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*Typology of Creation and the Family*



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# Typology of Creation and the Family

## 1. Beauty and Representation: Sacramental Aspect of Beauty

In the last talk we saw that God created the world such that every level of being has a certain level of beauty. Part of the beauty of creation is its aspect of symbolism. One of the marvelous aspects of beauty is that things that are lower in the scale of being can represent higher realities, and thus “borrow” the beauty of the higher realities they represent. This is the case of all representative art. The statue or painted canvas is made of inanimate matter, but through its representation of higher things such as human action, it attains a beauty proper to the higher things it represents. Something similar happens also in nature. Creatures that are lower in the scale of being can have a beauty that transcends them through a natural representation of spiritual values. The beauty of the mountain peak, the rose, the butterfly, or the soaring eagle lies partly in the fact that they naturally represent spiritual values.

Alice von Hildebrand writes:

In sense-perceived beauty—and this is a *mirandum*—there’s a total disproportion between the material used and the result obtained. What, after all, are tones? What are colors and forms? What are canvasses and bronze? They rank low on the metaphysical scale, but by some mysterious artistic transformation, they can radiate a beauty that brings tears to our eyes. This is why von Hildebrand speaks of a quasi-sacramental dimension of sense-perceived beauty. In baptism, plain water is poured on the head of a child, while the priest pronounces some words, and lo, through these mediums, the Holy Trinity takes hold of the child’s soul and blots out the stain of original sin. Our response to beauty is awe, enchantment, gratitude—something that a meditation on purely abstract being cannot give us. Our senses are like windows opened to a sublime world—a sort of Promised Land. This explains the deepest stirrings of the heart, this profound emotion that takes the one whose eyes and ears are opened to the message of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

In creating the universe, God made physical realities fitting symbols of spiritual realities. The typology of creation is frequently mentioned in Scripture. Psalm 19:1–2 summarizes: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.” God is manifested at times in the tempest and storm, in the clouds, the mountains, the sea, the dove, or in the gentle breeze. Nature also provides images of moral evil, as in the serpent or swarms of locusts.

<sup>1</sup> Alice von Hildebrand, “Debating Beauty: Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hildebrand,” in *Crisis*, July 8, 2004.

The Fathers of the Church, following Scripture, saw in creation itself a kind of typology. Bl. Cardinal Newman speaks of how he was entranced by this idea of the typology of creation that he encountered in reading the Fathers. He writes:

The broad philosophy of Clement and Origen carried me away; . . . Some portions of their teaching, magnificent in themselves, came like music to my inward ear, as if the response to ideas, which, with little external to encourage them, I had cherished so long. These were based on the mystical or sacramental principle, and spoke of the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal. I understood them to mean that the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the outward manifestation of realities greater than itself. Nature was a parable: Scripture was an allegory: pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, properly understood, were but a preparation for the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

St. Ephraem gives a magnificent expression of the Christo-centric nature of the typology of creation:

Wherever you look, His symbol is there;

Whatever you read, you find there His types;

For in Him were all creatures created

And He sealed all His possessions with His symbols when He created the world.<sup>3</sup>

Because beauty involves this aspect of representation of higher realities, it is capable of pointing to what transcends the entire physical world. We can say that all natural beauty thus points to the divine artist, whose ordering permeates all of nature.<sup>4</sup> Thus beauty serves as a ladder leading to God.

Here we see the greatest pedagogical mission of art. Since art manifests beauty, and all created beauty is ultimately a participation of the infinite Beauty of God, art as well as nature has a capacity to lead the mind to aspire to the ultimate beauty that is God Himself.<sup>5</sup> In other words,

<sup>2</sup> Bl. John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (Modern Library edition, 1950), 55.

<sup>3</sup> St. Ephraem, *Hymn on Virginity* 20.12; CSC) 223, Syr. 94, p. 70

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 25–26: “Beauty therefore belongs to the transcendental and metaphysical order. For this reason it tends of itself to carry the soul beyond creation.”

<sup>5</sup> See Herbert Cory, *The Significance of Beauty in Nature and Art* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1947), 46–47, 51: “I offer the following hypothesis: an object is beautiful to the extent that it reveals—or can reveal—to anyone in a properly contemplative mood the operative presence of almighty God. What I am making a central thesis throughout this volume is this: beauty is objective and by its presence discerned reveals (whether the observer is aware of it or not) the Creator and Conserver who is in all things . . . When we discern

imitation of nature in a work of art has the task not merely of imitating a given object, but through that imitation to point to higher forms that involve the spiritual dimension. The artist's task is to uncover the typology of creation. Thus artistic imitation has an essential symbolic or sacramental aspect. Through the reproduction of some sensible form it seeks to manifest forms that transcend the senses. Jacques Maritain writes:

Art, as ordered to beauty, never stops—at all events when its object permits it—at shapes or colors, or at sounds or words, considered in themselves and *as things* . . . , but considers them *also* as making known something other than themselves, that is to say *as symbols*. And the things symbolized can in turn be a symbol, and the more charged with symbolism the work of art . . . the richer and the higher will be the possibility of joy and beauty.<sup>6</sup>

Great poets have a sense of the transcendence of the beauty that they seek to capture. Edgar Allan Poe wrote:

We have still a thirst unquenchable. . . . This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements perhaps appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry, or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods, we find ourselves melted into tears, we weep them not . . . through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which through the poem, or through the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness—this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted—has given to the world all that which it (the world) has ever been enable at once to understand and to *feel* as poetic.<sup>7</sup>

The great French poet Baudelaire, inspired by these lines of Poe, wrote:

It is that immortal instinct for the beautiful which makes us consider the world and its pageants as a glimpse of, a *correspondence* with, Heaven. The insatiable thirst for everything beyond, which life reveals, is the liveliest proof of our immortality. It is at once by poetry and *through* poetry, by music and *through* music that the soul perceives what splendors shine behind the tomb.<sup>8</sup>

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the beauty in an object, we discern in it and under it the perpetually sustaining hand of God.”

<sup>6</sup> Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, 44–45 (italics original).

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” in *Tales and Poems*, vol. 4 (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1884), 205–206, quoted in Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, fn. 70, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup> Baudelaire, *L'Art romantique*, quoted in Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, fn. 70, p. 134.

Pope Pius XII has similar words on the mission of artistic beauty:

The function of all art lies in fact in breaking through the narrow and tortuous enclosure of the finite, in which man is immersed while living here below, and in providing a window to the infinite for his hungry soul. . . . Whatever artistic beauty one may wish to grasp in the world, in nature and in man, in order to express it in sound, in color, or in plays for the masses, such beauty cannot prescind from God. Whatever exists is bound to Him by an essential relationship. Hence, there is not, neither in life nor in art—be it intended as an expression of the subject or as an interpretation of the object—the exclusively “human,” the exclusively “natural” or “immanent.”

The greater the clarity with which art mirrors the infinite, the divine, the greater will be its possibility for success in striving toward its ideal and true, artistic accomplishment.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Typology of the Family: Adam and Eve

Of all the different aspects of the typology of creation, marriage and the family is the richest and most beautiful, immeasurably transcending the mountain peak and the soaring eagle. This is acknowledged in the history of mankind by the predominant theme of married love in our books, plays (and movies), poems, and songs. As Genesis 2 shows, God has so created man and woman as spousal creatures, so that their spousal union is a privileged representation of the divine love and of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity.

The notion that man is made in the image and likeness of God is usually understood to mean that man has intellect and will (rational nature) like God. However, another beautiful meaning to the idea of image and likeness concerns the complementarity of man and woman and their capacity for communion. Genesis 1:26–27 connects the image of God in man with the creation of both male and female:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Notice two plurals, regarding God on the one hand, and man as male and female on the other. First, God does not say, “Let *me* make man in *my* image, but rather He speaks of Himself in the plural: “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Why this plural? John Paul II stresses that it is a Trinitarian reference, put here to connect man's creation with the Trinitarian complementarity of Persons. In addition, Genesis does not simply say that God made man in His image, period. Rather, the complementarity of male and female is emphasized: “in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” God made man to be a creature who is not an island, not a monad or

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<sup>9</sup> Pius XII, Address to Italian Artists, April 8, 1952, available online at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12ART.HTM>. Accessed Feb. 7, 2013.

monarch, but a person made to be with and for another who complements him, the man with and for the woman and the woman with and for the man. Made in the image of the Triune God, man and woman are called to communion, and the family is the first and privileged place in which we encounter communion. John Paul II, in his *Letter to Families* of 1994, writes:

*The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine “We” is the eternal pattern of the human “we”, especially of that “we” formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness. The words of the Book of Genesis contain that truth about man which is confirmed by the very experience of humanity. Man is created “from the very beginning” as male and female: the life of all humanity — whether of small communities or of society as a whole — is marked by this primordial duality.<sup>10</sup>*

In Genesis 2 we read that it was not good for Adam to be alone. We may wonder why, for Adam had a relationship with God. If he had God, why would he miss a human companion? In *Theology of the Body*, John Paul spends several audiences analyzing Adam’s experience of solitude and its significance for understanding the spousal nature of the body. Adam’s solitude comes into focus especially during his naming of the animals. He recognizes that no other creature in the physical world could enter into spiritual communion with him. This solitude involves the recognition of man’s spiritual interiority, and the corresponding desire for communion that is properly human. On the basis of that painful experience of solitude, Adam exults when Eve is created: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). Thus the experience of solitude, although painful, is positive because it reveals to us that we are made for love and communion.

Adam’s exultation in seeing Eve, and the original unity established between them, is thus both an overcoming of natural human solitude and a sign of the supernatural communion between man and God to which man is called. This unity involves the experience of complementarity—that each one is reciprocally “for” the other, and the experience of God’s blessing on that communion through the gift of fecundity.

Man, as a rational animal, naturally learns about invisible things by analogy through visible and sensible realities. The natural human way to learn about the love of God is through the experience of human love in the family. Adam did not have a vocation to the religious life, for the order of nature required that Adam learn about communion on the human level in order to be able to use that human experience to grasp a higher communion. This is an example of a great principle in theology: grace does not destroy nature, but presupposes it and elevates it. Communion with God through grace presupposes human interpersonal

communion; and grace then elevates and perfects that human interpersonal communion to be an ever more perfect sign and participation of the divine communion that God wants to establish with man.

Man needs the mediation of physical realities in order to ascend to knowledge of higher realities. This sacramental principle, on which all the sacraments of the Church are based, is deeply rooted in man’s nature, as the intersection of the material and spiritual worlds.

### ***Christ Illuminates Marriage and the Family***

Spousal love points to the divine love as its necessary source, foundation, and model. But the reverse is equally true. The mystery of the divine love as expressed in the Incarnation of Christ and the Paschal Mystery immensely illuminates God’s plan for marriage and the family. This mutual enrichment is an example of what I call a *vital circle* (as opposed to a vicious circle). Marriage and the family are sacramental signs that help us to understand God’s love; and then God’s love becomes the model or archetype that illuminates what marriage and the family—paternity, maternity, and filiation—are called to be. And when Christians live their marriage and family life according to Christ and through His sacramental grace, then such a family points still more efficaciously to the Trinity and to the spousal union of Christ and the Church.

St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians 5:21–32 presents this vital circle. St. Paul explains the love of husband and wife on the model of the love between Christ and the Church. Marriage is a mystery/sacrament or sacred sign pointing to the spousal union of Christ and the Church, and Christ’s self-donation for His bride is the great model that illuminates all human marriage.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. . .

As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her. . . . “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery [sacrament], and I mean in reference to Christ and the church.

When Christ became incarnate, He “left His Father,” so to speak, coming down from Heaven to cleave to His spouse, taking on her flesh, and laying it down on the Cross for love of her, a love that is to the death.<sup>11</sup> Christ’s love from the Cross is the model for every husband’s love for

<sup>11</sup> See St. Methodius of Olympus, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 3.8, in ANF 6:532–533: “The Word, leaving His Father in heaven, came down to be ‘joined to His wife;’ and slept in the trance of His passion, and willingly suffered death for her, that He might present the Church to Himself glorious and blameless, having cleansed her by the laver, for the receiving of the spiritual and blessed seed, which is sown by Him who with whispers implants it in the depths of the mind; and is conceived and formed by the Church, as by a woman, so as to give birth and nourishment to virtue.”

<sup>10</sup> *Letter to Families* 6.

his wife, and the Church's love for Christ who died for her is the model for the wife's love of her husband. This love is only possible through the gift of the Holy Spirit that Christ won for His Bride on Calvary. The fruitfulness of Christ's union with the Church, which has engendered us, is the model for all paternity and maternity in their service of fostering life.

One of the main themes of John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* is that God has wished to make His invisible love manifest in the world through spousal love, and that He has also wished spousal love to be physically manifested by the conjugal act, which, as a sign of God's love, has been blessed in a special way with potential fruitfulness. Thus there is a double symbolism. *The conjugal act is by its very nature a bodily sign and sensible manifestation of the full reality of conjugal love, and conjugal love is the preeminent sign in the natural order of the invisible divine love.* Hence marriage, from the beginning, was the primordial sacrament.<sup>12</sup> This dual symbolism is decisive for understanding the nature of marriage and all of Catholic sexual morality.

### Marriage Is a Sacramental Sign of God's Love

Marriage is spoken of by St. Thomas Aquinas as "maximum friendship,"<sup>13</sup> because in this friendship each spouse offers to the other a *total* gift of self. The gift of self must be total because marriage is a sign and sacrament of God's love in two ways. First, marriage is an image of God's love in His inter-Trinitarian life. Since man is created in the image of the Trinity, he can only fully realize himself by living a love that in some way mirrors the inter-Trinitarian love.<sup>14</sup> Marriage is also an image of God's love for man as expressed in Christ through the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. As John Paul II states, the mutual total gift of self in marriage is an "image and likeness" of God's love

<sup>12</sup> See John Paul II,

<sup>13</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas uses this expression to refer to marriage in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, ch. 123, no. 6 (trans. Vernon J. Bourke): "Furthermore, the greater that friendship is, the more solid and long-lasting will it be. Now, there seems to be the greatest friendship between husband and wife, for they are united not only in the act of fleshly union, which produces a certain gentle association even among beasts, but also in the partnership of the whole range of domestic activity. Consequently, as an indication of this, man must even 'leave his father and mother' for the sake of his wife, as is said in Genesis (2:24). Therefore, it is fitting for matrimony to be completely indissoluble."

<sup>14</sup> This theme was developed at length in John Paul II's Wednesday audiences of 1979 and 1980, published in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. See also his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio* 11: "God created man in His own image and likeness: calling him to existence *through love*, He called him at the same time *for love*. God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being."

for His people, for God "wills and He communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church."<sup>15</sup>

Paul VI, in his encyclical *Humanae vitae* 9, describes the total nature of marital love as a sharing of all that one has for the sake of the beloved:

It is a love which is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself.

This act of total gift of self in marriage, as an image of the divine love, has four properties: it is indissoluble, exclusive, fruitful (intrinsicly open to life), and complementary.

### Indissoluble and Exclusive

In order to be total, the gift of self in marriage must be indissoluble. The necessarily irrevocable nature of marriage is most clearly seen in the words of Christ to the Pharisees: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt 19:6). The call to form an indissoluble marriage is rooted in the very creation of man in the image of God.

Love in its highest form is the gift of self to another person, to whom one wills the good for his own sake, precisely because the person is worthy of love, worthy of such a gift. Now the complete gift of self to another person, in order to be such, must necessarily be irrevocable and exclusive. If it is not irrevocable, then it is not a complete gift of self, but only for a time. Likewise, if it is not exclusive, then it is not a complete gift of self, but only partial, because it can also be given to another. Celibacy for the kingdom involves the exclusive and irrevocable gift of self to God alone, whereas marriage is the exclusive and irrevocable gift of self to a human person of the opposite sex.

John Paul II writes:

The only 'place' in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage. . . . The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured

<sup>15</sup> See John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, n. 20: "Being rooted in the personal and total self-giving of the couple, and being required by the good of the children, the indissolubility of marriage finds its ultimate truth in the plan that God has manifested in His revelation: He wills and He communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church."

against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom.<sup>16</sup>

Outside of this unique “place” in which “self-giving in its whole truth is made possible,” the sexual act causes heartbreak, as can be seen in so many different ways, such as adultery, fornication, abortion, homosexuality, and pornography addiction. The heartbreak comes because we intuitively know that the sexual act is meant to be a sign of a total self-gift (to spouse and potential children), and when the self-gift is not there, the unfulfilled and empty promise of fully human love breaks the heart.

The exclusivity and irrevocable nature of marriage is demanded by the complete gift of self of conjugal love, and by the ordination of marriage to procreation, for divorce breaks the hearts of the children as well as the parents. In the words of *Gaudium et spes* 48: “As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.” Children can only be properly reared and educated in a home in which they will be educated in an environment of mutual and self-giving love involving sacrificial service.

### ***Fecund***

The totality of the gift of self in the marriage covenant entails that it be open to life, for the intimate union of mutual self-gift involves the mutual giving of potential paternity and maternity. A spousal gift would by no means be total if it excluded one’s paternity or maternity! In *Humanae vitae* 12, Pope Paul VI states that the Church’s teaching on contraception “is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act.”

Pius XI speaks of the tremendous dignity of the procreative end of marriage in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* of 1931: “Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. . . . How great a boon of God this is, and how great a blessing of matrimony is clear from a consideration of man’s dignity and of his sublime end.” *Gaudium et spes* 50, likewise stresses the importance of the procreative end of marriage:

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. The God Himself Who said, “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and “Who made man from the beginning male and female” (Matt. 19:4), wishing to share with man a certain special participation in His own creative work, blessed male and female, saying: “Increase and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). . . . [Parents] should realize that they are thereby **cooperators**

**with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love.**

In *Familiaris Consortio* 14, John Paul briefly explains the intimate unity between the gift of self in conjugal love and the gift of self in procreation. The gift of self in marriage naturally overflows and blossoms into the flower of that love, who are the children of that union.

In its most profound reality, love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love, while leading the spouses to the reciprocal “knowledge” which makes them “one flesh,” does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.

When couples deliberately frustrate the natural fertility of the conjugal act, they are

altering its value of “total” self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.<sup>17</sup>

The couple, in such a case, is refusing the total gift of self by placing an obstacle to the gift of their maternity and paternity.

The key to understanding Catholic teaching on human sexuality is that sexuality is a *sacred reality* intended by God to be the primordial sacrament of His love. The world thinks that Catholic sexual morality stems from a negative view of sex, as if it were something dirty or base. In reality it is the complete opposite: human sexuality is sacred because it was created by God to be the privileged “icon” of the divine love, as well as His instrument for the transmission of human life, made in His image and likeness. The transmission of human life is the way in which human beings are enabled to most closely participate in God’s creative activity! This is a privilege denied to the angels! This aspect of participation or cooperation with God in His kingly office of creation makes matrimony, by its very nature, into a sacred institution. This dignity of matrimony is not lost when the marriage is not blessed by fertility as long as the spouses do not deliberately exclude an openness to life. Catholic sexual morality, then, protects and defends that sacredness, just as there are norms for protecting and defending the Eucharist, the other sacraments, the holy

<sup>16</sup> *Familiaris consortio* 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Familiaris consortio* 32.

objects in a church, and the sacredness of life itself. John Paul II speaks of the family as the “*sanctuary of life*.”<sup>18</sup>

As mentioned above, the conjugal act is a natural sign of conjugal love, which is a created sign of divine love. Now the holier things are, the greater the responsibility we have to safeguard their sacred character. Because of the sacredness of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Eucharist cannot be treated as we would treat something profane. The same is true of the conjugal act. Because of its character as the primordial sacrament, the conjugal act must be treated with great reverence and in a way consistent with the intrinsic “language of the body.” This is all the more true because of our vulnerability in this sphere, attacked by the loss of the gift of integrity and the resulting concupiscence that we experience, above all in the sexual sphere. *Reverence* for the mystery of the generation of life is thus one of the main themes of the Theology of the Body.<sup>19</sup>

### *Complementarity of the Spouses*

In order to be potentially fruitful, and in order to be a perfect and total union, and in order to be a type of the union of the Blessed Trinity and Christ and the Church, marriage must be between complementary partners distinguished by gender. It is easy to see that the fruitfulness of marriage depends on the complementarity of genders, each of which supplies a faculty lacking to the other, which only together are fruitful.

The complementarity required for fruitfulness also involves a complementarity of spiritual gifts that are ordered to the mission of paternity and maternity. The union between the spouses is cemented by the fact that each one contributes a charism lacking to the other, but necessary for their joint mission. Maternal and paternal gifts, both on the biological and the spiritual level, combine to form *a union far richer than either member on their own*.

In the *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II speaks at length of the spousal meaning of the human body. The gift of self to which man is called is written into his very body and its sexuality. This spousal meaning implies that the two sexes are complementary and called to be for the other and given to each other. This complementarity between the sexes, which is as much spiritual as it is physical, is a source of great richness to humanity. At the same time, it is this natural complementarity which makes possible the specifically spousal form of love that is realized in

18 *Letter to Families* 11. The sacred character of marriage and the marital bed is nicely shown in the painting, *Arnolfini Wedding* by Jan van Eyck. Notice that the husband is not wearing shoes, and his sandals are prominently displayed in front of him. This seems to be an allusion to the appearance of God in the burning bush in Exodus 3, when Moses was told to remove his shoes because it was holy ground. Marriage and the marital bed, also prominently featured, is holy ground.

19 John Paul II uses this term 102 times in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, especially in audiences 53–60, pp. 340–365.

marriage, in which man and woman complement each other both as persons through their spiritual union, and as potential mothers and fathers through their bodily gift to each other.<sup>20</sup>

In Genesis 2, we see that the first married couple was composed of one man and one woman, and this is not accidental. Marriage by its very nature is between one man and one woman, united for life. Marriage is a union which *by its very nature is ordered towards fruitfulness and the exchange of complementary gifts* (maternity and paternity), and obviously this cannot be the case for homosexual couples.

Since God is the author of marriage because He is the Creator of man and human nature, it follows that man cannot of his own authority change the nature of marriage. The fundamental properties of marriage (irrevocable union of one man and one woman through personal consent, ordered to fruitfulness and mutual aid) and its fundamental ends (procreation and union) belong to marriage as a consequence of the very nature of man.

In many ways, the rapidity with which so many people have come to accept the idea of same-sex marriage is a consequence of catechetical failure on two other fronts: the beauty of gender distinction and its typology, and the beauty of the Church’s teaching on contraception. Radical feminism has attempted to eliminate the very idea of gender difference as a natural complementarity written into human nature to be a created image of the complementary distinction between the divine Persons and of Christ and the Church.

Secondly, if contraceptive sex—which is intrinsically and deliberately closed to life—is accepted in practice as morally acceptable and normal, how can one find fault with homosexual acts that are likewise intrinsically closed to life? Both teachings must stand together or fall together in people’s minds if they are coherent. In both cases the sexual act loses its sacredness as a cooperation with God’s creative power, and its capacity to be the expression of a total gift of self that includes one’s potential paternity/maternity.

The Gospel forms a glorious whole. No part, even what may seem like an iota, can be cut out or ignored without colossal consequences to societies and nations. The popu-

20 This complementarity of man and woman as ordered to marriage has been well expressed by Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: Love and the Meaning of Intimacy*, p. 37: “Man and woman are spiritually oriented toward each other; they are created for each other. First, they have a mission for each other; second, because of their complementary difference, a much closer communion and more ultimate love is possible between them than between persons of the same sex. Their mutual mission manifests itself in a wholesome mutual enrichment as well as in the mitigation of the dangers to which the masculine and the feminine type of human beings are exposed when they are deprived of this influence.”

lation implosion in Europe is a good case in point of the consequences of ignoring a difficult teaching. The rapid spread of legal recognition of same sex marriage is another consequence.

### The Gospel of the Family and Satan's Hatred of the Family

Every Christian family who seeks to live the Gospel of marriage and the family is an image of Christ's love for the Church, in the midst of the counter-sign of the contemporary world and its culture of death. The Christian family evangelizes simply by being faithful to God's plan for the family.

God loves the family because it is His icon in nature! We see this above all in the Holy Family. God wanted to become man in the bosom of a family to sanctify every family. In his *Letter to Families*, Bl. John Paul II writes: "The *only-begotten Son . . . entered into human history through the family. . . .* If in fact Christ 'fully discloses man to himself,' he does so beginning with the family in which he chose to be born and to grow up."<sup>21</sup> He chose to work His first miracle in the context of a wedding, because He is the Bridegroom coming to prepare His Bride for the eternal wedding feast.

Satan, on the contrary, hates the Gospel of the family with the same hatred that He hates Christ and His Father, from whom all paternity derives, natural and supernatural. Satan knows where to aim his weapons. To strike against the paternity of God he strikes against its created image or type: human paternity and the mutual total self-giving of marriage, and all its properties: fully human, exclusive, indissoluble, open to life, and complementary. He seeks to create confusion and even hatred for the glories of marriage: its indissolubility through divorce; its exclusivity through adultery, pornography, and polygamy; its fruitfulness through the promotion of contraception, sterilization and homosexual acts; and its glorious complementarity through the notion of same-sex "marriage."

What is the underlying unity behind these various attacks of Satan on the family? John Paul identifies it as a *false notion of freedom*, "conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being."<sup>22</sup> Opposed to the false notion of freedom is genuine freedom that consists in self-donation.

One of the central themes of the long pontificate of John Paul II is the defense of the family as the "the basic cell of society," the "cradle of life and love, the place in which the individual 'is born' and 'grows,'" and "the primary

place of 'humanization' for the person and society."<sup>23</sup> The family must be defended in an altogether special way in our time because of the great attacks it has suffered from our secular culture. It follows that the **New Evangelization must have a central focus on the defense of the blueprint of the family given by God in creation**, and uniquely illuminated by the Paschal Mystery.

Not only must the New Evangelization illuminate the nature and beauty of the family, but it must also take place in the family and radiate out from the Catholic family. Pope Benedict spoke of the importance of the family in the transmission of the faith in his message to the Curia of December 2012:

It was noticeable that the Synod repeatedly emphasized the significance, for the transmission of the faith, of the **family as the authentic setting in which to hand on the blueprint of human existence**. This is something we learn by living it with others and suffering it with others.

In the family one learns not only the blueprint of human existence, but it is the best "place" to encounter the Triune God, to grow in faith and to pass it on. It is the best place for the Gospel to grow precisely because it is the place of maximum friendship and self-giving. If marriage and the family that flows from it is the created reality that most radically points to the divine love, then it is natural that it must be the place in which one should primordially learn the Gospel. Pope Benedict said that "I know of no more convincing proof for the faith than precisely the pure and unalloyed humanity that the faith allowed to mature in my parents."<sup>24</sup> Parents have the greatest power to evangelize, as head and heart of the family. If the father in particular, as head of the family, practices the faith and charts out the life of the family starting from God, then the children have an immensely greater chance to grow up with a strong practice of the faith.

Secondly, the family that prays together stays together. Prayer in the family is a great example of the words of Jesus in Mt 18, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If this is true in general, how much more in the place in which we naturally learn about the paternity of God and His maternal tenderness? If the power of prayer in union is so great, it is greatest in the family (including the religious family).

In his *Letter to Families* of 1994, Bl. John Paul II spoke of the family as the "first and the most important" of all the paths of the Church. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Lumen fidei* 52, makes the same point and beautifully summarizes what I have tried to say here:

The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city is the family. . . . This union is born of their love, as a sign

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Families* 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Familiaris consortio* 6.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 131.

and presence of God's own love, and of the acknowledgment and acceptance of the goodness of sexual differentiation. . . . Grounded in this love, a man and a woman can promise each other mutual love in a gesture which engages their entire lives and mirrors many features of faith. Promising love for ever is possible when we perceive a plan bigger than our own ideas and undertakings, a plan which sustains us and enables us to surrender our future entirely to the one we love. Faith also helps us to grasp in all its depth and richness the begetting of children, as a sign of the love of the Creator who entrusts us with the mystery of a new person.