# Take-Home 10. The Language of the Body

*From the Beginning*

## What We Found

St. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in the middle of an argument about a man and a prostitute. Nobody in that transaction thought they were marrying, and he says one flesh happens anyway.

On this Catholic reading, the meaning of the act is not assigned by the participants. The body has a language, and what we control is whether we speak it truthfully. The Church's plainer claim underneath it is that sexual acts have an objective moral meaning.

The body is for the Lord, is a member of Christ, is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and is not our own, because we were bought with a price.

St. John Paul II's theology of the body reads the marital act as saying what the vows say: I give you all of myself, permanently, exclusively, open to whatever comes. Note that the act does not by itself make a marriage; consent does. When the body says that and the will has not yet said it, the body is saying something not yet true.

Chastity is the successful integration of sexuality within the person, not its suppression, and it is asked of the married as well as the unmarried.

The social science on cohabitation and divorce risk is genuinely disputed, and the Church's position does not rest on it. Her argument is about what the body says, and about keeping the question of freedom genuinely open until the day it is answered.

The creation account ends with two people naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25). Getting back there requires honesty, forgiveness, and a covenant strong enough to make being known safe.

## Voices of the Church

**VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE ON WANTING IT AND NOT WANTING IT**

In his Confessions, St. Augustine describes praying, in his younger years, for chastity and for continence, and asking God to grant it but not yet. He is honest that part of him was afraid the prayer would be answered.

*Summary of his account in Confessions, Book VIII.*

**VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN PAUL II ON USING A PERSON**

Before he was pope, St. John Paul II argued that a person is the kind of being who may never be treated merely as a means to an end, and that this holds inside a relationship as much as outside one. The opposite of love, in his account, is not hatred but use.

Applied to a couple: the question is not only whether both parties agreed. It is whether each is being received as a person or employed as a source of something.

*Summary of his argument in Love and Responsibility.*

**VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON ORDERING AN APPETITE**

St. Thomas treats chastity as a part of temperance, whose work is to order an appetite toward the good rather than to eliminate it. On his account the chaste person is not the person with the weakest desires but the

person whose desires have been ordered by reason toward the true good.

She is not asking anyone to despise desire. She is asking that desire be purified and ordered by reason and love, and wanted truthfully.

*Summary of his treatment of chastity, Summa Theologiae II-II, question 151.*

## Live It This Week

- **Make the plan, not the intention.** Write down what changes this week, with specifics, and tell one other person besides your fiance.
- **Go to confession.** Anyone conscious of grave sin should go before receiving communion, and everyone here is warmly encouraged to go this week regardless. If it has been a long time, say so at the start and let the priest help.
- **Say the avoided thing.** If the Couple Conversation surfaced something about your past or present that has gone unsaid, say it this week.
- **Read Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127 before next session,** and notice how children are described.

**BEFORE THE ALTAR**

**This week.** Decide your living arrangements between now and the wedding, and write down the plan with specifics rather than an intention. If separate residences are not possible, tell the priest preparing you honestly and ask for his counsel directly.

**Also.** Both of you go to confession this week, and schedule one more for the month before the wedding.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE**

You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

Before next session: Read Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 127 before Session 11. Notice how children are described.

Catechism: CCC 1632, 2332, 2337, 2348-2350, 2354, 2390.