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An Undivided Heart: How Mary Unites What Sin Divides According to John Paul II's Theology of the Body

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**An Undivided Heart:
How Mary Unites What Sin Divides
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Theology of the Body**



Honors Thesis

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Department: Religious Studies

Advisors: Gloria Dodd, Ph.D., Jana Bennett, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Today, personhood is often threatened by the tendency to divide the human person into two contrasting parts: body and soul. Many times, this causes the human person to be reduced to a disembodied spiritual being or a disposable object rather than a whole person called to love and be loved. In his teachings known as Theology of the Body, John Paul II uses a personalistic approach to illuminate the human person as the integration of body and soul. Scripturally based, Theology of the Body is the study of God's reflection in the human body and human sexuality. Using John Paul II's Theology of the Body and the Catholic Church's four Marian dogmas, this thesis will illustrate how the Blessed Virgin Mary gives humanity knowledge of the body as a personalistic integration of flesh and spirit intended for a self-giving relationship with both God and man.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The story of the human heart begins with a tree. This tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, standing tall with its branches bending in the wind and its fruit illuminated by the golden rays of the sun in a beautiful garden called Eden. Shiny fruit with the richness of color grew upon the branches of that tree, and Adam and Eve were hungry. But, God had warned the man and woman: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for the day that you eat of it you shall die.”¹ Their hearts were hungry, and they lived in harmony with a God that would surely satisfy.

As Adam and Eve lived amid God’s creation, where the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil grew, a cunning serpent, the father of falsehood and empty promises, entered the garden and questioned the gift of God’s goodness. In the midst of creation, Adam and Eve were surrounded by the gift endowed by God; but tempted by the satisfaction the fruit seemingly promised to bring, their human hearts began to doubt that God truly would satisfy. One bite from the fruit of that tree was taken, and death – an unfolding of division – plagued the human heart. For the first time in human history, man and woman had divorced themselves from God.²

As a bridegroom fights for the heart of his beloved bride, God rebuked the serpent: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”³ Who is this woman who is promised to bring forth God’s victory over sin? This woman is the Bride of the Divine Bridegroom. This woman is Mary, the Mother of God, who stands at the cross as the prototype of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Appealing to the human heart, Pope John Paul II returns to this Genesis story to take a philosophical and theological look at the human experience. His comprehensive work, *Theology of the Body*, is composed of 129 catecheses given at the Wednesday

¹ Gen. 2:16-17. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages come from the Revised Standard Version.

² Gen. 3:1-22.

³ Gen. 3:15.

General Audiences from September 1979 to November 1984.⁴ In *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II explores God's original plan for human life starting from the origin of mankind in the Garden of Eden until the eschaton – the new creation at the end of time. *Theology of the Body* is the biblically-based study of God's reflection in the human body and human sexuality. Using the focus of human sexuality to develop the concepts of the nuptial meaning of the body and the spousal analogy (which will be discussed later), John Paul II illustrates how the meaning of human existence can be discovered in genuine love – the gift of self – as God intended.

Like Jesus' teachings in Scripture, such as the Sermon on the Mount, John Paul II uses a personalistic approach that speaks to the human heart in *Theology of the Body*. The first part of *Theology of the Body* focuses on the words of Christ and is broken into three parts: Christ Appeals to the Beginning, Christ Appeals to the Human Heart, and Christ Appeals to the Resurrection. Using the teachings of Christ, John Paul II looks to the past, present, and future and focuses on "original man," "historical man" (redeemed man), and "eschatological man" (glorified man).⁵ As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, throughout human history, man has desired God because the desire for God "is written in the human heart" (CCC 27). God has revealed himself through his gift of creation, but he has even more profoundly revealed himself through the body. John Paul II's thesis is "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it."⁶ Man is the "highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift."⁷ Man, a visible reality, through the nuptial meaning of the body – a call to self-giving love through masculinity or femininity – reveals God, an invisible reality.

⁴ John Paul II's series of catechesis, commonly referred to as "Theology of the Body (TOB)," has been compiled in the book *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006). Thus, "Theology of the Body" refers to the theological content of *Man and Woman He Created Them*.

⁵ Michael Waldstein, introduction to *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 114-118.

⁶ TOB 19:4, References to Theology of the Body (TOB) will be the number of the audience and paragraph as provided in *Man and Woman He Created Them*. Here, TOB 19:4 refers to general audience no. 19, par. 4.

⁷ TOB 19:5.

In *Love and Responsibility*, written before his papacy as John Paul II, Karol Wojtyla discusses the “personalistic norm.”⁸ The personalistic norm is related to the two greatest commandments Jesus preached in the New Testament: love of God and love of neighbor. In opposition to the principle of utilitarianism, John Paul II explains: “This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.”⁹ The personalistic norm relates to the relationship between persons, but it also relates to the relationship with God. As John Paul II says, “For God, whom the commandment to love names first, is the most perfect personal being.”¹⁰ Love according to the personalistic norm is outlined in *Love and Responsibility* and drawn upon in *Theology of the Body*. Also woven into *Theology of the Body* is St. John of the Cross’ threefold conviction about love: love is a gift of self, the spousal relationship is the model of self-giving love, and the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the source of self-giving love.¹¹ This thesis will show how John Paul II’s personalistic norm, an essential theme in *Theology of the Body*, is embodied in Mary, the perfect bride, who stands at the foot of the cross as “woman,” the prototype of the Church, and who receives Christ, the Bridegroom.

The Problem

The Tree is the boundary between good and evil, Original Innocence and Original Sin, harmony and separation. God’s eternal plan for man was one of communion with God and fellow man. After eating from the tree that brought death upon the human race, the exchange of gift between man and God was disrupted and division resulted. In Greek *diaballein*, the root of “devil,” means to divide or break apart. West explains, “The deceiver’s counterplan for man as diabolized through the body is separation, fraction, divorce...”¹² The division between creature and Creator was the divorce of Bride and

⁸ Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 40-44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹ Michael Waldstein, introduction to *Man and Women He Created Them*, 24.

¹² Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2007), 38.

Bridegroom. What followed was the separation of body and soul, eros and agape love, and man and woman.

When sin entered the world, as seen in Genesis 3:1-24, sin distorted human nature. God's original plan had been for man and woman, created in God's image, to love with a total gift of self. With the sin of Adam and Eve, love became twisted into lust, a desire for selfish pleasure instead of a total gift of self. Today, the body is often divorced from the soul, and human beings many times become objects that are used rather than persons who love and are loved. This principle of utilitarianism can be seen throughout society in the acceptance of sex as a pleasurable end rather than a means for procreation and family, as well as in the legalization of abortion, in the existence of pornography and prostitution, and in a culture that satisfies its desire with temporary pleasure and instant gratification. In the world today, humans seek to satisfy their desire for infinity – the desire for God that man was created with – but they often look to the finite and are left wanting.¹³

According to John Paul II's Theology of the Body, once the man separated himself from the Creator and divorced himself from the Divine Bridegroom, man (body and soul) ceased to draw on the power of the Spirit – the source of Truth and Love. The power of the Spirit raised man to the level of the image of God and gave man his personhood.¹⁴ When man ceases to draw upon the Spirit, the human person is viewed as an object. In his encyclical, *Letter to Families*, John Paul II speaks of this problem in today's society. He says: "The separation of spirit and body in man has led to a growing tendency to consider the human body, not in accordance with the categories of its specific likeness to God, but rather on the basis of its similarity to all the other bodies present in the world of nature, bodies which man uses as raw material in his efforts to produce goods for consumption..."¹⁵ Though Original Sin has caused the body to be viewed as an object, Theology of the Body affirms the human person as a subject "willed for its

¹³ Christopher West, *Fill These Hearts* (New York: Image, 2012), 11.

¹⁴ TOB 28:2.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, February 2, 1994, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html, 19.

own sake.”¹⁶ When a person’s body is viewed as an object of use, the person’s individuality is denied. The person becomes one among many disposable objects. In contrast with the objectification of the person, “to be willed for one’s own sake” means that each person is endowed with dignity as body and soul and thus deserves to love and be loved.

Besides exploring the divine plan for love and life, Theology of the Body is a response to the Enlightenment, which embraced rationalism. According to John Paul II, “Rationalism provides a radically different way of looking at creation and the meaning of human existence. But once man begins to lose sight of a God who loves him, a God who calls man through Christ to live in him and with him, and once the family no longer has the possibility of sharing in the ‘great mystery,’ what is left except the mere *temporal dimension of life?*”¹⁷ Because it has drifted away from the idea of personal relationship with a loving God – a God who became man out of love for mankind – rationalism doubts the gift of God. Rationalism doubts that God is the Bridegroom and sent his Son Jesus to redeem humanity from the rejection of the gift.

Moreover, rationalism tends to reduce the human person to two contrasting parts: body and spirit. Predominantly in the West, Cartesian dualism has divorced the body and the soul. Descartes coined the term “Cogito, ergo sum” – “I think, therefore I am.” He claimed that the human person is no more than a “thinking thing,” trapped in a body. In his encyclical, *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II opposes the Cartesian dualism that plagues the West, while maintaining the existence of the soul. The person is not only spirit nor is it only matter; it is rather an integration of body and soul – matter and spirit. Similarly, in *Letter to Families*, John Paul II speaks of a “new Manichaeism,” in which the “...body and spirit are put in radical opposition; the body does not receive life from the spirit, and the spirit does not give life to the body. Man thus *ceases to live as a person and a subject*. Regardless of all intentions and declarations to the contrary, he becomes merely an *object*.”

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, 24.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 19.

Opposing rationalism that pits the body against spirit, John Paul II says, “The body can never be reduced to mere matter: it is a *spiritualized body*, just as man’s spirit is so closely united to the body that he can be described as *an embodied spirit*. The richest source for knowledge of the body is the Word made flesh. *Christ reveals man to himself*. In a certain sense this statement of the Second Vatican Council is the reply, so long awaited, which the Church has given to modern rationalism.”¹⁸ This thesis will take John Paul II’s statement a step further as it illustrates how not only Jesus but the Blessed Virgin Mary gives humanity knowledge of the body as a personalistic integration of flesh and spirit.

Status Questionis

The problem discussed has been explored by theologians through the lens of John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. At the root of the problem is an attack on personhood. Bransfield, Scola, West, and Calloway all provide insight into what it means to be a person according to God’s plan for human life and love.

The Human Person, written by Reverend Brian J. Bransfield, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and doctor of Moral Theology, provides a commentary on John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. His work addresses the attack on personhood that has escalated in modern day. He explains that three revolutions have instigated this attack: the Industrial Revolution, the Sexual Revolution, and the Technological Revolution.¹⁹ He addresses the objectification of persons that has taken place in society which has diminished the meaning of humanity to an accumulation of things and pleasures. Bransfield says that society claims, “Unless you are ‘feeling good’ you are not a full person.”²⁰ To solve this problem, Bransfield dives into Theology of the Body and explores the experience of original humanity before the Fall.

Bransfield also understands the needs of historical man, and looks to Theology of the Body to fulfill them. “Believers hunger for truth, but too often they are given abstract

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, 19.

¹⁹ Brian J. Bransfield, *The Human Person According to John Paul II*, (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2010), 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

ideas that cannot fill their hunger, living as they do in a very concrete world...”²¹

Bransfield also warns that Christianity cannot be reduced to sentiment, and the Truth about the human person must be preached. Bransfield notes that by appealing merely to the sentiment of religion, there was an increasing deficiency in catechesis in the mid to late twentieth century, especially in regard to the identity of the human person and moral theology.²² To solve these problems, Bransfield uses the teachings of Augustine and Aquinas to explore the themes of personhood introduced in Theology of the Body. Additionally, Bransfield uses the Blessed Virgin Mary’s “seven steps of grace” to remedy the “seven steps of sin.”²³ This paper will address some of Mary’s “steps of grace,” and expound on how Mary renews the image of the human person.

The Nuptial Mystery, written by Cardinal Scola, philosopher and theologian, draws on themes explored in Theology of the Body, like marriage, sexual difference, and Trinitarian theology. Like West, he speaks to what the human heart desires – authentic love. Scola says, “...the Christian proposal fits the men and women of our time... [and] corresponds deeply to what the fascinating interweaving of freedom and reason known as the human heart yearns for, it corresponds to what man seeks, more or less consciously, in everything he does.”²⁴ Christianity appeals to the desire of the human heart, because the human heart desires relationship with God. Through Jesus Christ, man can enter into a personal relationship with God. Scola speaks of the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church. “The principal way to grasp the spousal bond between Christ and the Church in all its profundity is the figure of Mary.”²⁵ This thesis seeks to address this point and shed light on how Mary is the prototype for the Church. “In the climate of disincarnate spiritualism and androgynism that defines the temper of first-world societies - and what we are facing today is not simply the latest version of human weakness but a thought-out, persistent proposal that is at the antipodes of Christian thought!”²⁶ This thesis will show how the person of Blessed Virgin Mary challenges this climate and reveals authentic human nature.

²¹ Ibid., 38.

²² Ibid., 33-34.

²³ Ibid., 165.

²⁴ Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), xvii.

²⁵ Ibid., 14.

²⁶ Ibid., xvii.

Christopher West is an educator, author, and theologian whose goal is to make Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body available to all people. Though Theology of the Body is complex, West explains the themes of John Paul II's work in everyday language, drawing on popular culture and appealing to modern man. In his best-selling book, *Fill These Hearts*, West addresses the universal longing of the human heart and explores the truths about God written in the design of the human body. While *Fill These Hearts* speaks of the hunger of the human heart, West's book, *At the Heart of the Gospel*, discusses the eternal wedding feast that will feed the hungry human heart, found in the pages of the Gospel. West addresses the question: How can this message be proclaimed to the modern world? "Truth and freedom, objectivity and subjectivity must be held together if man is to be himself and if human society is to flourish. Herein lies Wojtyla's lifelong philosophical project – to demonstrate the link between objective reality and subjective experience."²⁷ Truth must be experienced and appeal to the desire of the human heart. West says that truth and beauty cannot be separated. "Truth without beauty is no longer true to itself, and beauty without truth ushers in a great ugliness."²⁸ West describes Christianity as an "invitation to be seized by beauty."²⁹ Mary embodies both truth and beauty. Reflecting the language of Song 4:7, John Paul II dedicated Theology of the Body to Mary and wrote the words "tota pulchra es Maria" on his manuscript which reads: "you are all beautiful, Mary."³⁰ Mary illustrates the beauty of truth in her authentically human life. West says, "As a witness to the path that alone leads to Life, Mary is the one who opened that "gaping space" within her "to be filled with God" and thus literally "contained the Uncreated."³¹ Mary continually opened herself to the gift of God and rejoiced in his goodness. This paper will further explore how Mary's life illustrates the beauty of truth – a truth that appeals to the longing human heart.

The Virgin Mary and Theology of the Body, edited by Fr. Donald Calloway, is a compilation of essays that integrates two of the topics John Paul II largely wrote about

²⁷ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 81.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁹ West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 212.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

during his pontificate.³² Through the bodily role Mary played in the incarnation and throughout Jesus' life, these essays illustrate the importance of Mary's role in salvation history. The essays reveal how Mary illuminates the teachings of Theology of the Body. Specifically, Calloway's essay, entitled "Theology of the Body and Marian Dogmas," explains how the four Marian Dogmas teach about human embodiment. This thesis integrates the four Marian Dogmas, as does Calloway's essay, but it focuses on how the dogmas reveal Mary's harmony in body and soul as a human person.

Thesis

In Christ, the Divine united himself with human flesh, but this marriage of Divine and human depended on the "yes" of a humble Jewish girl – Mary. John Paul II and others have pointed out that the perfect unity of body and soul is present in Jesus Christ, God made flesh. Although Christ is essential for the human understanding of the importance of the body, it is not easy to relate to Christ's divinity. In Mary, on the other hand, humanity gains an example of the harmony of body and soul. She was a human person with perfect human nature totally united to the love of God. Mary provides the blueprint for humanity. What can Mary teach us about being human? How does Mary bring together the separation that exists between body and soul? How does Mary integrate eros and agape love? What can Mary teach us about the personalism that John Paul II stresses in his writings?

Using John Paul II's Catechesis on Theology of the Body, the Church's Four Marian Dogmas, Scripture, and secondary sources, this paper will explore how Mary, a woman and a "symbol," exemplifies perfect humanity and illustrates the divine plan for human life and love. In Greek, *sympallein* means to bring together and *diaballein* means to divide.³³ In her very person as a united body and soul, Mary brings together everything that sin divides. In chapter two, "Sin's Deadly Division," this paper will further explain the threat to personhood man faces as a result of the divisions in man that the Fall caused. In chapter three, "Mary Unites What Sin Divides," this paper will show how Mary's life

³² Donald H. Calloway, *The Virgin Mary and Theology of the Body*, (West Chester: Ascension Press, 2007), 1.

³³ Francios Rossier, notes from "Theology of Mary" class, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, February 26, 2013.

reflects the themes of Theology of the Body, using the four Marian dogmas – Divine Motherhood, Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, and the Assumption. Finally, in chapter four, “Mary, the Perfect Bride,” this paper will explain how Mary is the prototype for the Church and can help repair the divisions in man’s heart.

Through Mary, historical man can realize the spousal relationship God desires to have with his beloved people. Man is not merely a body created by God, but the integration of body and soul – a person. Not as an object, but as a person, man can enter into the reciprocal exchange of gift with God. Using Mary as the exemplar, man can satisfy the fundamental desire of the human heart with a personal, self-giving, and receptive relationship with God – one that upholds his personhood, body and soul.

II. SIN’S DEADLY DIVISION

The Problem of “Historical Man”

Today, the denial of personalism has led to a rejection of God’s gift in the world of “historical man.” According to John Paul II, “historical man” is man “who at the ‘beginning of his earthly drama found himself ‘inside’ the knowledge of good and evil by breaking the covenant with his Creator.”³⁴ From the beginning, created for relationship with God, man has been the subject of the covenant. Sin, then, is not merely disobedience; rather, it is a disruption in the relationship of God and man.

People today, ever since the Fall of man, wish to independently pursue their own satisfaction. In the world, many place value on being independent despite the fact that, as relational creatures, humans were not created for independence but dependence on God. As creatures, our very existence depends on the Creator. As Bransfield observes, “When we realize that ‘God depends on nothing else,’ we come to the essential awareness of our creaturehood, a reality from which modern man is in the long flight of denial.”³⁵ Because humans do not trust in the personal relationship with God that they were created for, humans think they can be independent from God and look toward the finite for satisfaction instead of toward God, the infinite. These finite things, which Benedict XVI calls “false infinities,” do not ultimately satisfy the human heart; so man continues to grasp for what God has not given, rejecting God’s true gift.³⁶

The true gift of God is Himself; throughout the history of creation, God has generously bestowed his love and life upon the world. If man fails to understand his personhood, he will fail to enter into the relationship – the covenant – that God extends to all of humanity. Benedict XVI observes the dilemma of historical man:

The consideration of man as a creature seems ‘uncomfortable’ because it implies an essential reference to something else, or better, to Someone else – whom man

³⁴ TOB 25:1.

³⁵ Bransfield, *Human Person*, 62.

³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 33rd Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples*, August 10, 2012, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120810_meeting-rimini_en.html, 5.

cannot control – who enters in order to define his identity in an essential way; a relational identity, whose first element is the original and ontological dependence of He who wanted us and created us. Yet this dependence, from which modern and contemporary man attempts to break free, not only does not hide or diminish, but luminously reveals the greatness and supreme dignity of man, who is called into life in order to enter into relationship with Life itself, with God.³⁷

As seen by the doubt in God’s gift, historical man does not fully understand his personhood. To understand original happiness and what it truly means to be human, one must return to the beginning.

In the Beginning: Original Man

Though composed differently, John Paul II says the two creation accounts of Genesis are indeed compatible. While the first account tells of the creation of humanity without the distinction between man and woman, the second account narrates the creation of man and then the creation of woman out of man. The first creation account reveals the fact that humanity was created in God’s image and likeness – *Imago Dei*. According to John Paul II, the second account of creation illustrates how man and woman were created in the image of God. Both creation accounts in Scripture can be considered myths, in that “...’myth’ does not refer to fictitious-fabulous content, but simply to an archaic way of expressing a deeper content.”³⁸ Myths “...convey a truth too dense to fit in a fact.”³⁹ In *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II starts at the creation of man to understand the fundamental truths of the human person.

As the ultimate giver, God holds all of creation in existence as his gift to humanity, the ultimate recipient. Throughout *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II speaks about this “gift.” To understand the gift, one can look at creation because creation is the original gift. In the beginning, man receives the world from God as a gift, and the world receives man. Creation is a “fundamental and ‘radical’ gift, that is, an act of giving in

³⁷ Ibid., 2.

³⁸ TOB 8:2.

³⁹ Bransfield, *Human Person*, 54.

which the gift comes into being precisely from nothing.”⁴⁰ *Bara* is the Hebrew verb used in Scripture for the creative action of God – to make out of nothing.⁴¹ Because the world came from nothing, it is a gift of love. “For God, creation is an unnecessary generosity. For man, the generosity is most necessary.”⁴² Bransfield points out that because human beings cannot cause themselves, and thus rely on the love of the Creator for their existence. “The world,” he says, “is not only from love, it is for love.”⁴³ In his “unnecessary generosity,” God loves humanity into existence not as objects but as persons.

It is in this relationship of giver and gift that one can understand how love proceeds and is essential for life. God created the world from nothing and brings all of creation into existence through love because he is love.⁴⁴ If God is love and God is life-giving, then love, both human and divine, must be life-giving because humanity was fashioned in the image of God. According to the creation account in Genesis 1:31, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” According to John Paul II, “Through these words we are led to glimpse in love the divine motive for creation, the source, as it were, from which it springs: *only love, in fact, gives rise to the good and is well pleased with the good.*”⁴⁵ Love, as shown by God in the creation accounts, is “unnecessary generosity,” a freely given gift. God gives this gift to man because man is able to understand the meaning of the gift. Only man is “able to know and love his creator.”⁴⁶ Only man is created as a subjective person, invited to participate in the gift. To understand participation in the gift, one must return to the creation accounts and understand the original meaning of solitude, unity, and nakedness.

Original Solitude

In Genesis 2, before the creation of woman, man finds himself alone in the garden. In this original solitude, man gains the self-knowledge as a subjective being who

⁴⁰ TOB 13:3.

⁴¹ Bransfield, *Human Person*, 57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁴ 1 John 4:8.

⁴⁵ TOB 13:3.

⁴⁶ CCC 356.

experiences the material world in a material body and who knows he was not made to be alone. The meaning of man's original solitude is twofold in that it gives insight to the human identity and to the relationship between man and woman. Placed before God and among animals unlike himself, man searches for his own identity. It is in this search that he discovers his consciousness, self-awareness, self-determination, and subjectivity.⁴⁷

Man discovers he is conscious and self-aware through God's command to till and keep the soil and then to name the animals.⁴⁸ Dominant over the animals, "The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field..."⁴⁹ When man names the animals, the subjectivity man has been endowed by God is further expressed. Man uses the animals as his reference point and realizes he is not like the animals.

Unlike the animals, man was created to enter into relationship as a subjective being. Subjectivity highlights that man is able to reflect on the meaning of his existence and enter into relationships freely and consciously. Man is the "subject of the covenant, that is, a subject constituted as a person, constituted according to the measure of 'partner of the Absolute,' inasmuch as he must consciously discern and choose between good and evil, between life and death."⁵⁰ As a relational being, man is the only creature able to know and love his creator. "Man is 'alone': this is to say that through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself."⁵¹ From the beginning, man lives in relationship with the creator, listening to God's commands and choosing to follow them.

Man, as "the only creature on earth that God willed for itself,"⁵² is given free will, choice, and self-determination. This is illustrated by the conditions God gives man. God instructs man to freely eat from any tree in the garden except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God gives man guidelines to live by, but does not force man to obey,

⁴⁷ There is a distinction between "subjectivity" and "subjectivism." While subjectivism rejects objective truth, subjectivity signifies that humans are able to consciously reflect on their own existence through personal experience of the external world.

⁴⁸ Gen. 2:15, 19.

⁴⁹ Gen. 2:20.

⁵⁰ TOB 6:2.

⁵¹ TOB 6:2.

⁵² Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

allowing man the choice of whether or not to trust in his creator. By the fact that man was created by God out of love and for love, it is necessary for God to give man free will. Love must always be a choice because love that is forced is not love at all. Love requires an active giver and an active recipient. God's gift of love is freely given and not forced upon man; thus, man must actively receive the gift from God.

As a subjective being in a visible world, man better understands his subjectivity through his body because through his body, man experiences the material world. Alone in the garden, amid God's creatures, Adam found no other visible being with a body like his. "The structure of this body is such that it permits him to be the author of genuinely human activity. In this activity, the body expresses the person."⁵³ As a subjective being, man understands that he is called to participate in the gift, so Adam looked for a partner. In his search, he realized that he is superior to the animals because among creation, he could not find someone equal to himself. No other part of creation offered man a reciprocal gift of self. "...but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him."⁵⁴ In the beginning, man had original happiness, but his identity was incomplete because he was alone.

Original Unity

God saw the incompleteness of humanity before the creation of woman: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."⁵⁵ The second creation account emphasizes that it is not good for man to be alone because the reciprocal gift of self is necessary to find oneself.⁵⁶ This self-discovery takes place in relation to another person, because man has been created as a subjective person who loves and is loved. Only in the presence of the woman, does man realize he was once alone. This realization emerges by existing not only "with someone" but "for someone."⁵⁷

Recalling that the second creation account explains the first account, the second account gives insight to how man is created in the *imago Dei*. It is the relational nature of

⁵³ TOB 7:2.

⁵⁴ Gen. 2:20.

⁵⁵ Gen. 2:18.

⁵⁶ Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

⁵⁷ TOB 14:2.

man that mirrors the image of God. In the Trinity, God exists in relationship. The Father gives himself to the Son. The Son gives himself to the Father. This eternal exchange of love is fruitful and the love between the Father and Son becomes a person – the Holy Spirit. If mankind is made in the image and likeness of God and the image of God is a communion of persons, then man can better understand his identity when he is living in self-giving communion with another.⁵⁸

The call for man to participate in the reciprocal gift is written in the anatomy of man and woman. God created two ways to be a body: male and female. The complementary parts are necessary because it is “not good for man to be alone.” Masculinity is for femininity and femininity is for masculinity. The biological makeup of humans reveals the call for man and woman to participate in the gift. John Paul II says, “This is the body: a witness to creation as a fundamental gift, and therefore a witness to Love as the source from which this same giving springs.”⁵⁹ The call for man and woman to give themselves reciprocally to each other, evident through their bodies, is called the “spousal meaning of the body.” From the beginning, when God proclaimed that it is not good for man to be alone, man and woman have been called to live in communion. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.”⁶⁰ In this way, man can better image God because the image of God is *communio personarum* – a communion of persons which exist in relationship.⁶¹

Not only in the giving of oneself but also in the acceptance of another’s self-gift can a person discover himself or herself. “...the acceptance of the woman by the man and the very way of accepting her become, as it were, a first gift in such a way that the woman, in giving herself (from the very first moment, in which, in the mystery of creation, she has been “given” by the Creator to the man), at the same time “discovers herself,” thanks to the fact that she has been accepted and welcomed and thanks to the way in which she has been received by the man.”⁶² God gave the woman to man, and in harmony with God, the woman also gives herself to the man. She discovers herself

⁵⁸ TOB 9:3.

⁵⁹ TOB 14:4.

⁶⁰ Gen. 2:24.

⁶¹ TOB 9:3.

⁶² TOB 17:4.

because her total self-gift is genuinely accepted and reciprocated. Self-discovery refers to the recognition of one's own subjectivity and dignity as a human person whose purpose is to love and to be loved. Through the man's initiative to love and his receptivity to her own gift, woman discovers herself as one who is genuinely loved as a person (body and soul). At the same time, man discovers himself through his self-gift and the receptivity of the woman to his self-gift.

Original Nakedness

In their original nakedness and innocence, Adam and Eve meet each other for the first time in the garden without shame. Discovering the spousal meaning of the body, they gaze at each other's bodies with eyes that see a person to be given to and not an object to be used. "The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to the simplicity and fullness of vision in which their understanding of the meaning of the body is born from the very heart, as it were, or their community-communion."⁶³ In original nakedness, man and woman fully understand their call to more closely become the image of God through their self-giving communion.

John Paul II refers to the first encounter of man and woman in the garden as the "feast of humanity" because it is the original experience of the fullness of humanity, drawing from the sources of Truth and Love.⁶⁴ In their original nakedness, man and woman greet each other, and their bodies, clothed in goodness and innocence, reveal the gifts of themselves they desire to sincerely give to and receive from each other. The man is genuinely joyful when he meets his complement for the first time. "Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' ... And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed."⁶⁵ As Genesis says, in the beginning, man and woman are naked and unafraid.

Before sin enters the world, there is no separation between the spiritual and the sensible. The body and soul are perfectly integrated and united. John Paul II describes

⁶³ TOB 13:1.

⁶⁴ TOB 19:5.

⁶⁵ Gen. 2:23-25.

this integration of body and soul: “Seeing each other reciprocally, through the very mystery of creation, as it were, the man and the woman see each other still more fully and clearly than through the sense of sight itself that is, through the eyes of the body.”⁶⁶ The spousal meaning of the body must be found through this original innocence and thus, excludes shame and “*eliminates the necessity of this shame in man, in his heart or his conscience.*”⁶⁷ “This innocence belongs to the dimension of grace contained in the mystery of creation, that is, to that mysterious *gift made to man’s innermost [being] – to the human heart – that allows both the man and the woman to exist from the ‘beginning’ in the reciprocal relationship of the disinterested gift of self.*”⁶⁸ The discovery of the spousal meaning of the body is rooted in original innocence because innocence lies at the foundation of the exchange of the reciprocal gift of self. The inner characteristic of self-donation and acceptance of the other as a gift is innocence.

Before humanity crossed the threshold to Original Sin, Adam and Eve lived in the state of original innocence. John Paul II defines innocence as “a mystery of man’s existence before the knowledge of good and evil and, as it were, ‘outside’ of that knowledge.” With original innocence begins man’s participation in the mystery of divine life of the Trinity – the mystery of Truth and Love. “If creation is a gift given to man...then its fullness and deepest dimension is determined by grace, that is, by participation in the inner life of God himself, in his holiness.”⁶⁹ Original innocence is the state in which (1) man is united to God, (2) his body is united to his soul, and (3) man and woman are united to each other.

Original innocence is the source of original happiness. “Since happiness and innocence are inscribed in the frame of the communion of persons, like two converging lines of man’s existence in the very mystery of creation, the beatifying consciousness of the meaning of the body – that is, of the spousal meaning of human masculinity and femininity – is conditioned by original innocence.”⁷⁰ Man is happy when he freely lives how he was created to live – in relationship through exchange of self-giving love. “The

⁶⁶ TOB 13:1.

⁶⁷ TOB 16:5.

⁶⁸ TOB 16:3.

⁶⁹ TOB 16:3.

⁷⁰ TOB 16:5.

desire for God is written in the human heart”⁷¹ and the desire to participate in the gift is written in the human body (the spousal meaning of the body).

The body is a sign that makes visible the invisible divine. This is John Paul II’s thesis: “Man appears in the visible world as the highest expression of the divine gift, because he bears within himself the inner dimension of the gift.”⁷² This inner dimension of the gift is Love and Truth – God himself. Created in the *imago Dei*, man and woman, through their femininity and masculinity, join in “one flesh” and are invited to participate in the divine exchange of Trinitarian life and love.⁷³ Through participation in the gift – through love – man is meant to return to God. Man came from God through love, and through love man returns to God; because of the Fall, this return to God is interrupted.

The Fall of Man

Sin and its consequences for historical man are rooted in the crossing of the boundary between Original Innocence (*status naturae integrae*) and Original Sin (*status naturae lapsae*). The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil lies at the boundary between these two states. John Paul II describes the tree as the “...expression and symbol of the covenant with God broken in man’s heart...”⁷⁴ The tree is the boundary between innocence and sin, between life and death, between love and lust, and between self-gift and selfishness. It is the point of doubt in the divine gift, and Adam and Eve cross the boundary by eating the forbidden fruit.

After eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve have knowledge of the divide between good and evil. The Semitic term for “to know” is *yada*. This verb means more than knowing in an intellectual sense. Rather, it means to know a “concrete experience.”⁷⁵ This knowledge does not refer to the concept of good and evil but rather the concrete experience of good and evil. Adam and Eve experience God’s goodness, but they also experience the separation from God’s goodness. Evil is a separation from the “good.” The original state of creation was good and the creation of

⁷¹ CCC 27.

⁷² TOB 19:3.

⁷³ CCC 221.

⁷⁴ TOB 4:1.

⁷⁵ TOB 20:2, footnote 31.

man and woman was “very good,” as seen in Genesis: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”⁷⁶ As discussed, the spousal meaning of the body is good because God said, “It is not good that man should be alone...”⁷⁷ When Adam and Eve separate themselves from God, they separate themselves from the ultimate good and the ultimate giver. The problems that plague historical man stem from the evil of separation. As discussed, God created man for unity and communion with Him and with each other. With the deception of the evil one, the Fall of man causes the original separation that took place in the midst of the harmony God created.

The Original Sin of Adam and Eve was a sin of pride, a separation in the Creator-creature relationship. The sin of pride is the opposite of a gift of self; it is the doubt of God’s gift and a failure to be receptive to the divine. In essence, Adam and Eve divorced themselves from the gift. West explains, “That’s pride at its root: we don’t trust God’s designs, so we choose to follow our own.”⁷⁸ Adam and Eve stopped trusting in the gift that God gave them – all of creation – and wished to design their own gift. As creatures, they were hungry, but instead of looking to the Creator for nourishment, they sought to feed themselves. Instead of looking to the divine giver for his gift, they sought to selfishly give to themselves. “The moment man divorces himself from the objective good and seeks to author his own reality is precisely the moment of abuse of his own subjectivity. It is the moment of broken trust in his Creator and of infidelity to the covenant.”⁷⁹ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Man tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.”⁸⁰

According to West, historical man’s problem is that he does not believe in the gift: “The tendency to question the gift and ‘grasp’ seems built into our fallen nature, as we can observe even in little children...The problem with man in his relationship with

⁷⁶ Gen. 1:31.

⁷⁷ Gen. 2:18.

⁷⁸ West, *Fill These Hearts*, 112.

⁷⁹ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 468.

⁸⁰ CCC 397.

God is that he does not believe in the gift. So he grasps at it.”⁸¹ Humans grasp because receptivity to the Divine will and a freely given ‘yes’ like Mary’s is difficult for historical man because he has been wounded by the selfishness of a sin ridden world.

The covenant of love that God made with man affirms the personhood of man. In the covenant, man is seen as a relational, subjective, and self-determined person rather than a mere pawn in the divine plan for the universe. However, Original Sin distorted the human view of the relationship with God so that it was perceived as a “master-slave relationship.”⁸² When humanity started to lack trust in the goodness and love of its Creator, humanity also lost confidence in its own personhood. Humans lost trust in the covenant God made with man, a person created in Divine likeness and destined to share in the Trinitarian exchange of love.

In the “beginning,” nakedness, like all of God’s creation, was good, because it revealed the spousal meaning of the body. However, recall that nakedness and the spousal meaning of the body depends on original innocence. When mankind casts off its original innocence, nakedness becomes a source of shame. Through Original Sin, fear crept into the world as a result of selfishness. West explains, “We’re afraid of being ‘naked,’ of being ourselves before others and even before God. We’re afraid that God really isn’t ‘love.’”⁸³ “Nakedness” shows that man is “deprived of participation in the Gift” and man is “alienated from the Love that was the source of the original gift, the source of the fullness of goodness intended for the creature.”⁸⁴

Though God promises redemption, the Fall of man severs the relationship between God and historical man through Original Sin, a tainting of perfect human nature. Historical man is the man of concupiscence, a separation from God. This separation from God, the ultimate good, causes other separations. Goodness takes form in original happiness, original innocence, and the spousal meaning of the body, and each of these good things is rooted in love. So, once Adam and Eve divorce themselves from Love, which creates the good, they divorce themselves from these things.

⁸¹ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 179.

⁸² West, *Fill These Hearts*, 112.

⁸³ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 17.

⁸⁴ TOB 27:2.

Division as a Consequence of the Fall of Man

When the relationship of the giver and gift between God and man is disrupted by distrust and disobedience, separation within the human person ensues. As Genesis illustrates, sin came into the world through the temptation of Satan disguised as a cunning serpent. Because only God can create, all Satan is capable of is division. So in his sinful pride and envy of human beings, he set out to divide what God created in harmony and goodness. There are two subsequent separations to the original separation (Man and God due to the Fall). These divisions occur between the body and soul and between man and woman.

The Divorce of Body and Soul

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve used eyes that peered beyond the physical and witnessed the person as a body and a soul, which were so closely united that the person was unaware of his or her own nakedness. Without shame, Adam and Eve understood each other's nakedness as a call to spousal unity. But, after Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realize they are naked and try to cover themselves, hiding from God.⁸⁵ God asks Adam: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"⁸⁶ This question reveals that the awareness of nakedness originates from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The Original Sin of prideful lust that caused a separation of creature and Creator, led to a deeper separation within humanity – the separation of body and soul. The lust in man's heart was caused by the doubt in God's gift. This lust "...shatters the peace of the three original experiences of solitude, unity, and nakedness."⁸⁷ Shame and lust explain each other. To the lusting heart, nakedness turns the human being into an object for the other; thus nakedness becomes a source of shame before God and man. The separation of

⁸⁵ Gen. 3:7-8.

⁸⁶ Gen. 3:10-11.

⁸⁷ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 188.

body and soul causes shame, the fear of being naked before God and each other. John Paul II distinguishes two types of shame: *immanent* and *relative*.⁸⁸

Immanent shame comes from the distortion of God's image in one's own person. Man realized that because of the disconnection between the bodily and spiritual, a distortion of human nature has taken place. "The very moment that man turned against God, the body started making demands upon the soul, one of them being the cravings for pleasures, viewed no longer as gifts but as 'rights.'⁸⁹ Man has lost his self-mastery and now he finds his cravings are for the world instead of for God. After the Fall, "Man realizes for the first time that his body has ceased drawing on the power of the Spirit, which raised him to the level of the image of God."⁹⁰ The words, "I was afraid, because I am naked" reveal a divide that has taken place within the person's innermost being. This divide is "a breakup...of man's original spiritual and somatic unity."

While immanent shame is the fear of oneself before God, relative shame is the "fear of one's own self in the presence of another."⁹¹ Recall that man and woman were created precisely as subjective persons meant to enter into communion with one another. Thus, they long to be loved as a person and not used as an object. Because the Fall caused the disintegration of body and soul, nakedness causes fear. As the fear of being objectified by others, shame shakes the very core of personhood. When man and woman "did not feel shame," they were not seen as objects by each other.⁹² Shame "...manifests a deep need of affirmation and acceptance as a person, and, at the same time, a fear that the 'other' will not recognize and affirm the full truth of my person revealed by my nakedness (remember that the body reveals the person)."⁹³

John Paul II says that shame is "the symptom of man's detachment from love..."⁹⁴ Man turns away from God and thus turns away from love in its truest form. When the body and the soul are separated, sex is seen as an end (temporary pleasure) and

⁸⁸ Ibid., 187.

⁸⁹ Alice von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: A Divine Intervention* (Ave Maria: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010), xv.

⁹⁰ TOB 28:2

⁹¹ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 188.

⁹² TOB 19:1

⁹³ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 124.

⁹⁴ TOB 29:4

not as a means the ultimate end (eternal bliss with the Creator in Heaven). West says, “When we aim our desire for infinity at something less than infinity (like sex), we’re inevitably left wanting, disillusioned, and disappointed. But, again, sex is meant to be a sign, a foreshadowing of ultimate fulfillment.”⁹⁵

Death Results

Death is the ultimate consequence of the division of body and soul, because death is literally the separation of the body and the soul. Though historical man suffers death, original man only knew life. As the Book of Wisdom states, “God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil death entered the world...”⁹⁶ Death disassembled what God created, separating the “breath of spirit” and “dust of earth.”⁹⁷

As stated, the original human experience did not include death, for death was conditional, as Genesis explains: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’”⁹⁸ This warning of death affirms the dependence of man. As John Paul II states, “The words of God-Yahweh addressed to the man confirm a dependence in existing, so that they show man as a limited being and, by his nature, susceptible to nonexistence.” Again, man was not created as an autonomous being. It is not good for him to be alone because he was created for relationship and above all, a relationship with his Creator. Death may have been a foreign concept to man, who only knew life, but John Paul II understands death to be the “antithesis of all that man had been endowed with.”⁹⁹

While death is the separation of body and soul, the Church Fathers view death as the further expression God’s love and goodness. In *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI quotes Saint Ambrose, a Church Father: “Death was not part of nature, it became part of nature. God did not decree death from the beginning; he prescribed it as a remedy. Human life,

⁹⁵ West, *Fill these Hearts*, 11.

⁹⁶ Ws 2:24.

⁹⁷ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 184.

⁹⁸ Gen. 2:16-17.

⁹⁹ TOB 7:3.

because of sin...began to experience the burden of wretchedness in unremitting labour and unbearable sorrow. There had to limit to its evils; death had to restore what life had forfeited.”¹⁰⁰ In his unrelenting love for humanity, God allowed death to enter into the human experience, because in death human beings have new life in Christ.

Tension between Man and Woman

While separation from God cause a separation of body and soul, it also causes a separation between fellow human beings, particularly in regard to the spousal meaning of the body. Because of sin, “The relationship of gift changes into a relationship of appropriation.”¹⁰¹ Man begins to look at woman as an object and not as a subject, and vice versa. The gift becomes depersonalized. Love turns into lust, a selfish desire for self-satisfaction rather than a total gift of self. West explains, “When we fail to read the language of the body truthfully – that is, when we lust – we inevitably violate the mystery of the person. We take what is not given.”¹⁰²

This is shown in the change from Genesis 2:23-25 to Genesis 3:7, 16. Before Adam and Eve sinned, man and woman lived in perfect harmony with God and each other. “The man said: ‘This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.”¹⁰³ With the separation of body and soul, there is a corruption of the spousal meaning of the body. “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves...To the woman...your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master.”¹⁰⁴ Though sin corrupts the spousal meaning of the body, redemption is promised in Genesis 3:15, renewing hope for fallen humanity.

¹⁰⁰ Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, November 30, 2007, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html, 10.

¹⁰¹ TOB 32:6

¹⁰² West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 486.

¹⁰³ Gen. 2:23-25.

¹⁰⁴ Gen. 3:7, 16.

Mary, Our Hope

John Paul II points out that the body has *almost* lost the power of expressing love as a self-gift. He uses the word “almost” because there is still hope for the condition of humanity. The spousal meaning of the body is only threatened and not totally destroyed. John Paul II proclaims: “The spousal meaning of the body has not become totally foreign to the heart; it has not been totally suffocated in it by concupiscence.”¹⁰⁵

Humans are not totally depraved because they still possess the inherent goodness of human nature from the beginning. West explains that John Paul II’s message is in opposition to the Protestant Reformers’ perspective that man has ‘utter depravity’ because of sin.¹⁰⁶ Sin may have distorted human nature, but it did not nullify the inherent goodness of being a person created in the image and likeness of God.¹⁰⁷ To man of concupiscence, Christ presents a “new ethos” of redemption. Christ does not expect man to return to the state of original innocence that has been robbed from man by sin. Rather, Christ calls man to be renewed.¹⁰⁸ Instead of accusing the human heart, Christ calls humanity to love as it loved in the beginning. Through her life of love, Mary illustrates who we, as humans, are called to become.

The devoted Bridegroom never gives up on his Bride. God continually gives humanity the gift of his love, but humans reject it time and time again. In the beginning, through the first rejection to God’s gift – Original Sin – humanity lost access to the Tree of Life by choice. Throughout salvation history, when humans break the covenant with their Creator they again lose access to Life. With great hope, John Paul II proclaims, “...nevertheless, when the living God enters his covenant with man (Abraham, the patriarchs, Moses, Israel), he continually renews in this covenant, the very reality of Life, reveals again its prospects, and in some way opens up again the access to the Tree of Life.”¹⁰⁹ Christ is the final covenant, and humanity finally accepts this gift through the fiat of a young Jewish girl – Mary of Nazareth. God will put the pieces shattered by humanity back together through the woman’s Son. To redeem fallen humanity, God will

¹⁰⁵ TOB 32:3.

¹⁰⁶ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 200.

¹⁰⁷ TOB 32:3.

¹⁰⁸ TOB 49:1, 4.

¹⁰⁹ TOB 65:5.

become man of male flesh through the Virgin Mary of female flesh. Where Adam and Eve fell, Mary will stand firm in God.

III. MARY UNITES WHAT SIN DIVIDES

Though sin has cast a shadow on human nature, mankind can look to the Virgin Mary, who is considered to be the “New Eve,” as an example of how to live an authentically human life. Fulton J. Sheen suggests that Mary is the eternal blueprint for humanity in the mind of God. He explains that God, as the great architect, holds blueprints of all of his creation. As an artist creates a beautiful painting from an idea in his mind, “so, too, every atom and every rose is a realization and concretization of an idea existing in the Mind of God from all eternity.”¹¹⁰ However, because human beings stray away from God’s blueprint through sin, human life does not accurately represent the masterpiece God wants to create. Sin, suffering, and death entered the picture, muddying the beautiful colors of God’s plan. Sheen explains, “He has the model, and He has the reality: the blueprint and the edifice, the score of the music and the way we play it.”¹¹¹ In Mary, God’s blueprint for humanity comes fully to life.

After the Fall, Mary was foretold to bring into the world victory over sin (Gen. 3:15). Sheen explains, “Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, is placed at the very center of that enmity, that struggle which accompanies the history of humanity on earth and the history of salvation itself. In this central place, she who belongs to the ‘weak and poor of the Lord’ bears in herself, like no other member of the human race, that ‘glory of grace’ which the Father ‘has bestowed on us in his beloved Son,’ and this grace determines the extraordinary greatness and beauty of her whole being.”¹¹² Mary’s perfect human nature, untouched by the evil of sin, gives humanity hope. Even though humanity, in its own pride, has hindered God’s beautiful design, he does not abandon his masterpiece. In fact, God calls mankind to rise to the glory, beyond which human beings were originally created, through the grace of his Son. Mary, in her beautiful perfection and fullness of God’s grace, stands at the center of the second chance God readily gives mankind.

¹¹⁰ Fulton J. Sheen, *The World’s First Love*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 16.

¹¹¹ Sheen, *World’s First Love*, 16.

¹¹² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html , 11.

Mary Trusts in the Gift

What sin divides, Mary brings together. In Mary, there was no separation from God because the sin of pride did not divorce the creature from the Creator. In Mary's life, the giver and the gift were never separated. She neither rejected what was given nor grasped for more than what was given. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception proclaims that Mary was conceived without Original Sin and remained in the state of original innocence (*status naturae integrae*). In *Ineffabilis Deus*, on December 8, 1854, Pius IX proclaimed that the Blessed Virgin Mary was immaculately conceived, without the stain of Original Sin:

We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of Original Sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful.¹¹³

Like Adam and Eve, Mary, immaculately conceived, was born without the stain of Original Sin. Unlike Adam and Eve, Mary remained with a sinless human nature and was always united to God.¹¹⁴

Original innocence lies outside the “knowledge of good and evil.” Because Mary was immaculately conceived, she lived outside the “knowledge of good and evil,” fully united to “good” – God. Original innocence is the participation in the inner Trinitarian life of God, and this participation in the inner life of God is unique to our original state of being. John Paul II also states that the source of original innocence is the fullness of holiness, our communion with the Divine.¹¹⁵ This full communion with the Trinity *is* original innocence. When mankind separates itself from this communion with God, it falls away from original innocence into Original Sin. Mary, through God's grace, never separated herself from God, and thus remained in the state of original innocence. Because

¹¹³ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854, Papal Encyclicals Online, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm>, 35.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁵ TOB 16:3.

of Mary's Immaculate Conception and state of original innocence, she participated in the inner life of God.

John Paul II emphasizes that innocence is “at the foundation of the exchange of the gift.”¹¹⁶ Innocence allows man and woman to totally give the disinterested gift of self and in turn receive that gift. In the beginning, when Adam and Eve felt no shame (Gen. 2:25), they were inspired to give themselves completely to each other, recognizing the other person not as an object to be used but a person to be given to. Therefore, the inner characteristic of self-donation and acceptance of the other as gift is innocence. Mary's original innocence allowed her to fully and freely enter into the reciprocal relationship of the disinterested gift of self with God. In Genesis 2:23-25, when the first man meets the first woman, man and woman become a gift for each other. In a similar way, God becomes a gift for Mary (literally as Jesus, her son), and Mary becomes a gift for God (in her ‘yes!’).

The first meeting of man and woman (Genesis 2:23-25) illustrates the spousal meaning of the body – the realization that the person was made for an unselfish exchange of gift through receptivity of the other and self-donation. In the exchange of the gift, the person must be received as a gift. Acceptance and welcome of the self-gift expresses the other person as a “subject.” This acceptance of a person as gift is illustrated in Genesis: “The man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.’”¹¹⁷ In *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II calls Genesis 2:23-25 the “First Feast of Humanity,” because it is the original experience of the fullness of humanity, the love between man and woman drawing from the sources of Truth and Love.¹¹⁸

In a way, the angel's joyous greeting to Mary at the Annunciation parallels Adam's greeting to the woman, who he meets for the first time, in Genesis. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel, Gabriel, approaches Mary with the greeting: “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”¹¹⁹ The angel's greeting in Greek is “*Chaire Kecharitomene*.” It is a joyous greeting, which literally translates “Rejoice, you (woman) who once was favored

¹¹⁶ TOB 17.

¹¹⁷ Gen. 2:23.

¹¹⁸ TOB 19:5.

¹¹⁹ Luke 1:28.

and is still favored today!” Alternately, it is translated to: “Hail, full of grace.” John Paul II explains, “In the language of the Bible “grace” means a special gift, which according to the New Testament has its source precisely in the Trinitarian life of God himself...”¹²⁰ Mary was full of God’s gift – Himself. Moreover, this greeting is unique. In Greek, the greeting would normally be “Chaire,” followed by the person’s name. But in Mary’s case, “Chaire” is followed by the perfect participle – “kecharitomene.”¹²¹ The uniqueness of this greeting portrays Mary, who is to become the mother of God, as most favored and special. Similarly Adam’s greeting expressed Eve as favored and special. Eve discovers herself because she is accepted, welcomed, and received by Adam. In the same way, Mary discovers herself, that is discovers her subjectivity, in the way she is welcomed by the angel and received by God. Mary has found favor with God, and she discovers herself in her self-gift: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”¹²² Thus, the annunciation can be considered the Second Feast of Humanity, as it parallels the first experience of the fullness of human love.

After accepting Mary’s self-gift, God gives himself completely to her in the Incarnation: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”¹²³ In Genesis, Adam rejoices over the woman who is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. God, too, rejoices over Mary, who is literally bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, through the incredible mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus came from the flesh of Mary, just as Eve came from the flesh of Adam. Mary participates in the exchange of the gift with God, receiving the Divine will and making a sincere gift of herself to God.

The Annunciation illustrates Mary’s perfect receptivity and submission to the Divine will, especially in her question: “How shall this be done, because I know not man?”¹²⁴ This question is strange because Mary was betrothed to Joseph, unless she had the desire to remain a perpetual virgin. The strangeness of the question reveals both

¹²⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 8.

¹²¹ Francios Rossier, notes from “Theology of Mary” class, University of Dayton, February 19, 2013.

¹²² Luke 1:38.

¹²³ Luke 1:31, 35.

¹²⁴ Luke 1:34 (Douay-Rheims Bible).

Mary's desire for perpetual virginity as well as her trust in God's plan. Furthermore, the question contrasts with Zechariah's question that is told of earlier in the Gospel of Luke.¹²⁵ When the angel greeted Zechariah, proclaiming the news that he will have a son, Zechariah questioned the angel because his wife was too old to bear children. Because the angel's news seemed impossible to the human intellect, Zechariah doubted the gift and questioned in unbelief. On the other hand, with a heart full of trust, Mary did not question the angel's statement, but rather questioned how it was to happen.¹²⁶

The Visitation (Luke 2:39-46) shows how Mary responded to God's gift. When Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth, she proclaims, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."¹²⁷ The words "blessed is she who believed" are linked to the angel's words "full of grace." Mary believed in the fullness of God's grace. John Paul II observes: "The fullness of grace announced by the angel means the gift of God himself. Mary's faith, proclaimed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, indicates how the Virgin of Nazareth responded to the gift."¹²⁸ The Visitation exemplifies that Mary accepted and believed in God's gift instead of questioning it. In Genesis, Adam and Eve doubted the abundance of God's gift and grasp for more. Despite being given the fullness of God's gift, Eve allowed the serpent to deceive her into questioning the goodness of God and his gift (Gen 3:4-6). Mary, conceived without the sin of pride, received the fullness of God's gift with a humble heart.

The welcomed exchange of self-gifts is fruitful, as seen in the Incarnation. According to Theology of the Body, "knowledge" is the cause of fruitfulness. In the literal translation of Hebrew Scripture, the "one flesh" union of man and woman is defined as "knowledge."¹²⁹ When Genesis 4:1 says that "Adam knew his wife," the Semetic term *yada* is used meaning to know a "concrete experience" and corresponding to the "knowledge of good of evil."¹³⁰ The literal translation of Luke 1:34, the Annunciation, reads: "How is this possible? I do not *know* man." Knowledge is "the act

¹²⁵ Luke 1:18.

¹²⁶ Rossier, "Theology of Mary," February 19, 2013.

¹²⁷ Luke 2:45.

¹²⁸ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 12.

¹²⁹ TOB 20:2.

¹³⁰ TOB 20:2, footnote 31.

that originates being, or, in union with the Creator, establishes a new human being in existence.”¹³¹ Moreover, “Procreation brings it about that ‘the man and the woman (his wife)’ know each other reciprocally in the ‘third,’ originated by both.”¹³² In Jesus, Mary and God reciprocally *knew* each other. Mary never knew evil and only knew the good, having the *concrete experience* of God, the ultimate good. In the Incarnation, the human flesh of Mary was united to the Spirit of God, generating Jesus, fully human and fully divine. The intimate knowledge and perfect union of Mary and God is revealed in the “third” – Jesus Christ.

All acts of procreation, especially the Incarnation, give truth to the words: knowledge is stronger than death. Life always has a victory over death, because the history of man is always made new by the same “knowledge-generation” cycle of genesis. Through “knowledge” or the “one flesh union,” man and woman bring a child, in the image and likeness of God, into the world. Through Mary, Jesus was conceived by woman and born into the world, as Genesis 3:15 foretold. “It is as if the reason for this unyielding strength of life, which shows itself in ‘generation,’ were always the same ‘knowledge,’ with which man passes beyond the solitude of his own being, and even more, decides anew to affirm this being in an ‘other.’”¹³³ Life draws its strength from “knowledge,” or the full exchange of self-gifts in the “one flesh” union of man and woman. Mary had an intimate and perfect union with God, to whom she gave herself completely. In Christ, life had victory over death. This victory of life began with Mary, who participated in knowledge of God – the exchange of self-gifts. As John Paul II eloquently explains:

Despite all the experiences of his own life, despite the sufferings, the disappointments in himself, his sinfulness, and finally, despite the inevitable prospect of death, man always continues, however to place ‘knowledge’ at the ‘beginning’ of ‘generation’; in this way he seems to participate in that first

¹³¹ TOB 31:7.

¹³² TOB 21:4.

¹³³ TOB 22:7.

‘vision’ of God himself: God, the Creator, ‘saw everything...and indeed, it was good.’ And always anew he confirms the truth of these words.¹³⁴

In Mary, God had a plan to redeem man and reaffirm the goodness of his creation.

Body and Soul, Together Forever

Because Mary remained untainted by sin, she perfectly reflects the image of God, especially in the harmony of body and soul. Original Sin severed the harmony of the body and the soul, because sin diminished mankind’s original likeness to God. Because Mary never strayed from her original perfect human nature, her body and soul were always united, as she was assumed into Heaven body and soul, and her flesh continually drew on the power of the Spirit. Saint Paul understands purity as “life according to the Spirit.” He says, “He who is united to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him.”¹³⁵ “Purity is the glory of the human body before God. It is the glory of God in the human body, through which masculinity and femininity are manifested.”¹³⁶ Mary lived her life fully united to the Lord in body and soul, exemplified by her *fiat* at the Annunciation.

There is a tendency in the Western world of thought, influenced by Descartes, to interpret Paul’s message as the call to completely reject the body (the flesh) in the “life according to Spirit.” Paul even says: “The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.”¹³⁷ West gives clarity to this misunderstanding, explaining that when Paul refers to “flesh” he refers to the “whole person (body and soul) cut off from God’s inspiration.”¹³⁸ This tension between the flesh and the Spirit exists in the heart of the man of concupiscence due to Original Sin. Recall that after Original Man fell from Original Innocence, the body ceased to draw on the power of the Spirit – the power that raised man to the likeness of God. John Paul II explains: “It is the ‘man of concupiscence,’ that is, the man of disordered desire...The man who lives ‘according to the flesh...’ is the man disposed only to that which comes ‘from the word’: he is the man of the ‘senses,’ the man of three-

¹³⁴ TOB 22:7.

¹³⁵ 1 Cor. 6:17.

¹³⁶ TOB 57:3.

¹³⁷ Gal. 5:17.

¹³⁸ West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 70.

fold concupiscence.”¹³⁹ West says, “As we allow these truths to peel away the Cartesian lenses glued to our pupils, we come to see the whole world differently.”¹⁴⁰ When the tendency to separate the body and the soul ceases and the one looks at the whole human person, the body becomes a sacred creation used to experience the material wonders of the world as well as participate in the immaterial supernatural life of God. The flesh was not meant to be in opposition of the Spirit but in harmony with the Spirit, as beautifully illustrated by Mary, the mother of the Word made *flesh*.

Mary’s Perpetual Virginity

Mary’s purity of body and soul is exemplified in her perpetual virginity. There are two reasons for Mary’s perpetual virginity. First, Mary’s perpetual virginity reflects the theology of the Temple. Mary acts as the temple where God literally dwells and parallels the temple of the Old Testament.¹⁴¹ Ezekiel 44:22-3 describes the temple: “This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut.” Jesus is considered the High Priest, and he is the only one who may physically enter the temple of Mary’s body. In *Theology of the Body*, the body is referred to as temple: “Purity is a virtue or ability of ‘keeping one’s own body with holiness and reverence,’ allied with the gift of piety as a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in the ‘temple’ of the body...”¹⁴² The words of John’s Gospel, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” literally translate from Greek: “The Word pitched His tent among us.”¹⁴³ God pitched his tent among humanity through Mary, who holds the Word in her womb. The tent recalls the tabernacle of the Old Testament. In Exodus, the Israelites carried a tent as a makeshift temple while wandering in the desert. The tent was the model of the temple to be built in Jerusalem. Only Moses was allowed to meet God in the tent because only the high priest can enter the “Holy of

¹³⁹ TOB 51:1.

¹⁴⁰ West, *At the Heart of the Gospel*, 71.

¹⁴¹ Rossier, “Theology of Mary,” March 26, 2013.

¹⁴² TOB 57:3.

¹⁴³ Rossier, “Theology of Mary,” March 26, 2013.

Holies.”¹⁴⁴ The tent God has pitched among men is Mary, whose womb becomes home to the high priest of the New Covenant – Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Mary’s perpetual virginity shows that she did not reject the marital union, but embraced a greater marital union. In her perpetual virginity, she witnesses to the resurrection of the body because human marriage is for this life and not the next. The “virginal state of the body will manifest itself completely as the eschatological fulfillment of the ‘spousal’ meaning of the body.”¹⁴⁵ John Paul II bases this on Scripture. When the Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection, tried to trap Jesus, they asked him: if a man has been married multiple times, who is his wife in heaven? Jesus addresses two points in his rebuttal: the resurrection of the body and the state of risen bodies.¹⁴⁶

According to John Paul II, “Resurrection means restoration to the true life of human bodiliness, which was subjected to death in its temporal phase.”¹⁴⁷ Resurrection of the body is “consummation of the gift” and the “eschatological fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the body.”¹⁴⁸ God will give himself to man in the beatific vision and man will participate in the reciprocal gift of self with God. “The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion.”¹⁴⁹ The beatific vision will be “...absolutely superior to every experience proper to earthly life. The reciprocal gift of oneself to God...will be the response to God’s gift of himself to man.”¹⁵⁰

Jesus also gives insight to the state of risen bodies. In the resurrection of the body, there will be a “spiritualization” of the body, meaning that there will be a new submission of body to spirit.¹⁵¹ “[T]he powers of the spirit will permeate the energies of the body” and the body and spirit will once again work in harmony toward communion with God.¹⁵² In the state of the resurrection of the body, humanity will once again participate fully in Divine nature, restored fully to the image and likeness of God. In *Theology of the Body*,

¹⁴⁴ Rossier, “Theology of Mary,” March 26, 2013.

¹⁴⁵ TOB 68:3.

¹⁴⁶ Mark 12:20-23.

¹⁴⁷ TOB 66:5.

¹⁴⁸ TOB 68:3.

¹⁴⁹ CCC 1045.

¹⁵⁰ TOB 68:2-3.

¹⁵¹ TOB 66:5.

¹⁵² TOB 67:1.

John Paul II describes the resurrection of the body: “Participation in the divine nature, participation in the inner life of God himself, penetration and permeation of what is essentially human by what is essentially divine, will then reach its peak, so that the life of the human spirit will reach a fullness that was absolutely inaccessible to it before.”¹⁵³

“The ‘divinization’ in the ‘other world’ indicated by Christ’s words will bring to the human spirit such a ‘range of experience’ of truth and of love that man would never have been able to reach in earthly life.”¹⁵⁴

Not only will the harmony of body and soul be restored, but marriage will not be necessary. When the Sadducees try to fool Jesus with their question, Jesus brilliantly answers: “...Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”¹⁵⁵ In heaven, there will be no marriage because if you are in heaven, you do not need the taste of heaven that the conjugal union gives. Why have a taste, when you enjoy the whole feast? Marriage is an earthly sign of a heavenly reality.¹⁵⁶ The sexual difference of the body shows humans that they were made for communion, and in heaven, humanity will have that experience of communion but in a virginal way because it will be communion with God.

Mary is an example for the celibacy for the Kingdom and the vocation of religious life. Like Mary, in religious life, men and women are called to witness to the resurrection. When speaking of celibacy, Jesus says: “He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”¹⁵⁷ John Paul II speaks of celibacy in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: “This cannot be compared to remaining simply unmarried or single, because virginity is not restricted to a mere “no,” but contains a profound “yes” in the spousal order: the gift of self for love in a total and undivided manner.”¹⁵⁸ The vocation to religious life is not in opposition to marriage, and it is not better or worse than marriage, just different.¹⁵⁹ This vocation must be

¹⁵³ TOB 67:3.

¹⁵⁴ TOB 67:4.

¹⁵⁵ Mark 12:24-25.

¹⁵⁶ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 302.

¹⁵⁷ Matt. 19:11.

¹⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, August 15, 1988, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html , 20.

¹⁵⁹ TOB 73:3.

voluntarily and freely chosen. It is a gift from God that must be received.¹⁶⁰ John Paul II calls continence for the kingdom a “charismatic sign” because it proclaims that the kingdom of God is here and that God is “all in all.”¹⁶¹ For Mary, God was “all in all.” Mary professes her own virginity during the Annunciation by the strangeness of her question.¹⁶² “*The marriage of Mary with Joseph...conceals within himself*, at the same time, *the mystery* of the perfect communion of persons, of Man and Woman in the conjugal covenant and at the same time the mystery of this *singular “continenence for the kingdom of heaven”*: a continence that served the most perfect “*fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit*” in the history of salvation.”¹⁶³

A celibate person still lives in communion, but that communion is one with God. The celibate person practices renunciation out of love for Christ, the “Divine Bridegroom.”¹⁶⁴ Naturally, people are anxious about the things close to their hearts, but “the unmarried person is anxious about what is the Lord’s, how to please the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32).”¹⁶⁵ Though communion of persons is at the core of the human identity, the communion of marriage does not bring eternal happiness. “In this realistic observation one should see a justified warning for those who think – as at times young people do – that conjugal union and life should bring them only happiness and joy. The experience of life shows that spouses are not seldom left disappointed in what they expect most.”¹⁶⁶ Eternal happiness only comes from communion with the Divine.

Mary’s state of perpetual virginity illustrates her purity of heart. This is not to say that married couples do not possess purity of heart, but as Cardinal Scola points out, virginity is “...the manner of love characteristic of Jesus Christ, which all Christians, even spouses, are therefore called to live. The virginal charism, as a specific vocation for some in the Church, literally bears witness to this.”¹⁶⁷ Mary’s virginity epitomizes Mary’s love for God and her desire to give herself wholly to him and not to the things of this

¹⁶⁰ CCC 1599.

¹⁶¹ 1 Cor. 15:28.

¹⁶² Luke 1:34.

¹⁶³ TOB 75:3.

¹⁶⁴ TOB 80:1.

¹⁶⁵ TOB 83:7.

¹⁶⁶ TOB 83:3.

¹⁶⁷ Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 270.

world. As Paul states: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit on the things of the Spirit. But the desires of the flesh lead to death while the desires of the Spirit lead to life and peace.”¹⁶⁸ Again, even those called to the vocation of matrimony must live according to the Spirit, in that there must be a certain detachment from one’s spouse. A person called to married life must understand that his or her heart was created for more than another person. The heart was created for ultimate fulfillment in God. Marriage and sex is not an ends but a means to loving the ultimate Good – God. “...a virginal vocation lived with joy will be a point of constant reference for Christian couples and families. It is a strong reminder of the way in which those called to live in Christ are meant to relate to each other.”¹⁶⁹

The Assumption

The Assumption of Mary’s body and soul into heaven gives witness to the perfect integration of Mary’s body and soul. On November 1, 1950, in *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pius XII declared: “We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”¹⁷⁰ Mary was privileged to experience the resurrection of the body that will take place for the rest of humanity at the end of the world. With a glorified body, her body and soul are perfectly united.

From the beginning, the body and soul were meant to be together forever. Plato erred when he asserted that a soul without a body is free. The soul needs to be expressed by the body.¹⁷¹ The body is necessary for the soul, as the soul is necessary for the body. West quotes Peter Kreeft in his explanation on the important unity of body and soul:

The body is the matter of the soul, and the soul is the form of the body. That is why the resurrection of the body is internal to the immortality of the soul, not a

¹⁶⁸ Rom. 8:5.

¹⁶⁹ Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 271.

¹⁷⁰ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus_en.html , 44.

¹⁷¹ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 304.

disposable extra. When death separates the two, we have a freak, a monster, an obscenity. That is why we are terrified of ghosts and corpses, though both are harmless: they are the obscenely separated aspects of what belongs together as one. That is why Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave: not merely for his bereavement but for this cosmic obscenity.¹⁷²

The Assumption is rooted in love. Sheen explains, "Love is the secret of the Ascension of one and the Assumption of the other, for love craves unity with the beloved. The Son returns to the Father in the unity of Divine Nature, and Mary returns to Jesus in the unity of human nature."¹⁷³ The Assumption illustrates the purity of Mary's body and soul and her perfect love for God and man.

Perfect Love: Eros and Agape

Because Mary never divorced herself from God through sin and remained united in body and soul, Mary was able to embody perfect love. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI explains that eros (human love) expresses agape (divine love). The human person was made for agape, but eros love was given by God to humanity in order that humans may more fully experience agape. In Mary, eros and agape were perfectly integrated, and this perfect love is fruitful.¹⁷⁴

Eros is human, erotic love, but John Paul II asserts that eros is not lust. He draws on Platonic philosophy to explain that eros is the force of attraction to truth, goodness, and beauty. The erotic should become true, good, and beautiful if it pulls the spirit toward truth, goodness, and beauty.¹⁷⁵ West says: "Before sin, man and woman experienced erotic desire not as a grasping for pleasure but as an aspiration toward all that is true, good, and beautiful. They experienced eros as the desire to love as God loves, to live in the mutual and sincere gift of self. Hence, they were both 'naked and felt no shame' (Gen

¹⁷² Peter Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 93, quoted in West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 304.

¹⁷³ Sheen, *World's First Love*, 139.

¹⁷⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, December 25, 2005, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html, 3.

¹⁷⁵ TOB 48:1.

2:25).”¹⁷⁶ Eros is a pure desire for love. Sin can twist eros into lust, if a person stops at erotic love and does not desire to participate in agape – the sacrificial love that Jesus epitomized by his death on the cross. Before the Fall, eros led man and woman to truth and goodness – to agape – the love God has for us. They lived with the total gift of self and saw the other as a person/subject they wished to give themselves to. In the beginning, eros was rooted in the unity of body and soul. Benedict XVI says: “Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of eros can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved.”¹⁷⁷ Because of Original Sin, eros presents a challenge to the human heart: using the goodness of eros as a means to agape – a greater love.

Agape love is divine, sacrificial love. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* affirms that agape love is rooted in the gift; to love means to give oneself. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI echoes the words of 1 John 4:16: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.”¹⁷⁸ God is love because he participates in the reciprocal and fruitful exchange of self-gift. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.”¹⁷⁹ The Trinity perfectly exemplifies the exchange of love through gift of self. The Father gives himself to the Son, who received the Father. The Son, in turn, gives himself completely back to the Father through surrendering himself in death on the cross. The Father receives the Son, and the fruit of this exchange of gift is the Holy Spirit. So fruitful is the self-giving love between the Father and Son that it is the third person of the Trinity. West describes the mystery of God as “love outpoured in a rapture, happiness, and bliss that never end...”¹⁸⁰ Humans were created by Love and for love. West says that humans exist because “...Love, by its nature, desires to expand its own communion.”¹⁸¹ God created mankind, not because he needed humans, but because he desired that humanity share in

¹⁷⁶ West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 244.

¹⁷⁷ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁹ CCC 221.

¹⁸⁰ West, *Love That Satisfies*, 9.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

His eternal exchange of love. But, to do this, humans must act in accordance with the gift. Through the sin of Adam and Eve, the exchange of gift was disrupted, and God's love was rejected instead of received.

The most frequent image used in the Bible to describe God's love for humanity is the spousal union of the bridegroom and the bride. The Bible is truly a love story – salvation is tied together by the love of the bridegroom and the receptivity of the love of the Bride. The first human words recorded in the Bible are Genesis 2:23: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Noted earlier, these words are words of the love of the bridegroom to the bride. The last human words are those of Revelation 22:17: “The Spirit and the Bride say come.” These words encompass the joyful response of the bride to the coming of her bridegroom.¹⁸² God is always the bridegroom because he initiates the gift. He is the Creator and mankind is the creature. The Creator gives and the creature receives, just as the Bridegroom gives and the Bride receives. In fact, Jesus' death on the cross is the epitome of agape love and self-gift. Benedict XVI explains:

His death on the cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from these that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.¹⁸³

Jesus' death on the cross not only illustrates but defines agape love in its purest form.

Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and Mary's fiat echo through salvation history in unison. Mary is united with Christ at the foot of the Cross because as he empties himself, so does she. “Through faith, the Mother shares in the death of her Son, in his redeeming death; but in contrast with the faith of the disciples who fled, hers was far more enlightened.”¹⁸⁴ Mary's obedience toward the Father did not culminate at the Annunciation, for it was the beginning of a life of constant surrender. At the presentation

¹⁸² Ibid., 12.

¹⁸³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 12.

¹⁸⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 18.

of Jesus in the Temple, Simeon's words foretell the suffering of a mother and son that the future holds: "a sword will pierce your heart."¹⁸⁵ "While this announcement on the one hand confirms her faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises of salvation, on the other hand it also reveals to her that she will have to live his obedience of faith in suffering, at the side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful."¹⁸⁶

Love is Fruitful

As Theology of the Body explains, genuine love is fruitful. The Council of Ephesus in AD 431 declared that Mary is to be called, "Theotokos," mother of God. Through God, Mary becomes a mother, and "...the mystery of femininity manifests and reveals itself in its full depth through motherhood, as the text says, 'who conceived and gave birth.'"¹⁸⁷ Mary, along with all women, is honored with the words: "the womb that bore you and the breasts from which you sucked milk."¹⁸⁸ John Paul II calls this passage the "eulogy of motherhood and femininity."¹⁸⁹ Mary's genuine love is fruitful, and Mary gives motherhood a new meaning. Like Eve, Mary is the "mother of all the living."¹⁹⁰

Mary's motherhood, however, is unique. In Mary, virginity and motherhood are completely united. Some feminist critics, like Elizabeth Johnson and Rosemary Radford Ruether, have a problem with the Church's honor of Mary's virginal motherhood, because it is impossible for women to live up to this unnatural example. Johnson and Ruether see the Church's devotion of Mary as a tool to enforce the suppression of women in a patriarchal society.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, Mary's virginal motherhood authenticates the honor the Church gives to both vocations for women: religious life and holy matrimony. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "The spousal character of

¹⁸⁵ Luke 2:35.

¹⁸⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 16.

¹⁸⁷ TOB 21:2.

¹⁸⁸ Luke 11:27.

¹⁸⁹ TOB 21:5.

¹⁹⁰ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 56.

¹⁹¹ Rev. J. Michael Miller, "Reconsidering Mary: Feminist Criticism Deserves a Response," *Crisis Magazine*, September 1, 1989, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/1989/reconsidering-mary-feminist-criticism-deserves-a-response>.

the human vocation in relation to God is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood."¹⁹² Mary exemplifies the perfection of motherhood and virginity (religious vows), and shows that each way of life is ultimately good, given by God, and to be received through self-surrender. Mary's example upholds the sanctity of both marriage and religious life. "All forms of Christian fruitfulness – physical as well as spiritual, virginal as well as marital – are patterned on Mary. They are all included in her as the perfected woman, in such a way that her perfections pour out from her like rays and strike all the faithful..."¹⁹³ Mary's fruitful love is an example that everyone, in all states of life, can learn from. Because Mary's fruitfulness comes from the divine Son, it is limitless. "The states of life in the Church, since they are willed and founded by the Son, can set no bounds on this fruitfulness. Every grace in the Church is catholic and penetrates the whole. If there were no marriages, there would be no priests or religious. But if the latter did not exist, there would be no really Christian marriages. Everything in the Church exists for and in everything else, because the Son's grace and the Mother's fruitfulness unfold beyond the different states of life."¹⁹⁴ Mary physically became mother by giving her "Yes" and conceiving the Son of God. She possessed one Child – Jesus – but through her motherhood of Christ, became the spiritual mother of all of mankind. For Mary, "physical motherhood bestowed on her an unlimited spiritual motherhood."¹⁹⁵

In the Gospel of Luke, after a woman in the crowd acknowledges the blessedness of Mary as the physical mother of Christ (Lk 11:27), Jesus turns his attention to spiritual motherhood. He says: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."¹⁹⁶ In *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II points out that Jesus does not exclude his biological mother, Mary, when he says these things:

Is not Mary the first of 'those who hear the word of God and do it'? And therefore does not the blessing uttered by Jesus in response to the woman in the crowd refer primarily to her? Without any doubt, Mary is worthy of blessing by the very fact that she became the mother of Jesus according to the flesh ...but also and

¹⁹² CCC 505.

¹⁹³ Adrienne Von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 170.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁹⁶ Luke 11:28.

especially because already at the Annunciation she accepted the word of God, because she believed it, because she was obedient to God, and because she ‘kept’ the word and ‘pondered it in her heart’ (cf. Lk. 1:38, 45; 2:19, 51) and by means of her whole life accomplished it.¹⁹⁷

Mary exemplifies a “new motherhood”¹⁹⁸ – spiritual motherhood. She proves that virginity can be fruitful when given to God. At the foot of the cross, John, the beloved apostle, is given to Mary – his new mother, with Jesus’ words: “Woman, behold your son!...Behold your mother!”¹⁹⁹ Mary gives herself to all her children – all of mankind. In the same way, a virgin has an undivided heart able to fruitfully share her love with all people.

Agape love, a love that looks to the other and not to oneself, demands detachment. Scola points out:

True love will not exist between man and woman, nor authentic communion between husband and wife, unless a certain detachment is experienced, even from within this intimate relationship which causes the two to become one flesh. If I am incapable of gazing upon the one I say I love so as to see her as she really is, in her metaphysical reality which may not correspond to what I think, want, or make her out to be, then there will never be true love.²⁰⁰

This detachment is seen in Mary, who must learn how to give up her only son, so that her son can be redeemed the world. At the Wedding at Cana and on the cross, Jesus addresses Mary as “woman.” This is not a sign of disrespect but of detachment. Mary experiences detachment from her son as a mother, and begins to realize her role as the Church, the Bride of Christ. Mary must look beyond her image of Jesus as a vulnerable baby wrapped in his mother’s protective arms and look upon the face of her Savior who must face a gruesome death on a cross. At Golgotha,

She stands before the Lord on the Cross like the embodiment and summation of mankind. When he looks at her, he no longer sees, for a moment, the atrocious sinners for whose sake and at whose hands he is dying; he sees mankind as if

¹⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 23.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹⁹ John 19:26-27.

²⁰⁰ Scola, *Nuptial Mystery*, 271.

transfigured in the form of his Mother. *He had redeemed her also, but by preserving her from sin.* That gives her the capacity to suffer with him, vicariously for all, as an embodiment of the meaning of redemption...²⁰¹

At the foot of the cross, Mary is not only the mother of mankind, but she also embodies mankind and is able to receive her savior and Bridegroom on behalf of the Church. As Mary embodies mankind, she expresses human subjectivity as a relational creature and sheds light on the intimate relationship God wishes to have with humanity through Jesus Christ.

²⁰¹ Von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, 116.

IV. MARY, THE PERFECT BRIDE

Though creatures of an omnipotent creator, the human relationship with God is much deeper than a creature/creator relationship. Even though sin twisted the human perception of the relationship with God into a master/slave relationship, God's relationship with mankind has been expressed akin to a bridegroom pursuing his beloved bride. God is the ultimate bridegroom, and man is his beloved bride. But, in the beginning, when humanity fell and Original Sin entered the world, mankind divorced itself from its creator and bridegroom.

God does not force humans to love him. Forced love is not authentic love, because forced love would not be a sincere gift of self. Love cannot be taken; it must be given and received. West says, "God is a gentleman. He does not impose his love on us. He awaits our freely given yes before he floods our hearts with His love."²⁰² Initiating the gift, God is always the bridegroom. He creates and gives, and his creatures receive his creation, just as the bridegroom gives and the bride receives. The spousal relationship is the most fundamental and intimate human relationship. It is so intimate that it calls persons to be joined so completely together that they become "one flesh." Using the spousal relationship as an analogy helps mankind understand the relationship that God desires with his people.

A Divine Bridegroom in Pursuit of his Bride

Throughout salvation history, starting with the Old Testament, God is seen pursuing his bride, through covenants that man continues to break. The spousal relationship between God and his people is evident in the Old Testament, especially in the Prophets. The Covenant can be likened to a marriage between God and his people. God is the persistently faithful Bridegroom in pursuit of his unfaithful Bride, Israel.

The sin of idolatry is often compared with the sin of adultery in the Old Testament. Idolatry is the root cause of Israel's infidelity to God and Israel is often depicted as an unfaithful bride. John Paul II observes that the books of the Prophets reveal that the people's betrayal of God is comparable to the betrayal of adultery in

²⁰² West, *Love That Satisfies*, 17.

marriage.²⁰³ For example, it is written in Hosea: “Go, take a prostitute for yourself as wife and have children of prostitution, for the land does nothing but prostitute itself by going away from the Lord.”²⁰⁴ Again, Israel is described as an adulterer in Ezekiel: “Your fame spread among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect due to the glory I place in you...But you, infatuated with your beauty and profiting from your fame, played the whore and lavished your favors on any passer-by...How degraded is your heart, says the Lord God, that you did all these things, the deeds of a shameless whore.”²⁰⁵ Jeremiah speaks of Israel as an unfaithful wife: “Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel.”²⁰⁶ The analogy between adultery and idolatry shows that the covenant God made with his people, Israel, was a “covenant accompanied by love.” This means that “Out of love, God-Yahweh makes the covenant with Israel (without any merit on its part); for Israel he becomes a Bridegroom and Husband who is most affectionate, attentive, and generous toward his Bride.”²⁰⁷ In their idolatry against God and in their adultery against the Divine Bridegroom, the Prophets show that “adultery is the antithesis of this spousal relation and the opposite of marriage.”²⁰⁸

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges the sons and daughters of the Old Covenant, pushing the definition of adultery further, teaching that adultery is not only a sin of the body but is committed in the heart. He says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you: whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”²⁰⁹ When a man desires a woman through the lust of his eyes, he is objectifying her, in contrast with the spousal meaning of the body and the disinterested gift of self. To desire things other than God and his gift is referred to as “adultery committed in the heart.” In the same way, anyone who looks to worldly pleasure with desire for satisfaction instead of looking toward God has committed idolatry or adultery against the Divine Bridegroom, like unfaithful Israel.

²⁰³ TOB 37:1.

²⁰⁴ Hosea 1:2.

²⁰⁵ Ezek. 16:5-8, 12-15, 30-32, quoted in TOB 37:3.

²⁰⁶ Jer. 3:20.

²⁰⁷ TOB 37:3.

²⁰⁸ TOB 37:4.

²⁰⁹ Matt. 5:27-28.

When Adam and Eve looked to the forbidden fruit with the desire to become like God without God, they committed the first sin. Through her immaculate conception, vow of perpetual virginity, and docility to the Divine will from the annunciation to the cross to her Assumption into Heaven, Mary's earthly life reveals that her one desire was for God.

The Moral Climates of the Past and Present

At the time of the Old Testament, the sin of adultery was not fully understood by the people in the monogamous sense. Instead, adultery was misinterpreted as “the possession of another's wife, but not the possession of other women as wives next to the first one.”²¹⁰ The law was not rooted in the heart but rather in a strict regulated moral code, causing people to be objectified as possessions rather than subjects. The people of the Old Testament took procreation so seriously that they desired it to the point of abuse. If women were unable to give their husbands offspring, they turned to slave women to bear their husband's children. This is true for Sarah and Abraham (Genesis 16:2) and Rachel and Jacob (Genesis 30:3). John Paul II explains, “These two narratives reflect the moral climate in which the Decalogue was practiced.”²¹¹ In this moral climate, polygamy was practiced by the Kings of Israel (David and Solomon). “The whole tradition of the Old Covenant indicates that the effective necessity of monogamy as an essential and indispensable implication of the commandment “You shall not commit adultery” never reached the consciousness and ethos of the later generation of the Chosen People.”²¹² The misinterpretations of adultery shaped the moral climate into one that ultimately denied human subjectivity, personhood, and love.

Even though some forms of adultery, like polygamy, were acceptable in society, there were severe punishments for committing adultery. “If one considers the letter of this legislation, it becomes evident that it combats adultery decisively and without hesitation, using radical means, including the death penalty (see Lev 20:10; Duet 22:22).”²¹³ Leviticus 20:10 illustrates the harshness of the law: “If man commits adultery with the

²¹⁰ TOB 35:3.

²¹¹ TOB 35:2.

²¹² TOB 35:3.

²¹³ TOB 35:4.

wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.”²¹⁴

Adultery was not understood as infidelity to the covenant of love between man and woman, rather “in these laws, adultery is understood above all (and perhaps exclusively) as the violation of the man’s property right regarding every woman who was his legal wife, usually one among many); adultery is not understood, by contrast, as it appears from the point of view of the monogamy established by the Creator.”²¹⁵ On the basis of Theology of the Body, adultery violates the very core of personhood in that it denies persons’ subjectivity and treats persons as objects to be used as property. Adultery also violates the exchange of gift in that it rejects the idea of self-gift and rather selfishly seeks satisfaction for one’s own self.

The moral climate of the Old Testament in some ways can be compared to the moral climate of the world today, in that morality was not rooted in the people’s hearts. In today’s moral climate there is a danger of two extremes: the indulgence of selfish pleasure that can objectify persons and a strict and lifeless moral legalism. West explains that today “...things like sex and alcohol are often terribly abused...But we mustn’t go to the other extreme and blame the good things God has made for our abuse of them.”²¹⁶ West describes the moral climate of today’s world with the analogy of “diets.” The “fast food diet” says that one must indulge his every desire. Today’s world says: “If it feels good, do it.” On the other hand, Christianity can sometimes be inaccurately presented as a strict list of rules to be obeyed, stifling the desires of the human heart. This is the “starvation diet.”²¹⁷ This lifestyle claims: “If it feels good, it must be sinful.” Unsatisfied by the “fast food” and “starvation,” West explains the “diet” humans need is the “Heavenly Banquet.” As West explains and Jesus teaches: “If it feels good, it’s meant to be a preview of coming attractions.”²¹⁸ The world does not need a diet to live by but the personal experience of Jesus Christ who teaches about the Banquet of Heaven.

In the midst of a moral climate based strictly on law and not rooted in the heart, Jesus came to bring a “New Ethos” and to fulfill the New Covenant. With his words of

²¹⁴ Lev. 20:10.

²¹⁵ TOB 35:4.

²¹⁶ West, *Fill These Hearts*, 163.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges the moral norms of both the Old Testament and today. To the listeners of the Sermon on the Mount, “You shall commit adultery” was nothing new. It was a commandment inscribed on the second tablet of law received by Moses. The people were the “sons and daughters of the chosen People, the people who had received the ‘law’ from God-Yahweh himself that had received also the ‘prophets,’ who had repeatedly in the course of centuries reproached precisely the people’s relation to this law, the many transgressions of the law.”²¹⁹ To these people of the law, Jesus proclaims: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill.”²²⁰ Jesus did not intend to uproot the Old Covenant. Rather, he came to bring the New Covenant that would not be inscribed on cold stone tablets but in the human heart.

Jesus needed to reinterpret the law by teaching a moral code that was rooted in the heart. Rather than a set of rules inscribed on a stone tablet, Jesus appealed to the human heart with a human heart. Jesus seeks to give “hearts of flesh,” echoing the words of Ezekiel: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”²²¹ Jesus appeals to the heart – the conscience – not the Israelite Law.

On more than one occasion, Jesus teaches the people not to judge their neighbor’s sin, for all humans (with the exception of Mary and Jesus), ever since Adam and Eve, are sinners. However, this does not mean Jesus allows sinful behavior. Jesus calls people to greatness and to glory, wishing to give new hearts full of love for God and one another. This is illustrated in the Gospel of John when Jesus actually defends the adulteress who is being stoned, saying: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”²²² Then, Jesus invites the woman to walk away from a life of sin, telling her: “Go, and from now on, do not sin again.”²²³ This conversion story gives proof to the

²¹⁹ TOB 35:1.

²²⁰ Matt. 5:17.

²²¹ Ezek. 36:26.

²²² John 8:7.

²²³ John 8:11.

fact that “the discernment of good and evil inscribed in human conscience can turn out to be deeper and more correct than the content of a legal norm.”²²⁴

While the law makes demands on a general group of people, Christ appeals to individual human hearts. When Christ addresses adultery as a matter of the heart in Matthew 5:27-28, he shifts from a code of law to the human experience. John Paul II explains that Christ’s with Christ’s words, “...the human being of every time and of every place feels himself called in a manner that is adequate, concrete, and unrepeatable, because Christ appeals precisely to the human ‘heart,’ which cannot be the subject of any generalization.”²²⁵ When Christ appeals to the human heart, he is reaffirming the person as a subject of the covenant of love.

In the Sermon on the Mount as well as during his ministry, Christ shifts the inner experience of man from what man cannot have to what man can have as subjects of the covenant. This positive shift expresses the joy Christ wishes to bring every human heart. “The satisfaction of the passions is, in fact, one thing, quite another is the joy a person finds in possessing himself more fully, since in this way he can also become more fully a true gift for another person...The words Christ spoke in the Sermon on the Mount direct the human heart precisely toward this joy.”²²⁶ Mary’s life of self-gift and dedication to perpetual virginity was not restrictive but freeing and joyful.

At the Threshold of the Old and New Covenants

Mary stands between the Old and New Covenant. When the Old Covenant is broken time after time, God is not discouraged by human weakness and does not give up on his people but redeems them through the New Covenant, which Mary ushers in with her ‘yes’ at the Annunciation. In *Theotokos*, John Paul II points out the Prophets’ spousal imagery that speaks to the promise for redemption and the New Covenant in the Old Testament.²²⁷ Likewise, John Paul II speaks about this point in *Theology of the Body*:

²²⁴ TOB 35:5.

²²⁵ TOB 34:4.

²²⁶ TOB 58:7.

²²⁷ John Paul II, “God Is Ever Faithful to His Covenant” in *Theotokos: Woman, Mother, Disciple: A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, (Boston: Pauline Books & Media), 80.

For although Israel is as unfaithful toward its God as the Bride who ‘chased after her lovers and forgot me’ (Hos 2:15), nevertheless, Yahweh does not stop looking for his Bride; he does not grow tired of waiting for her to turn and come back, and he confirms this attitude by the prophet’s words and actions, ‘And on that day, word of the Lord, you will call me, ‘My husband,’ and will no longer call me, ‘My master (my Baal).’ ...I will make you my bride forever, I will make you my bride in righteousness and in justice, in goodness and in love. I will make you my bride in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord’ (Hos 2:18, 21-22).²²⁸

Through the people are faithless, God proves to be ever faithful. “‘At that time,’ says the Lord, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from afar. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel.’”²²⁹ Again God seeks his people: “You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall God rejoice over you.”²³⁰ These poetic words illustrate the love that God, “the bridegroom” has for “his bride.” Mary, as a Jew and a part of both the Old and New Covenants, listened to these prophesies. John Paul II states, “The rebukes addressed to the unfaithful people must have inspired in her a more ardent commitment of fidelity to the covenant, opening her spirit to the proposal of a definitive spousal communion with the Lord in grace and love.”²³¹ In the New Covenant, Mary is the bride, embodying more than Israel but the whole Church. While Israel was the collective “chosen people” of God, Mary has a collective identity that reaches universally to all of humanity.

²²⁸ TOB 37:1.

²²⁹ Jer. 31:1-4.

²³⁰ Isa. 62:4-5.

²³¹ John Paul II, “God Is Ever Faithful to His Covenant” in *Theotokos*, 82.

As the chosen people were called “the daughter of Zion,” Mary is referred to as “the daughter of Zion.”²³² Zion was the mountain where the temple was built in Jerusalem. John Paul II explains, “This feminine personalization facilitates the spousal interpretation of the loving relationship between God and Israel, frequently described with the terms ‘betrothed’ or ‘wife.’”²³³ John Paul II refers to Mary as “the daughter of Zion” because of the parallels between the Annunciation and the prophet Zephaniah’s words: “Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst. Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory (Zeph. 3:14-17).”²³⁴ At the Annunciation, Mary says “yes” for all of mankind to the covenant of love God wishes to make with his beloved people. She says “yes” to the Bridegroom’s proposal to the Bride. After many broken covenants on the part of humanity, God pursues his beloved people once and for all by becoming flesh.

Mary’s Authentic Femininity

Mary’s authentic femininity and participation in the gift weave together salvation history, and connect all people as the bride of Christ, through her “yes.” Mary’s womanhood is important. The woman’s receptivity, exemplified by Mary, shows the Church, God’s beloved people, how to respond to the gift of God’s love. In John Paul II’s encyclical on the dignity of women, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, he says, “the woman is the representative and archetype of the whole human race...she represents the humanity which belongs to all human beings, both men and women...”²³⁵ Both masculinity and femininity reveal aspects of God’s likeness, but femininity, naturally receptive to the gift of life, provides an archetype for humanity. As a woman receives and bears forth life, all people are called to receive and bear forth God’s love.

The Song of Songs is a beautiful portrayal of eros love poured forth from pure human hearts. It takes man back to the fascination of the first man upon seeing the first woman. Song of Songs speaks the language of the body, in a style of conversing. The

²³² Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 55.

²³³ John Paul II, “God Is Ever Faithful to his Covenant” in *Theotokos*, 79.

²³⁴ John Paul II, “Mary Responds to God with Spousal Love” in *Theotokos*, 84.

²³⁵ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 4.

body gives and receives. In the poetic language of the Song of Songs, the metaphors show the “personal dignity of the female sex.”²³⁶ The bridegroom addresses the bride: “A garden closed you are, my sister, my bride, a garden closed, a fountain sealed.”²³⁷ As a “garden closed” and “fountain sealed,” the bride remains hidden until she opens herself up to the bridegroom. John Paul II refers to woman as “the master of her own mystery” because the female is endowed with self-possession, and she is in control. Her lover cannot “take” or “grasp.” Instead, the bride must freely give herself to her bridegroom. Femininity “belongs to the personal structure of self-possession and consequently decides not only the metaphysical depth, but also the essential truth and authenticity, of the personal gift.”²³⁸ This is why the Incarnation depended on the free ‘yes’ of a woman. Mary is the ultimate “master of her own mystery.” God could not force Mary’s fiat, like God, as Bridegroom, cannot force mankind, his Bride, to receive the gift of his love. “When the bride says, ‘My beloved is mine,’ she means at the same time, ‘It is he to whom I entrust myself,’ and therefore she says, ‘and I am his’ (Song 2:16).”²³⁹ Mary, likewise, entrusts herself to God with her words: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”²⁴⁰

Women by nature are more receptive than men because they are biologically designed to receive life. This natural receptivity inclines women to holiness. Von Hildebrand observes: “Women are more pious than men because they are more receptive and receptivity is the road to holiness. One reaches holiness not by efficiency (an American ideal) but by total acceptance of God’s will, by giving a total Yes to His plans for us.”²⁴¹ It is important to note that receptivity is not total passivity. Rather, receptivity involves activity. While passivity has no say about one’s own fate, receptivity is a choice that engages the free will. Active receptivity leads to the creativity of God. Mary’s words “*Let it be done,*” illustrate that Mary was not passive but actively receptive. Receptivity is

²³⁶ TOB 110:7.

²³⁷ Song of Sol. 4:12.

²³⁸ TOB 110:7.

²³⁹ TOB 110:9.

²⁴⁰ Luke 1:38.

²⁴¹ Alice Von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: A Divine Invention*, (Ave Maria: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010), 43.

“an alert, awakened, joyful readiness to be fecundated by another person or by a beautiful object.”²⁴²

In Mary, Love took root. She, as a woman, bore Love itself in the person of Jesus – Love incarnate. Love belongs to the life of the Trinity; love is uncreated and eternal. As the uncreated love between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is the “personal hypostasis of love.” Love, uncreated gift, becomes gift for created persons, and this love takes root in woman who bears new life.²⁴³

By the design of their bodies, women bear life. God chose the woman’s body to be the place of conception, birth, and new life. The woman’s body is the place where God dwelled. John Paul II calls the words of Luke 11:27 the “eulogy” of motherhood and femininity: “The womb that bore you and the breast from which you sucked.” Mary, in her divine motherhood, reveals the dignity of the gift of all motherhood. “One thing is certain: When the time has come, nothing which is man-made will subsist. One day, all human accomplishments will be reduced to a pile of ashes. But every single child to whom a woman has given birth will live forever, for he has been given an immortal soul made to God’s image and likeness.”²⁴⁴ The woman is the soil of which new life is planted, nurtured, and fruitfully brought forth. Benedict XVI calls Mary the “holy soil of the Church.”²⁴⁵ The divine plan was planted, nurtured, and fruitfully brought forth in Mary’s feminine heart. On more than one occasion in Scripture, Mary is described as pondering and keeping things in her heart.²⁴⁶ Benedict XVI explains:

To be soil for the Word means that the soil must allow itself to be absorbed by the seed, to be assimilated by the seed, to surrender itself for the sake of transforming the seed into life. Mary’s maternity means that she willingly places her own substance, body and soul, into the seed so that new life can grow. When Luke says that a sword shall pierce her soul (Lk 2:35), he means something much more profound and much greater: Mary makes herself entirely available as soul; she lets

²⁴² Ibid., 63.

²⁴³ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 29.

²⁴⁴ Von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman*, 33.

²⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, *Mary: The Church as the Source*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 15.

²⁴⁶ Luke 2:19, 51.

herself be used and used up, in order to be transformed into the One who needs us in order to become the fruit of the earth.²⁴⁷

This bearing of life requires the consent to suffering and pain. Mary endured the suffering of life, so that Christ may enter the world. Christ endures the suffering of death so that we may enter into new life, and Mary, at the foot of the cross, shares in that suffering.

Natural womanly weakness allows Mary to better understand herself as a creature dependent on her Creator. While weakness is viewed negatively to the world, weakness is essential to understanding the human identity and the intrinsic need for God, the ultimate Creator. Von Hildebrand explains: "...women, being physically weaker than men, are more conscious of their creaturehood. Creatures are metaphysically so dependent that they are constantly in need of help. The Church teaches that the world would collapse back into nothingness if it were not for the sustaining action of God."²⁴⁸ Mary's Magnificat echoes her reliance on the Almighty: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."²⁴⁹ Women are better inclined to understand their creaturehood, something that people struggle with today amid the ideals of autonomy and independence.

Mary, the Bride

Mary is the perfect creature, but she is also the perfect bride. The spousal relationship is still evident in the New Testament, but it is not between God and Israel; rather, it is between Christ and the Church. Throughout Scripture, Christ refers to himself as "bridegroom:" "And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they?...But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them..."²⁵⁰ John the Baptist also refers to Christ as bridegroom: "John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have sent been sent ahead of Him.' He who has the bride is the

²⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, *Mary: The Church as the Source*, 15.

²⁴⁸ Von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman*, 67.

²⁴⁹ Luke 1:46-49.

²⁵⁰ Mark 2:19-20.

bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full."²⁵¹ As Jesus is referred to as a bridegroom, Paul refers to the Church as a bride in Ephesians: "And you, husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water accompanied by the word, so as to present his Church before himself all glorious, without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but holy and immaculate...For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and they will form one flesh."²⁵² Mary is the prototype of the Church, and thus she stands in as the perfect bride who readily accepted the Divine Bridegroom's proposal at the Annunciation.

The sacrament of marriage reveals the analogy of spousal love – the love between God and His chosen people in the Old Testament and the love between Jesus, the bridegroom, and the Church, the bride. The sacrament of matrimony, like all sacraments, is "a visible sign of an invisible reality."²⁵³ The intimate relationship between a husband and wife points to the heavenly marriage with God to be experienced for eternity in Heaven. "The spousal relationship that unites the spouses, husband and wife, must – according to the author of Ephesians – help us to understand the love that unites Christ and the Church, the reciprocal love of Christ and the Church in which the eternal divine plan of man's salvation is realized."²⁵⁴ In the reciprocal love of Christ and the Church, the meaning of man's personhood is discovered. God does not wish humans to be mere pawns in his plan for creation. He wishes for humans to enter into relationship with Him – a relationship as life-giving and intimate as marriage. Through the sign of marriage, "...God gives himself to man in his transcendent truth and in his love."²⁵⁵

As human marriage requires a self-gift, so does relationship with the Divine. Christ's self-gift to humanity on the cross is redemptive in that it allows humans to return to their former goodness and glory and frees them from the bonds of sin. As explained by John Paul II, "The essential goal of the love of Christ for the Church is her

²⁵¹ John 3:17-29.

²⁵² Eph. 5:21-33.

²⁵³ TOB 87:5.

²⁵⁴ TOB 90:2.

²⁵⁵ TOB 87:5.

sanctification...At the *beginning* of this sanctification stands *Baptism*, the first and essential fruit of Christ's gift of self for the Church."²⁵⁶ In Ephesians, baptism is referred to as "the washing of water accompanied by the word."²⁵⁷ This "washing of water" parallels the ritual washing practiced as a religious rite before a wedding by the Greeks, according to biblical scholars. So, Baptism, a purification, prepares the bride (Church) for the bridegroom (Christ). "This washing with the power that flows from the redemptive gift of self Christ made for the Church, brings about the fundamental purification through which his love for the Church gains, in the eyes of the author of the letter, a spousal character."²⁵⁸ Further, the "washing of water" makes the Church a Bride in the Eschatological perspective because it is said that the Bridegroom will "present his Church before himself all glorious, without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but holy and immaculate."²⁵⁹

Mary receives and even urges Christ's redemptive self-gift as shown in the Wedding at Cana. The Wedding at Cana represents the beginning of creation. In the Gospel story, Mary urges Christ to transform water into an abundance of wine after realizing the lack of wine at the wedding party. Mary inaugurates a new humanity, without spot or wrinkle, when she says, "They have no wine."²⁶⁰ When Jesus miraculously satisfies the need for wine, the quality of the new wine is superior to the previous wine, and the waiter remarks that they have saved the best wine for last. This new choice wine represents the glorious new humanity that Christ will have transformed in the "fullness of time."²⁶¹ In this scripture story, Jesus calls Mary, "woman." Echoing the "woman," of Genesis, it is not a sign of disrespect but of detachment. Mary experiences detachment from her son as a mother, and begins to realize her eschatological role as the Church, the Bride of Christ. These "nuptials" take place at the foot of the cross.

Because Mary is a paradigm for humanity, she becomes a paradigm for the Church at the foot of the cross. Jesus again addresses Mary as "woman" as he is dying on

²⁵⁶ TOB 91:6.

²⁵⁷ Eph. 5:26.

²⁵⁸ TOB 91:6.

²⁵⁹ Eph. 5:27.

²⁶⁰ John 2:3.

²⁶¹ Rossier, "Theology of Mary," March 7, 2013.

the cross. Mary detaches from her role as Mother of Christ and begins her role standing in for humanity as “the bride without spot or wrinkle.” West explains that there is “...theological significance in the fact that it is a male (Christ, the New Adam, the Bridegroom) who hangs on the cross and a female (Mary, the New Eve, symbol of the Church, the Bride) who receives his redemptive gift at the foot of the cross.”²⁶² As the spousal analogy alludes, at the foot of the cross, Christ, the bridegroom, enters into a mystically nuptial union with the Bride-Church, who is symbolized by Mary.

Mystically, Mary shares in her Son’s suffering as she stands at the foot of the cross. As Simeon prophesized, the sword of suffering pierced Mary’s heart, intimately connecting the hearts of mother and Son, mystical bride and bridegroom. Mary “stood in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth.”²⁶³ John Paul II observes, “The Blessed Virgin’s ‘standing erect’ at the foot of the cross recalls her unfailing constancy and extraordinary courage in facing suffering.”²⁶⁴

When Christ calls Mary, “woman,” it is not only detachment but a return to the beginning. Mary becomes the “New Eve,” fulfilling God’s promise of Genesis 3:15. Sheen notes, “The first man, Adam, was made from the slime of the earth. The first woman was made from man in an ecstasy. The New Adam, Christ, comes from the New Eve, Mary, in an ecstasy...of prayer and love of God and the fullness of freedom.”²⁶⁵ At the cross, the “New Adam,” Christ, and the “New Eve,” Mary and the Church, become one in a spiritually spousal union.

The Unity Cross (Figure 1) is a cross depicting Jesus on the cross with Mary at the foot of the cross, receiving his blood in a chalice.²⁶⁶ This cross illustrates the mystery of the mystical, spousal union of the New Adam and the New Eve beautifully. The cross was designed by Fr. Angel Vicente Cerro, who is part of the Schoenstatt Movement,

²⁶² West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 120.

²⁶³ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

²⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Theotokos*, 184.

²⁶⁵ Sheen, *World’s First Love*, 19.

²⁶⁶ *The Unity Cross*, Fr. Angel Vicente Cerro, 1960, Schoenstatt Shrine in Stuttgart, Germany, “Unity Cross Gallery,” Schoenstatt, <http://www.schoenstatt.org/es/material/galeria-de-fotos.htm>, accessed on April 2, 2014.

which is a Marian Apostolic movement of the Catholic Church. The Unity Cross was used as a symbol for Mother Teresa's community, Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India. The cross was also given to Pope John Paul II by the Schoenstatt family.²⁶⁷

As spouses become "one flesh," Mary, too, was united "one flesh" with Christ physically in her biological role as mother as well as when the sword of Christ's suffering spiritually pierced her heart. Jesus, because he



Figure 1 "The Unity Cross"

was conceived of Mary virginally, takes on human flesh wholly from Mary. The body of Christ dwelled in Mary's womb, through the mystery of the Incarnation. The body of Christ also physically dwells in the Church, through the Sacrament of the Eucharist. So, recalling that Mary embodies the Church, the Church, too, is called to become literally one flesh with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. Before his death, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and called men to be his priests at the Last Supper, asking them to "do this in memory of me."²⁶⁸ Jesus gives himself completely to his bride, pouring out his blood on the cross and humbling himself to the appearance of bread and wine in the Eucharist.²⁶⁹ Like Mary, the Church is called to receive the gift of the Bridegroom in the Eucharist, sacrificed for the beloved Bride.

At the foot of the cross, Mary, the new daughter of Zion, receives the sacrifice of the Christ the Bridegroom on behalf of the whole Church. This collective dimension of Mary opens the invitation of Salvation to all people. Heaven is like a wedding feast and all people are invited to participate. John Paul II draws a parallel between the descriptions of Heaven as a great feast for all people on Mount Zion in the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament Heaven is described: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of

²⁶⁷ West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 271.

²⁶⁸ Luke 22:19-20.

²⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26.

marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.”²⁷⁰ In the New Testament, in the Matthew 22:1-10, Jesus describes Heaven as a wedding banquet: “‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son’ ... ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready come to the marriage feast.’”²⁷¹ The Church, as Bride, is invited to receive the sacrifice of Christ, the Bridegroom, and participate in the wedding feast – the Eucharist – awaiting the Heavenly Banquet that Christ is preparing for his Bride in the life to come. Mary exemplifies the perfect receptivity of a bride, as John Paul II explains: “As the new Daughter of Zion, Mary was particularly suited to entering into the spousal covenant with God. More and better than any member of the Chosen People, she could offer the Lord the true heart of a bride.”²⁷²

The Church as Bride

Christianity is not a long list of rules but an encounter with the person of Christ. Holiness is not a falsely pious and rigid practice; rather, it is the free response to that encounter by becoming like Mary, the bride who is eager to receive God’s gift. In Mary, the Church is not an institution but a person who receives the gift of Christ. “With Mary, ‘Daughter of Zion’ is not merely a collective subject, but a person who represents humanity.”²⁷³ The teachings of the Church are not rules carved on stone tablets but God’s guidelines to an authentically beautiful love written on the human heart. Mary had the heart of a bride because her heart was undivided; she loved completely and unreservedly with her whole body and soul. Mary, responding to God with spousal love, reveals the profound beauty of Christianity.

West explains that Beauty and Truth cannot be separated: “Truth without beauty is no longer true to itself, and beauty without truth ushers in a great ugliness.”²⁷⁴ When Truth is not presented as something beautiful, it loses its appeal to the human heart. The human heart yearns for beauty because it was created for the most beautiful Bridegroom

²⁷⁰ Isa. 25:6.

²⁷¹ Matt. 22:2-4.

²⁷² John Paul II, “Mary Responds to God with Spousal Love” in *Theotokos*, 85.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷⁴ West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 203.

– Christ. As West explains, “When the Church’s teaching is presented without beauty – in a dry, cold, mechanical, doctrinaire way, for example – the heart rarely (if ever) responds, even if what’s being presented is true.”²⁷⁵ Truth must be presented to the whole person, in a concrete way he or she can grasp in a world lived through human experience. Authentic beauty mediates truth. As Benedict XVI says, “Beauty is the experimental proof that the incarnation is possible.”²⁷⁶

The Christian life is beautiful; it is a response to God’s love that takes root in the human heart. As eros love seizes the heart and draws it deeper toward agape love, beauty leads one to Truth by incarnating invisible Truth in a visible world. Thus, beauty cannot be the end. Rather, it is a means to truth. If beauty is an end, “...we reduce beauty to the merely physical level and fixate ourselves on it for the sake of a selfish, base gratification of our bodily sense, cut off from transcendental truth.”²⁷⁷ Rather Benedict XVI describes authentic beauty as something that “...unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the Other, to reach for the Beyond.”²⁷⁸ So, the epitome of beauty remains the cross where Mary stands receiving the sacrifice of the Bridegroom for the Church.

The culmination of teachings of Theology of the Body – personalism and the sincere gift of self – is found at the cross. The cross is where Christ marries the Church. The Bridegroom sacrifices himself for the Bride in his final pursuit of the Beloved. Mary stands at the cross, receiving the sacrifice of love not only as mother but as mystical bride – prototype of the Church. As Mary receives this great sacrifice, the Church is invited to receive the sacrifice of the cross at Mass and become *one flesh* with Christ in the Eucharist. It is not enough that the Church spiritually encounters Christ, Christ wishes to become physically *one flesh* with his Bride. For at the Last Supper, “...Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood for the covenant, which is poured out for

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 204.

²⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Artists*, 9.

²⁷⁷ West, *Heart of the Gospel*, 204.

²⁷⁸ Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Artists*, 7.

many for the forgiveness of sins.”²⁷⁹ The dignity of the person – body and soul – is affirmed in Mary at the mystical nuptials at the foot of the cross and in every Eucharist.

²⁷⁹ Matt. 26: 26-28.

V. CONCLUSION

Humans, by nature, are relational creatures, but today personalism is threatened by the three-fold division of sin. In the beginning, lacking trust in the goodness of God's gift, the Fall of man caused a divide between mankind and God. This division resulted in the further separation of the body and the soul and the division between man and woman. These divisions are not present in the Blessed Virgin Mary as illustrated by the four Marian dogmas: Divine Motherhood, Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, and the Assumption. Because Mary, Mother of God and immaculately conceived, was never separated from God through Original Sin, her body and soul remained in perfect harmony, which is exemplified through her Perpetual Virginity and Assumption into Heaven; thus, she was able to embody perfect self-giving love and receptivity to the Divine gift. Sin has only threatened the spousal meaning of the body and has not totally destroyed it. John Paul II's Theology of the Body and the example of Mary give humanity hope. Human beings still have the inherent goodness of human nature from the "beginning." Mary shows humanity this inherent goodness and calls man to it.

Chapter two, "Sin's Deadly Division," discussed the threat to personhood the modern world faces. Today, ever since the separation of God and man that began with the Fall, there is a tendency to divide the human person into two contrasting parts: body and soul. Many times, this causes the human person to be reduced to either a disembodied spiritual being or a merely material body that works as machine rather than a whole person called to love and be love. This objectification of the human person causes division between man and woman. With sin, humans separated eros (human love) and agape (Divine love), and love became twisted into lust, a desire for selfish pleasure instead of a total gift of self.

Chapter three, "Mary Unites What Sin Divides," revealed how Mary teaches mankind what it means to be human – a whole person (body and soul). The Virgin Mary, through her fiat, her life's example, and her intercession, can remedy this problem of division. What sin divides, Mary brings together. Because Mary, immaculately conceived, was never separated from God through Original Sin, her body and soul remained in perfect harmony; thus, she was able to embody perfect self-giving love and receptivity to the Divine gift.

In Mary's heart, there was no separation from God because the sin of pride and lack of trust in the Divine did not divorce the creature from the Creator. So, in Mary's life, the giver and the gift were never separated. She neither rejected what was given nor grasped for more. This harmonious exchange of gift preserved the harmony of Mary's body and soul.

Original Sin severed the unity of body and soul in man because sin diminished mankind's original likeness to God. But, because Mary never strayed from her original perfect human nature and always lived in the image and likeness to God, her body and soul were always united and her flesh continually drew on the power of the Spirit. Because Mary never divorced herself from God and remained united in body and soul, Mary was able to embody perfect love. In Mary, eros and agape were perfectly integrated, and this perfect love in fruitful, bringing forth Jesus Christ into the world.

When the body and soul are united, eros expresses agape love. Mary, out of eros for God, or the attraction to truth, beauty, and goodness, gave herself in sacrificial abandonment to God, becoming the "Theotokos." Mary illustrated agape love in the gift of herself at the annunciation, at the cross, and throughout her entire life. Jesus' death on the cross is the epitome of agape love and self-gift, and at the cross, Mary (the New Eve) received and shared in Jesus' (the New Adam) agape love as "a sword pierced her heart."²⁸⁰ By its self-sacrificial nature, agape love demands a certain detachment from oneself. At the foot of the cross, Mary embraced a spiritual motherhood, detaching from her role as biological mother and gazing upon her savior on the cross. She found herself standing for the Church, becoming the "woman" of Genesis 3:15 foretold to bring forth Christ's victory over sin. At the foot of the cross, Mary became the mystical bride who would receive the Divine bridegroom's sacrifice; thus, Mary is the prototype of the Church as bride.

Finally, chapter four, "Mary, the Perfect Bride," illustrated that the relationship between God and mankind is a personalistic, spousal relationship and Mary exemplifies this. The Bible is the love story of God pursuing his beloved bride – mankind. The Old Testament recounts that time after time, God saw his people Fall into idolatry and

²⁸⁰ Luke 2:35.

essentially commit adultery against him. The people sought God's love but instead filled their hearts with the fleeting things of the world. Even today people look to temporal things to satisfy their longings for the eternal, only to be left unsatisfied and empty. Because God saw his people growing distant from his love, he decided he would propose once and for all to his beloved bride and sought a human being with perfectly original human nature. So, God went back to the garden and returned to the tree. But, it was a new garden and a new tree. Mary, as the New Eve, is the garden of the new creation and she stands at the tree of redemption – the cross. Mary embodies perfect receptivity to the bridegroom's pursuit because she says "yes" on behalf of all of mankind to God's loving proposal – the Incarnation. Mary receives this gift and through her receptivity, shows mankind how to be the Bride of Christ.

The purpose of this thesis is to apply John Paul II's Catechesis on Theology of the Body to Mary, as she is the exemplary human person. Though personalism has been threatened in the modern world, Theology of the Body affirms the human person as a subject who was created to enter into a reciprocally self-giving relationship. Mary exemplifies this personalism in her expression of self-giving love. She illustrates the dignity of the human person as a body and soul and shows that the only relationship that will satisfy the human heart is the relationship with God, the ultimate Bridegroom. As the story of the human heart begins with a tree, it culminates with a tree. This tree is the cross, where the self-giving love of Christ as bridegroom is poured out and received by Mary and the Church as bride.

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