

Man in the Theology of Creation

Introduction

1. I would like to offer you a deeper theological understanding of the situation to help you help other men.
2. Most men's conferences are full of speakers telling inspirational stories, opening the men up for the possibility of conversion, to receiving God's grace so that they may become real men of God, real men of the Church, really good family men, dads, husbands, priests, coaches, teachers, employees.
3. Tonight I'm going to try to go deeper, at the organizers' request, to provide some principles, taken mainly from the insights of Pope John Paul II, about who we are based on the way God created us in the beginning.
4. I'll be drawing mainly from two sources:
 - a. JP II's Theology of the Body, the group of 129 Wednesday catechetical addresses he gave at the beginning of his Pontificate on the meaning of human love in God's plan. These thoughts show us his entire theological insight. I'll be focused in a particular way on the first 23 catecheses which were about what God reveals to us in the Book of Genesis about who we are and are called to become.
 - b. The second source will be his encyclical on the dignity of human work, which was published in 1981, *Laborem exercens*. Insofar as we're all called to work in imitation of God who is always working and Jesus who saved us not just on the Cross, not just during his preaching for three years, but by his whole life — including his hidden years in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, to help us to sanctify our work, sanctify others through our work and be sanctified ourselves.
5. I would like to break the talk down into FIVE things we learn about our identity from the book of Genesis.
 - a. What it means that the human person is made in the image of God (which will include discussion of our being made a communion of persons, man original solitude, man's and woman's original unity, original differentiation and)
 - b. Nuptial meaning of the person in the body: love, original nakedness, original innocence, shame
 - c. Meaning of Marriage in God's plan
 - d. Biblical knowledge, procreation and motherhood.
 - e. Original and Redemptive meaning of human work.

Lesson One: What it means that the human person is made in the image of God and what it means to be a man

1. To discuss the question of what it means to be a man, we need to return to the origin of the human person. We learn from the beginning of the book of Genesis that "God created man in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen 1:27-28).
2. We find here two central and related truths.
 - a. First, the human person is created in God's image; to see ourselves as we really are, therefore, we need first to look to the God whom we reflect. St. John, inspired by God in writing his beautiful first letter, tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16), which teaches us quite a bit about God. In fact, many teachers of the Catholic faith have seen in those three words an indication of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity.
 - As we know from the human experience of love, there is always one who loves, one who is loved, and the bond of love that unites them. For God to be love, he could not have been unitary or "all alone" before the creation of the world. He needed, rather, to be this three-fold reality of love existing in a unity — an eternal lover, beloved, and love between them — all at the same time. Some of the great saints throughout the centuries

have, in their teachings about the Blessed Trinity, have attempted to “name” the persons of the Trinity on basis of this reality of love, saying God the Father is most like the eternal lover, God the Son is most like the eternal beloved, and God the Holy Spirit is most like the love between them so strong that it assumes its own personality. The Blessed Trinity is an eternal communion of love, or, better, a loving communion of persons.

- b. Since man was created in God’s image, we would expect man to be created to exist in a loving communion of persons. This is the second truth we see in the passage from the Book of Genesis: God created man not just as a “him” but as a “them,” and not just as a “them” of two or more “hims,” but in a very specific way: “male and female [God] created them.”
 - God created the human person male and female to reflect his love, and made it possible for man and woman to live in a loving communion of persons so strong that their love itself could take on personality. That’s precisely what happens in the loving communion of persons we call marriage, in which, by God’s design, man and woman can “make love” by literally becoming “one flesh” in a child. The son or daughter is a fruit of their love, and by the child’s participation in that communion, a means by which that love can continue to grow and flourish.

3. **The meaning of original differentiation**

- a. So it is not some biological “accident” that there are men and women. This “original differentiation” is part of God’s plan from the beginning. God made man and woman equal in dignity and similar in so many respects, but also different and complementary in so many other respects — at the level of the organs, their minds and personalities, and even in their cells, chromosomes, hormones and so much more. These differences in particular are caught up mysteriously in the image of God. These complementary divergences, so to speak, are meant to be “calls to communion,” to elicit the recognition on the part of each that they need the other in order to become all it means to be human. These differences urge them on inwardly to give of themselves with love to remedy what the other lacks and to welcome and receive from the other what they are incapable of being or doing on their own.
- b. Phrased in another way, the original and complementary differences of man and woman were to help each learn how to love. We see this truth in inspired literary form in the book of Genesis. Adam had been created “very good” by God. He had named all of creation and lived in harmony with it. It was before original sin and he was living on good terms with God. But after God had accomplished the first five phases of creation and pronounced them “good,” and had created man and pronounced things “very good,” he finally said something was not quite right. “It is not good,” God said, “that man should be alone.” So God created Eve from Adam. Eve was meant to be a “fitting helper” for Adam, one who would help him to become fully human. Adam’s original solitude helped him to recognize both that he was different from all the rest of creation and from God and that he needed another to help him to experience the fullness and the joy of human life. When Eve was created and Adam beheld her, that’s what happened: Adam cried out with joy (Gen 2:18-23).

4. **Purpose of original solitude**

- a. This recognition of the need for the other was what led to their quest for a loving unity, which would help them become whom God created them to be, and open them up to live in a communion of love with him. Eve’s vocation was to help Adam overcome his original solitude and loneliness and teach him how to love. She would help him to learn how to love another; and, through the analogy of human love, she would help him learn how to love himself and how to receive and reciprocate God’s love. Adam’s vocation was to help Eve to learn to do the same. Woman has a crucial role in man’s vocation and man in woman’s.
- b. 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.

- c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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.
5. The meaning of original solitude (man-Adam) is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity (male-female).
- a. 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.
 - b. 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.*
 - c. 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).
 - d. 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.
 - e. In sum, the body, which through its own masculinity or femininity, right from the beginning helps both ("a helper fit for him") to find themselves in communion of persons, becomes, in a particular way, the constituent element of their union, when they become husband and wife.

Lesson Two: Nuptial Meaning of the Body (love, original nakedness, original innocence and shame)

1. Love

- a. The original difference between man and woman, from the first man and woman to every man and woman, is meant to help us learn how to love. But that obviously raises the question of what true love is.

- Love is not merely a warm feeling of attraction or admiration for another person. Jesus Christ told us during the Last Supper what true love is, and then put that message into body language the following afternoon on the Cross. “No one has any greater love,” he said, “than to lay down his life” for another (Jn 15:13). Love is not just “wishing” another the best, but a willingness to choose to give of oneself — even to the point of sacrificing one’s own interests, desires and even life — for someone else. This is the type of love that will lead to genuine fulfillment and happiness, because this is the type of love that will help us become the real image of God.
- b. Each of us is called to give of ourselves unselfishly to others just as Christ did. Jesus himself called us to this love twice during the Last Supper, when he said, “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34; 15:12). The first apostles learned to live by these words and called their fellow Christians to the same self-giving. St. John said clearly that love is not words, but deeds: “Let us love, not in word or speech but in truth and action.... Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for one another” (1 John 3:16, 18).
- c. This laying down of one’s life does not just mean the willingness to pay the “supreme sacrifice” for another, but the willingness to die to oneself so that the other may more fully live. In marriage preparation, I often ask would-be grooms whether they love their fiancée enough to take a bullet for her. Never has one said no. Then I ask whether their answer and heroism would be the same if the “bullet” took one of the following forms: being abstinent before marriage; giving up smoking if she asks; being on time if one is habitually late; cleaning up after himself better; patiently telling her what happened that day at work if she requests it; learning the faith better to help pass it on to her more contagiously; or making the time and the priority to pray with her. Those are the types of grenades on which many men refuse to dive! But these gifts of oneself are so much more valuable than almost any material gift one could give, and they are a far greater sign of real love than any ring could symbolize. When a future husband and wife begin to love each other through sacrifices like this, their marriage can become what it is meant to be: a sacrament, a visible sign and reflection of Christ’s love for his Bride, the Church, Christ who “loved the Church and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy” (Eph 5:25-26).

2. Men and women love differently

- a. The ultimate vocation of man is the same as the calling of woman: to love as Christ loves, which means to give of oneself unselfishly to and for others. This type of life will allow one to be a true image of God and to grow into God’s holy likeness. Our focus on Genesis also showed us that part of this loving of others involves lovingly receiving the other’s gift of self. The mutual giving and receiving of self-gifts is what brings about the communion of persons.
- b. But while man and woman are both called to give of themselves to the other and to welcome the other’s gift of self, how they do so varies. Many students of Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body have developed his insight that there is a profound complementarity in the way man and woman love. The Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Scola, has phrased it in this way: “Men receive love by giving love; women give love by receiving love.”
- c. This is true on several levels.
 - At the level of physiology, it’s obvious in the design of the human act of making love. A woman has been made by God to receive love, and she gives of her love to her husband principally by receiving within her own body the bodily gift of her husband. Man experiences the real welcome of the love of his wife when he is embraced in giving of himself in this way.
 - We see the same complementary, too, at the level of psychology. One of the fastest ways for a woman to frustrate a man is to not to allow or appreciate his sacrificing himself for her. Men, for example, *want* to pick up the tab on a date, because they show their affection for a woman by saying she is worth the effort at work to make the money to take her out. One of the quickest ways for a man to frustrate a woman, on the other hand, is not to

allow her to receive him into her life. When a wife, for instance, asks her husband to describe for her what his day was like and he refuses, it wounds her deeply, because she wishes to receive him and his experiences into her life.

- We see this complementarity illustrated unmistakably in the familiar tradition of the marriage proposal and the engagement ring. Man gives the proposal — he offers himself, his heart, his vulnerability, his future to the woman — and the woman accepts or rejects the proposal. He generally proposes with a ring, which is a very costly sign of his fidelity and love. If she accepts the proposal, she accepts the ring. In receiving the ring, she gives the man one of the greatest joys of his life. The woman does not give the man in return, for example, a watch, because it would be pointless. The very fact that she has accepted the man's proposal and received the symbol of his commitment and love and placed it on her finger is enough of a sign of her love for him in return.

3. The meaning of original nakedness; meaning of shame

- a. The theology of the body is connected with man's personal subjectivity, wherein the *consciousness of the meaning of the body develops*. Man's and woman's unashamed nakedness points to this consciousness. Later, "then," after sin — their first test of obedience, listening to Word in all its truth and accepting love, according to God's creative will — their eyes will be opened, they'll know that they are naked, and they will cover themselves. *Shame is an experience that is not only original, but a "boundary" experience.*
- b. *With the first sin, there was a radical change in the meaning of original nakedness.* After sin, there was fear "I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." *In shame, the human being experiences fear with regard to his "second self," and this is substantially fear for his own "self." But it also involves an "instinctive" need for affirmation and acceptance. It is a complex experience that both keeps human beings apart as well as draws them closer.*
- c. The experience of shame, and the appearance of sexual modesty, is connected with loss of original fullness. *Original nakedness corresponds to the fullness of consciousness of the meaning of the body, "flesh of my flesh," which through their mutual self-gift is the sacrament of their unity.* There was an original "communication" between man and woman through the "common union" between them expressed through the body, which is the sacrament of the person in his ontological and existential concreteness. The body manifests man and allows for the communication, the communion of persons, between man and woman. This is crucial for the meaning of original nakedness.
- d. *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. Shame brings with it a limitation in seeing with the eyes of the body through a disturbed interpersonal intimacy. The meaning of original nakedness corresponds to their understanding of the "nuptial" meaning of the body (created for each other in love).*

4. The nuptial meaning of the body

- a. Genesis allows us to ground an adequate anthropology in the theological context of the image of God in the "hermeneutics of the gift." *The dimension of the gift decides the essential truth and depth of the meaning of original solitude-unity-nakedness and is at the heart of the mystery of creation and the theology of the body.*
- b. *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.

- c. There is a deep connection between the mystery of creation, springing from Love, and the beatifying beginning of man as male and female. Man’s rejoicing is interpersonal; the “flesh” and “bones” express the person. Man emerges from sleep in the dimension of mutual gift. *The body is the original sign of a creative donation and of the awareness of this by man and woman. The male and female body is a witness to, a sacrament of, this gift. This is how sex enters the theology of the body.*
- d. The body has a “nuptial meaning,” the sign and means of this personal gift. It was clear from the beginning, and hence there was no shame in nakedness. *By uniting in one flesh, their humanity is subject to blessing of fertility. This procreative finality is part of the nuptial meaning of the body.* They are free with the very freedom of the gift of love. From the beginning, the human body, with its sex, is not only a source of fruitfulness but has the “nuptial attribute,” capable of expressing the love by which the person becomes a gift and fulfills the meaning of his existence. GS 24: Man is the only creature in the visible world that God willed "for its own sake," and "can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself."
- e. *The original nuptial meaning of the body explains the original lack of shame, because they were free in the freedom of the mutual gift of themselves.* This freedom means self-mastery, which is the precondition for the ability to give oneself to another in love — “no one can give what he doesn’t have.” Free interiorly with the *freedom of the gift*, man and woman could enjoy the whole truth about man, just as God Yahweh had revealed these things to them in the mystery of creation. 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.
- f. *The human body is created to express love through the gift and to affirm the other through existential self-giving “for [the other’s] sake.”* This affirmation is the acceptance of the gift and is without shame. This causes man’s original happiness. The nuptial meaning of the body will remain after the fall, but will undergo many distortions, as it awaits the “redemption of the body.”
- g. *The body has a nuptial meaning because the person has a nuptial nature.*
- h. This nuptial meaning can be fulfilled in the vocation to marriage but also in making a gift of themselves for the kingdom of heaven. There is the freedom of the gift in the human body, which points to the full “nuptial” meaning.

5. Mystery of man’s original innocence

- a. The fullness of the nuptial meaning of the body in its original nakedness is rooted in love. Original happiness is rooted in love. Christ is the witness of this love, flowing from the Creator in the beginning. *Man’s original innocence is founded interiorly on his participation in the interior life of God himself in his holiness through an original benefaction of grace.* It is witnessed by their having no shame before each other. The nuptial meaning of the body is discovered through original innocence. This original innocence is an essential characteristic for the theology of the body, because it radically excludes shame of the body.
- b. We reconstruct this original innocence and its connection to the nuptial meaning of the body historically after the Fall. *This original innocence is a particular “purity of heart” that preserves an interior faithfulness to the gift according to the nuptial meaning of the body.* It precedes good and evil. The human will is originally innocent. There is an innocence in the reciprocal

- “experience of the body,” which inspires the interior exchange of the nuptial gift of the person. This exchange is the real source of the experience of innocence.
- c. *The exchange points to the reciprocal acceptance of the other. 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 opposite of this would be a privation of the gift and a reduction of the other to an “object for myself,” an object of lust. This change will mark the beginning of shame, which will be a threat inflicted on the gift and the collapse of innocence.
 - d. The woman was “given” to man in the mystery of creation and received by him as a gift in the full truth of her person and inspires the reciprocal gift and acceptance. *Real masculinity comes through the “possession of self” thanks to which he is capable both of giving himself and of receiving the other’s gift.*
 - e. *Man entered the world with an ethos to his body, which is meant for self-gift in love.* This is crucial for the theology of the body. *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.* Gen 2:24 notes that man and woman were created for marriage, and through marital one-flesh union, for procreation. 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.*
 - f. *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.* This sacrament is personal, but visible through the masculine or feminine body. 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.
 - g. After original sin, they lose the grace of original innocence, and the nuptial meaning of the body is obscured, but there remains as distant echo of original innocence through love. Through shame, man will rediscover himself as the guardian of the mystery of the other, of the freedom of the gift.

Lesson Three: Meaning of marriage in God’s plan

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.”

1. 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.
2. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil separates the state of original innocence of Adam and Eve (in which they were “naked and unashamed”) from the state of human sinfulness, which is man’s historical state. In his teaching on marriage, Christ goes back to the state of original innocence and his words are normative for the theology of man and for the theology of body. *We cannot understand man’s*

present state without reference to his beginning. The proto-Gospel of Gen 3:15 also puts man in the theological perspective of the history of salvation, to the “redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23), which guarantees the continuity between the hereditary state of man’s sinfulness and his original innocence. This redemption of the body, which agrees with our experience, opens the way for the proper theology of the body.

Lesson Four: Biblical knowledge, procreation, fatherhood and motherhood

1. The unity and indissolubility of marriage

- a. The unity of Gen 2:24, “they become one flesh,” is what *happens in the conjugal act*. The body allows the unity of persons when *they submit their communion of persons to the blessing of fertility*. Every time man and woman unite in “one flesh,” they rediscover the mystery of creation, as flesh and bones of each other, and call each other by name. Becoming one flesh is a way to discover their own humanity, in original unity and duality of mysterious mutual attraction. Sex is a new surpassing of limit of man’s bodily solitude and assumes the solitude of the body of the second “self” as one’s own.
- b. From the beginning, man and woman were created for unity in the flesh, but also for the choice to leave “father and mother and cleave to his wife.” Man belongs to parents by nature, to his wife by choice. Choice establishes the conjugal pact. This choice presumes a mature consciousness of the body and the meaning of the body in the mutual self-giving of persons. Every conjugal union leads to the discovery of the unifying meaning of body. Procreation is rooted in creation and reproduces its mystery.

2. Biblical knowledge and procreation; motherhood

- a. Sin and death entered man’s history through the very heart of the unity of two in one flesh. Man was the first to feel fear and shame of nakedness.
- b. 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. This refers to the deepest essence of married life, of the meaning of one’s body in becoming one flesh with another through love. *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).*
- c. 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.
- d. *Man and woman know each other in the third, sprung from them both, which is a new revelation and discovery of themselves.*
- e. The Bible praises motherhood and femininity. Eve’s “I have gotten a man!” shows she recognizes the humanity, “bone of bones, flesh of flesh” of the child. The child is conceived, “with the help of the Lord!” *after they “sleep” together in loving communion*. In every child, 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.*
- f. 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.

- g. Adam and Eve are tempted to try to take possession of the other through a Biblical equivalent of eros that would not have been present before the Fall, in which there was no possessiveness. *After the Fall, man and woman must arduously reconstruct the meaning of the disinterested mutual gift.*
- h. Man's sentence after the fall, "you shall return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19), shows that death hovers over the human experience of life. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil detached man from God and from the tree of life. Life is not taken away, but given to man as a task in an ever-recurring cycle of conception, birth and death. Life always overcomes death. *Knowledge always allows man to surpass his solitude and affirm his being in the other, and then together in the new being generated.* Man, despite suffering, sinfulness and death, continues to put "knowledge" at the "beginning" of "generation" and thereby participates in God's vision of man from the beginning as very good.

Lesson Five: Original and Redemptive meaning of human work.

I. Laborem Exercens, based on Gen 1-3.

1. In the first command in the Bible, the Lord gave the human person the mission to co-operate (work together) with him in bringing His work of creation to fulfillment: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish ... the birds ... and every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). God, who worked for the "six days" of creation and whom Jesus says "is still working" (Jn 5:17), made man and woman in his own image and likeness and called them to share in this work.
 - a. The first way we do so is through pro-creation, when in the image of the Trinitarian communion-of-persons-in-love we "increase and multiply" that part of creation God deemed "very good."
 - b. The second way we cooperate in bringing creation to perfection is through "subduing the earth" and exercising "dominion" over all living things.
2. Right from the beginning, before the Fall, the human person had received this mission, which shows not only the goodness of human work but how central it is for man's dignity, vocation and mission.
3. After the Fall, both aspects of man's work became toilsome — procreation now would bring with it the "pangs of childbirth" for the woman and the work of subduing and having dominion would now bring "sweat" to one's brow (Gen 3:16-19) — but work would remain fundamentally good — and in fact redemptive.
4. The most important part of work, Pope John Paul II wrote, was not its "transitive" function of perfecting God's material universe, in cultivating the land, raising animals, and even, in modern times, making computer chips out of sand and life-saving medicines out of bacteria. It was the "intransitive" purpose of bringing God's greatest work — the human person — to perfection. Work done well gives the human person the opportunity to cultivate all the various hidden talents and potentials God has implanted in him — physical, intellectual, and spiritual — which are far greater than those He has inscribed in the earth.
5. So great was Jesus' appreciation for human work in God's divine plan that he could not stop using it as the proper analogy for his preaching. In his teaching, he favorably mentions shepherds, farmers, doctors, sowers, householders, servants, stewards, merchants, laborers, soldiers, cooks, tax collectors and scholars and many more. He compares the work of the apostolate to the manual work of harvesters and fishermen.
6. Jesus did not merely praise ordinary human work but shared in it. He spent the vast majority of his life in Nazareth as a manual laborer. His fellow Nazarenes knew him as a "construction worker" (the Greek word teknon, in Mk 6:3, is broader than "carpenter"). Following his foster-father, Jesus entered into the

world of human work, not as a “cover” until his “real work” would begin, but precisely to redeem noble human work in his process of redeeming the human person

7. He called all his listeners, of whatever honest profession, to be saints. A few he called to leave their fishing boats or tax-charts behind to proclaim the Gospel. The vast majority he called to proclaim the Gospel by living that good news right where they were. That’s still what Jesus does today.
8. Most of his followers are called to live out their discipleship and apostolate, their vocation and their mission, in the family and in the work-place. They are called to become saints and bring others to sanctity through this “increasing and multiplying” and “subduing” and “dominion.”
9. One’s desk, or sewing machine, or kitchen, or chalkboard, or operating room, or workbench or boat, is meant to become an altar which sanctifies not only what is given to God in work, but the giver as well. It is there that the vast majority of men and women are called to be sanctified and sanctify others through showing the original dignity and meaning of human work.
10. Work is not principally about earning a paycheck, but about serving and loving others. When work takes on this meaning, the perfection of the human person continues, the work-place is evangelized, and God’s work is advanced.
11. A reflection on the Book of Genesis is an opportunity for all of us, Catholic men, to reflect on the meaning of human work — and specifically our work — in God’s divine plan.
12. A diligent construction worker from Nazareth waves to each of us today with calloused hands and says, “Come, follow me!”

II. Genesis - Creation

1. Begins with God’s creation of heaven and earth, plants and animals. All “good.” They’re good precisely because God created them. The material order was created good. Man was created as the crown of creation, formed from the dust of the earth into which God brings life. God saw this as “very good.” Then man receives the command to cooperate in the perfection of God’s creation.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” 27 So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

2. An analysis of these texts makes us aware that they express--sometimes in an archaic way of manifesting thought--the fundamental truths about man, in the context of the mystery of creation itself.
3. From the beginning therefore he is called to work.
4. When man, who had been created "in the image of God...male and female,"[9] hears the words: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it,"[10] even though these words do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond any doubt they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to carry out in the world.
5. Indeed, they show its very deepest essence.
6. Man is the image of God partly through the mandate received from his creator to subdue, to dominate, the earth.
7. In carrying out this mandate, man, every human being, reflects the very action of the creator of the universe.
8. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work.
9. Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth.

10. Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons.
11. This vocation comes, notice well, BEFORE THE FALL.
12. It's part of the very constitution of man.

III. Genesis - After the Fall

1. (39) God's fundamental and original intention with regard to man, whom he created in his image and after his likeness,[15] was not withdrawn or canceled out even when man, having broken the original covenant with God, heard the words: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." [16]
 - a. These words refer to the sometimes heavy toil that from then onward has accompanied human work; but they do not alter the fact that work is the means whereby man achieves that "dominion" which is proper to him over the visible world, by "subjecting" the earth.
 - b. Toil is something that is universally known, for it is universally experienced.
 - c. (40) And yet in spite of all this toil--perhaps, in a sense, because of it--work is a good thing for man.
 - d. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it.
 - e. If one wishes to define more clearly the ethical meaning of work, it is this truth that one must particularly keep in mind. Work is a good thing for man--a good thing for his humanity--because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes "more a human being."
2. (125) All work, whether manual or intellectual, is inevitably linked with toil.
 - a. The Book of Genesis expresses it in a truly penetrating manner: The original blessing of work contained in the very mystery of creation and connected with man's elevation as the image of God is contrasted with the curse that sin brought with it: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." [81]
 - b. This toil connected with work marks the way of human life on earth and constitutes an announcement of death: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken." [82] Almost as an echo of these words, the author of one of the wisdom books says: "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it." [83] There is no one on earth who could not apply these words to himself.
3. (126) In a sense, the final word of the Gospel on this matter as on others is found in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. It is here that we must seek an answer to these problems so important for the spirituality of human work.
 - a. The paschal mystery contains the cross of Christ and his obedience unto death, which the apostle contrasts with the disobedience which from the beginning has burdened man's history on earth. [84] It also contains the elevation of Christ, who by means of death on a cross returns to his disciples in the resurrection with the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. (127) Sweat and toil, which work necessarily involves in the present condition of the human race, present the Christian and everyone who is called to follow Christ with the possibility of sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do. [85]
 - a. This work of salvation came about through suffering and death on a cross.
 - b. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn every day [86] in the activity that he is called upon to perform .

5. (129) The Christian finds in human work a small part of the cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his cross for us.
 - a. In work, thanks to the light that penetrates us from the resurrection of Christ, we always find a glimmer of new life, of the new good, as if it were an announcement of "the new heavens and the new earth"[88] in which man and the world participate precisely through the toil that goes with work. Through toil--and never without it.
 - b. On the one hand this confirms the indispensability of the cross in the spirituality of human work; on the other hand the cross which this toil constitutes reveals a new good springing from work itself, from work understood in depth and in all its aspects and never apart from work.

IV. Work as a transitive activity changes creation in subduing the earth.

1. (14) Work understood as a "transitive" activity, that is to say an activity beginning in the human subject and directed toward an external object, presupposes a specific dominion by man over "the earth", and in its turn it confirms and develops this dominion.
 - a. "The earth" of which the biblical text speaks is to be understood in the first place as that fragment of the visible universe that man inhabits. By extension, however, it can be understood as the whole of the visible world insofar as it comes within the range of man's influence and of his striving to satisfy his needs.
 - b. The expression "subdue the earth" has an immense range. It means all the resources that the earth (and indirectly the visible world) contains and which, through the conscious activity of man, can be discovered and used for his ends.
 - c. And so these words, placed at the beginning of the Bible, never cease to be relevant. They embrace equally the past ages of civilization and economy, as also the whole of modern reality and future phases of development, which are perhaps already to some extent beginning to take shape, though for the most part they are still almost unknown to man and hidden from him.
 - d. (16) This universality and, at the same time, this multiplicity of the process of "subduing the earth" throw light upon human work, because man's dominion over the earth is achieved in and by means of work.
 - e. There thus emerges the meaning of work in an objective sense, which finds expression in the various epochs of culture and civilization.
 - f. Man dominates the earth by the very fact of domesticating animals, rearing them and obtaining from them the food and clothing he needs, and by the fact of being able to extract various natural resources from the earth and the seas.
 - g. But man "subdues the earth" much more when he begins to cultivate it and then to transform its products, adapting them to his own use.
 - h. Thus agriculture constitutes through human work a primary field of economic activity and an indispensable factor of production.
 - i. Industry in its turn will always consist in linking the earth's riches--whether nature's living resources, or the products of agriculture, or the mineral or chemical resources--with man's work, whether physical or intellectual. This is also in a sense true in the sphere of what are called service industries, and also in the sphere of research, pure or applied.
 - j. While it may seem that in the industrial process it is the machine that "works" and man merely supervises it, making it function and keeping it going in various ways, it is also true that for this very reason industrial development provides grounds for repositing in new ways the question of human work.
 - k. (19) The development of industry... show how vast is the role of technology, that ally of work that human thought has produced, in the interaction between the subject and object of work (in the widest sense of the word).

- l. Technology is understood in this case not as a capacity or aptitude for work, but rather as a whole set of instruments which man uses in his work. It facilitates his work, perfects, accelerates and augments it. It leads to an increase in the quantity of things produced by work, and in many cases improves their quality.
- m. However, it is also a fact that, in some instances, technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanization of work "supplants" him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment, or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave.

V. Work in the "intransitive" and "subjective" sense.

- a. If the words of the Book of Genesis to which we refer in this analysis of ours speak of work in the objective sense in an indirect way, they also speak only indirectly of the subject of work; but what they say is very eloquent and is full of great significance.
- b. Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the "image of God" he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization.
- c. As a person, man is therefore the subject of work.
- d. As a person he works, he performs various actions belonging to the work process; independently of their objective content, these actions must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfill the calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity.
- e. (24) And so this "dominion" spoken of in the biblical text being meditated upon here refers not only to the objective dimension of work, but at the same time introduces us to an understanding of its subjective dimension.
- f. Understood as a process whereby man and the human race subdue the earth, work corresponds to this basic biblical concept only when throughout the process man **manifests himself and confirms** himself as the one who "dominates."
- g. This dominion, in a certain sense, refers to the subjective dimension even more than to the objective one: This dimension conditions the very ethical nature of work.
- h. In fact there is no doubt that human work has an ethical value of its own, which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is to say, a subject that decides about himself. (FREEDOM, VIRTUE)

VI. Spirituality of work

- a. Since work in its subjective aspect is always a personal action, an "actus personae," it follows that the whole person, body and spirit, participates in it, whether it is manual or intellectual work.
- b. It is also to the whole person that the word of the living God is directed, the evangelical message of salvation in which we find many points which concern human work and which throw particular light on it.
- c. These points need to be properly assimilated: An inner effort on the part of the human spirit, guided by faith, hope and charity, is needed in order that through these points the work of the individual human being may be given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God and by means of which work enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture.
- d. The Church sees as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the creator and redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as priest, prophet and king, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches.

VII. Gospel of Work

- a. (114). This description of creation, which we find in the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis, is also in a sense the first "gospel of work."
- b. For it shows what the dignity of work consists of: It teaches that man ought to imitate God, his creator, in working, because man alone has the unique characteristic of likeness to God.
- c. Man ought to imitate God both in working and also in resting, since God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of work and rest.
- d. Work is "for man" and not man "for work." (27)
- e. This activity by God in the world always continues, as the words of Christ attest: "My father is working still";[32] he works with creative power by sustaining in existence the world that he called into being from nothing, and he works with salvific power in the hearts of those whom from the beginning he has destined for "rest"[33] in union with himself in his "Father's house." [34]
- f. Therefore man's work too not only requires a rest every "seventh day," [35] but also cannot consist in the mere exercise of human strength in external action; it must leave room for man to prepare himself, by becoming more and more what in the will of God he ought to be, for the "rest" that the Lord reserves for his servants and friends.[36]

VIII. Old Testament

(119) The books of the Old Testament contain many references to human work and to the individual professions exercised by man: for example, the doctor,[44] the pharmacist,[45] the craftsman or artist,[46] the blacksmith[47]--we could apply these words to today's foundry workers--the potter,[48] the farmer,[49] the scholar,[50] the sailor,[51] the builder,[52] the musician,[53] the shepherd[54] and the fisherman.[55] The words of praise for the work of women are well known.[56]

Jews had esteem for work. Christians continued it.

IX. Christ's example & teaching

Here we can reflect on the awesomeness of the Incarnation. God himself took on flesh and blood and worked.

(118) The truth that by means of work man participates in the activity of God himself, his creator, was given particular prominence by Jesus Christ--the Jesus at whom many of his first listeners in Nazareth "were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? . . . Is not this the carpenter?'"[40]

- a. For Jesus not only proclaimed but first and foremost fulfilled by his deeds the "gospel," the word of eternal wisdom that had been entrusted to him.
- b. Therefore, this was also "the gospel of work," because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth.[41]
- c. And if we do not find in his words a special command to work--but rather on one occasion a prohibition against too much anxiety about work and life[42]--at the same time the eloquence of the life of Christ is unequivocal: He belongs to the "working world," he has appreciation and respect for human work.
- d. It can indeed be said that he looks with love upon human work and the different forms that it takes, seeing in each one of these forms a particular facet of man's likeness with God, the creator and Father. Is it not he who says: "My Father is the vine dresser", [43] and in various ways puts into his teaching the fundamental truth about work which is already expressed in the whole tradition of the Old Testament, beginning with the Book of Genesis?

In his parables on the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ constantly refers to human work: that of the shepherd,[57] the farmer,[58] the doctor,[59] the sower,[60] the householder,[61] the servant,[62] the steward,[63] the fisherman,[64] the merchant,[65] the laborer.[66] He also speaks of the various forms of women's work.[67] He compares the apostolate to the manual work of harvesters[68] or fishermen.[69] He refers to the work of scholars too.[70]

X. St. Paul's example and teaching

(120) This teaching of Christ on work, based on the example of his life during his years in Nazareth, finds a particularly lively echo in the teaching of the apostle Paul.

- a. Paul boasts of working at his trade (he was probably a tentmaker),[71] and thanks to that work he was able even as an apostle to earn his own bread.[72]
- b. "With toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you." [73]
- c. Hence his instructions, in the form of exhortation and command, on the subject of work: "Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living," he writes to the Thessalonians.[74]
- d. In fact, noting that some "are living in idleness . . . not doing any work,"[75] the apostle does not hesitate to say in the same context: "If any one will not work, let him not eat." [76]
- e. In another passage he encourages his readers: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward." [77]

(121) The teachings of the "apostle of the gentiles" obviously have key importance for the morality and spirituality of human work. They are an important complement to the great though discreet gospel of work that we find in the life and parables of Christ, in what Jesus "did and taught." [78]

XI. Change brought by Christianity

Should there be any surprise that Christianity brought a great change to the idea of work?

- a. (26) Christianity brought about a fundamental change of ideas in this field [of the analysis of work], taking the whole content of the gospel message as its point of departure, especially the fact that the one who, while being God, became like us in all things [11] "devoted most of the years of his life on earth to manual work at the carpenter's bench.
- b. This circumstance constitutes in itself the most eloquent "gospel of work," showing that the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done, but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person.
- c. The sources of the dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one.
- d. Given this way of understanding things and presupposing that different sorts of work that people do can have greater or lesser objective value, let us try nevertheless to show that each sort is judged above all by the measure of the dignity of the subject of work, that is to say, the person, the individual who carries it out.
- e. In fact, in the final analysis it is always man who is the purpose of the work, whatever work it is that is done by man--even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest "service," as the most monotonous, even the most alienating work.
- f. Criticism of certain forms of capitalism which treat man as "merchandise" rather than as a subject. Man is dehumanized.
- g. Fundamentally work is a good thing, a participation in the work of the Creator, a participation in the work of the Redeemer.