason that Christ prayed for Christian unity on Holy Thursday when he ordained his first priests during the Last Supper, because priests are meant to be signs and agents of unity in the midst of the Church, beginning with the presbyterium. Without priestly prayer, leadership and modeling, it will obviously be much harder for parishes to achieve a real communion of persons.
- Reading in others their great dignity and worth. Knowing people.
 - RLU: The good shepherd knows his sheep and they know him. A bishop —we could say a priest — should try to ensure that as many as possible of those who, together with him, make up the local Church can come to know him personally. He for his part will seek to be close to them, to know about their lives, what gives joy to their hearts and what saddens them. Such mutual acquaintance cannot be built through occasional meetings. It comes from a genuine interest in what is happening in their lives regardless of age, social status, or nationality, whether they are close at hand or far away. ... I was greatly helped in this by the study of personalism... Every being is an individual person and therefore I cannot program a priori a certain type of relationship that could be applied to everyone, but I must, so to speak, learn it anew in every case.”
 - This is the secret to the experience of being “alone” with him, as if the only person in the room.

- RLU: “I never felt that I was meeting an excessive number of people. Nonetheless, I was always concerned to safeguard the personal quality of each relationship. Every person is a chapter to himself. I always acted with this conviction, but I realize that it is something you can’t learn. It is simply there, because it comes from within. Interest in others begins with the ... prayer life. His conversations with Christ who entrusts ‘his own’ to him. Prayer prepares him for the encounter with others. In such meetings, if we are truly open, we can come to know and understand one another, even when there is little time. I simply pray for everyone every day. As soon as I meet people, I pray for them, and this helps me in all my relationships. ... I always follow this principle: I welcome everyone as a person sent to me and entrusted to me by Christ.”
- Original nakedness
 - Transparency before God and others.
 - Various Biblical Texts:
 - John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” He was able to respond with joy to the Lord’s mentioning that he saw him under the fig tree.
 - Luke 12:1 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops
 - Psa. 139:1 LORD, you have searched me, you know me: 2 you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. 3 My travels and my rest you mark; with all my ways you are familiar. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. 5 Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is beyond me, far too lofty for me to reach. 7 Where can I hide from your spirit? From your presence, where can I flee? 8 If I ascend to the heavens, you are there; if I lie down in Sheol, you are there too. 9 If I fly with the wings of dawn and alight beyond the sea, 10 Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand hold me fast. 11 If I say, “Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light” — 12 Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one. 13 You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. 14 I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! My very self you knew; 15 my bones were not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes foresaw my actions; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be. 17 How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them! 18 Were I to count, they would outnumber the sands; to finish, I would need eternity.
 - Our transparency is meant to allow others to see Christ more easily ministering to them through us
 - PDV 72: As one who shares in the prophetic mission of Jesus and is part of the mystery of the Church the Teacher of truth, the priest is called to reveal to others, in Jesus Christ, the true face of God, and as a result the true face of man. This demands that the priest himself seek God's face and contemplate it with loving veneration (cf. Ps 26:7; 41:2). Only thus will he be able to make others know him. (72)
 - We obviously have pastoral secrets, confessional seal, but we’re not called to live a double life. God knows us. Pope Francis in El Jesuita talked about the evil of a priest’s trying to live a double life.

as he is generated by the Father and as father insofar as he generates eternal life in us through his passion, death and resurrection.

- Christ, the fathers argue, is the new Adam, the father of a renewed humanity, transmitting to his children a new principle of life, which is able to give new life to man's existence in the flesh. This life opens up an existence that transcends death.
- Christ's fatherhood is virginal, opening up the ultimate future of life by situating his children in perspective of the eschaton, the goal of human life in communion with God; and spiritual, because it communicates the fullness of God's spirit.
- The priest, in representing the self-offering of Jesus Christ for the world, enters into this virginal and spiritual paternity. He acts in the person of Christ, the head of the Church, inasmuch as he is the source of divine life in the sacraments, in the order of the community and in the official proclamation of the Word.
- The priest, as father, not only receives Jesus' life and gives it to others (something all Christians do), but specifically transmits life with the originality of Christ himself, the source of grace, through his identification with Christ as the head of the Church.
- Granados draws a practical consequence from the priest as father, pointing to the fact that the priesthood is vocational, not merely functional, and is therefore meant to extend throughout the whole of his life. Understood as fatherhood, the priesthood cannot be only an office that the priest carries out during certain hours of the day; but it is rather a vocation that embraces his whole existence.
- Granados illustrates the point of spiritual fatherhood in Christ in the writings of St. Paul.
 - "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves. You are witnesses, and God as well, ... how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you." (1 Thess 2:7-10).
 - "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides (pedagogues) in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (1 Cor 4:14-15). He was different than a pedagogue, an enslaved tutor who looked after external discipline; he saw himself as a generator of life within them.
- The priest is meant to be a "father in Jesus Christ through the Gospel." The priest, in Christ, participates in giving a new birth, like Jesus described to Nicodemus. His fatherhood is rooted in Christ.
- Traits of spiritual fatherhood
 - We look to see what Jesus revealed about the Father, because Jesus is the image of the Father and whoever has seen him as seen the Father (Jn 14:9). Jesus reveals to us the following qualities about God the Father that spiritual fathers are called to emulate and share:
 - The Father takes delight in his children.
 - "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," God the Father thunders at Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:17).
 - Fathers must express their love for their children. This is obviously a key point and an underpinning for all paternal interactions.
 - The Father loves unconditionally
 - Jesus says he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mt 5:45).

- The Father cares about every one, 100 out of 100.
 - Matt. 18:14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
- The Father is generous
 - Mt 6:26: Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?
 - Matt. 7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
- The Father is observant
 - He sees what is done in secret and rewards (Mt 6:4).
 - He pays such good attention that he knows what is needed even before it is asked.
- The Father is merciful
 - We see his nature in the parable of the prodigal son. (Lk 15)
 - Jesus calls all his followers, but a fortiori his priests, to be merciful as the heavenly father is merciful, to forgive as the father forgives. (Lk 6:36)
- The Father instructs those who are docile
 - Matt. 11:25-26: At that time Jesus declared, “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.
 - Matt. 16:17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.
 - John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. 46 Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.
- The Father disciplines
 - We see throughout the Old Testament how God disciplines and instructs the Israelites.
 - Drawing from these lessons, St. Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
 - The letter to the Hebrews expands on this discipline of the Father which we’re called to receive and emulate: Heb. 12:5-11: “And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? — “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our

good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

- There is an obvious importance of our disciplining as fathers so that through us the Holy Spirit can form true disciples. We can't have disciples without discipline.
- The Father works
 - John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working still, and I am working.”
 - How important it is for fathers in general and spiritual fathers in particular to be hard workers!
- The Father wants to share his child's life
 - John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
 - Priests likewise should make it their will and desire to share that divine life, which they've received in earthen vessels, on to others.
- The image of fatherhood in the priest is always a participatory reflection. Jesus says “call no one on earth your father” precisely in order to stress the unique way in which we all share in God the Father paternity, which is the source of every family on earth, including the spiritual family of the Church.
- John Paul II focused on spiritual fatherhood in St. Joseph in some beautiful passages on St. Joseph in his 2004 book, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*.
 - RLU: For St. Joseph, life with Jesus was a continuous discovery of his own vocation as father. He became a father in an extraordinary way, without beginning his son in the flesh. Isn't this, perhaps, an example of the type of fatherhood that is proposed to us, priests and bishops, as a model?
Everything I did in the course of my ministry I saw as an expression of this kind of fatherhood — baptizing, hearing confessions, celebrating the Eucharist, preaching, admonishing, encouraging. For me these things were always a way of living out that fatherhood”
 - RLU: We should think particularly of the home St. Joseph built for the Son of God when we touch upon the subject of priestly ... celibacy. Celibacy, in fact, provides the fullest opportunity to live out this type of fatherhood: chaste and totally dedicated to Christ and his Virgin Mother. Unconstrained by any personal solicitude for a family, a priest can dedicate himself with his whole heart to his pastoral responsibilities. One can therefore understand the tenacity with which the Latin Church has defended the tradition of celibacy for its priests, resisting the pressures that have arisen from time to time throughout history. This tradition is clearly demanding, but it has yielded particularly rich spiritual fruit.
 - RLU: On the basis of my own experience, I firmly reject this argument [that celibacy promotes priestly loneliness]. Personally, I have never felt lonely. Aside from constant awareness that the Lord is close at hand, I have always been surrounded by people. And I have maintained cordial relations with priests, and with all kinds of lay people
- Crisis of fatherhood
 - In a March 15, 2000 speech at the Cathedral of Palermo, Sicily, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said, “The crisis of fatherhood we are living today is an element, perhaps the most important, threatening man in his humanity.” He went on to say that that crisis, a true “dissolution of fatherhood,” comes from reducing fatherhood to a merely biological phenomenon — as an act of generation, sometimes even carried

out in a laboratory — without its human and spiritual dimensions. That reduction not only leads to the “dissolution of what it means to be a son or a daughter,” but, on a spiritual plane, impedes our relationship to relate to God as he is and revealed himself. God, Cardinal Ratzinger said, “willed to manifest and describe himself as Father.” Human fatherhood provides us an analogy to understand the fatherhood of God, but “when human fatherhood has dissolved, all statements about God the Father are empty.” The crisis of fatherhood, therefore, leaves the human person lost, confused about who God is, confused about who he is, confused about where he has come from and where he is going. That’s why Cardinal Ratzinger says the crisis of paternity is perhaps the most important element threatening man.

- While there are clear and evident dangers from the crisis of paternity, there is also an opportunity for us, to begin to repair the damage, and restore a notion of what it means to be a good father, by helping not just Catholics but all of society see in the priesthood a glimpse of the Fatherhood of God, and to see in the priesthood a means to be fathered by Christ into eternal life. This is the means by which, first, we can be restored in our relationship as sons and daughters, as Cardinal Ratzinger says, by receiving regeneration from God and then imitating and ministering that regeneration to others.
- This is a particular task of priests as spiritual fathers today.
- Conclusion and prayer
 - Pope John Paul II was a true spiritual father. Let us turn to him to ask him for the graces we need to benefit from these reflections on the beginning: to live and love our solitude with the Lord, especially our prayer, that urges us toward communion with others; to be transparent before God and others so that others may see “God in us” like they saw “God in a man” in St. John Vianney; to grasp and live the nuptial and paternal meaning of our existence as icons acting in the person of the New Adam. Amen.