

## The Eternal Exchange of Love

What is the divine mystery that the body signifies?

- It is the mystery of Trinitarian Life and Love – of God’s eternal *Communion* as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- It is also the plan “hidden from eternity in God” (Ephesians 3:9) that man is destined in Christ to share in God’s eternal bliss. *This is our call to “greatness.”*

**2i.** “God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange” (CCC 221).

## 3. THE SPOUSAL ANALOGY

Scripture uses many images to describe God’s love. Each has its own valuable place. But the spousal image is used far more than any other. It is also the favored image of the mystics.

- The Bible begins and ends with marriages – Adam-Eve and Christ-Church.
- The spousal “book ends” of Genesis and Revelation are a key for interpreting all that lies in between.
- We are *creatures* called to live in total (spousal) union with our *Creator*. This is the source of our “greatness” as human beings.
- The spousal analogy (like all analogies) is certainly limited and inadequate. No human image can do justice to the divine mystery. Yet JP II considers the spousal analogy the *least* inadequate.

God wanted this eternal plan of love and communion to be so obvious to us that he stamped an image of it in our very being by creating us as male and female.

**3a.** Man “became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, which man and woman form from the very beginning ... On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fruitfulness descended” (TOB 9:3).

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:21-32).

**3b.** “The Church cannot therefore be understood ... unless we keep in mind the ‘great mystery’ ... expressed in the ‘one flesh’ [union] of marriage and the family” (LF 19).

**3c.** “Saint Paul’s magnificent synthesis concerning the ‘great mystery’ appears as the ... *summa*, in some sense, of the teaching about God and man which was brought to fulfillment by Christ” (LF 19).

## 4. THREE KEY WORDS OF CHRIST

In his discussions about the love of man and woman, Christ himself points to the marriage of the *beginning* and the Marriage of our ultimate *destiny*. Within *history* we live in a kind of “tension between these two poles” (TOB 71:2). This tension can awaken in us a great hope for the “redemption of our bodies” akin to the hope of a woman in labor (see Romans 8:22-23).

### Our Origin

“For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:8).

- We think all the tension, heartache, and difficulty in the male-female relationship is “normal.” In the beginning it was not this way. Something has gone dreadfully wrong.
- The good news is that “Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins” (CCC 2336).

“And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25).

- John Paul II calls this the “key” for understanding God’s original plan for man and woman (see TOB 11:2).
- They experienced sexual desire (*eros*) only as the desire to love as God loves (*agape*). There is no shame (or fear) in love. “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).