

Sexuality is God-given gift for communicating true love, pope says

VATICAN CITY – The human body is a God-given instrument for communicating love, although it also can be used to inflict harm on others or for one's own selfish pleasure, Pope Benedict XVI said.

That the body is designed for true love is what gives value to chastity as the virtue that takes seriously the power of the body to communicate something profound if given the respect and time it needs, the pope told participants in a meeting sponsored by the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.

The pope met the group May 13 during their celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the institute by Blessed Pope John Paul II. The late pope encouraged the institute to study and promote what has been described as his "theology of the body."

Pope Benedict told the group that by "connecting the theology of the body with the theology of love" they could help Catholics reach a greater understanding about the purpose of their lives.

"The true fascination of sexuality stems from the greatness of this horizon which it opens: the integral beauty, the universe of the other person and of the 'we' that is born of union, the promise of communion hidden there, the new fruitfulness, the journey that love opens toward God, who is the source of love," the pope said.

"In this light," he said, "the virtue of chastity receives new meaning. It is not a 'no' to pleasures and to the joy of life, but a great 'yes' to love as a profound communication between persons, which requires time and respect as a journey together toward fullness, and as a love that becomes capable of generating life and generously welcoming the new life that is born," the pope said.

Pope Benedict said having a body is a reminder that there really is no such thing as a "self-made man," but that we are born of our parents and, ultimately, of God the

creator.

“Only when one recognizes the original love that gave him life can he accept himself, reconcile himself with nature and with the world,” the pope said.

That God created human beings male and female is a clear sign that he wanted it to be possible for a man and a woman to love each other, unite and have children, he said.

And the fact that even after Adam and Eve sinned, God sent his son – born with a human body – shows that their fall “was not the last word on the body in the history of salvation. God also offered man a path to the redemption of the body” through the family, the pope said.

References to Eve as “the mother of the living,” he said, “give a witness that the power of sin was not able to cancel the original language of the body, the blessing of life that God continues to offer when man and woman unite in one flesh.”

“The family: This is where the theology of the body and the theology of love intersect,” he said. A man and a woman, who pledge themselves exclusively to each other for life, have children and educate them, experience firsthand “the goodness of the body” and the fruitfulness of love, the pope said.