

JOURNEY
INTO THE

Heart

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Session 1

A VISION OF HOPE FOR THE HEART

LORD,

You know my heart and its ways. You know everything about me. Every hair on my head is numbered. Show me the wounded places of my heart that are in need of healing. Shine your light deep within me that all darkness might be cast out and I might become more and more who you created me to be. Amen.

1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SERIES

Key points from Session One: “An Education in Being Human”

- The Theology of the Body (TOB) is not merely a reflection on marriage. Rather, the TOB provides a “lens” through which to view the whole mystery of human life.
- The human person is not a “spirit” trapped in a body, but rather a profound *unity* of body and soul. The human body expresses the mystery of the human person.
- In the *Incarnation*, God has chosen to reveal himself in and through human flesh – *theology of the body*. This phrase represents the very logic of Christianity.
- The thesis of the TOB is that the body alone is capable of making visible what is invisible – the spiritual and divine. God created the human body to be a sign of the mystery hidden within the Trinity for all eternity.

2. INTO THE HEART

What Is the “Heart”?

The “heart” is our deepest interior self where we are “alone” with ourselves and with God.

- The heart is where we experience the forces of good and evil competing against each other. Hence, it’s where we know and experience the true meaning of the body, or, because of the hardness of our hearts, fail to do so.
- Using a physical reality such as the “heart” (a muscle in our chests) to speak of a deep, interior, spiritual reality confirms the basic principle of the TOB: the body reveals profound spiritual mysteries.

2a. “The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation” (CCC 2563).

THE HEART IS “THAT ‘INTIMATE PLACE’
IN WHICH GOOD AND EVIL, SIN
AND JUSTICE, CONCUISCENCE AND
HOLINESS FIGHT EACH OTHER IN MAN.”

– POPE JOHN PAUL II

Wounded Hearts in Need of Healing

In his TOB, John Paul II immediately focuses our attention on Christ's words about the human heart – its woundedness and its need for healing: "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8).

- A prayerful study of the TOB is not only "informational" but also "transformational."
- We should seek not only to open our *minds* to the intellectual riches of John Paul II's teaching, but also our *hearts* to its life-changing power.

2b. "I always tried to achieve a harmony between faith, reason, and the heart. These are profoundly connected, each giving life to the other. This coming together of faith, reason, and the heart is strongly influenced by our sense of wonder at the miracle of a human person – at man's likeness to the Triune God, at the immensely profound bond between love and truth, at the mystery of mutual self-giving and the life that it generates" (RW, p. 97).

2c. "Saint Augustine ... defines prayer as an exercise of desire. Man was created for greatness – for God himself; he was created to be filled by God. But his heart is too small for the greatness to which it is destined. It must be stretched. 'By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him]'" (Benedict XVI, SS 33).

2d. "Suppose that God wishes to fill you with honey; but if you are full of vinegar, where will you put the honey?' The vessel, that is your heart, must first be enlarged and then cleansed, freed from the vinegar and its taste. This requires hard work and is painful, but in this way alone do we become suited to that for which we are destined" (Benedict XVI, SS 33).

2e. "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 ... The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly must with his *unrest*, *uncertainty* and even *his weakness and sinfulness*, with his life and death, *draw near to Christ*. He must, so to speak, *enter into him* with all his own self, he must '*appropriate*' and *assimilate* the whole reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If that profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself ... In reality, the name for that deep amazement at man's worth and dignity is the Gospel, that is to say: the Good News. It is also called Christianity" (RH 10, emphasis added).



"THE CHOICE YOU FACE CONSTANTLY IS WHETHER YOU ARE TAKING YOUR WOUNDS TO YOUR HEAD OR YOUR HEART. IN YOUR HEAD YOU CAN ANALYZE THEM, FIND THEIR CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, AND COIN WORDS TO SPEAK AND WRITE ABOUT THEM. BUT NO FINAL HEALING IS LIKELY TO COME FROM THAT SOURCE. YOU NEED TO LET YOUR WOUNDS GO DOWN TO YOUR HEART. THEN YOU CAN LIVE THROUGH THEM AND DISCOVER THAT THEY WILL NOT DESTROY YOU."

– HENRI NOUWEN

POINTS TO PONDER

When *Humanae Vitae* was released, the secular media predicted that the papacy may well topple under the weight of so glaring a blunder. Paul VI predicted that if the teaching were ignored, marriage and the family may well topple under the weight of its error. Society, he said, would experience the breakdown of the family, the lowering of morality, increase in disrespect for women, government imposition on the family, and scientific domination of human life in other areas. Who was right?

3. ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHING

Response to the *Humanae Vitae* Crisis

The TOB originated in response to something Pope Paul VI said in his much contested encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (*Of Human Life*):

3a. “The problem of birth [regulation], like every other problem regarding human life, is to be considered beyond partial perspectives.” It must be seen “in light of a total vision of man and of his vocation, not only his natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation” (HV 7).

Paul VI, however, did not provide us with an extensive articulation of this ‘total vision of man and his vocation. John Paul II does, and that, essentially, is what his TOB is.

- The TOB is the presentation of what John Paul II calls an “adequate anthropology” (anthropology is the “study of man,” the study of what it means to be human).
- “Adequate” does not mean “that will do,” but “full” and “complete.” In turn, this full and complete vision of man provides the basis for understanding the human being’s vocation to love as God loves.
- Only in this light can we understand the controversial, yet *essential*, teaching of *Humanae Vitae*.

3b. The whole of the TOB constitutes “an extensive commentary on the doctrine contained precisely in *Humanae Vitae*” (TOB 133:2). For questions spring from *Humanae Vitae* “that run in some way through the whole of our reflections ... This is important from the point of view of structure and method” (TOB 133:4).

Being Human: An “Adequate Anthropology”

In short, in order to provide a thorough response to the “*Humanae Vitae* crisis,” the TOB seeks to answer two of the most fundamental human questions:

- (1) *What does it mean to be human?* (“adequate anthropology”)
- (2) *How do I live my life in a way that will bring true happiness?*
(vocation and ethics)

The following is an effective way of presenting the structure of the teaching:

Part I: Establishing an “Adequate Anthropology”

- Our Origin
- Our History
- Our Destiny

Part II: Applying an “Adequate Anthropology”

- Christian Celibacy
- Christian Marriage
- *Humanae Vitae*

John Paul II’s original manuscript divides the text in the following manner:

Part I: The Words of Christ

- Christ Appeals to the “Beginning”
- Christ Appeals to the Human Heart
- Christ Appeals to the Resurrection
 - Celibacy for the Kingdom

Part II: The Sacrament

- The Dimension of Covenant and of Grace
- The Dimension of the Sign
- He Gave Them the Law of Life as Their Inheritance

3c. “One must immediately observe, in fact, that the term ‘theology of the body’ goes far beyond the content of the reflections presented here. These reflections do not include many problems belonging ... to the theology of the body (e.g., the problem of suffering and death, so important in the biblical message). One must say this clearly” (TOB 133:1).

Summary

- The “heart” is our deepest interior self where we are “alone” with ourselves and with God. In TOB, John Paul II immediately focuses our attention on Christ’s words about the human heart – its woundedness and its need for healing.
- A prayerful study of TOB is not only “informational” but also “transformational.” We should seek not only to open our *minds* to the intellectual riches of John Paul II’s teaching, but also our *hearts* to its life-changing power.
- In short, in order to provide a thorough response to the “*Humanae Vitae* crisis,” TOB seeks to answer two of the most fundamental human questions:
 - (1) *What does it mean to be human?* (“adequate anthropology”)
 - (2) *How do I live my life in a way that will bring true happiness?* (vocation and ethics)

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR:

SESSION 1: A VISION OF HOPE FOR THE HEART

1. John Paul II's TOB provides great intellectual treasures that theologians will be studying and unpacking for centuries. What is the danger, however, of keeping this teaching "in the head" and not allowing it to penetrate "into the heart"?
2. Were you alive in 1968 when the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was published? If so, what do you remember about the controversy that followed?
3. How was the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* presented to you growing up? Was it presented at all?
4. Why is it necessary to view the teaching of the Church on the immorality of contraception in light of a total vision of man and his vocation?
5. Without quoting John Paul II or Christopher West, how would you answer the question *What does it mean to be human*?
6. Again, without quoting John Paul II or Christopher West, how would you answer the question *How do I live my life in a way that will bring true happiness*?

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