



“Theology of the Body”

St. John Paul II’s Roadmap to Happiness

Would you like a roadmap to a fulfilling life and a heavenly destiny?

Well, back in the 1980’s Pope St. John Paul II gave us an extraordinary one. Calling it the “Theology of the Body,” he unfolded that map bit by bit through weekly audiences over the course of five years. Because of his philosophical mind and vocabulary, the Pope’s map needed some ‘decoding’ for the average person. We have that now, thanks to the dedication of people like author Brian Butler, who will be presenting a virtual conference on “Formation for Theology of the Body: Unlocking the Meaning of Our Humanity,” on Sat., June 5, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm.

Before I explain how you can register for this conference, let me tell you why it is so valuable.

You see, *every Catholic school in the diocese*, and *every parish religious education program*, has been asked by Bishop Callahan to form our young people using the Theology of the Body through a curriculum whose primary author is Brian Butler. That makes the June 5 virtual conference a golden opportunity for parents, grandparents and any interested adult to gain key insights from the author himself on what their children are being taught.

But there’s more. Several of us in charge of diocesan offices see the Theology of the Body as a central thread in all our efforts of

formation, at every level. We are working and planning to weave it into everything we do.

Why? Because it has a powerfully inspiring message that God created us in a burst of His infinite Love, that He wired us for relationship with Him and with each other, that we become who God created us to be when we live a life of self-giving love, and that by His grace we can experience a freedom and contagious joy that lights up the world.

The Theology of the Body has been especially helpful in teaching people the positive Catholic vision of human sexuality. To our culture that looks at sex as a commodity, it declares that women (and men) are always to be respected and loved, and never to be objectified and used. And in this age of gender confusion, its profound insights into the God-given uniqueness and complementarity of man and woman are a healing balm.

Pope John Paul II showed a marvelous ability to speak to the human heart in a way that is real and relatable, addressing both our fears and our yearnings. That is why our young people are responding to it with such enthusiasm. It resonates with their experience and gives hope and meaning to their lives.

But the Theology of the Body does much more than help us understand sexual morality. It considers all the ways the body expresses the person – our gaze, a smile or a frown, our tone of voice, our manners and

posture, our touch. These bodies of ours are not “containers” for our souls, nor are they “accessories” that we can manipulate as we wish.

No, our bodies are *us*, central to our very identity. They will be raised up on the last day and we will be embodied forever. Our bodies speak a language. Think of a closed fist vs. an open hand, a shove vs. an embrace. Jesus took on a body and He “spoke” with it. He wept in grief at the tomb of Lazarus. He made a whip in righteous anger and overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple. He fed his people, first with loaves and fishes and then with His very Body and Blood. He opened His arms upon the Cross. He rose in glory and ascended bodily into Heaven.

We live and move and express ourselves through our bodies. This is what Pope St. John Paul II understood so keenly and wanted us to take seriously, in our age that fails to respect the body and thus also fails to respect the person that the body represents.

So, join Brian Butler on June 5 as he shares vital insights into this treasure from Pope John Paul II that is having such a powerful impact in our Catholic schools and parishes. It will speak to your heart, too!

By Christopher Ruff

*Virtual Conference Cost: \$10/person.
To register, visit diolc.org/tob.*



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