

Noted lecturer speaks on "Theology of the Body"

MOSS BLUFF – Christopher West, a noted lecturer on the topic, provided the priests of the Diocese of Lake Charles an in-depth presentation recently on Pope John Paul II's first major teaching of his pontificate "The Theology of the Body" at the annual priest's convocation held at Tabor Retreat House of Saint Charles Center.

The Pope expounded on the topic in 129 short talks from September 1979 to November 1984 to provide a profoundly beautiful vision of human embodiment and erotic love, according to West, who is a research fellow and faculty member of the Theology of the Body Institute. He is also one of the most sought after speakers in the Church today, having delivered more than 1000 public lectures on four continents, in nine countries, and in over 150 American cities.

His books – *Good News About Sex & Marriage*, *Theology of the Body Explained*, and *Theology of the Body for Beginners* – have become Catholic best sellers. He has also lectured on a number of prestigious faculties while hundreds of thousands have heard him on national radio programs and even more have seen him defending the faith on programs such as *Scarborough Country*, *Fox and Friends*, and *At Large with Geraldo Rivera*.

Many Catholics, in fact most people, are more than likely unfamiliar with the phrase "Theology of the Body."

"There are people out there catching wind that this has something to do with the Pope's teaching on sex, but they have not understood generally what that means," West said. "They think it's 'oh here we go again with a list of rules'."

"Pope John Paul II has given us a glorious vision of what it means that we are male and female to begin with," he continued. "When most people have questions about sexual morality, they general begin with something like this 'how far can I go before I break the law'."

"John Paul II shifts the discussion entirely by beginning with this 'what does it mean to be human?' 'why did God create sex in the first place' and 'what is the truth about sex that will set me free to love?'. 'How can I live the happiness I yearn for?' Those are the

questions of The Theology of the Body."

The Pope used more than 1000 scriptural references in the teaching.

"We come to realize through John Paul II's brilliant reflection on scripture, that the truth that sets us free is Christ's call to love as He loves, and that is actually chiseled right in our bodies. Love one another. How? As I have loved you. How did Jesus love us? This is my body given for you. That call is literally chiseled in our sexuality. A man's body doesn't make sense by itself. A woman's body doesn't make sense by itself. Seen in light of each other we see this call to love.

"If you look at our world today, there is a lot of sex going on, but we are still starved for love," West said. "Why? Because we have run out of wine. The Good News of the Gospel is that Christ comes to restore the wine. That is what the 'Theology of the Body' teaches. It's a path to real sexual restoration, healing, and redemption."

West brings his knowledge to many groups, both married people, Catholic and Protestant, as well as clergy and religious.

"It is so important to understand that 'Theology of the Body' is not just for married people," he said. "I like to say, if you have a body, this theology applies to you.

"It's a vision for life, it's a vision about what it means to be human," he continued. "It's stamped right in our bodies as a call to love. This is no less true for someone who is celibate for the Kingdom than it is for somebody who is married. The celibate is also called to live the 'Theology of the Body.' The celibate priest also says in the consummate moment of his vocation 'this is my body, given for you'."

"The priest in a way is married to the church and the religious woman is in a way married to Christ. This is why the terms husband, father, wife, mother, brother, and sister apply just as much to celibacy for the Kingdom as they do to marriage and family life. We are all called to image God through this gift of our bodies. There is a sexual way of doing that through married love, there is a celibate way of doing that. But they come from the very same vocation, the very same call."



Noted lecturer Christopher West, top left, speaks to the priests of the Diocese of Lake Charles at the recent Priests' Convocation about "The Theology of the Body," the first major teaching of Pope John Paul II's pontificate. Eventually compiled and published as a single work it refers to a series of 129 lectures given by the late Holy Father during his Wednesday audiences between September 1979 and November 1984.

Concept proclaimed so people can understand

MOSS BLUFF – "The Theology of the Body" is a very powerful vision brought forth by Pope John Paul II early in his pontificate and spread to the people now by knowledgeable speakers like Christopher West, who recently spoke to the priests of the Diocese of Lake Charles.

"It is the Christian vision," West said. "It is the Gospel. It's nothing new, it is just the Gospel proclaimed in a language that modern men and women can understand."

According to West, people have a great craving to understand their bodies.

"It is a deep, aching, yearning hunger in all of us to understand the meaning of our bodies and our sexuality. But when the banquet of God's plan is not laid out for us in all of its splendor and beauty, we go to Hugh Hefner's trash heap. Hugh Hefner says 'I'll feed you.' We go to that because we are hungry and going to the trash heap is better than starving to death. All I heard growing up was 'thou shall not eat out of the trash heap'. Nobody ever showed me the beauty of the banquet.

"But, when the banquet is laid out we are no longer attracted to the trash heap. We have found the food that really satisfies the hunger," West continued. "We have in the Theology of the Body what Hugh Hefner has been looking for the whole time.

Which is why we are on the verge of a new Evangelization. Christianity is for hungry people I like to say. And, the fact that our world is immersed in pornography demonstrates the hunger. We are hungry and you can only eat out of that trash heap for so long before you start feeling nauseous and you start looking for better food."

The meaning of "Theology of the Body" goes beyond married people, West notes.

"John Paul II says there is a 'spousal meaning to our bodies'. Spousal love is the language of total self-donation. It is the vowed gift of self. Both married people and those who are consecrated celibates, make vows - vows of this total gift of self. That is how we are fulfilling the image of God in us, through that total gift of self. We are all called to this, not just married people."

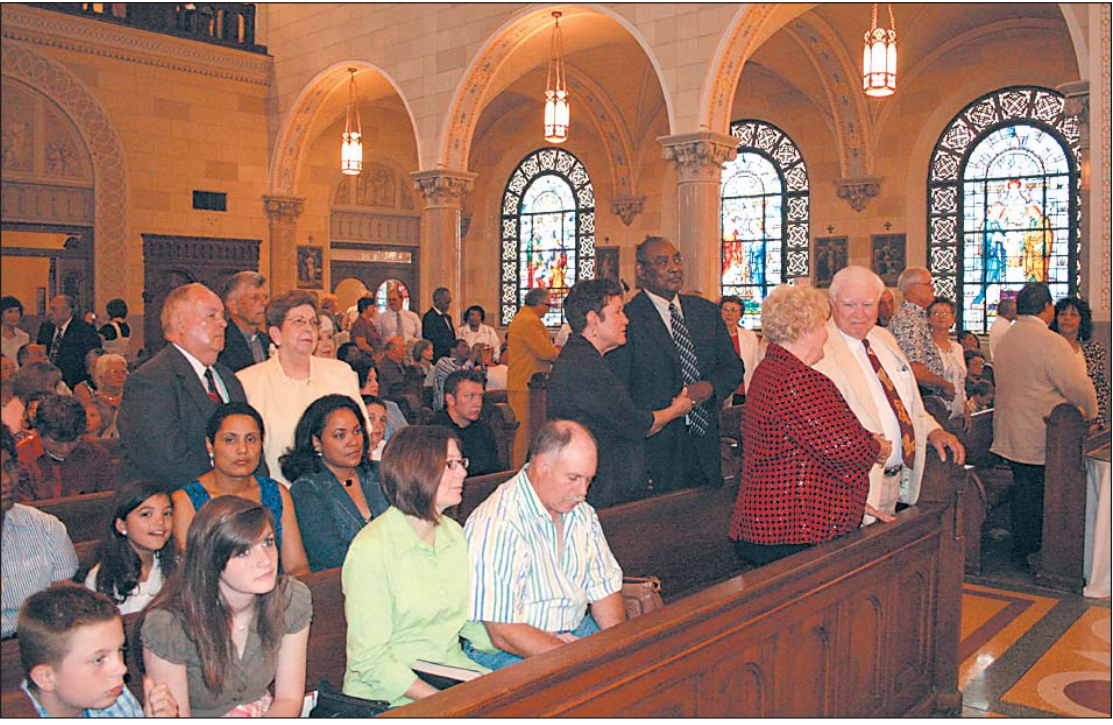
The fact is that many people don't understand the concept of "Theology of the Body" because they aren't aware of the good news of the Gospel.

"We haven't understood what Christ teaches us," West said. "Christ himself says 'some remain celibate for the sake of the Kingdom of God'. What is the Kingdom of God? We need to look to the Book of Revelation to get a full vision of what the Kingdom of God is.

"In the Book of Revela-

tion, the Kingdom of God is described as a marriage. It is the marriage of Christ and the Church. The Bible begins in Genesis with the marriage of man and woman and it ends in the Book of Revelation with the marriage of Christ and the Church. Interestingly, Jesus says that in the Resurrection men and women are no longer given in marriage. Why? This shines a bright light on the very purpose and meaning of marriage. The union of man and woman, as beautiful and wonderful as it is, it is not our be-all and end-all. It is just a sacrament of our be-all and end-all. It is meant to point us to the marriage of Christ and the Church. That is our ultimate fulfillment and you no longer need a sign - marriage - to point you to Heaven when you are there. You've arrived and you've achieved the goal for which you are created - union with God."

According to West, those who choose celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, are skipping, so to speak, the marriage of man and woman to devote themselves entirely to the ultimate fulfillment - the marriage of Christ and the Church. In this way they are not rejecting their sexuality, they are living out the ultimate purpose and meaning of their sexuality which is union with God."



Shown are some of the 41 couples celebrating either 25th or 50th anniversaries of marriage in 2008 who re-committed their vows during Mass on Sunday, June 1 in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Bishop Glen John Provost honored the couples at the Liturgy and blessed their unions.

Bishop Provost honors anniversary couples

LAKE CHARLES – Bishop Glen John Provost honored 41 married couples of the Diocese of Lake Charles who were celebrating their 25th or 50th anniversaries during 2008 on Sunday, June 1, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

Bishop Provost noted a discussion he had had with some close friends who would be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary this year.

"I asked them about what kind of advice they would give," Bishop said. "They said something very interesting and at the same time challenging. 'We made an agreement 60 years ago that the sun would not set on a day when we had an argument that we did not give to each other an apology, no matter who was wrong or who was right. We made that agreement and we stuck to it.'"

Also in his homily, Bishop Provost said, "Knowing the will of the Father in heaven and carrying it out is what it means to be Christian and Christ has left us the example of what that means. That will is to love and to love God above all things and our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is taking the word of God into us and living it."

marvelous things about couples in marriage," the Bishop continued. "They witness to this reality. Are things always perfect? Of course not. We don't live in a perfect world. Are there difficulties? Yes, of course there are.

"Like the older couple told me 'not a day will come when the sun will set that we will not put aside whatever it is we were arguing about'. This is what it means to live love. We see it everyday in those who have been graced with the vocation of marriage and live it with perseverance, with fidelity, with integrity."

Fiftieth Anniversary honorees were Harry and Jeanette Aguilard; Francis and Barbara Andrepont; Albert and Helena Blanchette; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Breaux; Bennie and Eula Buller; Albert and Betty Cedars; Deacon Norris and Sandra Chapman; Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Laurence Darbonne; Franklin and Shirley Foote; Mr. and Mrs. John Fontenot; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rapheal Fontenot; Pervis and Joyce Guidry; Donald and Doris Hebert; Loral Paul and Annette D. LaFleur; Rufus and Marjorie Nelands; David and Antoinette Norris; Mr. and Mrs. William Barr Pharr III; Mr. and Mrs. James Poullard; Joseph and Marjorie Richard; James and

Rmanuel Sam-Hollier; Charles and Billye Scheufens; George and Gayla Shove; Jim and Louise Thibodeaux; Paul and Eldalene Todd; George and Theresa Walker Jr; and John and Shirley Young.

Twenty-fifth anniversary honorees were Joseph and Brenda Andrepont; Joseph and Pamela Broussard; Mr. and Mrs. Michael Casteel; John and Susan Crawford; Mr. and Mrs. David Duplechian; John and Amy Fontenot; Mr. and Mrs. George William Graham; Alvin and Katherine Hayes; Todd and Toyne Hebert; Kevin and Roxanne Lavergne; Kevin and Cynthia Robbins; Albert and Julie Robichaux; Charles and Tina Savoie; Frank and Eva Thompson; and Robert and Connie Verret.

Mass in Latin Sunday, 2 p.m.

LAKE CHARLES – The Rev. Roland Vaughn, Pastor of Saint Peter the Apostle Church in Hackberry, will be the celebrant of the Sunday, June 22, Extraordinary Form of the Liturgy in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Bilbo Street at 2 p.m.

Did you know...

Msgr. Jules Daigle was pastor of Our Lady of Seven Dolours Church in Welsh for 44 years, the longest tenure of the nine priests with over 25 years as pastor of a single parish. Two others with more than 40 years service to one community were Msgr. A.J. Robichaud, St. Philip Neri, Kinder (43 years); and Rev. William Frantzen, St. Paul, Elton (42 years). Pastors with more than 30 years of service in one place Msgr. Louis H. Boudreaux, Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles (34); Msgr. Hubert Cramers, Immaculate Conception, Lake Charles (33) and Msgr. Irving A. DeBlanc, Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Lake Charles (31). Pastors with 25 years at one parish were Msgr. Joseph Peeters, Our Lady Help of Christians, Jennings; Msgr. M. J. Bernard, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Creole; and Msgr. Charles LeVasseur, St. Mary of the Lake.

Four priests of the Diocese have reached 50 or more years of priesthood. One celebrated his 50th last week. Who are they and who was the most recent to reach this golden milestone? Find out in our next Catholic Calendar.

