

“The Beauty and Truth of Human Love in the Divine Plan”

I. Introduction

- A. It's a real joy to come to be with you tonight to ponder together the theme of the Beauty and Truth of Human Love in the Divine Plan.
- B. What I'd like to do is first to talk about this connection between truth and beauty in the Church's new evangelization as a whole. Then I'd like to examine the truth and beauty of human love, sexuality, marriage and family in God's plan, by examining John Paul II's Theology of the Body as well as a few of his other writings. Then I'd like to leave time for your questions on how to apply these beautiful truths to particular situations.

II. Connection between beauty and truth

A. Reasons for the New Evangelization (Ratzinger, 2000)

1. “A large part of today's humanity does not find the Gospel in the permanent evangelization of the Church: that is to say the convincing response to the question: How to live? This is why we are searching for, along with permanent and uninterrupted and never to be interrupted evangelization, a new evangelization, capable of being heard by that world that does not find access to 'classic' evangelization. Everyone needs the Gospel; the Gospel is destined to all and not only to a specific circle and this is why we are obliged to look for new ways of bringing the Gospel to all.
 2. He went on: “At the beginning of His public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor (Lk 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path towards happiness – rather: I am that path.” He responds to the deepest poverty, which is the “tediousness of a life considered absurd and contradictory,” a life without joy that produces the inability to love, produces jealousy, avarice, and other destructive responses to the lack of meaning. “This is why we are in need of a new evangelization: if the art of living remains an unknown, nothing else works.”
- B. That's what the new evangelization is about, to help people learn the art of living, and that can occur only by those who are already practicing that art, the art of living in loving communion with Christ and others.
- C. But in the present world, we are convinced far more by witnesses than by words. In most cases we're not going to persuade people into the truth by giving them a copy of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Contra Gentiles. That's why the Church has been focusing more and more on the *Via Pulchritudinis*, the Way of Beauty.
1. Pope John Paul II mentioned the important link of truth to beauty in *Fides et Ratio* 103:
 - a. I have unstintingly recalled the pressing need for a *new evangelization*; and I appeal now to philosophers to explore more comprehensively the dimensions of the true, the good and the beautiful to which the Word of God gives access.
 2. In a 2006 document by the Pontifical Council for Culture specifically on the *Via Pulchritudinis*, Cardinal Poupard and the authors ponder this connection:
 - a. This call to philosophers might surprise some people, but is not the *Via Pulchritudinis* also a *via veritatis* on which man engages to discover the *bonitas* of God's love, source of all beauty, truth and good? Beauty, as much as truth and good, leads us to God, the first truth, supreme good, and beauty itself. But beauty means more than the truth or the good. To say that something is beautiful is not only to recognize it intelligible and therefore loveable, but also, in specifying our knowledge, it attracts us, or captures us with a ray capable of igniting marvel. Moreover, as it expresses a certain power of attraction, beauty tells forth reality itself in the perfection of its form. It is its epiphany. It manifests it by expressing its internal brightness. If the good speaks the desirable, the beautiful tells forth the splendor and light of the perfection it manifests.

3. In the final list of propositions for last October's Synod on the New Evangelization, the Synod Fathers talked more specifically about this Way of Beauty in Proposition 20:
 - a. In the New Evangelization, there should be a particular attention paid to the way of beauty: Christ, the "Good Shepherd" (cf. *Jn* 10:11) is the Truth in person, the beautiful revelation in sign, pouring himself out without measure. It is important to give testimony to the young who follow Jesus, not only of his goodness and truth, but also of the fullness of his beauty. As Augustine affirmed, "it is not possible to love what is not beautiful" (*Confessions*, Bk IV, 13.20). Beauty attracts us to love, through which God reveals to us his face in which we believe. ... Beauty should always be a special dimension of the new evangelization.
- D. To recover this essential dimension of beauty as part of Christian life and proclamation is one of the things that throughout his priestly, episcopal and papal ministry, Pope Benedict has stressed repeatedly. If we can't connect truth to beauty, he was basically arguing, we're wasting our time.
 1. Ratzinger Report (1985)
 - a. The only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely the saints the Church has produced and the art which has grown in her womb.
 - b. Better witness is borne to the Lord by the splendor of holiness and art which have arisen in the community of believers than by clever excuses which apologetics has come up with to justify the dark sides which, sadly, are so frequent in the Church's human history. If the Church is to continue to transform and humanize the world, ... Christians must ... make their Church into a place where beauty—and hence truth—is at home. Without this the world will become the first circle of hell.
 2. In Rimini in 2002 at the annual meeting of Communion and Liberation that draws 700,000 people but outside of Italy for some strange reason never hits the ecclesiastical radar, he built upon these points in ways that are helpful for us to hear.
 - a. Being struck and overcome by the beauty of Christ is a more real, more profound knowledge than mere rational deduction. Of course we must not underrate the importance of theological reflection, of exact and precise theological thought; it remains absolutely necessary. But to move from here to disdain or to reject the impact produced **by the response of the heart in the encounter with beauty** as a true form of knowledge would impoverish us and dry up our faith and our theology. We must rediscover this form of knowledge; it is a pressing need of our time. ...
 - b. Of course, this is not just, or principally, a theological problem, but a problem of pastoral life that has to foster the human person's encounter with the beauty of faith. To admire the icons and the great masterpieces of Christian art in general, leads us on an inner way, a way of overcoming ourselves; thus in this purification of vision that is a purification of the heart, it reveals the beautiful to us, or at least a ray of it. In this way we are brought into contact with the power of the truth. I have often affirmed my conviction that the true apology of Christian faith, the most convincing demonstration of its truth against every denial, are the saints, and the beauty that the faith has generated. Today, for faith to grow, we must lead ourselves and the persons we meet to encounter the saints and to enter into contact with the Beautiful.
 3. He stressed the essential connection we need to recognize between beauty and truth in an off the cuff question and answer session with the priests of Bressanone in the Dolomites in northern Italy on August 6, 2008:
 - a. I once said that to me art and the saints are the greatest apologetic for our faith. The arguments contributed by reason are unquestionably important and indispensable, but then there is always dissent somewhere. On the other hand, if we look at the saints, this great luminous trail on which God passed through history, we see that there truly is a force of good which resists the millennia; there truly is the light of light.
 - b. Likewise, if we contemplate the beauties created by faith, they are simply, I would say, **the living proof of faith.** If I look at this beautiful cathedral—it is a living proclamation! It speaks to us itself, and on the basis of the cathedral's beauty, we succeed in visibly proclaiming God,

Christ and all his mysteries: Here they have acquired a form and look at us. All the great works of art, cathedrals—the Gothic cathedrals and the splendid Baroque churches—they are all a luminous sign of God and therefore truly a manifestation, an epiphany of God. And in Christianity it is precisely a matter of this epiphany: that God became a veiled Epiphany—he appears and is resplendent.

- c. We have just heard the organ in its full splendor. I think the great music born in the Church makes the truth of our faith audible and perceivable: from Gregorian chant to the music of the cathedrals, to Palestrina and his epoch, to Bach and hence to Mozart and Bruckner and so forth. In listening to all these works—the Passions of Bach, his Mass in B flat, and the great spiritual compositions of 16th-century polyphony, of the Viennese School, of all music, even that of minor composers—we suddenly understand: It is true! Wherever such things are born, the Truth is there. Without an intuition that discovers the true creative center of the world such beauty cannot be born.
- d. **For this reason I think we should always ensure that the two things are together [truth and beauty]; we should bring them together.** When, in our epoch, we discuss the reasonableness of faith, we discuss precisely the fact that reason does not end where experimental discoveries end—it does not finish in positivism; the theory of evolution sees the truth but sees only half the truth: It does not see that behind it is the Spirit of the creation. We are fighting to expand reason, and hence for a reason, which, precisely, is also open to the beautiful and does not have to set it aside as something quite different and unreasonable.
- e. Christian art is a rational art—let us think of Gothic art or of the great music or even, precisely, of our own Baroque art—but it is the artistic expression of a greatly expanded reason, in which heart and reason encounter each other.
- f. This is the point. **I believe that in a certain way this is proof of the truth of Christianity: Heart and reason encounter one another, beauty and truth converge, and the more that we ourselves succeed in living in the beauty of truth, the more that faith will be able to return to being creative in our time too, and to express itself in a convincing form of art.**

4. To talk about truth and beauty is to reunite head and heart. One of the chief means to be able to bring others the Gospel today is by going through their heart to their head by allowing beauty to lead to the truth.

- E. But this remains still a challenge because of all the isms that have poisoned the soil in which we seek to sow the seed of Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and the Good, True and Beautiful Personified. All three of the transcendentals are in a sense denied today.
 - 1. First is secularism, living as if God doesn't exist; a practical atheism, in which any reference to God is severed from thought and action.
 - 2. Epistemological Relativism — No truth, except your truth and my truth, but there is no truth except that there is no truth. Truth is determined by polls.
 - 3. Moral Relativism— No real good, except what we like or dislike, how something makes us feel.
 - 4. Relativist aestheticism — There's no real beauty, because "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," it doesn't exist in the beheld. All we're left with is an aesthetics of interesting ideas, all of which are of equal subjective value.
 - a. There's no real difference Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and Andres' Serrano's picturing of a crucifix in urine.
 - b. There's no objective superiority of Bernini's Ecstasy of St. Theresa and Chris Ofili's depiction of the Virgin Mary covered in elephant dung.
 - c. It's nonsensical to say that the beautiful Gothic symmetry of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York portraying the order of God is any better than the intentional asymmetry of Los Angeles' new cathedral which is meant to put into architecture the chaos of the world.
 - d. Beauty and ugliness have become equated. Neither is better. Neither says anything about the object of art or the subject who finds it beautiful or ugly.

5. In a consumerist culture, our ephemeral fashions, our subjectivity, dominate the truths we believe, the good we do, and the beauty we seek.
 6. There's no longer any connection outside ourselves to anything objective. St. Thomas Aquinas defined truth as *adequatio intellectus ad rem*, a certain adequation, a type of adequate connection between something in the mind and the thing that was represented in the mind. Something was true to the extent that a thought or word corresponded to reality. Likewise with goodness and beauty, there was a similar adequation, a like objectivity. But in a secularist, consumerist, relativist world, the good, the true and the beautiful have all lost their transcendence, their universality, their supreme value.
- F. But of the three, the one that has lost its grip least is beauty. It's been less corrupted in the masses by the ideas of the elites. And that's where the formation, the education, the redemption of people in the culture through the new evangelization can begin. **Beauty is the splendour of the truth and the flowering of Love.**
- G. And the stakes are enormous. As Dostoevsky had Dimitri Karamazov say to his brother Alyosha in his famous novel on the Karamazov brothers: "Beauty is a terrible thing. It is the struggle between God and Satan, the battleground, my heart."
- H. That struggle for beauty, for the connection between the beautiful, the true and the good, is present everywhere, but it is also particularly present today in the realm of human love, sexuality, marriage and family.
- I. That's where we turn now, in the second part of the talk.

III. "Fair Love"

- A. Before I get into the beauty and truth, and ugliness and falsity, in John Paul II's theology of the body, I'd like to consider two other things he wrote that stress in a very clear way how important it is for all of us to consider not just the truth but the beauty of human love in the divine plan. John Paul II stressed that not only was trying to promote the beauty in love basically the summary of his entire priestly life, but it is also the most important thing for the salvation of the world.
- B. Let's take each of those thoughts in turn.
- C. First, we consider his vocation to spread the beauty of love.
1. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, his 1994 book length interview with Vittorio Messori, he said that he "felt almost an inner call" from early in his priesthood to help the young learn how to respond appropriately to their vocation to love, to teach them how to keep their love beautiful, to help them learn from Christ, the revelation of the Father's love, and to encourage and assist them to enter into the beauty of Christ's nuptial love so that they may learn how to give of themselves sincerely, unselfishly and beautifully to God and others.
 2. Here's what he said:
 - a. "As a young priest," he said, "I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood — my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional and also in my writing. If one loves human love there naturally arises the need to commit oneself completely to the service of "fair love," because love is fair, it is beautiful. Young people are always searching for the beauty in love. They want their love to be beautiful. If they give in to weakness, following models of behavior that can rightly be considered a scandal in the contemporary world, in the depths of their hearts they still desire a beautiful and pure love."
 3. But their hearts, like the heart of a young Augustine are restless, often seeking for meaning, for love, for self-giving, in wrong places rather than in right ones. For this reason, he said, "They need guides and they want them close at hand," guides to teach them about the beauty of human love. We all need those guides and we need become those guides for others, especially the young.
- D. Second, his message about the importance of fair love for the world's salvation:
1. In 1985, for the World Year dedicated to Young People, the Year he made the first international World Youth Day, John Paul II wrote a beautiful letter to the young people of the world called *Dilecti Amici*, in which he helped them to examine the whole question of the beauty of love, marriage, sexuality and family from the perspective of the faith, knowing that these ideas are not often effectively passed on to the young. His thoughts here I think will be of interest to all of us,

no matter how young, no matter whether we're married, still waiting, or living by another form of nuptiality.

- a. "Against this vast background that your youthful plan of life acquires in relation to the idea of the Christian vocation, I wish to examine, together with you young people ... the question that in a certain sense is at the heart of the youth of all of you. This is one of the central questions of human life, and at the same time one of the central themes of reflection, creativity and culture. It is also one of the main biblical theme," the great sacrament of marriage. Youth is the period when this great theme affects in an experimental and creative way the soul and body of every young woman and young man ... and on the horizon of a young heart a new experience occurs: the experience of love, which from the beginning has to be included in that plan of life which youth spontaneously creates and forms.
- b. In each separate case all of this has its own unrepeatable subjective expression, its affective richness, indeed its metaphysical beauty.
- c. At the same time, in all of this there is contained a powerful exhortation not to distort this expression, not to destroy this treasure and not to disfigure this beauty. Be convinced that this vocation [to fair love] comes from God himself, who created man "in his own image and likeness" precisely "as man and woman". This call flows from the Gospel and makes itself heard in the voice of young consciences, if they have preserved their simplicity and purity: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".
- d. Yes, through that love which is born in you-and wishes to become a part of your whole plan of life-you must see God who is love.
- e. And so I ask you not to break off your conversation with Christ in this extremely important phase of your youth; I ask you rather to commit yourselves even more. When Christ says "Follow me", his call can mean: "I call you to still another love"; but very often it means: "Follow me", follow me who am the Bridegroom of the Church who is my bride; come, you too become the bridegroom of your bride, you too become the bride of your spouse. Both of you become sharers in that mystery, that Sacrament, which the Letter to the Ephesians says is something great: great "in reference to Christ and the Church." Much depends on the fact that you, on this path too, should follow Christ; that you should not flee from him, when you are occupied with this matter which you rightly consider the great event of your heart, a matter that exists only in you and between you.
- f. I want you to believe and to be convinced that this great matter has its definitive dimension in God, who is love-in God, who in the absolute unity of his divinity is also a communion of persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- g. To set out on the path of the married vocation means to learn married love day by day, year by year: love according to soul and body, love that "is patient, is kind, that does not insist on its own way... and does not rejoice at wrong": love that "rejoices in the right", love that "endures all things. It is precisely this love that you young people need if your married future is to "pass the test" of the whole of life. And precisely this test is part of the very essence of the vocation that, through marriage, you intend to include in the plan of your life.
- h. And so I do not cease to pray to Christ and to the **Mother of Fair Love** for the love that is born in young hearts. Many times in my life it has been my task to accompany in a sense more closely this love of young people. Thanks to this experience I have come to understand just how essential the matter that we are dealing with here is, how important and how great it is. I think that to a large extent the future of humanity is decided along the paths of this love, initially youthful love, which you and she, you and he discover along the paths of your youth. This can be called a great adventure, but it is also a great task.

IV. The Theology of the Body as a Tutorial in the Truth and Beauty of Human Love in the Divine Plan

- A. I'd like now to turn to the Theology of the Body as a Tutorial in the Truth and Beauty of Human Love in the Divine Plan.

- B. Many of you may have already studied the theology of the body. I would encourage all of you to do so. It would definitely repay your work, for your life as disciples and apostles, no matter what your state of life.
- C. But one of the chief techniques John Paul II uses in the TOB is “re-reading,” in which he constantly goes back over what he had previously covered through the prism of new information that he had introduced.
- D. That’s what I’d like to do here, briefly, to re-read the TOB from the perspective of beauty and truth. It will not be a full treatment of the subject matter because of obvious reasons of time, but I would like to give an accent to these thoughts because they are essential not only to understanding properly the Theology of the Body but to learning a path to the new evangelization that ponders the beauty of human love in God’s plan and describes the path so that beauty, rather than ugliness, will triumph in the battleground between love and lust in the human heart.
- E. Creation before the Fall
 - 1. Beauty of Creation.
 - a. God saw that creation of the human person was very good.
 - b. It was beautiful.
 - c. Man was a reflection of his own beauty.
 - d. Married love was a reflection of God’s own beauty.
 - 2. Beauty of original innocence
 - a. Original innocence is a purity of heart that sees God in others, sees the true beauty.
 - 3. Beauty of original nakedness
 - a. Nakedness was a sign of beauty, beauty that was associated with the good and the true.
 - b. There was no shame, no fear.
 - c. Nakedness signified that the other saw the interior fullness of the other as God did.
 - d. Shame would bring a blindness to the real beauty of the other, and the openness to seeing it only as a useful good for me, rather than a beautiful good per se. This is what leads to lust. Then one can no longer see the beauty of the divine image, God, in the other.
 - 4. Beauty and the nuptial gift
 - a. Beauty drew them toward self-gift, toward the nuptial gift of themselves. One exists for the other.
 - b. Nuptial meaning of the body is the primordial sacrament, efficaciously transmitting the invisible mystery of God’s Truth and Beauty.
 - 5. Beauty in Original difference.
 - a. There was joy in Adam at the beauty of Eve. He rejoiced for the first time and discovered in the reflection of her eyes his own beauty.
 - b. Original unity was even more beautiful than original solitude. It was a discovery of beauty through knowledge of the beauty of each other.
 - c. Maternal and Paternal knowledge leads to a great appreciation of the other’s beauty as one gets to know the beauty of the other so much more deeply through the experience of parenthood.
- F. Partial disfiguring of beauty after the Fall
 - 1. Three-fold corruption through original sin, concupiscence.
 - a. Rather than lifting us up toward the true, good and beautiful, corrupt *eros* tries to bring everything down to our appetites.
 - b. We see it in materialism, the concupiscence of the eyes, which instrumentalizes material creation rather than appreciates it in his beautiful connection to God.
 - c. We see it in lust, the concupiscence of the flesh, that reduces the beauty of another to face, or teeth, or figure, or individual body parts.
 - d. We see it in the tendency to control or dominate others, what St. John calls the pride of life, which fails to see the beauty of the other’s dignity, freedom and individuality, but instead just sees the person as a useful good to the achievement of one’s own ends.

2. After the Fall, there is still some attraction, but there's no longer exclusively an attraction that leads to *adoration*, to getting outside oneself for the sake of the other and for God, but one that leads just to *appetite*.
3. We see in the Genesis account that God and the other no longer are beautiful, but feared.
4. Sexual organs become both dangerous (through revealing lustful thoughts through physiological reactions) and vulnerable (the other can take advantage). The body no longer is the trustworthy substratum for the sacrament of communion of persons.
5. The shame they experience through their nakedness has a double meaning: first, it indicates a threat to the value of the person; and second it seeks to preserve that value interiorly.
6. JP II wrote in the theology of the body that after the Fall man and woman will fail to satisfy the aspiration to realize in the conjugal union of the body the mutual communion of persons, the full beauty. Others can become just an object. Man begins to dominate. Woman wants to possess the man as the object of her desire and tries to enslave him by his lustful attraction or even by a child.
7. There is a desire for another, but a desire also to protect oneself from the other. The heart has been changed. The body has lost the full beauty of its nuptial meaning. Others become objects and body is objectified. The heart becomes battleground between love and lust, between beauty and ugliness.
8. This leads to Jesus' words about adultery in the heart (Mt 5:25-27).
 - a. Adultery starts in the heart. The heart is no longer pure, seeing God, but seeing the useful.
 - b. Prov 7:24: To keep you from your neighbor's wife, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Lust not in your heart after her beauty, let her not captivate you with her glance!
 - c. Man becomes a taker, instead of a giver, a consumer of others. He's lost the beauty and the truth. Adultery is not true to the self-gift.
9. Where this adultery of the heart is seen is in what John Paul II calls pornovision, a rarely studied part of the Theology of the Body. John Paul II stresses that:
 - a. The naked human body in the whole truth of its masculinity or femininity has the meaning of a gift of the person to a person.
 - b. When does human nakedness become pornography or pornovision?
 - i. When personal sensitivity with regard to human body is overstepped;
 - ii. When in art or media, the right to privacy of the person in masculinity or femininity is violated; and
 - iii. When the deep governing rules of the gift and mutual donation inscribed in masculinity and femininity toward the communion of persons are violated.
 - c. These pornographic abuses can happen only in the intentional order of the reproduction and representation. Man is offended because such representation is divorced from interpersonal relationship. What is most human is the destination toward the gift which would protect the body in privacy. If the "element of the gift" is suspended in a dimension of unknown reception and unforeseen response, it is threatened in the order of intention as an anonymous object of abusive "appropriation." The truth about man and the meaning of his body creates precise limits that are unlawful to exceed. These limits must be recognized and respected by artists who make the body the object, model or subject of art; otherwise the values of the human body can be distorted and destroyed in man's heart. The Latin word was "obscaena," what should not be before the eyes of spectators.
 - d. Ancient Greek sculpture focused on the naked human body in such a way as to allow the contemplation of the whole mysterious truth about man and the supra-sensual beauty of masculinity and femininity. We're not drawn to "lust" after these works. Other works offend our personal sensitivity by their intentional and reductive objectification of the human body to an instrument of enjoyment and for the satisfaction of concupiscence. This is contrary to man's dignity in the intentional order of art and in reproduction.
 - e. We have to discuss the ethos of the "image" and the correlative ethos of "seeing." The creation of an atmosphere conducive to chastity education involves both. The creation of the image is both aesthetic and ethical; likewise looking imposes obligations on the recipient of the

work. True and responsible artistic activity tries to overcome the anonymity of the human body as an object “without choice” seeking to portray the truth about man in his feminine and masculine corporeity. This is a task of the viewer, who cannot become just a “consumer of impressions,” exploiting the meaning of the anonymous body.

10. *Via Pulchritudinis* summarizes where we have come up until now and where we still need to go:
 - a. The image has been altered by the first sin, that poison which injures the will in its leaning to the good and thereby obscures intelligence and deviates the senses. The beauty of the soul, thirsty for truth and the beloved, loses its splendor and becomes capable of evil, of ugliness. ... With sin, he has lost his beauty and sees himself naked, even unto feeling shame. The coming of the Redeemer re-establishes man in his first beauty; moreover, it redresses him in a new beauty: the unimaginable beauty of the creature raised up to divine sonship, the transfiguration promised by the soul ransomed and lifted up by Grace, resplendent in all its fibre, the body called to new life.

G. Redemption

1. That path to that redemption pointed to by *Via Pulchritudinis* is what is described by John Paul II in the most important part of his reflections on the Theology of the Body, his thoughts on the redemption of the body through purity of heart and life according to the Holy Spirit.
2. He says that *eros* needs to be redeemed and made ethical so that it will be open to the full meaning of the person and beauty and prevent *eros* from becoming corrupt lustful.
3. Purified *eros* allows us to perceive the beauty of the perennial attraction of masculinity and femininity.
4. The path to redemption is a life according to the Holy Spirit, to seeking the things that are above, to seeking the beauty of God, to seeing oneself and another as a temple of God's presence. It means being attracted to the other's dignity.
5. Purity linked to piety. Attraction to the level of the person as a whole. Seeing and reverencing God in another.
6. Reverence for each other out of reverence for Christ (piety, awe) (Eph 5).
 - a. Marriage is an analogy to the bond between Christ and the Church. Husbands are called to love their wives to sacrifice and women under this mission of the husbands. They are mutually sanctified through self-giving to become one flesh.
 - b. The purpose is to present her in splendor, holy and unblemished, without spot or wrinkle, ugliness or senility.
7. This leads to JP II's discussion of the language of the body. Such body language is not just true to the situation — making love actually expresses the total commitment to the other, the total self gift made in marriage — but is called to be beautiful, poetic, a Song of Songs.
8. JP II says that through the continual expression of the sacrament sign of marriage in the language of the body, man and woman encounter the great mystery and transfer the light (truth and beauty) or that mystery to the language of the practice of love, fidelity and conjugal honesty. In this way conjugal life becomes liturgical (an act of worship).
9. The gift of piety, together with love and chastity, helps us to understand the exceptional significance, dignity and allied responsibility of the conjugal act among the various “manifestations of affection.” Piety, love and chastity mold the couple's spirituality to protect the dignity of the body language of the act and its procreative potential within God's plan as well as protect the dignity of the other person. It helps to keep love fair.

V. Conclusion

- A. The document *Via Pulchritudinis* asks: “How can we be guardians of beauty in today's contemporary artistic culture where erotic seduction stems the instincts, pollutes the imagination and inhibits the spiritual faculties? Is not the task of saving beauty that of saving man? Is this not the role of the Church, “expert in humanity” and guardian of the faith?” That's what this talk has been about.
- B. Paul VI said back in 1965 in a letter to Artists, “This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. It is beauty, like truth, which brings joy to the heart of man and is that precious fruit which resists the wear and tear of time, which unites generations and makes them share things in

admiration.” He wrote that as he was pondering the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in response to the sexual revolution. We need the beauty of human love.

- C. The beauty that saves is Christ, but unfortunately many need to hear of him anew. Too many people perceive Christianity as a submission to commandments made up of prohibitions and limits applied to personal liberty, especially in the sexual sphere. That’s why we need a new evangelization of beauty and truth in the living of the Gospel of Human Love in the Divine Plan.
 - D. The beauty that saves is Christ and we need to love like him for us to be redeemed and to become co-redeemers. As Pope Benedict said at his first canonization in 2005, “The saint is the one who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth that he is progressively transformed by it. For this beauty and this truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself.”
 - 1. The beauty of Christian witness expresses the beauty of Christianity and provides for its future. How can we be credible in announcing the "good news" if our lives are unable to manifest the "beauty" of this life?
 - 2. We need to have saints like this in marriages. Christian husbands and wives are called to love each other as Christ loved the Church, by laying down their lives for each other to make each other holy, happy, beautiful forever.
 - 3. *Via Pulchritudinis* writes, “The summit, the archetype of beauty manifests itself in the face of the Son of Man crucified on the Cross of sorrows, Revelation of infinite love of God who, in His mercy for His creatures, restores beauty lost with original sin. ‘Beauty will save the world,’ because this beauty is Christ, the only beauty that defies evil, and triumphs over death. By love, the "most beautiful of the children of men" became "the man of sorrows", "without beauty, without majesty no looks to attract our eyes" (*Is*, 53, 2) and so he rendered to man, to each and every man the fullness of His beauty, His dignity and His true grandeur. In Christ, and only in Him, our *via crucis* is transformed into His in the *via lucis* and the *via pulchritudinis*.
 - E. For all of us that’s our path. Whether we’ve been walking it, whether we need to get on that narrow way, no matter where we are, tonight is an occasion for us to follow Christ the Way on that Path, to embrace with truth the full joy of its liberating power, so that we might experience the fullness of the beautiful life that comes, even with the Cross.
 - F. This beauty is not new. It envelops us already, in creation and in recreation. But we need the purity of heart and life according to the Holy Spirit to see it.
 - G. I want to finish with the autobiographical reflection of one who had lived by another route who eventually discovered this way of beauty. As a young man, he abandoned a sense of truth to become a sophist who could win any argument. He stopped seeking the good because of a philosophical confusion between the conflicting equal powers, as he thought them, between good and evil. And he didn’t seek beauty in love, but just pleasure. But God never gave up on him and he gives hope not only to all of us but to so many others who are like Aurelius Augustinus today.
 - H. He wrote in my favorite passage from all of literature, something that I recommend people pray each night at Compline: After focusing on Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life, he turned to him and prayed:
 - 1. Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things that you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.
- VI. The same Lord shouts and shines tonight, he breathes his beautiful incense into us, he allows us to consume him and now we’re called to hunger and thirst for him, to burn for the peace that comes through allowing him to help us to win that battle between love and lust for beauty and truth.