



# Theology Corner

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*Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation*

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## “What Does the Genesis Story Tell Us About Our Nature?”

Many people hear the title “Theology of the Body” by St. John Paul II, and immediately think that it strictly entails a conversation about sexual matters. I think this is a misconception since the body of this work has to do with gaining a better understanding of our nature as man and woman made in the image of God. He does this by going back to the “beginning” in the Genesis story. John Paul II speaks much about the relationship between the state of sin and the state of original innocence. This is essentially speaking about man in a fallen state versus man in a state of grace. In the beginning, man was in a state of grace, and man was perfect. By perfect, I do not mean this in the same way that God is perfect. Rather, that man was perfect in that he always acted according to his nature in a perfect way – “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen 1:31). When acting according to our nature, we are entirely happy because we are cooperating with the way God made us. But as soon as sin entered into the world, man entered into a state of shame. In the state of innocence, there was no shame felt because of that innocence. Shame, then, comes with the state of sin by which man’s eyes are opened and directed back to themselves – “they knew that they were naked.” (Gen 3:7). By the failed test of obedience on part of our first parents, they broke the first covenant with God. Adam and Eve now had a skewed view of each other insofar as they viewed each other’s nakedness as an object instead of a subject. In other words, they went from seeing each other as a gift, to seeing things from only their individual point-of-view. This seems to point to the first time the consequence of selfishness is manifested.

By looking at the genesis story, in the second account of creation, we see that man was alone and needed a helper fit for him (Gen 2:18). This also points to the fact that men and women are created for each other and must live according to this nature in order to live harmoniously. The good news is that our nature itself is not evil as a consequence to the fall. While still being “good” it is, in fact, damaged. Yet, by being made in the image of God endowed with an intellect and will, we can hear a distant echo of our state of original innocence in search of our true selves. As we seek out this echo, we begin to accept God’s grace and begin to be restored into God’s Divine life and become a faithful representation of the image of God, mirroring the relationship of the Holy Trinity. This, of course, leads to a discussion about marriage and how a true marriage will display the integral nature of man (male and female) and how we were created for each other in complete complementarity. It is when we revert back to our state of corruption, divorced from God’s grace, that we begin acting contrary to our *true* nature as beings created in His image.

Luckily, we do not have to struggle to hear this distant echo of innocence, being that we have been revealed through the scriptures, the history of humanity from the perspective of our salvation. We can then clearly see, through Genesis, how things were like when we were in a state of grace, and compare that to the effects we see from being in a corrupted state. This is so useful for us because we can use this as a tool to understand that when spouses are at odds with each other, it is a consequence to a lack of grace being accepted on part of one or both spouses. Grace heals our damaged nature, so the more we participate with God, the more we will experience His happiness and peace. What better place to witness this integral nature in action than in the Genesis story.

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