

A Singles Guide to the Theology of the Body

Anastasia Northrop

GIFT:

Love = Self-Gift

- * "Man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, [and he] cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." (*Gaudium et Spes* 24)
- * "To say that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist "for" others, to become a gift." (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 7)
- * "The human body, with its sex – its masculinity and femininity... contains 'from the beginning' the 'spousal' attribute, that is *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence." (TOB 15:1)
- * "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." (*Familiaris Consortio* 11)

VOCATION:

- * "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it." (*Redemptor Hominis* 10)
- * "...the truth about his particular vocation that springs from the eternal mystery of the person as the image of God" (TOB 58:2)
- * *Written while Fr. Wojtyla, affectionately known as "Wujek," was a university chaplain, Dec. 1956*

Dear Teresa,

People like to think that Wujek [Fr. Wojtyla] would like to see everyone married. But I think this is a false picture. The most important problem is really something else. Everyone...lives, above all, for love. The ability to love authentically, not great intellectual capacity, constitutes the deepest part of a personality. It is no accident that the greatest commandment is to love. Authentic love leads us outside ourselves to affirming others: devoting oneself to the cause of man, to people, and, above all, to God. Marriage makes sense...if it gives one the opportunity for such love, if it evokes the ability and necessity of such loving, if it draws one out of the shell of individualism (various kinds) and egocentrism. It is not enough simply to want to accept such love. One must know how to give it, and it's often not ready to be received. Many times it's necessary to help it to be formed....

— *Wujek*

- * "Christian married couples, then, docile to [Christ's] voice, must remember that their Christian vocation, which began at Baptism, is further specified and reinforced by the sacrament of Marriage." (TOB 126:1)
- * "Marriage and procreation do not definitively determine the original and fundamental meaning of being a body nor of being, as a body, male and female. Marriage and procreation only give concrete reality to that meaning in the dimensions of history." (TOB 69:5; Jan. 13, 1982)
- * "On the basis of the same spousal meaning of being, as a body, male or female, there can be formed the love that commits man to marriage for the whole duration of his life, but there can be formed also the love that commits man for his whole life to continence 'for the kingdom of heaven.'" (TOB 80:6; April 28, 1982)
- * "The nature of the one as well as the other love [celibate or married] is 'spousal,' that is, expressed through the complete gift of self." (TOB 78:4; April 14, 1982)
- * "God's gift of himself to man ... [is] a gift that is in its essential character total (or rather 'radical') and irrevocable ... The freedom of the gift is the response to the deep consciousness of the gift" (TOB 95B:4, 110:9)
- * "Whether one lives the vocation of consecrated celibacy or the vocation of marriage, one is called to give oneself "to God alone," to make a "spousal" gift of oneself to God." ... Each person is called to give himself or herself to God alone, whether it be through an earthly spouse in marriage, or immediately to Christ in the celibate vocation. Those who have not yet entered a vocation of total self-gift in marriage or celibacy are also called to give themselves fully to God in their current state in life. This is simply the message of the Gospel - to love God with one's whole heart, mind, soul and strength. It is the end for which we were made. After all, the Bridegroom 'walks every street! How am I to prove to you that you are the bride?'" (*The Jeweler's Shop*. p 64) (Anastasia Northrop, "Christ the Bridegroom: The Spousal Dimension of the Christian Life in Light of the Tradition and the Anthropology of St. John Paul II," 46)

FREEDOM:

- * "Freedom exists for the sake of love....Man longs for love more than for freedom – freedom is the means and love the end." "Love consists of a commitment which limits one's freedom." "Love between persons is essentially a creation of human free will." (L&R, 51)
- * "We thus come to the very heart of the Gospel truth about *freedom*. The person realizes himself by the exercise of freedom in truth. Freedom cannot be understood as a license to do *absolutely anything*: it means a *gift of self*." (Letter to Families, 14)

The Freedom of the Gift

- * the interior freedom of the gift —> the disinterested gift of self (TOB 15:3)
- * If a man or a woman is capable of making a gift of self for the kingdom of heaven, this shows in turn (and perhaps even more) that the freedom of the gift exists in the human body. This means that this body possesses a full "spousal" meaning. (TOB 15:5)
- * **"Love...is thus the power given to the human person to participate in the love with which God himself loves in the mystery of creation and redemption."** (TOB 127:1; Oct. 10, 1984)
- * **"Are you afraid of love?" "Do not be afraid of the risks! God's strength is far more powerful than your difficulties!" - John Paul II**