

# Magisterial Pronouncements Teach Christ's Word

Following is excerpted from an a general audience address given recently by Pope John Paul II.

Purely "biological" knowledge of the functions of the body as an organism, connected with the masculinity and femininity of the human person, is capable of helping to discover the true nuptial meaning of the body, only if it is accompanied by an adequate



spiritual maturity of the human person. Otherwise, such knowledge can have quite the opposite effect; and this is confirmed by many experiences of our time.

From this point of view it is necessary to consider prudently the pronouncements of the modern Church. Their adequate understanding and interpretation, as well as their practical application (that is,

precisely; pedagogy) demands that deep theology of the body which, in a word, we derive mainly from the key words of Christ. As for the pronouncements of the Church in modern times, it is necessary to study the chapter entitled "The dignity of marriage and the family," of the pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council and, subsequently, Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Without any doubt, the words of Christ, which we have analyzed at great length, had no other purpose than to emphasize the dignity of marriage and the family; hence the fundamental convergence between them and the content of both the above-mentioned statements of the modern Church. Christ was speaking to the man of all times and places; the pronouncements of the Church aim at applying Christ's words to the here and now, and therefore they must be reread according to the key of that theology and that pedagogy which find roots and support in Christ's words.

It is difficult here to make a total analysis of the cited pronouncements of the supreme Magisterium of the Church. We will confine ourselves to quoting some passages. Here is how the Second Vatican Council — placing among the most urgent problems of the Church in the modern world "the dignity of marriage and the family" — characterizes the situation that exists in this area: "The happy picture of the dignity of these partnerships (that is, marriage and the family) is not reflected everywhere, but is overshadowed by polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love, and similar blemishes; furthermore, married love is too often dishonoured by selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptive practices." Paul VI, setting forth this last problem in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, writes among other things: "Another thing that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection."

In the same spirit the author of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, speaking of the demands of Christian morality, presents, at the same time, the possibility of fulfilling them, when he writes: "The mastery of instinct by one's reason and free will undoubtedly demands an asceticism — Paul VI uses this term — so that the affective manifestations of conjugal life may be in keeping with right order, in particular with regard to the observance of periodic continence. Yet this discipline which is proper to the purity of married couples, far from harming conjugal love, rather confers

on it a higher human value. It demands a continual effort (precisely this effort was called above "asceticism"), yet, thanks to its beneficent influence, husband and wife fully develop their personalities, enrich each other with spiritual values . . . It favors attention for one's partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness, the enemy of true love, and deepens their sense of responsibility . . ."

Let us pause on these few passages. They — particularly the last one — clearly show how indispensable, for an adequate understanding of the pronouncement of the Magisterium of the modern Church, is that theology of the body, whose foundations we sought especially in the words of Christ himself. It is precisely that theology — as we have already said — that becomes the fundamental method of the whole Christian pedagogy of the body. Referring to the words quoted, it can be affirmed that the purpose of the pedagogy of the body lies precisely in ensuring that the "affective manifestations" —

particularly those "proper to conjugal life" — be in conformity with the moral order, or, in a word, with the dignity of the persons. In these words there returns the problem of the mutual relationship between "eros" and "ethos," with which we have already dealt. Theology, understood as a method of the pedagogy of the body, prepares us also for further reflections on the sacramentality of human life and, in particular, of married life.

The Gospel of purity of heart, yesterday and today: concluding with this phrase this cycle of our considerations — before going on to the next one, in which the basis of analysis will be Christ's words on the resurrection of the body — we will wish to devote some attention to the need of creating an atmosphere favourable to education in chastity," with which Paul VI's Encyclical deals and we wish to focus these observations on the problem of the ethos of the body in works of artistic culture, with particular reference to the situations we encounter in modern life.

## Sr. Mary Roch Basso Is Top Honoree

Elmira — Sister Mary Roch Basso was the spotlighted honoree at the St. Joseph's Hospital Employee Awards Dinner May 12.

Sister Mary Roch, long associated with Maternity Services and due to retire soon, was unable to attend the event due to illness. But she was honored for 45 years of service to the hospital.

Among the honorees was Sister Joan Francis Hauser, who completed 40 years of service, including her current membership on the Board of Directors.

In addition to honors for those celebrating an anniversary of service, employees who retired during the past year received certificates.

Dr. Robert V. Siliciano, medical staff chairman, expressed the physician's appreciation to the employees.

The service awards were presented by Sister Martha Gersbach, administrator; Judge Daniel J. Donahoe, board chairman; and the respective department heads.

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