

Spirituality of the Body

The bond of love in marriage:

We all have sexual desires. But have you ever wondered why the sexual urge is so strong? It is because God made us with a desire for union with others, or what we call intimacy. While this desire for intimacy is easily felt in our bodies, it is more than just physical. We desire intimacy with others “personally.” In other words, we desire the friendship and acceptance of other human persons. But the effects of sin have blinded us to the deeper communion we desire in our souls for God and for one another. Sin reduces the desire for holy union to the desire merely to satisfy our physical passions.

The effects of sin are a reality, which we must not overlook. We recognize that every one of us is a sinner, and that we all fall short of God’s perfect plan for us. That is why God sent His Son to redeem us, and to give the grace to seek and to follow His plan for our lives. In these lessons on the Spirituality of the Body, we are setting forth human sexuality according to God’s perfect design, and this includes God’s plan for marriage. But we also recognize that no one’s experience of marriage is perfect. Many people are divorced, or are raising children without being married. Our intention is not to cause frustration, pain, or feelings of condemnation. We are simply setting forth the teachings of Our Lord Jesus and of His Holy Catholic Church in regards to human sexuality. These teachings are a struggle for all of us, as they challenge us to grow toward perfect holiness.

What makes a marriage in the sight of God? The Scriptures teach us that in marriage, the two become one flesh, and Jesus teaches us that God joins the couple together in an unbreakable bond (cf. Mark 10:9). But what is necessary for that unbreakable marriage bond to come about?

First, the couple must have the intention of entering into a permanent marriage. Couples cannot enter into a true marriage with the idea, “I’ll do this until it gets too difficult, or until I get tired of it.” Marriage is a covenant promise, not only between a man and a woman, but between the man, the woman, and God. Marriage is a Sacrament, meaning it is a source of grace. In marriage, God provides the couple with every grace they need to live as husband and wife for the entirety of their lives here on earth. This lifelong union is a symbol of Christ’s undying love for His Bride, the Church.

Secondly, the marital union is to be one of faithfulness to each other. This means spouses have no other sexual partners outside of the marriage. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers.” Marriage also requires an openness to having children. As we saw in lesson two, there are two “goods” of marriage: the unitive, and the procreative. Marriage is not only the blessing of a lifelong partner, but also the willingness to accept children as a gift from God.

Marriage must be entered into freely, without any pressure, force, or fear. When couples say, “I do” at the altar, their vows are expressions of their genuine desire to give themselves totally to one another for life. This also assumes the ability of each spouse to take on the duties which marriage requires. Some people, for example, are too immature to live up to what being a husband or wife requires. Or, a person may have a mental illness, or an addiction problem, which in spite of their desire to be married, prevents them from fulfilling the duties of a married person.