

# **The Philosophical Foundation of John Paul II's Notions of Marriage and Unity of Man and Woman in His *Theology of The Body***

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**Abstract:** The general objective of this paper is to highlight the philosophical foundation of St. John Paul II's reflection on marriage and the unity of man and woman contained in his *Theology of the Body*. Specifically, the focus is on two things which are integrated into the discussion: first is the reflections of St. John Paul II on marriage and the original unity of man and woman expressed in his *Theology of the Body*, second the philosophical foundation of his reflections about the marital union which can be found in his pre-papacy philosophical works. This will bring us through a discussion on the important concepts or teachings which he expressed in the *Theology of the Body* and then a discussion on how these concepts are grounded in his philosophy – this is what is meant by philosophical foundation. While there will be some references on some Church documents and the *Theology of the Body* which is in itself catechetical in nature, this paper should not be read as a theological or catechetical piece. The first part will be a general discussion on the nature of marriage: as a natural institution, its biblical account and as a sacrament. The second part will be on the personal foundation of marriage focusing on the nature of love and the dignity of the human person. The third part will be on marriage based on the unity of man and woman discussed in the *Theology of the Body*. The last part is the concluding remarks.

**Keywords:** marriage, theology of the body, unity of man and woman, conjugal love, human person

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## Introduction

### *Marriage in the World of Today*

The modern world had lived up to its description as being “new.” New ideologies, new discourses, new technologies, and many new developments in culture, society, business, politics are constantly emerging. The underlying cause of these developments have are the secular ideals that prevail in today’s world. Even new interpretation of certain institutions that have long been regarded as permanent and unchanging are also emerging, take for example the institution of marriage. In today’s world, the meaning of marriage is constantly being redefined or at least there is the attempt to give it a different definition. Hence, the way the institution of marriage is taken today, the way we understand it and the way that it is practiced is also undergoing certain modifications. We can see that what is stated in theory or in the way we used to understand marriage is certainly different from what is happening in practice. While we would like to maintain that marriage is a union between a man and a woman in reality this union is being modified to be the union between two individuals who may be both men or both women. While we would like to believe that marriage is sacred and necessary to maintain a healthy and stable relationship some have expressed that it is becoming obsolete, that couples need not be married to be happy and maintain stable relationship. Indeed, if there is one traditional human institution that is being challenged it is the institution of marriage and together with this is the family.

Marriage from the Christian perspective is holy and sacramental but because of the secular ideals that prevail in the modern societies, the religious character of marriage is being undermined. The secular ideals pose challenges to the way we understand and practice marriage based on its spiritual foundation and religious significance. This particular challenge is manifested not only in the attempts to redefine the meaning of marriage and family and but in an effort to set up laws and policies that undermine the very foundation of marriage as the union of man and woman and the composition of the family based on this union. However, if we follow convention and what is natural, marriage cannot be redefined into simply a union between two individuals because the individuals in marital union are not just individuals, these individual are identified by their sexuality or gender as man and woman.

### *The Theology of the Body*

One document or teaching that takes on marriage is the series of catecheses that St. John Paul II delivered in the Vatican. From September 5, 1979 to November

28, 1984, St. John Paul II used his Wednesday General Audience for the pilgrims of the Vatican to deliver his catecheses in St. Peter's Square. These catecheses centered on the human person and human sexuality and had been called the *Theology of the Body* (TOB). According to the Holy Father, these Wednesday Catecheses could be called "Human Love in the Divine Plan" or "The Redemption of the Body and the Sacramentality of Marriage." The *Theology of the Body* is a biblical reflection on the human person particularly on the meaning of the body, sex, love, and what it means to be created as a male and female. It was intended to shed light on the mystery of our bodies and sexuality. Needless to say that this TOB has generated enormous interests from different thinkers and commentators, either hailing it as one of the lasting legacies of St. John Paul II or simply dismissing it as unrealistic and lacks connection with real people in their real lives.

In the first section of the TOB, St. John Paul II reflects and discusses the biblical foundation of marriage, particularly on the Genesis account of creation, where God created man in His own image and likeness. In the beginning, in the original state of man, there was solitude and innocence; there was also the unity between man and woman, the fullness of the interpersonal relation between man and woman, the man and the woman with their respective bodies which are seen as "gifts" to each other. This was the original state of man until the "fall." After the fall, shame, lust (concupiscence), domination/manipulation distorted what was supposed to be a state of the fullness of creation.

Many of the main concepts that St. John Paul II discussed in the TOB like human person, human dignity, love, sexuality, concupiscence, and continence have their philosophical expressions in his earlier philosophical writings as Karol Wojtyła specifically the *Acting Person* and *Love and Responsibility*. While the TOB of St. John Paul II is generally catechetical and biblical, it has its philosophical roots in his writings before his papacy, written as Karol Wojtyła. Here we can see the continuity of the philosophical and theological thoughts of Karol Wojtyła or St. John Paul II. Hence, for a better understanding and fuller appreciation of his papal teachings we also need to understand the philosophical underpinnings of such teachings. The beauty of the papal teachings of St. John Paul II is that they have their rational foundation in philosophy, St. John Paul II being a highly regarded philosopher. His philosophy is based on the ontology of Thomism and the approach of phenomenology. Thus, a closer reading of the TOB will reveal the close relation of the philosophical and theological thoughts of Karol Wojtyła or St. John Paul II. This present paper thus looks into the philosophical foundation of the notion of marriage and the original unity of man in woman as discussed in St. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.

## The Nature of Marriage

### *Marriage as a Natural Institution*

‘Marriage’ can refer to a legal contract and civil status, a religious rite, a social practice. The understanding of marriage and its practice may vary depending on the culture, religion, and legal interpretation. While in practice there may be several types of marriages – polygyny, polyandry, etc., the most common form of marriage is monogamy which is loosely interpreted as a natural union between a man and a woman. All marriages whether monogamous or otherwise are between the opposite genders. It is impossible therefore to consider same sex union as marriage because same sex union and marriage are mutually exclusive. Marriage by its very nature and from the beginning involves the union of the two opposite sexes. What is referred today as same-sex marriage is at best a union and therefore advocates of same sex marriage are trying to redefine marriage as the union between two individuals undermining that these two individuals must be of different sex.

Marriage is also called matrimony or wedlock. The term “matrimony” comes from *mater* – mother and *monium* which signifies “condition,” hence etymologically and loosely it meant condition of the mother. This very root of the word “matrimony” signifies that by nature marriage is a natural union between a woman (the gender capable of being a mother) and man (the gender who is capable of making the woman pregnant.) Thus the common and natural practice of marriage is between a woman and a man, where the feminine term ‘wife’ and the masculine term ‘husband’ are used to describe the contracting parties. Since marriage is a natural union between man and woman the natural purpose of marriage is the expression of desire or love for each other which is consummated in sexual relation and thus opens the possibility of procreation. From this follows the social purpose of the union which is family and kinship.

Marriage is also recognized as social union or legal contract between contracting parties referred to as spouses that creates kinship. As a natural institution marriage is the very foundation of society. The family which is the basic unit of the society is formed through the union of a man and woman and such union naturally result to the bearing of children. Children are raised as good members of society or a community in the family. Marriage therefore carries with it certain social and moral obligations on the part of the man and woman as spouses, and as parents to their children. No less than Aristotle emphasized the social import of marriage and family to the society. Aristotle stresses that because the state arises from component parts, the state is established with the natural procreative union of male and female. Thus for Aristotle a state of families and its dependence on the functioning of individual

households makes marriage essential to the state and to the proper understanding of a political theory.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Biblical Account of Marriage*

One rich source of the meaning and nature of marriage is the Holy Scriptures. In the beginning “God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1:27) When God first created the man, he saw that it is not good for man to live alone. Thus he made the first man - Adam who fell asleep and God made a helper like himself. It is therefore God’s design that man and woman should complement each other, draw strength from each other, and contribute to each other’s spiritual growth.

Based on this, the first human relation or community of persons is the union of man and woman. This is emphasized by St. John Paul in the series of catecheses that we mentioned earlier – the *Theology of the Body*. This first community of persons established the unity of marriage and its consequent - the indissolubility of marriage.<sup>2</sup> God chose to create man as male and female, and to give him the power, in partnership with himself, to produce new human life. Through the intimate union or sexual relation between the man and woman a physical image of themselves – a human body is produced and into this new human body God infused a spiritual and immortal soul. By creating man as male and female, sexuality becomes a very essential part of the institution of marriage. Since God is the author of everything and everything that he created is good, then God is the author of sex and sex is essentially good. Because of human sexuality’s close relationship with God who is a partner to the reproductive act, sex is not merely something good—it is something sacred and holy. Through human sexuality God bestowed upon human beings the power of procreation.

The establishment of the institution of marriage ensures the proper use of the procreative power that God bestowed on man. Marriage becomes the lifelong and irrevocable union of one man and one woman. Thus, the sacredness of sexuality and the power of procreation are intimately related to the sanctity of marriage. The importance of such monogamous union cannot be understated because it is essential

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<sup>1</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, Translated by C.D.C. Reeve, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998, 1264b.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *The Redemption of the Body and Sacramentality of Marriage (Theology of the Body) L'Osservatore Romano*, 1979-1984; *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 2005; electronic format *The Catholic Primer*, 2006, #8. Henceforth this will be referred to as TOB. While there are now many publications of *Theology of the Body*, I have used the electronic format by *The Catholic Primer of the L'Osservatore Romano* and *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* editions for quotations and references. There are 129 addresses and I used the respected numbers of the catecheses as references.

that the child is not only born but that he or she is lovingly reared and cared for and educated by the father and mother who brought him or her into the world.

### *Marriage as a Sacrament*

During the time of Christ although marriage is a sacred union, it was regarded only as a civil contract between a man and a woman. Christ however transformed this contract and marital consent between man and woman into a channel of grace. Thus he made marriage a sacrament – a visible sign of God’s presence among his people. According to the *Catechism of the Church*, marriage is a “matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”<sup>3</sup> Marriage as a sacrament is entered into by a baptized man and a baptized woman who bind themselves for life in a lawful marriage and receive the grace to discharge their duties.

The *Catechism of the Church* further explains that marriage is based on conjugal love which “involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter - appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will.” This conjugal love “aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul.” It “demands *indissolubility* and *faithfulness* in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to *fertility*.”<sup>4</sup> Conjugal love on which marriage is based bears a new significance in that it becomes the “expression of specifically Christian values.”<sup>5</sup>

The love of the spouses therefore requires “of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses’ community of persons, which embraces their entire life.”<sup>6</sup> According to St. John Paul II they “are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving.”<sup>7</sup> “This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.”<sup>8</sup> By

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<sup>3</sup> Catechism of the Church, Part 2, Section 2, Chapter 3, Article 7, #1601. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P7S.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P7S.HTM). Accessed June 1, 2017. Henceforth this will be referred as COC.

<sup>4</sup> COC, 2.2.3.7, #1643.

<sup>5</sup> COC, 2.2.3.7, #1643.

<sup>6</sup> COC, 2.2.3.7, #1644.

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, #19. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html). Accessed June 13, 2017. Henceforth this will be referred to as FC.

<sup>8</sup> COC, 2.2.3.7, #1644.

virtue of the sacramentality of their marriage, spouses are bound to one another in the most profoundly indissoluble manner.

### *The Sacrament of Marriage and Procreation*

As a sacrament, marriage is not just for the expression of love, it is also ordained for procreation of children; hence, marriage is the basis of family. This procreative character of marriage becomes the foundation of family. “A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family.”<sup>9</sup> Marriage and family then are intimately and fundamentally connected, because of the love between man and woman marriage is formed and because of the conjugal union resulting in that love, children are procreated and the family is consequently formed. The marriage and family are therefore ordained towards particular good. “Marriage and the family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children.”<sup>10</sup>

St. John Paul II stresses in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* that “in matrimony and in the family a complex of interpersonal relationships is set up—married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation, and fraternity—through which each human person is introduced into the “human family” and into the “family of God,” which is the Church.”<sup>11</sup> The love between the husband and wife reflects God’s love for humanity. When God commanded the man and the woman to “go and multiply,” this is not just about begetting children it is also about loving and trusting one another.

### **The Personalistic Foundation of Marriage**

Marriage for St. John Paul has a personalistic foundation, that means it is first of all based on the fact that those who enter into the marital union are human persons and as human persons they are capable of loving and deserved to be loved. Because of their love for each other, they not only respect each other as persons but also offer to each other their being as persons and help each other actualize their potentials as persons. The two elements that provide the personalistic foundation of marriage in St. John Paul II’s thought are the dignity of human person as *imago Dei* and the conjugal love between man and woman.

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<sup>9</sup> COC, 3, 2, 2, 4, #2202.

<sup>10</sup> COC, 3.2.2.4, #2201.

<sup>11</sup>FC, #15.

*The Dignity of the Human Person as an Imago Dei*

St. John Paul II starts his catechesis with a discussion of man as a being created in God's image and likeness.<sup>12</sup> According to the Holy Father this highlights the special nature of man which is based on his relationship with God: "In the image of God he created him." This also affirms the absolute impossibility of reducing man to the world; man cannot be either understood or explained completely in terms of categories taken from the "world," that is, from the visible complex of bodies. Man therefore is also understood as corporeal.<sup>13</sup> St. John Paul II cites Genesis 1:27 which observes that this essential truth about man referred both to the male and the female: "God created man in his image...male and female he created them."<sup>14</sup> The basis therefore of being male and female is man's corporeality.

However, because man is endowed with spirit, he is rational which means he is capable of thinking and he is creative and intuitive. Aside from his rational and creative capacities, man is also endowed with free will; he is free to make his own decisions and choices, to create himself and determine his actions and based on his freedom he can influence the world around him.<sup>15</sup> Man is not just rational and free, man is also relational; he is oriented toward other beings or creatures; he can establish personal relations with his fellow human beings. Because of man's capacity to establish personal relations, he is also a being oriented to love; he is created to love and to be loved.

In St. John Paul/Wojtyla's philosophical writings, this notion of man as an image of God is the ground of man's being a human person. His notion of the human person is based on a solid foundation in St. Thomas' account of the person.<sup>16</sup> The Thomistic notion of the person is primarily based on the concept of the person as it is applied to the Trinity and Incarnation. The Holy Trinity is the one nature of God expressed in three persons, namely the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son incarnated and became man or a human person. By analogy, the concept of person as applied to the Trinity can also be applied to man. Wojtyla asserts the Thomistic position that in the created world, the person is the highest perfection; the human

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<sup>12</sup> TOB, #1.

<sup>13</sup> TOB, #2.

<sup>14</sup> TOB, #2.

<sup>15</sup> See Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*. trans. from Polish of the book *Osoba i Czyn*, by Andrzej Potocki, established in collaboration with Cardinal Wojtyla by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka for publication in the Reidel Book Series *Annalecta Husserliana*. (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, USA; London, England: D. Reidel Publishing Co.), 1979, Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Henceforth this will be referred to as AP.

<sup>16</sup> See Jove Jim S. Aguas, "The Notions of the Human Person and Human Dignity in Aquinas and Wojtyla," *Kritike: Online Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (June 2009), pp. 45-46.

person is objectively the most perfect being and such perfection is the result of the rational and thus spiritual nature which subsists in the person. Reason and its complement, freedom, are the two properties concretized in the person. The person is a concrete, rational, and free subject who is capable of all those activities that reason and freedom can make possible.<sup>17</sup>

According to Wojtyła man is in a privileged position among God's creatures in the world for he alone is gifted with spirit, with intellect and will. He is the only being in this world who we can call a person because of his inner spiritual life. Wojtyła writes:

A person differs from a thing in structure and in the degree of perfection. To the structure of the person belongs an "inner" in which we find the elements of spiritual life and it is this that compels us to acknowledge the spiritual nature of the human soul and the peculiar perfectibility of the human person.<sup>18</sup>

The spirituality of man constitutes the very core of the human person and this makes him a subject, a wellspring of intentions, thoughts, motives, and feelings.<sup>19</sup> Because of his spiritual and interior life, the person has rationality and volition, and these make him distinct from all other entities. This spiritual dimension of man is the very basis of human subjectivity. However, the human person is not just spiritual; he has both physical and spiritual aspects. He is not just a spirit or a pure spiritual subject; he is also a concrete subject, incarnating his inner self through his body. This complex constitution of the human person as composed of the material and spiritual aspects makes him unique from all other entities in the world. Although he can be considered an object like other entities, he is more importantly a human subject by virtue of his nature as a human person. As a human subject, he is an entity that exists and acts in a certain way; he is an objective somebody.

### *Conjugal Love and Marriage*

The human person is capable of loving. He was created by God because of love and therefore he is also capable of loving and deserves to be loved. It is through love, conjugal love specifically that man and woman enters into marriage or marital union and as persons they enter into marriage. The framework of marriage ensures

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<sup>17</sup> Karol Wojtyła, "Thomistic Personalism," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. by Theresa Sandok, OSM, New York: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by H.T. Willets, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, p. 121. Henceforth will be referred to as LR.

<sup>19</sup> Aguas, *Notions of the Human Person and Human Dignity*, p. 53.

that the partners treat each other as persons, making authentic person through an authentic manifestation of his sexuality.

In the *Theology of the Body*, St. John Paul II stresses that marriage signifies the maturity of the union between a man and a woman, to testify that there is a love on which a lasting union and community can be based.<sup>20</sup> While love can be understood in many different ways and contexts, St. John Paul II relates love with human sexuality and marriage. Marriage is an expression of betrothed or conjugal love between a man and a woman. St. John Paul II/Wojtyla's first articulation of the notion of love appeared in *Love and Responsibility*.

Love is proper only to human person for no one can love, except the human person and St. John Paul II/Wojtyla focuses on the love between a man and a woman. In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla discusses the several dimensions of love: the psychological, the metaphysical, and the ethical, which are all connected with the dynamic structures of the human person.<sup>21</sup> The psychological aspect of love is connected with the complex world of human sensuality and human emotions. Sensuality and emotion strongly influence man's every activity as a person especially in the aspect of human sexuality. On the metaphysical and ethical dimensions, Wojtyla describes the different levels or types of human love, that is, the love between a man and a woman and how this love transforms from the lowest or basic type to the more sublime and personal level. Love is oriented toward a value, toward a good; after all, love is a natural inclination toward what is perceived or cognized to be good. This value is the sexual value of the person which is related to the physical and sensible. But the human person has a fundamental value which is over and above the other values found *in* him or her, like sexual value. Hence, St. John Paul II/Wojtyla integrates the love as directed toward the value *of* the person which is the object of the will with the value *in* the person which is the object of the senses and feelings. The person then can never be reduced to a mere physical object of love based on his sexual value because he has a value as a person and, as such, is an end in his self. The Holy Father stresses that love must be a true gift of the self to another, it cannot be based on the selfishness of the mere satisfaction of sexual desire.<sup>22</sup>

Love is put into practice in the relationship between man and a woman in marriage, where two individual persons, a man and a woman, are united in such a way

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<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997, p.21.

<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed discussion on this aspect of love, see Jove Jim S. Aguas, *Person, Action and Love: The Philosophical Thoughts of Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2014, pp. 165-173. Henceforth this will be referred to as PAL.

<sup>22</sup> Nick Bakalar and Richard Balkin, *John Paul II, The Wisdom of John Paul II: The Pope on Life's Most Vital Questions*. New York: Harper Collins, 1995, p. 23.

that they become *one flesh*, a common subject of sexual life. In marriage, the man and the woman, share the same ends and subordinate themselves to these ends for the sake of their relationship and of each other. They also share the same goal of continuously nurturing their relationship oriented towards procreation and the raising of children and forming a family. This orientation of marriage towards procreation definitely can never be fulfilled in same sex marriages. The objective purposes of marriage based on love exclude the possibility of treating a person as means to an end or as an object for use. The commandment to love is, therefore, based on a “personalistic norm,” which requires us to respect the value of the person. Love can only be genuine if it is based on an attitude that respects the value of the person, a value that is greater than pleasure.

However, the mere consideration of the objective purposes of marriage does not guarantee that the danger of using a person as means will be avoided because it seems that the sexual relationship in marriage presents more opportunities compared to other activities for treating the other as means or as an object of use. Sometimes one of the couples thinks that in marriage, he or she owns his or her partner and, therefore, he or she has all the right to use him or her for his or her gratification. A common situation is when a wife is abused or maltreated by the husband because of her refusal to have sexual intercourse with him. Many times we hear of cases of marital rapes. St. John Paul/Wojtyla insists that a person of the opposite sex cannot be treated only as means to an end or the object of pleasure of another person; because the human being is a person, enjoyment or pleasure must be subordinated to love. *To use*, both in the first or objective meaning (to employ as means) and in the second or subjective meaning (to experience pleasure), can be raised to the level appropriate to an interpersonal relationship only by love.<sup>23</sup> Only caring and loving can preclude *using* both in its objective and subjective meaning.

### **Marriage based on The original Unity of Man and Woman**

In his catecheses, St. John Paul reflects on the original unity of man and woman. He traces the development of the relation between man and woman from man's original solitude and self- knowledge, self-knowledge being related to self-consciousness and corporeality, to the formation of the community of persons in the first man and woman in their original unity. He also reflects on the indissolubility of marriage, the meaning of nuptial body and the original nakedness and innocence and consequent loss of innocence because of sin. Marriage is based on the original unity of man and woman. When God first created Adam, he saw that Adam was alone, alone because despite the fact that he had the world with him, there was no one like

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<sup>23</sup> Wojtyla, LR, p. 34.

him and thus God gifted him a companion in Eve. Thus, through this gift the first community of persons was formed.

St. John Paul II develops and explains three original experiences of humanity in the Garden of Eden: original solitude, original unity, and original nakedness and its related experience on the original innocence. The first man was depicted in the Genesis account like any other man or woman aware of himself as a subject, as an *I*. In this original solitude, he discovers the uniqueness of his experience and that he is capable of expressing his subjectivity and freedom.<sup>24</sup> Yet he longs for someone like him, for another being like himself and this longing was answered with the creation of the woman, another person equal to his dignity. Thus man and woman experience such original unity of the two genders. Untainted by sin they saw in their nakedness their respective bodies though different without any shame, hence the original nakedness and original innocence. In this section the discussion will not only focus on these reflections but also on the philosophical groundings of these reflections.

### *Man's Original Solitude and Self-Knowledge*

When God created the first man, man was alone. St. John Paul II calls this man's original solitude. Man's solitude is based not on his being male as distinguished from female, but in his nature as distinct from other living things. Man is alone in the sense that he has superiority over the other creatures. As a rational, free, relational and loving being, he has the capacity to know, determine, and relate with himself. This superior nature of man is revealed to him by his self-consciousness. So man experiences his original solitude first of all as the only rational creature on earth. As rational being he is aware of himself, of his body and its meaning. He knows that he is created by God, and is therefore not God. He also realizes that he is not the same as the animals either. St. John Paul II writes:

Man finds himself alone before God mainly to express, through a first self-definition, his own self-knowledge, as the original and fundamental manifestation of mankind. Self-knowledge develops at the same rate as knowledge of the world, of all the visible creatures, of all the living beings to which man has given a name to affirm his own dissimilarity with regard to them. In this way, consciousness reveals man as the one who possesses a cognitive faculty as regards the visible world.<sup>25</sup>

This self-knowledge, in a sense, brings him out of his own being; he is revealed to himself in all the peculiarity of his being. The first articulation of the notion of self-

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<sup>24</sup> See "Foreword" of John Grabowski, in John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997, 17.

<sup>25</sup> TOB, #5.

knowledge can be found the *The Acting Person* where St. John Paul II/Wojtyła defines it as the “understanding of one’s own self and is concerned with a kind of cognitive insight into the object that I am for myself.” Aside from cognizing or comprehending external objects, man also cognizes or knows his own being and his own acts. In self-knowledge, the self and its acts are brought into objective focus for the self and so they are recognized as ontological and objective realities. Through self-knowledge, man realizes that he is not only essentially and subjectively alone; his solitude also signifies his subjectivity. Man is alone because he is “different” from the visible world, from the world of living beings.<sup>26</sup>

In another sense, man is alone because there is no other person but himself; the first man is without a woman, without another human person. God noticed that man is not happy being alone because God created man not to live by himself but in communion with others. Man feels this solitude without the woman.

#### *Free Will and Self-determination*

St. John Paul II relates this original solitude of man wherein he experiences self-knowledge with self-determination. In the *Acting Person*, St. John Paul II/Wojtyła explains that self-determination is the capacity of man to direct, control, and determine his action and his self. In the performance of action the self is not necessitated by any other factor; it is the self that determines its own action. Thus the self depends, so to speak, on itself. This dependence of the self on itself is the basis of freedom. The self is free because it solely relies on itself. This also extends to the dependence of the action to the self. This relation and dependence of action upon the self is the very foundation of personal freedom. This is manifested in the ability of the person to move from the “I can” and “I need not” to “I want,” or “I will.” There are some things that a person can do, but need not do.<sup>27</sup> But the moment he says “I want,” or “I will,” this is the instance when he experiences the moment of freedom, the moment of efficacy, the moment of the will, the moment of self-determination.<sup>28</sup> According to Wojtyła, “every authentically human “I will,” is an act of self-determination.”<sup>29</sup> Since the self is the agent of his actions, he determines the act and in the process determines himself.<sup>30</sup> Self-determination because it the basis of freedom is also the basis or choice and responsibility.

<sup>26</sup> TOB, #5.

<sup>27</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*. trans. from Polish of the book *Osoba i Czyn*, by Andrzej Potocki, established in collaboration with Cardinal Wojtyła by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka for publication in the Reidel Book Series *Annalecta Husserliana*. (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, USA; London, England: D. Reidel Publishing Co.), 1979, p. 105. Henceforth this will be referred to as AP.

<sup>28</sup> See Aguas, PAL, p. 83.

<sup>29</sup> Wojtyła, AP, p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> See Aguas, PAL, p. 83.

When God created man, he gave his order about the trees in the Garden of Eden, especially the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This divine prohibition added another feature to the nature of man – free will. This free will is the basis of man’s moment of choice and self-determination. Because of this free will he is capable of making moral choices and because he is capable of making moral choices he becomes responsible for his actions. With the ability to be conscious of himself and to determine himself, the image of man as a person endowed with a subjectivity is completed. St. John Paul II writes: “The concept of original solitude includes both self-consciousness and self-determination. The fact that man is “alone” conceals within it this ontological structure and at the same time indicates true comprehension.”<sup>31</sup>

### *Self-consciousness and Corporeality*

St. John Paul II relates self-consciousness with corporeality. According to him, the original description of human consciousness contains the first account of the discovery of one’s corporeality, that is, the perception of the meaning of one’s own body. In his philosophical writing, St. John Paul II/Wojtyla explains the body as the material and visible reality which is accessible to the sense. The body determines what is visible in the person and it affects his individual physical appearance and the impression that he makes on others.<sup>32</sup> The body is also the basis of the affinity of man with nature; because of his body he genuinely belongs to nature. This implies man’s similarity to the rest of nature and his connection to the whole external conditions of existence; the body is something that is shared with the animals.<sup>33</sup>

St. John Paul II clarifies that the discovery of one’s corporeality is revealed not on some primordial metaphysical analysis, but on the basis of a concrete subjectivity of man. He explains:

Man is a subject not only because of his self-awareness and self-determination, but also on the basis of his own body. The structure of this body permits him to be the author of a truly human activity. In this activity the body expresses the person. Therefore, in all its materiality (“God formed man of dust from the ground”), it is almost penetrable and transparent, in such a way as to make it clear who man is (and who he should be), thanks to the structure of his consciousness and of his self-determination. On this rests the fundamental perception of the meaning of one’s own body, which can be discovered when analyzing man’s original solitude.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> TOB, #6.

<sup>32</sup> See Aguas, PAL, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Aside from the body or the somatic constitution there is also the psyche. The psyche refers to that which makes man an integral being, to that which determines the integrity of his components without being of a bodily or somatic nature, the psyche is a component that belongs exclusively to man. See Wojtyla, Acting Person Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

<sup>34</sup> TOB, #5.

But this human existence which is characterized by corporeality brings with it a kind of dependence which makes man a limited being and, by this very nature, makes non-existence a certainty. Because of his bodily existence he will one day cease existing.

According to St. John Paul II man finds himself alone before God mainly to express, through a first self-definition, his own self-knowledge, as the original and fundamental manifestation of mankind. Self-knowledge develops at the same rate as knowledge of the world, of all the visible creatures, of all the living beings to which man has given a name to affirm his own difference with regard to them. In this way, consciousness reveals man as the one who possesses a cognitive faculty as regards the visible world. With this knowledge which, in a sense, brings him out of his own being, man at the same time reveals himself to himself in all the peculiarity of his being. Man's subjectivity constituted through self-knowledge reveals that is "different" from the visible world, from the world of living beings.<sup>35</sup>

### *Original Unity of Man and Woman*

The original unity refers first to the fact that man and woman share a common humanity and second to the fact that they become *one flesh*.<sup>36</sup> In this part of his reflection, St. John Paul II stresses the relational aspect of human existence. The revelation of original solitude is transformed into an experience of original unity and this original is in some sense a discovery of what it means to be a person<sup>37</sup> Through the first experience of solitude, man discovers his uniqueness but at the same time he also sees himself alone and longs for a companion. God did not only create man in His image and likeness, He created him male and female. Man was not created only as a rational, self-conscious, and self-determining individual but also as a relational being. Man was created not to be alone but to have communion with others and with the creation of the woman, man is no longer 'alone,' he is now a being-with-other. For St. John Paul II, man is not fully human – his creation is not fully complete – until he emerges in the double unity of male and female. The basis of the community of person is the relationship that exists between or among human persons. This being-with-other is manifested in one's awareness or recognition of the other is not on some knowledge or understanding of the essence of a human being but in one's lived experience of the other. "It is through our shared lived experiences that I recognize the existence and actions of the other."<sup>38</sup> Wojtyla clarified however that the other

<sup>35</sup> TOB, #5.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's Man and Woman He Created Them*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2009, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> Aguas, PAL, p. 160.

lies beyond the *I*'s experience of self-consciousness, self-determination and self-possession, because these experiences are limited to the self.<sup>39</sup> However, the other as another *I* also experiences these essential elements. Hence the other is not just other in relation to the *I*; he is also another *I*, related experientially with his own *I*.<sup>40</sup>

According to John Paul II, in the beginning the other being is a woman, hence, the first human relation or community of persons is man and woman. This first community of persons established the unity of marriage. This sets the unity and indissolubility of marriage. Through this original unity of man and woman, one aspect of man's solitude is overcome – that of being “alone” as a human being and the other is confirmed that of being male or female based on their corporeality. John Paul II stresses the connection between the original solitude of man and the division of the sexes noting that original solitude is prior to original unity. He writes:

Corporeality and sexuality are not completely identified. Although the human body in its normal constitution bears within it the signs of sex and is by its nature male or female, the fact, however, that man is a “body” belongs to the structure of the personal subject more deeply than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female. Therefore, the meaning of “original solitude,” which can be referred simply to “man,” is substantially prior to the meaning of original unity. The latter is based on masculinity and femininity, as if on two different “incarnations,” that is, on two ways of “being a body” of the same human being created “in the image of God”<sup>41</sup>

#### *The First Man and Woman as Communion of Persons*

Man's original unity as man and woman is an affirmation of everything that constitutes man in solitude – self-conscious, self-determining and corporeal. At the same time it is also expressed as an overcoming of the frontier of man's solitude. Solitude is the way that leads to that unity referred to as *communio personarum*, or community of persons. Hence, the creation account of man's solitude is presented not only as the first discovery of the characteristic nature of the person. It is also presented the discovery of an adequate relationship to the person, and therefore as an opening and expectation of a “communion of persons.” *Communio* expresses the relationship derived from the very fact of existing as a person “beside” another person. The perfect example of this *communio personarum* is the Holy Trinity.

The communion of persons is formed only on the basis of a “double solitude” of man and of woman, that is, as their meeting in their distinction from the world of

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<sup>39</sup> Aguas, PAL, p. 160.

<sup>40</sup> Wojtyła, AP, p. 200.

<sup>41</sup> TOB, #8.

living beings (animalia), which gave them both the possibility of being and existing in a special reciprocity.<sup>42</sup> The woman is for man and vice versa; man discovers his own humanity through the help of the woman and vice versa. Communion points to the existential help derived from the other; one exists for the other. Hence, from the beginning man is for another. Man then is an image of God not only through his own humanity or subjectivity but also through the communion of person; he is both an image of God in the solitude of a Person who is rational, self-determining, self-conscious and an image of the Trinitarian communion of Persons, relational and loving. This double solitude is an indispensable foundation of original unity and the foundation of the true equality between man and woman.<sup>43</sup>

St. John Paul II/Wojtyła in the *Acting Person* and in other writings focuses on one important aspect of man's existence and that is the relation and reciprocity of the *I* and the other or the *thou*. This reciprocity is expressed through participation, that is in the experience of acting together with others.<sup>44</sup> In the context of the *I-thou* relationship, by the very nature of interpersonal community, the persons also become mutually responsible for one another.<sup>45</sup> This mutual responsibility is the mutual confirmation of the transcendent value of the person, which is also understood as his dignity as person. Only such relationship deserves the name *communio personarum*.<sup>46</sup>

St. John Paul II connects man's being created in the image of God in the creation of the first man and woman related to each other. In the beginning this becomes the basis of the community of persons. He points out that the "definitive" creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings, man and woman. Their original unity denotes above all the identity of human nature, that there is only one human nature. The duality of sexes on the other hand manifests the constitution of masculinity and femininity on the basis of the identity human nature. In other words, there is only one human nature manifested in two sexes, that of a man and a woman. This ontological dimension of unity and duality has an axiological meaning: man was also created as a particular value for himself—first, because he is man; second, because the woman is for the man, and vice versa, the man is for the woman.<sup>47</sup> "The beauty and mystery of sexual difference specifically reveals man and woman's call to communion."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> TOB, #9.

<sup>43</sup> See West, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> See Wojtyła, AP, pp. 261-262.

<sup>45</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Person Subject and Community: Selected Essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok, OSM. New York: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 245.

<sup>46</sup> Wojtyła, *Person Subject and Community: Selected Essays*, p. 245.

<sup>47</sup> TOB, #9.

<sup>48</sup> West, p. 107.

### *The Conjugal Act as Mutual Self-Giving*

St. John Paul emphasizes that the masculinity and femininity of the person are two “incarnations” of the same metaphysical solitude before God and the world. These are two ways of “being a body,” two complementary dimensions of self-consciousness and self-determination and, at the same time, two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body. Femininity finds itself, in a sense, in the presence of masculinity, while masculinity is confirmed through femininity. Precisely the function of sex, which is in a sense, “a constituent part of the person” (not just “an attribute of the person”), proves how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the never to be repeated uniqueness of his person, is constituted by the body as “he” or “she.” The presence of the feminine element, alongside the male element and together with it, signifies an enrichment for man in the whole perspective of his history, including the history of salvation.<sup>49</sup>

The unity of man and woman is expressed in their becoming “one flesh” and it is undoubtedly realized in the conjugal act. The biblical formulation of becoming one flesh indicates that sex, femininity and masculinity, is that characteristic of man—male and female—which permits them, when they become “one flesh,” to submit their whole humanity to the blessing of fertility. This union in the conjugal act binds the woman and the man in the very mystery of creation. When they unite with each other (in the conjugal act) so closely as to become “one flesh,” man and woman rediscover always and in a special way, the mystery of creation. The fact that they become one flesh is a powerful bond established by the Creator. Through it, they discover their own humanity, both in its original unity, and in the duality of a mysterious mutual attraction. The body, through its own masculinity or femininity, helps the man and woman to affirm themselves in communion of persons and in a particular way, becomes the constituent element of their union, when they become husband and wife. The most intimate expression of the human communion in marriage takes place through the bodies of the husband and wife. Through the sexual act of self-donation “the couple indeed speaks a “language of the body” expressing in a manner far more profound than words the totality of their gifts to each other.”<sup>50</sup>

The conjugal act, however, happens through a mutual choice. This choice establishes the conjugal pact between persons who become one flesh only on the basis of this relation. The conjugal act is an expression of self-determination; choice rests on the foundation of his self-consciousness. The man and woman realize that such act is consummated through their bodies as male and female. Hence, when they both unite so closely as to become one flesh, their conjugal union presupposes

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<sup>49</sup> TOB, #10.

<sup>50</sup> “Foreword” of John Grabowski, in John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, p. 17.

a mature consciousness of the body; it bears within it a particular consciousness of the meaning of that body in the mutual self-giving of the persons.

For Wojtyla/John Paul II, conjugal love is the basis of this mutual self-giving. The love between a man and a woman is connected with human sexuality. In his philosophical writings, especially in *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla has already emphasized that the human nature has two sexual properties, that of a man and a woman, and these properties are the very basis of human sexuality. Human sexuality addresses some sort of inadequacy or limitation on the part of either sexes or genders. The attributes of both sexes are complementary so that the inadequacy of the attributes of the man is supplemented by the woman and vice versa.<sup>51</sup> The complementariness of their attributes is made more obvious by sexual attraction.<sup>52</sup> Sexual attraction manifests a keenly felt need to supplement and complete each other.

Human sexuality does not only have a biological or psychological significance.<sup>53</sup> Wojtyla connects human sexuality to human existence, particularly to the continued existence of the human species; the sexual urge is essential to human existence. One reason why the human species continue to exist is because of the sexual urge and its natural result. The sexual urge is closely bound up with the whole existence of the species homo.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Original Human Experiences: Original Nakedness*

St. John Paul II stresses that in their original state of consciousness, the man and woman, “were naked” and yet “were not ashamed.” This describes their mutual experience of the body. It describes the experience on the part of the man of the femininity that is revealed in the nakedness of the body and, reciprocally, the similar experience of masculinity on the part of the woman. This also shows that in the original state, there was no “experience of shame.”<sup>55</sup> Their original nakedness corresponds to the fullness of consciousness of the meaning of the body as a mutual gift to each other. Such is the basis of the original “communication” between man and woman through the “common union” between them expressed through the body. The body as a gift for the other manifests man and allows for the communication, the communion of persons, between man and woman.

The original experience of nakedness absolutely lacked the element of shame because their being naked did not pose any threat to the first man and woman’s

<sup>51</sup> See Aguas, PAL, p. 212.

<sup>52</sup> Wojtyla, LR, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> See Aguas, PAL, p. 214-215.

<sup>54</sup> Wojtyla, LR, p. 52-53.

<sup>55</sup> TOB, #11.

dignity. They both saw the body as a revelation of the person and his /her dignity.<sup>56</sup> Their lack of shame demonstrates that they both regarded and received each other as a gift and sought only to give themselves to one another, not to use the other. They respected each other's body not only as a gift to be welcomed and reciprocated in love but also as a sign of the other person which must be accepted. The original lack of shame indicates the original depth in affirming what is inherent in the person that allows for true mutual interpersonal communion.<sup>57</sup> The external perception of the physical nakedness corresponds to the internal fullness of seeing the other the way God sees the other as "very good." Nakedness signifies the original good of God's vision, of the "pure" value of humanity as male and female, of the body and of sex.<sup>58</sup> Their respect for each other and their acceptance of each other's body as mutual self-gift create the basis for the fullness of interpersonal intimacy and communication in a communion of persons. Interpersonal intimacy is based on self-giving.

### *Nuptial Meaning of the Body*

St. John Paul II based this mutual self-giving of man and woman on the creative act of God.<sup>59</sup> Creation is itself a fundamental and "radical" act giving by God; what is created is a gift that comes into being from nothingness. God is the Giver and man a receiver of the gift and the relationship between the two is based on this gift-giving. Man is created in the image of this Giver and as a created being bears within him the sign of the original and fundamental gift. God also created the world as a gift to man, "for him." Man is capable of understanding this gift which is creation. But man in his original solitude has to wait for a being with whom he can exist in a relationship of mutual giving. God recognized that it is not good for man to be alone because he was created in the spirit of gift-giving. Man can realize his essence and attain happiness only by existing "with someone" and "for someone." Hence, the communion of persons means an existence ordained to be a mutual "for," an existence in a relationship of mutual gift. This is the fulfillment of man's original solitude; this is the reason of man's original happiness and this mutual gift happens through love. The possibility of this mutual self-gift is manifested in the bodies of male and female, hence, the body attains a nuptial meaning.

In his *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla stresses that in the relationship between a man and a woman this self-giving forms a special form of love, which is the betrothed love.<sup>60</sup> In this act of surrender and self-giving, the man and the woman reciprocate

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<sup>56</sup> West, p. 122.

<sup>57</sup> TOB, #12.

<sup>58</sup> TOB, #13.

<sup>59</sup> TOB, #12.

<sup>60</sup> Wojtyla, LR, p. 97.

each other, and although they are psychologically and physically different, they combine to produce a perfect whole, in an act of mutual self-surrender.<sup>61</sup> However, this “gift of self” in the conjugal act is only possible in the context of the “personalistic interpretation” of the sexual urge. One cannot give himself or herself totally only in a sexual sense; it is not just the mutual giving of the body, but of one’s whole self.<sup>62</sup> Hence, it is a full gift of the person.

*Original Innocence: Purity of the Heart*

According to John Paul II, the “nuptial meaning of the body” is realized through self-mastery, by which the purely physical side of sex was restrained, the first man and woman were free to give themselves totally to each other, and thereby discovered their true selves. Through their original innocence, expressed in the purity of heart it enabled the man and woman to give themselves to each other in love.<sup>63</sup> In the state of original innocence there is the original integrity of the body and soul. St. John Paul refers to this as “original virginal value”<sup>64</sup> wherein the body is untouched by original sin, hence the original lack of shame. The original lack of shame is also based on the freedom of the mutual gift of themselves. This freedom is based on self-mastery, which is the precondition for the ability to give oneself to another in love. Because they are free internally, with the freedom of the gift, they could enjoy the whole truth about themselves man, just as God revealed to them these things in the mystery of creation. They both know that they were created for the sake of the other and find each other only in mutual self-giving. They understand the “nuptial meaning” of their body and that they are created for each other in love. The human body is therefore created to express love through the gift and to affirm the other through existential self-giving. Hence we can say that the union between the man and woman is not just a spiritual union although we can always make a distinction between a spiritual and physical union. But for the spouses spiritual love cannot be divorced from the body that is from physical intimate union. Thus, “in marriage, the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.”<sup>65</sup> Such affirmation is an acceptance of the gift and is without shame.

This original innocence is a particular “purity of heart” that preserves an interior faithfulness to the gift according to the nuptial meaning of the body. It precedes good and evil. The human will is originally innocent. There is an innocence in the reciprocal “experience of the body,” which inspires the interior exchange of the

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<sup>61</sup> Aguas, PAL, p. 230.

<sup>62</sup> Aguas, PAL, p. 230.

<sup>63</sup> See TOB, #16-19.

<sup>64</sup> TOB, #10.

<sup>65</sup> CCC, #2360.

nuptial gift of the person. After the “fall,” this original innocence will be replaced by shame and the purity of the heart will be replaced by lust.

### **Final Remarks: Betrothed Love and Responsibility**

The highest form of love between man and woman is betrothed love. Betrothed love is essentially the giving of one’s own person to another; it is total self-giving, the surrender of one’s I to another. In such love, the will and the realization of a reciprocal belonging are established. It is more than attraction, desire, and goodwill. When betrothed love enters into an interpersonal relation between man and woman, something more than just friendship results: two persons giving themselves to each other. In this act of surrender, the man and the woman reciprocate each other. This self-giving demands reciprocity, that both surrender themselves to each other. It also demands mutual acceptance of the “gift of self.”

Love and sexuality properly understood always carries with them deep responsibility, a responsibility for the other person, for his or her life and health. This responsibility is based on the value of the person. This responsibility is based on the value of the person, most especially “the person who is drawn into the closest possible partnership in the life and activity of another, and becomes in a sense the property of whoever benefits from this gift of self.”<sup>66</sup> This responsibility for the other is related to the choice of the other person to whom one bestows the gift of self. In choosing another person as a partner, one cannot base his or her choice solely on the sexual value of the other although this is a primary psychological motive. Since the choice is a person, then the primary reason for the choice must be the value of the person. The essential reason for choosing a person must be person and not just sexual. Love, from its very nature is reciprocal; responsible love is mutual self-giving. Love includes the ability to give and receive, and this ability is permeated with a basic affirmation of the value of the person. Love as mutual self-giving leads to the enrichment of existence of persons in love.

In today’s modern world, the meaning and practice of marriage may be challenged, but we have the inspiration of St. John Paul II. In his Letter to the Families he says:

Love is demanding. It makes demands in all human situations; it is even more demanding in the case of those who are open to the Gospel. Is this not what Christ proclaims in “his” commandment? Nowadays people need to rediscover this demanding love, for it is the truly firm foundation of the family, a foundation able to “endure all things.” According to the

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<sup>66</sup> Wojtyla, LR, p. 130.

Apostle, love is not able to “endure all things” if it yields to “jealousies”, or if it is “boastful... arrogant or rude” (cf. *1 Cor* 13:5-6). True love, Saint Paul teaches, is different: “Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (*1 Cor* 13:7). This is the very love which “endures all things”. At work within it is the power and strength of God himself, who “is love” (*1 Jn* 4:8, 16). At work within it is also the power and strength of Christ, the Redeemer of man and Saviour of the world.<sup>67</sup> **PS**

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