

Training Your Human Freedom for the Gift of Self



"I came that you might have life and have it to the full." ~ John 10:10

Questions to change the context...

- What is the most powerful thing a human being can do?
- What is the next most powerful thing a human being can do?
- What is the next most powerful thing a human being can do?

What is the Trinity?

- ◆ What does it mean to be made in the image of God
- ◆ Body is good, sex is good / marriage is divinely missioned
- ◆ Intimacy is rooted in the security of belonging – love making is showing how much 'I love you'

Why is sacrifice necessary for love?

- ◆ If a couple isn't ready to begin seeing sacrifice as a means of growth, then that couple needs to rethink their calling
- ◆ If they're unable to sacrifice in small ways, they won't have discipline to do so in big ways, sexually or otherwise
- ◆ Generosity to life and abstinence: this is a normal part of life that a marriage must survive (for example: if a pregnancy is difficult, caring for a child with disabilities, a job transition, a spouse is sick for a prolonged period, taking in aging/disabled family members)
 - ✓ Fosters self-mastery and self-sacrifice not selfishness and lust
 - ✓ Helps relationship mature beyond sexual attraction and dependence
 - ✓ Divorce rate among NFP users vs. those using artificial contraceptives
- ◆ Distinction between sex and sexuality
 - ✓ Sex is: designed and missioned by God / not a plaything, but a beautiful gift / good, fun, enjoyable / an act of trust / ultimate form of communication / procreative and unitive
 - ✓ Sexuality is: the result of gender, as well as sexual experiences, family attitudes, social stereotypes
- ◆ Procreative (babies) and Unitive (bonding)
 - ✓ Your body is not your own – 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 – respects intrinsic dignity of human transmission of life
 - ✓ Ends and means must both be just – the right to a child does not exist
 - ✓ Respects and does not sever procreative and unitive ends of marriage
 - ✓ Doesn't presume to benefit from sexual pleasure without bearing the responsibility in fertile times
 - ✓ Acting as a couple to regulate your openness to life must be for serious reasons – not with a contraceptive mentality that makes material things more important than a *trusting* generosity to life



Pope St. Paul VI – Humanae Vitae, 1968; Pope St. John Paul II – Donum Vitae, 1987

- ◆ General lowering of morality / divorce increase (50% divorce rate)
- ◆ Devaluation of women (Playboy, Penthouse, increased prostitution)
- ◆ Children not loved or wanted / extra-marital affairs increase
- ◆ Abortion (1.5 million/year in U.S.; 1 in 7 teenagers have had one abortion)
- ◆ Failure of education (60-80% of women who have had abortions have used contraceptives)
- ◆ Euthanasia (growing acceptance around the nation as a principle of privacy)

Questions to invite social awareness and self-awareness...

- ✦ What is the divorce rate today for Americans? For Catholics? For NFP users?
- ✦ What did sexuality mean to my parents?
- ✦ What does birth control mean to me? What formed me in my thinking on this issue?
- ✦ What is the role of my conscience relative to the Church?
- ✦ Am I seeking God's will or am I just praying that my will also happens to be what God wants?
- ✦ What is the purpose of marital intimacy?

You as Spouse

For love to attain its full value, and truly unite a man and a woman, it must be firmly based on the affirmation of the value of the person. From this, it is a simple progression to whole-hearted desire of the beloved person's good - a good worthy of the person. It is this that gives love its character of happiness. The longing for true happiness for another person, a sincere devotion to that person's good, puts a priceless imprint of altruism on love. But none of this will happen if the love between a man and a woman is dominated by an ambition to possess, or more specifically by concupiscence born of sensual reactions, even if these are accompanied by intense emotion.

~ Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II), *Love and Responsibility*, 145



To be Wanted To be Given



The Father's Plan

To reveal the deepest reality of God's love.

To raise up matrimony as the primary image of that love.

The Son's Gift

To reveal the deepest reality of God's love for His creatures.

To raise up matrimony as the primary image of that love.

The Spirit's Call

To reveal a vocation where passion and purity are combined to create earth's most powerful, transformative human love.



(The human body) includes... the capacity of expressing love...
in which the person becomes a gift
and by means of this gift fulfills the meaning of his being
and existence. Man can fully discover his true self
only in a sincere giving of himself.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24

Jesus as Spouse

If Christ on the Cross is our example of the purest and most beautiful love, we must not only know that there will be sacrifice in our marriage, but understand that love cannot be authentic without it. Love requires sacrifice. If it does not, you will only have a glorified version of lust. Christ gave and he held nothing back. He loved without counting the cost.

Am I to give up my emotional desires for the good of my spouse?

Christ did. Am I to sacrifice my body and let it be an instrument for another person's survival? Christ did.

Am I to be insulted and humiliated by suffering the sins of my spouse? Christ did. Am I to be pushed beyond what I believe to be reasonable limits? Christ did. Christ gave even to the last drop of blood.

Marriage is a sacrament, because like all sacraments, they bring us closer to God. They give us grace and help us get to heaven.

You will achieve a successful marriage if you love your spouse with all your mind (will) and heart (emotions) and never look back. You will achieve heaven if you can learn, grow and maintain a pure love throughout your entire marriage. Emotions will come and go, but your decision to love through the grace of this sacrament will be the stronghold that keeps you together.

~ Dr. Ray Guarendi

What is the Purpose of Marriage?

In the debate about gay marriage, this is the question that is never asked.
There is an unspoken assumption in the debate that marriage is about a mutually supportive union between two persons, containing a sexual component.

That definition leaves someone out, though.

It leaves out the person or persons produced by the marriage.

Marriage is meant to be the instrument by which our species is propagated.

It is, at its core, reproductive.

In that we do not convey all of our knowledge by genes alone; i.e., by transferring instincts, it also forms a basis for raising young people and shaping them until they are mature.

Marriage exists to produce family.

It exists as the institution to transfer truth and knowledge from one generation to the next.

It is not a thing of convenience, for by its very nature it requires self sacrifice.

Its bond is to death – I pledge to love my wife until she dies, and in a very concrete way, to guarantee her life – to lay down my life to preserve hers.

We pledge ourselves to each other even to the utmost core of our beings – the willingness to mix my life with hers in a very concrete and genetic way, and also in a way reflective of society – I promise to teach our children what we believe.

It is the future that gives marriage meaning – not the present.

It is the raising of children, and the self-sacrifice unto even death, that makes it real.

Friendship and sexual pleasure are components of it, but are not the meaning or reality of it.

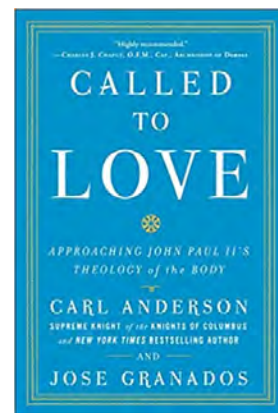
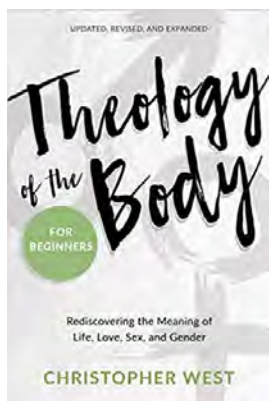
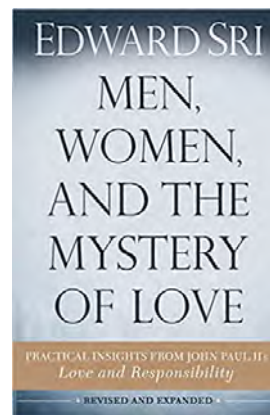
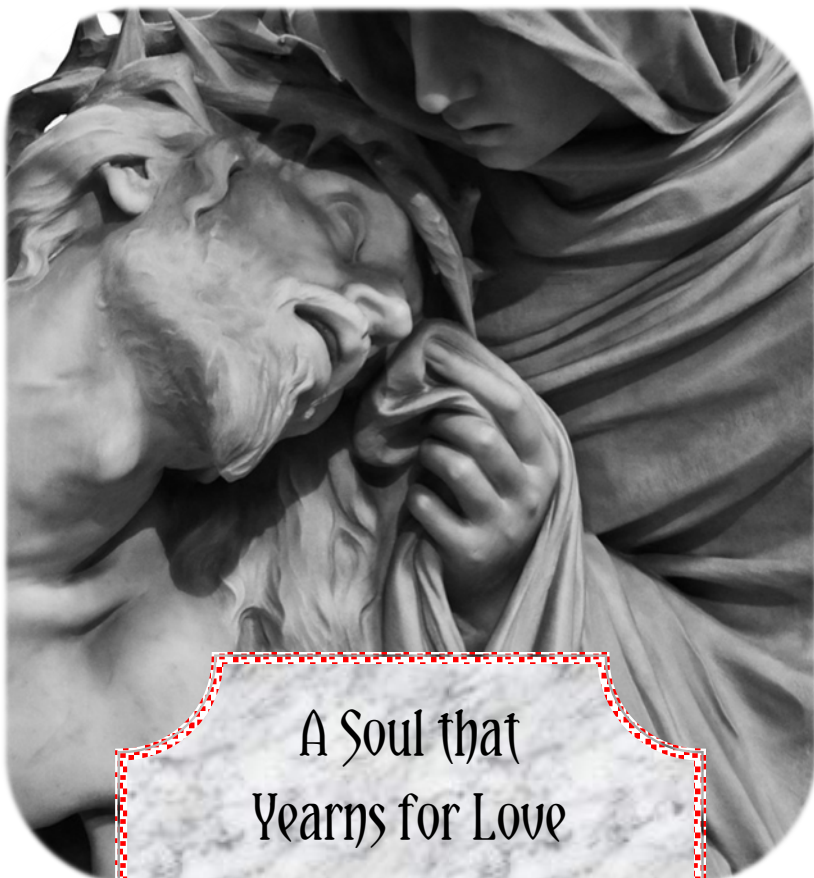
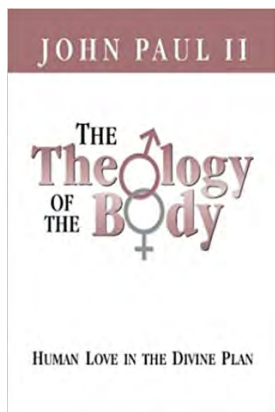
The reality of it is physical and spiritual union that brings about new life.

I oppose gay marriage not in the sense that I want to limit
any person's freedom to choose companions on his or her journey through life.

I oppose it because it is not marriage.

Posted by www.virtualabbey.com

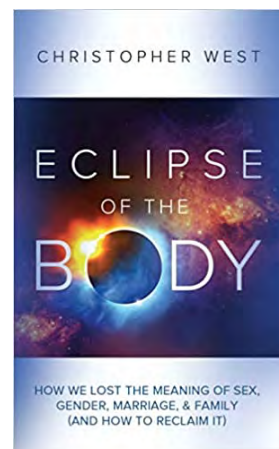
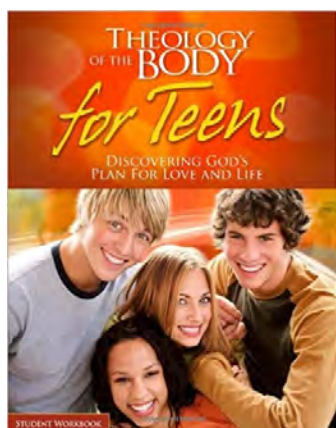
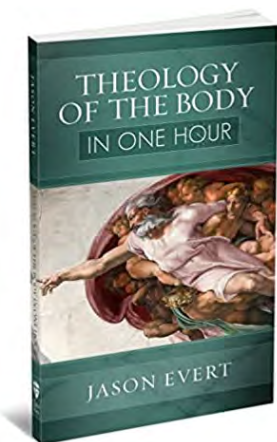




A Soul that Yearns for Love

"The path of self-mastery is not easy, especially for a person who has grown accustomed to giving in to his impulses rather than controlling them. If he perseveres, though, such a person will feel a growing sense of his own dignity. He will begin to experience the body as a gift, and sexuality as a sign of communion—a reflection of God's love. Freedom, the fruit of self-control, is the foundation for love between persons. This is why love can only flourish where there is purity of heart."

~ Pope John Paul II



God's Plan

This is an excerpt taken from an article published in Christianity Today in July 2007. It is by Tony Snow, a devout Catholic, and a husband and father of three. Commentator and broadcaster Tony Snow announced that he had colon cancer in 2005. Following surgery and chemotherapy, Snow joined the Bush Administration in April 2006 as press secretary. On March 23, 2007, Snow announced that the cancer had recurred, with tumors found in his abdomen, leading to surgery in April, followed by more chemotherapy. He went back to work in the White House Briefing Room on May 30, but resigned shortly thereafter. On July 12, 2008 Tony Snow died of cancer. He was 51.

Blessings arrive in unexpected packages – in my case, cancer. Those of us with potentially fatal diseases – and there are millions in America today – find ourselves in the odd position of coping with our mortality while trying to fathom God's will. Although it would be the height of presumption to declare with confidence 'What It All Means,' Scripture provides powerful hints and consolations.

The first is that we shouldn't spend too much time trying to answer the 'why' questions: Why me? Why must people suffer? Why can't someone else get sick? We can't answer such things, and the questions themselves often are designed more to express our anguish than to solicit an answer.

I don't know why I have cancer, and I don't much care. It is what it is, a plain and indisputable fact. Yet even while staring into a mirror darkly, great and stunning truths begin to take shape. Our maladies define a central feature of our existence: We are fallen. We are imperfect. Our bodies give out.

But despite this – or because of it – God offers the possibility of salvation and grace. We don't know how the narrative of our lives will end, but we get to choose how to use the interval between now and the moment we meet our Creator face-to-face. Second, we need to get past the anxiety. The mere thought of dying can send adrenaline flooding through your system. A dizzy, unfocused panic

seizes you. Your heart thumps; your head swims. You think of nothingness and swoon. You fear partings; you worry about the impact on family and friends. You fidget and get nowhere.

To regain footing, remember that we were born not into death, but into life – and that the journey continues after we have finished our days on this earth. We accept this on faith, but that faith is nourished by a conviction that stirs even within many non-believing hearts – an intuition that the gift of life, once given, cannot be taken away. Those who have been stricken enjoy the special privilege of being able to fight with their might, main, and faith to live fully, richly, exuberantly – no matter how their days may be numbered.

Third, we can open our eyes and hearts. God relishes surprise. We want lives of simple, predictable ease – smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see – but God likes to go off-road. He provokes us with twists and turns. He places us in predicaments that seem to defy our endurance; and comprehension – and yet don't. By His love and grace, we persevere. The challenges that make our hearts leap and stomachs churn invariably strengthen our faith and grant measures of wisdom and joy we would not experience otherwise.

You Have Been Called

Picture yourself in a hospital bed. The fog of anesthesia has begun to wear away. A doctor stands at your feet, a loved one holds your hand at the side. 'It's cancer,' the healer announces.

The natural reaction is to turn to God and ask him to serve as a cosmic Santa. 'Dear God, make it all go away. Make everything simpler.' But another voice whispers: 'You have been called.' Your quandary has drawn you closer to God, closer to those you love, closer to the issues that matter – and has dragged into insignificance the banal concerns that occupy our 'normal time.'

There's another kind of response, although usually short-lived an inexplicable shudder of excitement, as if a clarifying moment of calamity has swept away everything trivial and tiny, and placed before us the challenge of important questions.

The moment you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, things change. You discover that Christianity is not something doughy, passive, pious, and soft. Faith may be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But it also draws you into a world shorn of fearful caution. The life of belief teems with thrills, boldness, danger, shocks, reversals, triumphs, and epiphanies. Think of Saint Paul, traipsing through the known world and contemplating trips to what must have seemed the antipodes (Spain), shaking the dust from his sandals, worrying not about the morrow, but only about the moment.

There's nothing wilder than a life of humble virtue – for it is through selflessness and service that God wrings from our bodies and spirits the most we ever could give, the most we ever could offer, and the most we ever could do.

Finally, we can let love change everything. When Jesus was faced with the prospect of crucifixion, he grieved not for himself, but for us. He cried for Jerusalem before entering the holy city. From the Cross, he took on the cumulative burden of human sin and weakness, and begged for forgiveness on our behalf.

We get repeated chances to learn that life is not about us, that we acquire purpose and satisfaction by sharing in God's love for others. Sickness gets us part way there. It reminds us of our limitations and dependence. But it also gives us a chance to serve the healthy. A minister friend of mine observes that people suffering grave afflictions often acquire the faith of two people, while loved ones accept the burden of two peoples' worries and fears.

Learning How to Live

Most of us have watched friends as they drifted toward God's arms, not with resignation, but with peace and hope. In so doing, they have taught us not how to die, but how to live. They have emulated Christ by transmitting the power and authority of love.

I sat by my best friend's bedside a few years ago as a wasting cancer took him away. He kept at his table a worn Bible and a 1928 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. A shattering grief disabled his family, many of his old friends, and at least one priest. Here was a humble and very good guy,

someone who apologized when he winced with pain because he thought it made his guest uncomfortable. He retained his equanimity and good humor literally until his last conscious moment. 'I'm going to try to beat [this cancer],' he told me several months before he died. 'But if I don't, I'll see you on the other side.'

His gift was to remind everyone around him that even though God doesn't promise us tomorrow, he does promise us eternity – filled with life and love we cannot comprehend – and that one can in the throes of sickness point the rest of us toward timeless truths that will help us weather future storms.

Through such trials, God bids us to choose: *Do we believe, or do we not?* Will we be bold enough to love, daring enough to serve, humble enough to submit, and strong enough to acknowledge our limitations? Can we surrender our concern in things that don't matter so that we might devote our remaining days to things that do?

When our faith flags, he throws reminders in our way. Think of the prayer warriors in our midst. They change things, and those of us who have been on the receiving end of their petitions and intercessions know it. It is hard to describe, but there are times when suddenly the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, and you feel a surge of the Spirit. Somehow you just know: Others have chosen, when talking to the Author of all creation, to lift us up – to speak of us!

This is love of a very special order. But so is the ability to sit back and appreciate the wonder of every created thing. The mere thought of death somehow makes every blessing vivid, every happiness more luminous and intense. We may not know how our contest with sickness will end, but we have felt the ineluctable touch of God.

'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?'

We don't know much, but we know this: No matter where we are, no matter what we do, no matter how bleak or frightening our prospects, each and every one of us who believe, each and every day, lies in the same safe and impregnable place, in the hollow of God's hand.





Seven Things I Wish My Pastor Knew About My Homosexuality

by Jean Lloyd

May I make
two requests?
Love me, but
remember that

you cannot be more merciful than God. It isn't mercy to affirm same-sex acts as good. Don't compromise truth; help me to live in harmony with it.

Over thirty years have passed since same-sex attraction rushed up from deep within my twelve-year-old frame. This attraction was unbidden and unwanted, yet simultaneously forceful and compelling.

As a Christian, the conflict between my sexuality and my faith would become the deepest and most intense of my life. Now in my forties, I've gone from being closeted to openly lesbian to celibate to heterosexually married. The fact that I need to qualify my marital union as a heterosexual one reveals how much the cultural landscape has changed in that time—just as much as my own personal landscape has, though in very different ways.

During my upbringing, I heard a few fiery sermons on homosexuality. These days, I hear declarations of love instead. They make me shout for joy. Amen! It always should have been so! At the same time, however, many pastors have begun accompanying this love with an eschewal of Biblical sexual morality as oppressive, unreasonable, or unkind. Hence, loving homosexual persons also comes to entail affirming and encouraging them in same-sex sexual relationships and behaviors.

Although I appreciate the desire to act in love, this isn't the genuine love that people like me need. Love me better than that!

Thomas Aquinas scholar Josef Pieper put it this way:
love is not synonymous with undifferentiated approval of everything the beloved person thinks and does in real life. . . . [nor is it] the wish for the beloved to feel good always and in every situation and for him to be spared experiencing pain or grief in all circumstances. "Mere 'kindness' which tolerates anything except [the beloved's] suffering" has nothing to do with real love. . . . No lover can look on easily when he sees the one he loves preferring convenience to the good.

Loving me with this kind of love is neither quick nor easy. But knowledge and truth can help us both stand against the growing tide of moral capitulation. In light of this, here are seven things I wish you knew about homosexuality.

1. I wish you knew that just because I didn't choose this orientation, it doesn't follow that I was "born this way" or that "God created me gay." While genetics influences these traits, there is not a fixed predetermination. It is not hardwired like eye or skin color.¹ I can look back and understand where it came from in my own life. Of course, others' experiences may be different from mine. But ultimately, the etiology doesn't matter. Same-sex sexual activity is outside the design and will of the good plan of God. To claim otherwise requires ignoring Scripture, historical Christian authority, and natural law. So I need help in living chastely, regardless of how my same-sex desires came to be.

2. I wish you knew a better way to help me honor my body by living in accord with the Creator's design. I *was* born this way: female. God did create me a woman. Please don't fall into the gnostic dualism that divides my spiritual life from the life I now live in my body. Christ became incarnate; my very body is now part of His body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. To act against its design in same-sex sexual action harms the dignity of my body. For my homosexually attracted brothers, same-sex sex harms their bodies even more because of their physiological design and the physical effects of going against that design. These bodies will be raised again. They matter.

3. I wish you knew that you aren't helping me follow Jesus either by demanding that my attractions change or by not allowing them to change. No one can promise me that my attractions will change. Jesus certainly didn't. But don't deny me that possibility either. (Especially if I'm an adolescent!) Both secular science and human experience attest to sexual fluidity and the potential for change.

4. I wish you knew a better way to define "change." Over many years, my experience of same-sex attraction went from being a continual fire to an occasional flicker. A man who still experiences same-sex attraction but is happily married to a woman, where he saw no possibility of a heterosexual relationship before, has indeed changed.

5. I wish you knew that I should be credited with the same moral agency and responsibility as everyone else in the Christian community. If unmarried heterosexuals are called to celibacy and are presumed in Christ to have the power to live out His commands, then so should I be. To treat me according to a different standard is to lower my dignity before God. I too am called to be holy.

6. I wish you knew that God teaches more about homosexual conduct than "Don't." He *does* teach that, but the truth about the body, sex, and the design and *telos* of creation reveals so much more.

7. I wish you knew that it honors neither God, nor me, to apologize for His plan or design. I appreciate empathy for the pain my misdirected longings may cause, but God is not arbitrarily withholding something good from me. He is showing me what leads to life and human flourishing and is keeping me from that which will harm me. "Let love be without dissimulation." Love me and tell me the truth.

May I make two requests? Continue to love me, but remember that you cannot be more merciful than God. It isn't mercy to affirm same-sex acts as good. Practice compassion according to the root meaning of "compassion": *Suffer with me*. Don't compromise truth; help me to live in harmony with it.

I'm asking you to help me take up my cross and follow Jesus.

Jean Lloyd, PhD, is a teacher and a happily married mother of two young children.

[1] Understand the significance of the twin studies. Identical twins should have 100 percent concordance for sexual orientation if it is genetically predetermined and involves no post-natal factors. In fact, these concordance rates are quite low. See, for example, Bailey, J. M., Dunne, M. P., & Martin, N. G. (2000). "Genetic and environmental influences on sexual orientation and its correlates in an Australian twin sample." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, pp. 524-36.

An awful loss, a beautiful life, a daunting task

Published in The Washington Examiner, February 24, 2013

Nothing can prepare you for seeing your one-year-old nephew in a casket. Nothing can take away his parents' agony. And nobody could have expected how much good work this helpless baby would do in 14 months.



John Paul smiles at his brother Joey. (Photo: Katie G. Carney)

John Paul Kilner was born with an advanced case of spinal muscular atrophy. Nearly paralyzed at birth, his body deteriorated further as he grew.

My sister-in-law Elena and her husband Pat brought JP home as soon as possible, and began the 24-hour a day job of keeping him alive. Someone was always at JP's side, monitoring blood-oxygen levels, suctioning mucus through his tracheostomy tube.

If Elena's younger sister Suzanne (now a nurse) or a hired nurse named Donnisse weren't on duty, either Pat or Elena did without sleep.

Daily saving the life of an immobile kid with a fatal disease raises some fundamental questions. What is the point of such a life? Which raises the prior question: What is the purpose of any life?

Pat and Elena are devout Catholics from strong families, but their answer to this question can't be set aside as some teaching in the Catechism. It's a truth written on the human heart.

Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor. This is our purpose. This view is not uniquely Christian. It's understood in other religions and in secular worldviews.

In this regard, John Paul lived a superior life. He exuded love. Before he lost control of his facial muscles, he beamed smiles that made grown men sob. Babies can love those around him with the pure, unconditional love we all should show.

Also, JP drew love from others. Neighbors, relatives and strangers cooked meals and gave time, equipment and money to help the Kilners. JP's brothers and sister showered him with affection. And Pat and Elena sacrificed immensely to care for him.

Before the wake at St. Patrick's in Rockville, during an observance called Stations of the Cross, we read a Gospel passage in which Christ explains our duty to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the sick.

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine," the Lord says in this passage, "you did for me."

Clearly a call to charity, this is also an exaltation of parenthood. Even moreso, this exalts the work of caring for helpless JP.

Tribulations both *reveal* character and *form* it. JP's struggles revealed his parents' heroic virtue and fostered virtue in others. Pat and Elena saw John Paul as a blessing, and they generously shared that blessing with the world. They took him wherever they could, in a chair rigged with a ventilator and an IV. Elena shared wider, by penning hopeful, contemplative letters to John Paul every few weeks, which she posted on a blog.

One friend of mine, who never met the Kilners, read the "Letters to John Paul" blog. She wrote me, "John Paul's story made me want to be a better person."

John Paul continued shaping souls even in dying. A priest at St. Patrick's took confessions during and after the wake. He commented afterwards that he heard some of the more honest, searching and contrite confessions he's ever heard.

More than 500 people attended the beautiful funeral. One non-Catholic mourner was moved so much by the Mass she told Pat, "Now I understand why you're Catholic."

John Paul, who never spoke a word in his life, was the greatest evangelist of love, faith, virtue and hope I have ever met. I don't think Pat and Elena foresaw all this as they sacrificed and toiled for JP. They just did what was right, understanding the "incomparable worth of the human person," in the words of JP's namesake, Pope John Paul II.

Father Drew Royals, Pat's high school friend, gave the homily. He said to Pat and Elena, "You saw so clearly that John Paul's life possessed a dignity that was radically equal to that of everybody else. His medical condition was simply the battlefield upon which this young warrior-prince would carry out his campaign."

At the funeral Mass, we mourned a calamity. The pain of JP's death pierces the heart, again and again.

Also, we thanked God we were blessed with John Paul for 442 days. Fr. Drew reminded us that "this blessing carries with it a great responsibility."

"If our love for this little one has enlarged our hearts," Fr. Drew said, "then that means that now we must love all the more. Your work is not done."

Timothy P. Carney, The Examiner's senior political columnist, can be contacted at tcarney@washingtonexaminer.com. His column appears Monday and Thursday, and his stories and blog posts appear on washingtonexaminer.com



Awesome Catholic Youth who Deeply Lived the Law of the Gift

Saints and Other Holy Souls for Young People

Just do an internet search on the names below to encounter some remarkable young people. This collection offers you a great wealth of holy lives to rouse and enliven you with these awesome Catholic young people. Go deeper in discovering the power of grace in your life! Enjoy exploring these lives that will inspire and encourage you!



Saint Agatha, 20 years old, 251

Saint Agnes, 12 or 13 years old, 254

Saint Anna Wang, 14 years old, 1900

Saint Bernadette Soubirous, 35 years old, 1879

Saint Cecilia, young martyr, 2nd century

Saint Dominic Savio, 14 years old, 1857

Saint Dymphna, 15 years old, 7th century

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, 24 years old, 1231

Saint Joan of Arc, 19 years old, 1431

Saint Kateri Tekawitha, 24 years old, 1680

Saint Maria Goretti, 11 years old, 1902

Saint Philomena, 13 years old, 304

Saint Rose of Viterbo, 18 years old, 1251

Saint Tarcisius, young martyr, 3rd century

Saint Therese of Lisieux, 24 years old, 1897

Blessed Antonia Mesina, 15 years old, 1935

Blessed Chiara Badano, 18 years old, 1990

Blessed David Okelo, 16-18 years old, 1918

Blessed Francisco Marto, 10 years old, 1919

Blessed Imelda Lambertini, 11 years old 1333

Blessed Isidore Bakanja, 22 years old, 1909

Blessed Jacinta Marto, 9 years old, 1920

Blessed Karolina Kozka, 16 years old, 1914

Blessed Laura Vicuna, 13 years old, 1904

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, 24 years old, 1925

Venerable Anne de Guigne, 10 years old, 1922

Venerable Maria Theresa Gonzalez-Quevedo, 20 years old, 1950

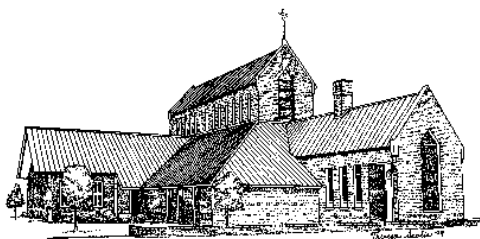
Venerable Zepherin Namuncura, 19 years old, 1905

Servant of God Angela Louise Baird, 19 years old, 1997

Servant of God Antonietta Meo, 6 years old, 1937

Servant of God Faustian Manglano, 17 years old, 1963





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Dear Parents of 7th and 8th Graders,

At the suggestion of the Archdiocese, beginning this Thursday, we are going to offer to the 7th and 8th grades an introductory-level program on Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body, designed for middle school students. We are also going to have an Archdiocesan assistant, Mr. Ken Gaughan, present to help us begin the first session, which will be this Thursday, May 3rd, as part of their regular religion class time.

The program website describes this 8-session series in this way: "There is little doubt that pre-teens are in an often confusing time of quest and discovery, especially with issues concerning their bodies, their sexuality, and their future. There are countless sources – from the airwaves, to peers, to the Internet - ready to provide "answers." *Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition*, designed for 6th through 8th grades, uses a great mix of stories, real-life examples, activities, prayers, and references to the culture that are relevant to the lives of middle school students."

Theology of the Body for Teens: Middle School Edition answers questions such as:

- Who am I?
- Are there consequences to my actions?
- What is the difference between love and lust?
- How do I balance family, friends, school, God, music, TV, internet, texting, etc., in my daily life?
- How can I discern my vocation to marriage, priesthood, or religious life?
- How do I deal with bullying, gossip, peer pressure, pornography, divorce, etc?
- Can I live my Catholic faith no matter how I messed up in the past?

If you would like to read more about this new program, this website will be helpful:
<https://ascensionpress.com/collections/theology-of-the-body-for-teens-middle-school-edition>

We are excited to offer this opportunity to our middle school students. If you would like your student to opt out of this program, please let the school office know by August 20.

Thank you.

Sincerely in Christ,

Kathleen Pfaff
Principal

In Christ Our Lord,

William Keimig
Director of Religious Education

Practical Formation Aides

Help for those who teach and pass on the faith to learn effective and pastorally careful ways to phrase TOB teachings and engage with confidence



Male & Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education
by the Congregation for Catholic Education

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_en.pdf

Deep within yourself, listen to your conscience which calls you to be pure... a home is not warmed by the fire of pleasure which burns quickly like a pile of withered grass. Passing encounters are only a caricature of love; they injure hearts and mock God's plan.

– Pope John Paul

A Catechesis on the Human Person and Gender Ideology
by the Most Rev. Michael Burbidge, Bishop of Arlington

<https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/bishop/public-messages/2021/a-catechesis-on-the-human-person-and-gender-ideology/>

*Purity is not about following a list of rules so that you'll avoid Hell.
It's about wanting Heaven for the person you love.*

– Jason Evert

The Chastity Project
by Jason Evert

<https://chastity.com>

<https://chastity.com/qa/category/dating/>

<https://chastity.com/blog/>

Some questions addressed in these sections:

- If two people of the same sex really love each other and are willing to stay faithful for life, why can't they get married?
- Recently I've been feeling attraction for some other guys at my high school. I have not told anyone yet because I don't even understand what's going on in me. I love God, but I'm scared and I don't know what to do. Any advice?
- What causes homosexuality? Is it ok to be gay if you are born that way?
- I go to an all-guys school; my friends sometimes make fun of effeminate guys. Is that wrong?
- I told my boyfriend we should be pure and he got quiet and was upset. I don't want to lose him. What do I do?
- Don't you want to know before marriage if you're sexually compatible? You wouldn't want to be disappointed. If premarital sex is so bad, why does it feel so good?
- Why is premarital sex bad? My friend just started high school, and she's telling me that it's good and she's going to do it.
- I've decided to save sex for marriage, but I'm unsure about being completely chaste with my boyfriend. Any advice?
- How do you know when you're ready to have sex?
- What authority does the Church have to tell me not to have sex?
- I heard that the Bible doesn't say anything about premarital sex. Is that true?
- Can't we accept that people have different values when it comes to sex? Times have changed since the Bible was written.
- Is it okay to have sex while you're engaged? After all, you are going to get married anyway.
- Is it okay to sleep in the same bed as long as you're not going to have sex?
- Is oral sex okay, so that you don't go all the way?
- How come a guy will act interested in a girl, but after they sleep together he acts like he doesn't know her?
- How should I respond when people in my high school say, "Everyone is doing it?"
- If sex is good and natural, why shouldn't we have it whenever we want?
- Isn't being chaste the same thing as being a prude?
- Is chastity the same thing as virginity? Is chastity the same thing as abstinence?
- Doesn't chastity ruin the spontaneity and excitement of romance?

*Winning the battle of
purity takes faith in Christ,
dedication, commitment,
honesty with ourselves
and others, and a
willingness to make
sacrifices and deny our
own selfish desires.
But love is not afraid
of those things.
Love is those things.
– Christopher West*

**Vocation fosters
Purpose**

"If you find what you do each day seems to have no link to any higher purpose, you probably want to rethink what you're doing."

~ Ronald A. Heifetz

**Vocation fosters
Peace**

"God has traced a way for each of us. Both our earthly and eternal happiness depends on following our vocation very carefully."

Every vocation is a call to motherhood or fatherhood, earthly, spiritual or moral. God has placed in us an instinct for life."

**Vocation fosters
Principle**

"What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude."

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

~ Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J.



Sample Vocations Plan

Kindergarten to College

K-3 Grades

- ☐ Angel in the Waters
- ☐ Will You Bless Me?
- ☐ Can God See Me in the Dark?
- ☐ What Can I Give God?
- ☐ Becoming Father Bob
- ☐ Where Do Priests Come From?
- ☐ Joseph's Hands
- ☐ The Princess Kiss
- ☐ DVD - The Best of Little Children
- ☐ The Pre-Born Christ (Precious Life Books)
- ☐ Victor Finds His Vocation (Precious Life Books)
- ☐ Father Phillip Tells a Ghost Story (Precious Life Books)
- ☐ The Little Turtledove Finds His Mate (Precious Life Books)
- ☐ The Most Beautiful Thing in the World (Precious Life Books)



4-6 Grades

- ☐ My Path to Heaven Workbook
- ☐ The King of the Golden City
- ☐ CDs - Glory Stories (17 stories available)
- ☐ DVD - Knights of Columbus on the Priesthood, Religious Life, Marriage
- ☐ DVD - The Miracle Maker
- ☐ DVD - A Time for Miracles

7-8 Grades

- ☐ Vocational Retreat in the Confirmation Program
- ☐ Books, movies, and CDs used in the course of the quarterly projects
- ☐ The Princess Kiss
- ☐ DVD - Interviews of Ann Arbor Dominican Sisters
- ☐ DVD - Beloved by the Nashville Dominican Sisters
- ☐ DVD - Fr. Don Calloway's Conversion Story
- ☐ DVD - Champions of Faith, Baseball Edition
- ☐ DVD - The Catholic Priest Today
- ☐ DVD - Fishers of Men
- ☐ DVD - A Greater Yes
- ☐ DVD - I Confess
- ☐ DVD - Miracle at Moreaux
- ☐ DVD - The 13th Day

9-12 Grades

- ☐ DVD - The Priestly Vocation
- ☐ DVD - Fireproof
- ☐ DVD - Courageous
- ☐ DVDs - Life-Work Program
- ☐ DVDs by Jason Evert Mount 2000 and Beyond Retreat
- ☐ Franciscan University of Steubenville's Summer Youth Conference
- ☐ High School-age Archdiocesan vocations retreats for boys
- ☐ High School-age women's discernment retreats for various religious orders
- ☐ Pure Love / Pure Womanhood / Pure Manhood / Pure Faith Booklets



College

- ☐ College-age Archdiocesan vocations retreats for boys
- ☐ College-age women's discernment retreats for various religious orders
- ☐ Application mailings for strong Catholic colleges
- ☐ Franciscan University of Steubenville's Encounter Conference for Youth Adults

When your need is...

...to find a way back to the Church:

Coming Home: www.catholicscomehome.org

Once Catholic: www.oncecatholic.com

...to staying informed as a faithful Catholic:

National Catholic Register: www.ncregister.com

Guadalupe Radio Network: <http://grnonline.info/>

US Conference of Catholic Bishops: www.usccb.org

...to grow in your ability to discern God's will:

What Does God Want by Fr. Michael Scanlan

A Map of Life by Frank Sheed

...to find a good devotional:

Magnificat: www.magnificat.net

The Word Among Us: www.wau.org

...to advance strongly in the spiritual life:

Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales

Imitation of Christ by Thomas a' Kempis

...to find God in a retreat/conference setting:

Life in the Spirit seminars: www.christkey.com/NLSS.html

Cursillo movement: www.natl-cursillo.org/affiliated.html

Steubenville adult conferences: www.franciscanconferences.com



...to deal with scrupulosity:

Understanding Scrupulosity by Thomas M. Santa

...to handle depression:

Surviving Depression: A Catholic Approach by Kathryn Hermes

...to handle the death of a loved one:

Be Comforted by Gloria Hutchinson

Grieving with the Help of Your Catholic Faith by Lorene Duquin

...to handle suffering:

The Truth About Trouble by Fr. Michael Scanlan

Making Sense Out of Suffering by Peter Kreeft

Amazing Grace for Those Who Suffer by Jeff Cavins

Fighting Cancer with the Help of Your Catholic Faith by Lorene Duquin

...to deal with stress:

God Help Me: This Stress is Driving Me Crazy by Gregory Popcak

Managing Stress with Help of Your Catholic Faith by Mary Lou Rosien

Taming the Lion Within by Ronda Chervin

...to deal with difficult relationships:

God Help Me: These People are Driving Me Nuts by Gregory Popcak

Forgiveness: Experiencing God's Mercy by Richard McAlear

...to deal with disappointment:

Life Shouldn't Look Like This by Gregory Popcak

Arise from Darkness by Fr. Benedict Groeschel

...to learn to defend your faith:

Compendium of the Catechism by the Vatican

This Rock Magazine: www.catholic.com

St. Joseph Communications: www.saintjoe.com

...to learn the Bible:

St. Paul Center: www.salvationhistory.com

You Can Understand the Bible by Peter Kreeft

...to find out about saints:

Encyclopedia of Saints by Matthew Bunson

Saints Index: <http://saints.sqpn.com>

...to find a place to worship on vacation:

Mass Times: www.masstimes.com

...to understand how the devil tempts souls:

Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

An Exorcist Tells His Story by Fr. Gabriel Amorth

Unbound by Neal Lozano

...to help someone whose loved one opposes the faith:

When Only One Converts by Lynn Nordhagen

How Not to Share your Faith by Mark Brumley

Search and Rescue by Patrick Madrid



...to address annulment situations:

Annulments and the Catholic Church by Edward Peters
Seeking an Annulment by Lorene Duquin

...to address sexual addiction/pornography:

Breaking Free by Stephen Wood
St. Joseph's Covenant Keepers: www.dads.org/strugglewithporn.asp
Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA): www.sexaa.org
Online Sexual Addiction (OSA): www.onlinesexaddict.com

...to address gambling or alcohol addictions:

Dying for a Drink by Anderson Speickard and Barbara Thompson
Gambling Addiction by John Eades

...to counsel someone who has had an abortion:

Her Choice to Heal by Sydna Masse and Joan Phillips
Men and Abortion: A Path to Healing by Catherine Coyle
Project Rachel: www.hopeafterabortion.com
Rachel's Vineyard: www.rachelsvineyard.org

...to counsel someone who is considering an abortion:

Gabriel Project: www.gabrielproject.com
Priests for Life: www.priestsforlife.org
Heritage House: www.hh76.com
Life Cycle Books: www.lifecyclebooks.com

...to address issues of homosexuality:

Courage: www.couragerc.net
Beyond Gay by David Morrison



...to find good Catholic music for teenagers:

Francesco Productions: www.francescoproductions.com
Omega Rock: www.omegarock.com
Catholic Youth Online: www.youmagazine.com

...to send a teenager on a great retreat:

Steubenville Youth Conferences: www.franciscanyouth.com
Mount 2000 and Beyond: www.mount2000andbeyond.com

...to find a real Catholic College:

The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College
NCR Guide: www.ncregister.com/site/article/16007/

...to find out about online dating for faithful Catholics:

Ave Maria Singles: www.avemariasingles.com

...to encourage young adults in their faith:

New Wave of the Faithful: www.nextwavefaithful.com

...to find out about vocations:

Vocation.com: www.vocation.com

...to give a comprehensive Catholic marriage resource:

A Catholic Guide to Lifelong Marriage by Gregory Popcak

...to address issues of contraception and pro-life

Couple to Couple League: www.ccli.org
One More Soul: www.omsoul.com
Priests for Life: www.priestsforlife.org

...to handle those scandalized by clergy-sexual abuse:

From Scandal to Hope by Archbishop Timothy Dolan

...to deal with an intellectual doubting the faith:

The Truth of Catholicism by George Weigel
The Courage to Be Catholic by George Weigel

...to learn how to be a Catholic parent:

Parenting with Grace by Gregory and Lisa Popcak
Parent Leadership: www.parentleadership.com

...to find a place for good Catholic books and movies:

Ignatius Press: www.ignatius.com
Sophia Institute Press: www.sophia institute.com

...to find a place for good Catholic family resources:

Family Life Center: www.familylifecenter.net

...to subscribe to a solid Catholic family magazine:

Faith and Family Magazine: www.faithandfamilymag.com

...to protect children in cyberspace:

Protect Kids: www.protectkids.com/parentsafety/index.htm

...to form and engage children at home:

Catholic Kids Net: www.catholickidsnet.org
MagnifiKid: www.magnificat.net
Holy Childhood: www.worldmissions-catholicchurch.org
Children of Hope: www.childrenofhope.org
Catholic Child: www.catholicchild.com
Leaflet Missal Company: www.leafletonline.com

...to find a short booklet for teenagers on sexuality issues:

Pure Love by Jason Evert

...to find a book for teenagers on sexuality issues:

Arms of Love by Carmen Marcoux
If You Really Loved Me by Jason Evert

...to find a book for teenagers on faith issues:

Did Adam and Eve Have Belly Buttons by Matthew Pinto
Prove It! series by Amy Welborn
Pure Love Club: www.pureloveclub.com
Ascension Press: www.ascensionpress.com

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST ~ BOOK IV ~ THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

The Examination of Conscience and the Resolution to Amend

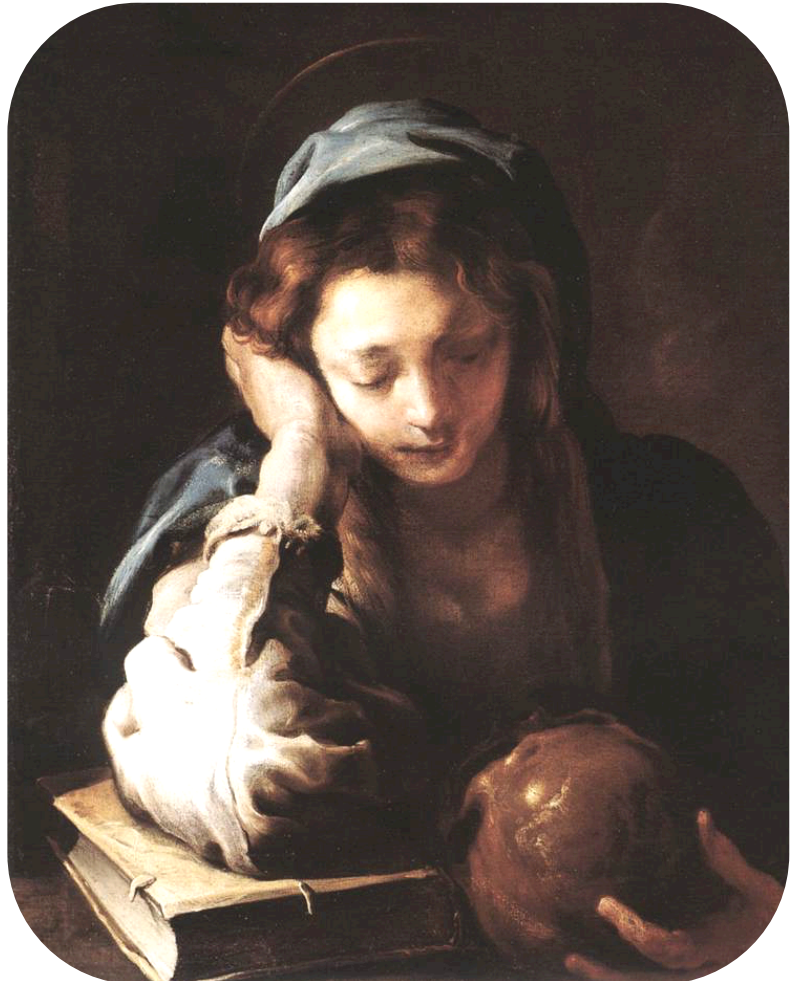
The Voice of Christ

Carefully examine your conscience, then. Cleanse and purify it to the best of your power by true contrition and humble confession, that you may have no burden, know of no remorse, and thus be free to come near. Let the memory of all your sins grieve you, and especially lament and bewail your daily transgressions. Then if time permits, confess to God in the secret depths of your heart all the miseries your passions have caused.

Lament and grieve because you are still so worldly, so carnal, so passionate and unmortified, so full of roving lust, so careless in guarding the external senses, so often occupied in many vain fancies, so inclined to exterior things and so heedless of what lies within, so prone to laughter and dissipation and so indisposed to sorrow and tears, so inclined to ease and the pleasures of the flesh and so cool to austerity and zeal, so curious to hear what is new and to see the beautiful and so slow to embrace humiliation and dejection, so covetous of abundance, so niggardly in giving and so tenacious in keeping, so inconsiderate in speech, so reluctant in silence, so undisciplined in character, so disordered in action, so greedy at meals, so deaf to the Word of God, so prompt to rest and so slow to labor, so awake to empty conversation, so sleepy in keeping sacred vigils and so eager to end them, so wandering in your attention, so careless in saying the office, so lukewarm in celebrating, so heartless in receiving, so quickly distracted, so seldom fully recollected, so quickly moved to anger, so apt to take offense at others, so prone to judge, so severe in condemning, so happy in prosperity and so weak in adversity, so often making good resolutions and carrying so few of them into action.

When you have confessed and deplored these and other faults with sorrow and great displeasure because of your weakness, be firmly determined to amend your life day by day and to advance in goodness. Then, with complete resignation and with your entire will offer yourself upon the altar of your heart as an everlasting sacrifice to the honor of My name, by entrusting with faith both body and soul to My care, that thus you may be considered worthy to draw near and offer sacrifice to God and profitably receive the Sacrament of My Body. For there is no more worthy offering, no greater satisfaction for washing away sin than to offer yourself purely and entirely to God with the offering of the Body of Christ in Mass and Communion.

If a man does what he can and is truly penitent, however often he comes to Me for grace and pardon, “As I live, says the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11); I will no longer remember his sins, but all will be forgiven him.



The repentant Mary Magdalene, by Domenico Feti, 1620

Love Lives by Sacrifice

Side by side both stand
Two sisters
Best friends
Once together, sharing a womb
Now two women
Two brides
With two desires
Different paths
But the same destination



There on the altar
Face to face
Eye to eye
She beholds her spouse
Before all she declares
To be one body, one flesh
Totally given and united
Poured out until death
With him
To him
For him
Through Him
Who became one flesh with us



Being drawn by this passion
To make Him loved
Adored
Known by all
She lies prostrate before the altar
Before the cross
Their marriage bed
Giving up all other desires
Even holy ones
For this one desire
To be offered
To be consumed
To be one with Him
To be radically given
Completely to Him
Who radically gave Himself



In this beautiful and holy desire they
share
To be one,
To be known
To be totally given
Their love is consummated
Their union
This explosion of love
Creates a whole new life
A life that is this union
Two bodies
Two hearts
Two souls
Become one
In this little embryo



In the silence of prayer
In the outpouring of charity
In the reception of His Body into
her very being
At the Holy Sacrifice
The consummation of their love
She becomes pregnant
With love
With mercy
With grace
With an undivided heart she seeks
Always to be conscious of this
divine life
Conceived within her
Aware of this new life within them
Both women radiate joy
Never has either felt more beautiful
More loved
More precious to behold
As when the gift of life
Has been entrusted
To their very being



Through blood and through water
And unspeakable pain
She offers her very body
This new life is poured forth
Becomes visible
Is held in her arms
Forgetting any pain
Their eyes lock
Her heart melts
This mother and child
Behold one another for the first time
And rejoice



Standing at the foot of the cross
And gazing on her Beloved
Through sacrifice
Through the offering of her heart
and body
Totally to Him
Through trial, temptation
She receives the blood and water
Gushing from His side
And pours it forth
On all souls
Thirsting for love
This new life of Christ
Is born to many
Though invisible to the eye
Both awaken in the early hours
One to a cry, the other to a bell
A helpless child cries out
For nourishment
For love
For his mother
Souls cry out for prayers
The lonely, abandoned, orphaned
Afflicted and poor
Who are not known or loved
Who need a mother



She and her spouse share a mission
To treasure and cherish
This child
This fruit of their love
Their world revolves around him
Dying to selfish desires
To bring this soul to knowledge
Of the infinite
Of the eternal
Of a tender heavenly Father



Together she and Jesus
Share a mission
To make known the love of their
Father
To all the world
Desperately searching for love
For a savior
To bring them to His eternal throne
Of love and grace
Mercy and truth
And there they shall behold
All joy, all fulfillment
And one by one
She shall look eyes
For the first time
With her children
Two brides, two mothers
Two journeys of charity and
sacrifice
United forever
In this one
Eternal destination

~Sr. Thérèse Marie, TOR

✠ marriage

✠ religious life