Marriage: The Union of Man and Woman

(Understanding the Theology of the Body)

by Henry Avila – August 2023





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What words come to mind when you hear the word "marriage"?

- Love
- Children
- Suffering
- Unity
- Difficult
- Happiness
- Fidelity
- Commitment
- Pleasure
- Life
- Work
- Disappointment

In the beginning . . .

Gen. 1:26-28 Then God said: "Let ***us*** make man in our image, after our likeness . . . in the ***divine image*** he created him; ***male*** and ***female*** he created them. God blessed them: "Be fruitful and multiply . . ."

- Adam and Eve are the first to experience marriage – the total giving of oneself to another.
- Hint of the Trinity in the use of the plural "us"
- We are made in the divine image (***2 Peter 1:4*** – partakers of the divine nature)
- Man was created as male and female – the are different but complimentary (the male nor female body makes sense by itself, but together they make sense.)

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Gen. 2:9 the LORD God made . . . the ***tree of life*** in the middle of the garden and the ***tree of the knowledge of good and evil***.

Gen 2:18-23 it is not good for the man to be alone . . . so the Lord formed the animals and brought them to Adam for him to name (shows dominion). None was a suitable partner. So God puts Adam into a deep sleep and takes a rib from his side and forms Woman. She is a suitable partner for Adam. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become ***one flesh***."

- The tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes the power to decide for oneself what is good and what is evil.
- God is the author of marriage and the one flesh union of husband and wife.

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Gen. 3:6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, ***who was with her***, and he ate it.
Gen. 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were ***naked***;

- The Serpent threatens Eve to eat the fruit, which she does and thus disobeys God's commandment no to eat of it. Death now enters into the world.
- The hiding of their nakedness comes from the sense of being used as an object for someone else's pleasure. This is the result of sin and fallen nature.

Marriage in the New Testament

Eph. 5:22-24 Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.
Eph. 5:25-29 Husbands, ***love*** your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to ***sanctify her***, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be ***holy*** and without blemish. So [also] husbands should ***love*** their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
Eph. 5:31 "For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become ***one flesh***."

- As Christ is the head, so the husband is head of the family. He must be another Christ to his family, ready to die to self. This is why the bridegroom and priests wear black. It symbolizes death – dying to self. (See Eph 4:22-24)
- If the husband is the ***head*** of the family, then the wife is ***heart*** of the family. Both the head and the heart are critical to the body as it is for the family.

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Eph. 6:11-14 Put on the armor of God so that you may stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the ***principalities***, with the ***powers***, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the ***evil spirits*** in the heavens . . . So stand fast with your ***loins girded in truth*** . . .

- Why is "girding the ***loins***" in ***truth*** the first thing Paul mentions? Somehow the truth of the "loins" is related to our struggle with the evil spirits.
- Satan knows that if he attacks human sexuality, he can break down the fabric of our existence and our understanding of God. (see Theology of the Body below)

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Divorce and Remarriage

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" Matt 19:3

Matt. 19:4-6 Jesus said, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become ***one flesh***? Therefore, what God has joined together, ***no man must separate***."

Matt. 19:7-9 They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?" Jesus said, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but ***from the beginning it was not so***. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery."

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Separation in Marriage (Not Divorce)

1Cor. 7:10-11 To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): a wife should not separate from her husband — and if she does separate she must either remain ***single*** or become ***reconciled*** to her husband — and a husband should not divorce his wife.

Annulment: A declaration by the Church that a marriage was invalid from the beginning.

A Sacramental marriage is a ***valid*** marriage between two ***baptized*** Christians.

A natural marriage, while recognized as valid, is classified as not confirmed (*non ratum*) and can be dissolved for the sake of the higher good of a person's faith.

Pauline Privilege: Allows the dissolution of a valid *natural* marriage between two non-baptized persons in the case that one (but not both) of the partners seeks baptism and converts to Christianity and the other (unbelieving) partner leaves the marriage. The Pauline Privilege does not apply when either of the partners was a Christian at the time of marriage.

1Cor. 7:12-13, 15 To the rest I say (not the Lord): if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to go on living with him, he should not divorce her; and if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to go on living with her, she should not divorce her husband. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound.

Petrine Privilege (privilege of the faith): Allows for dissolution by the Pope of a valid *natural* marriage between a baptized and a non-baptized person, for the sake of the salvation of the soul of one of the spouses. They are, thus enabled to marry in the Church.

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The Two Aspects of Marriage

The nature of marriage as God intended involves two things:

1. The union of the spouses (pleasure and intimacy)
2. The procreation of children (life-giving love)

God is not a prude. He wants spouses to have an immense intimacy for one another so that we can get an small taste of the intimacy with which God desires to loves us.

In a certain sense, God wants to “marry us”, but not like humans experience marriage.

Theology of the Body

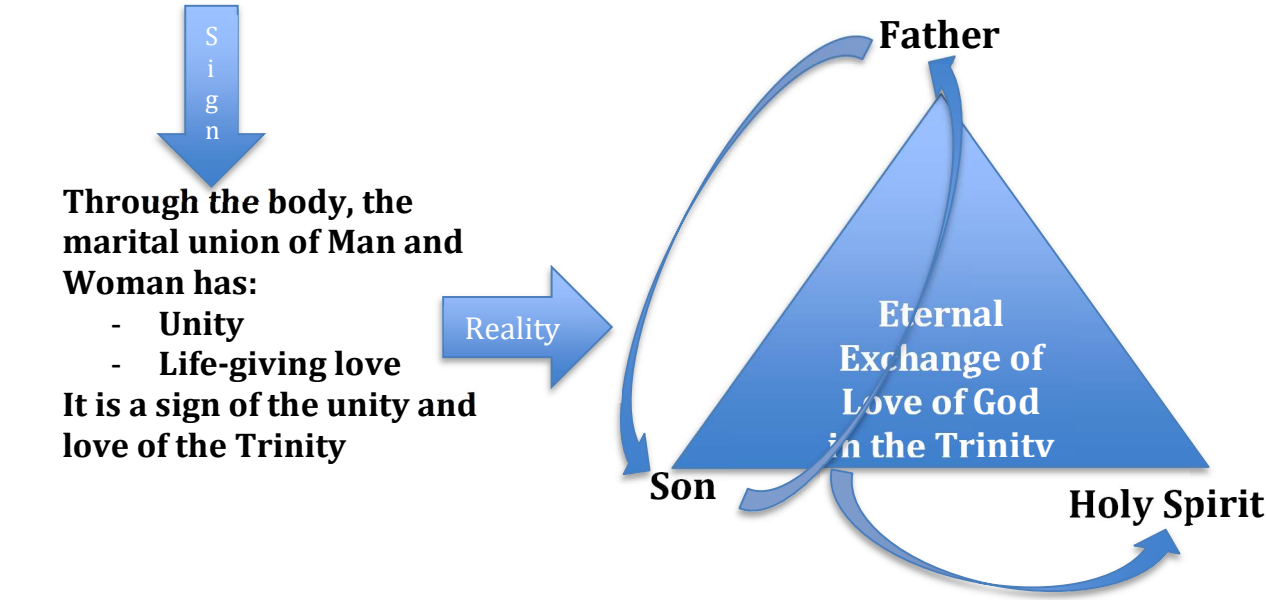
Male and Female He created them . . .

Why male and female? It is the body and it alone that is capable of making visible the invisible mystery of God.[1] The body is a ***sign*** that points to the mystery of God.

- All that we know/experience comes through our senses (the body).
- A sign points us to a reality.

How does the body (being male and female) point to the mystery of God?
First we must answer, "What is the mystery of God?"

- The mystery of God is that he is an eternal exchange of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and **he destined us to share in that exchange of love in the Trinity**. This is what we were made for . . . **this is the meaning of human existence!**



- God revealed this mystery of His desire to bring us into this exchange of love in the Trinity through His son, Jesus Christ.
- Christ fully reveals Man to himself. [2] No one can find the true meaning of life except through Christ. Life makes no sense without Christ.

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"Why is there evil?"
Because of our rejection of the love of God that he inscribed in our bodies . . . the rejection of a proper sexual relationship between man and woman. This relationship of man and woman is the ***foundation of human life***. It is the fabric of existence.

[1] John Paull II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Pauline Books and Media, 1997. pg. 76.
[2] Documents of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

The Family
The family is the foundational cell of society and it comes from the sexual union of husband and wife.

- When this physical union of husband and wife is oriented to life and love, it builds strong and happy marriages that live the truth of life and love.
- These strong marriages build the culture of love and life.



By understanding the meaning of the body, sexuality and marital love we come to understand the very meaning of life . . . what it means to be human.

Now let's answer, **"How does the body (us being male and female) point to the mystery of God?"**
It is through life-giving ***exchange of love*** between husband and wife that we participate in the creative union of man and woman. We are ***co-creators*** with God. As co-creators, we are doing what God does . . . bring into existence something that did not exist before – a new life, a new soul.

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The Teleology of Marriage (Teleology means the "end" or "goal")
Human marriage (sexual intimacy) is a sign that points to a reality . . . God want us to understand that his life-giving love for us can be understood through the sign of the marital act – through the life-giving love of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife. (Note: God is not a sexual being. He is pure spirit. This is only an analogy)

If the body and it alone is capable of making visible the invisible mystery of God, where do you think the enemy (Satan) will attack?
The body. The sexuality of man & woman since it is the ***foundation of human life***.

- Satan hates us! He takes what is good, true and beautiful and he twists it. He makes us think that we have the reality of ***authentic life-giving love***, but instead he has convinced us to accept a counterfeit. We have been tricked!
- If this twisted truth of human sexuality was the reality, then why does it not bring lasting happiness? Why is there guilt and broken hearts and broken lives? Because it is not the truth of who we are and how we are to live.
- Satan does not want us to participate in that eternal exchange of love with God.

Who are we?
We are sons and daughters of The King!

- He is rich in mercy and grace (***Eph. 2:4***) and we are poor.
- We are persons with a value that has no equal in the universe. We are priceless.
- We need to understand that we are not "things" to be used by others. We are not objects to be used for someone else's pleasure or discarded.
- We have a dignity and purpose that is given to us by God himself.