



Me, Myself and I: The Body and the Soul

The “Language of the Body”

You know another person’s inner emotions through facial expressions, gestures and other actions. You reveal your love for your son or daughter by taking them to soccer practice, going for a walk, preparing a special birthday meal, and so forth. These bodily actions reveal your love and give your child a sense of security – even if he or she does not seem to appreciate everything you do. These simple, everyday gestures show how the body speaks a language. It makes visible and communicates what is in the invisible soul, which is our innermost core. Our soul is the ultimate source of our thoughts and choices, out of which we can love and enter into relationship with others.

Pope Saint John Paul II said it like this: “The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. The body has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery of God’s love hidden from eternity, and thus to be a sign of it” (Theology of the Body, 19:4).

Some aspects of the language of the body can vary from culture to culture. For example, when in the West we shake hands, people in the East might bow. But not everything is relative in this way. Indeed, God has “wired” us to understand some universal, objective truths about the language of the body. Take for example, the kiss, which is a universal sign of affection and good will. That is the “truth” of the kiss, and thus Judas “lied” with the language of his body when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Integrity of Body and Soul

The angels are pure spirits, but we are not. God created us as a body and soul composite. For this composite to be well integrated, to have “integrity,” our external actions need to be aligned with what is going on inside us; and both of these dimensions – internal and external – must be aligned with virtue. All of this is possible only through God’s love, His grace, dwelling in us through prayer and the Sacraments.

Here we have the foundation for Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. We are called to lives of integrity in body and soul, so that our outward actions express an inner love that comes from God and calls us to be His images, His visible sons and daughters, in the world. This will form the basis for your child’s understanding of human sexuality and the “language of the body” it is meant to speak in order to be “true” to God’s design for married love. But it will also form the basis for all the rest of life’s choices and actions, that they might speak a language that is true and virtuous.

Bear in mind that in Jesus Christ, God took on human flesh. He is our perfect model of integrity of soul and body. He is also “like us in all things but sin” (Heb 4:15). The struggles and temptations we face can be overcome through the power of Jesus’ grace, and when we fall short by sinning, He stands ready with His merciful forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Engage with your son/daughter

Pray for them: Jesus, help us to show our son/daughter who he/she truly is in You. Amen.

- 1) What does a person do that reveals that he is angry? Or joyful?
- 2) What are some things that Jesus experienced, just like you, as a Divine Person Who took on a human body?

Adapted from *Theology of the Body for Teens, Discovering God’s Plan for Love and Life Middle School Edition: Parent’s Guide*, Ascension Press, 2024.