

RELATIONALITY
AS THE CONSTITUTIVE FEATURE OF MAN IN THE LIGHT OF JOHN PAUL II'S
THEOLOGY OF THE BODY:
A MORAL THEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE.

ABSTRACT

The dissertation is an analysis of John Paul II's theology of the body in terms of the relationality of man, through which it is possible to fulfill the meaning of humanity in the dimension of corporeality realizing God's likeness in the visible world. The pope's theology of the body is a collection of his catecheses collectively titled: "Male and Female He Created Them" and delivered by him at the beginning of his pontificate during his Wednesday audiences from September 1979 to November 1984. This teaching reflects the pope's anthropological conception, which considers the divine origin of man and the importance of corporeality in fulfilling the sense of humanity. According to this anthropology, its sense is to show likeness to God in the visible world.

The dissertation presents this teaching, enriched by the pope's biographical information, which indicate that the process of Karol Wojtyla's spiritual and intellectual formation played a huge role in the development of his later theological thought, and his theology of the body is an elaboration of this content and the pope's theological interests. The study attempts to demonstrate that relationality is a constitutive feature of human beings and to determine its visible shape in the bodily dimension of man. The research focuses on the shape of relationality in which humanity is realized, since the history of the fall of man reveals another relationality that distorted the original image of man and disrupted his sense of identity in the world: Satan's relationality.

The methodological premise of this dissertation is firstly to show the foundations on which the theology of the body is based, then to extract from them the relationality in which humanity was to be fulfilled "in the beginning," and finally to show its sin-distorted image and the role that the Redemption played in healing human relationality and identity contaminated by concupiscence. The dissertation ends with practical conclusions, which focus on showing how human identity and theological relationality are realized in different ways of life: in celibacy and consecrated life, and in marriage: through body language. The practical conclusions also include bioethical topics and the references of the relationality to the world of nature.

The theology of the body is the key to discover the mystery of humanity realized in a visible way thanks to the body. It reveals man's way of being, in which he fulfills his meaning by realizing his likeness to God in relationships: just as God exists by living in the relationships of the Persons of the Trinity.

In conjunction with the Introduction, Conclusion and Bibliography, the essential structure of the dissertation is formed by three chapters. The first chapter discusses Karol Wojtyła's biographical themes, which reveal those elements of his spiritual and theological formation that influenced his theological thought as developed in his theology of the body and in his further teaching as a pope. In the pope's interests, the theme of human love was one of the most significant, not to say, the most important threads, in which the body and human corporeality have played a key role. The theology of the body is therefore a theology of human love, realized through the human body. And since love is a personal relationship, it is as well a theological vision of human relationships.

The second chapter shows the process of the formation of man's relationality, according to the biblical accounts, correlated with the arising of man's individuality and the consequences that sin caused to the relationality, and how it was healed by the Redemption. First the filial and spousal relationality is shown (experienced by man before committing sin), then the relationality distorted by sin, infected by concupiscence in man's heart. In the aspect of relationality is also presented the work of Redemption, which made it possible for man to return to the "in the beginning" relationality, in sense of sacramental relationship with Christ. It means the relationality of the God's child (filial relationship) and the spousal relationality (the spousal sense of the body). The humanity is realized in them in terms of a gratuitous personal sacrifice, whether for God, for the other and for the world.

The third chapter presents practical conclusions. They show the realization of theological relationality within the vocation to celibacy and to marriage, focusing on the aspect of body language, which expresses spousal love, to which every person is called, regardless of the chosen path of life. The conclusions also include bioethical topics relating to the respect of theological relationality in all phases of human life. The particular focus is on the prenatal phase, where a very selective respect for personal identity and for the right to life becomes apparent, relativizing the personal character of human life, as well as its eschatological meaning. In the final conclusions consideration to man's relationship with the created world was also presented.