



"For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1)

10 Steps to Leave the Cave Practical Strategies to Implement the Theology of the Body

A task that is truly worth of man

"Thus, if man wants to respond to the call expressed by Matthew 5:27-28, he must *learn* with perseverance and consistency *what* the meaning of the body *is*...He must learn it not only through an objectifying abstraction (though this is needed as well), but above all in the sphere of the interior reactions of his own "heart"...One should add that this task *can* be carried out and that it is truly worthy of man" (TOB, 12 Nov. 80, emphasis in original)

TOB is invitation to true freedom, not only external freedom, but internal freedom

"Such freedom liberates us not from the *external* 'constraint' that calls us to good, but from the *internal* constraint that hinders our choice of the good. When we *desire* what is true, good and beautiful, then we are free indeed...Those who toss off the law in order to indulge their lusts may imagine themselves free, but like an alcoholic who can't say no to the bottle, a person who can't say no to lust is *enslaved*" (*Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 41-42, emphasis in original)

In the allegory of the cave, true freedom is perceiving that the shadows have greater significance because of what they reflect (freedom of the mind) and breaking our bonds to leave the cave (freedom of the heart)

Follow these ten steps to get out of the cave

Step One: Surround yourself with greatness: great "beauty" "truth" and "goodness"

Seek great beauty

Natural beauty: visit Grand Canyon, explore the splendors of hidden life underwater, discover the vast immensity of space, or intricacy of a flower petal

Artistic beauty: classical paintings such as DaVinci's "Last Supper," Michelangelo's "David," music of Johann Sebastian Bach

Great beauty reveals that this world is a shadow of

something more

"To see in contemplation...is not limited only to the tangible surface of reality; it certainly perceives more than mere appearances. Art flowing from contemplation does not so much attempt to copy reality as rather to capture the archetypes of all that is. Such art does not want to depict what everybody already sees but to make visible what not everybody sees" (*Only the Lover Sings*, 74)

Seek the truth

"Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him...`you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (*John* 8:31-33)

Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Shakespeare's "Hamlet", Homer's *Iliad*, St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*

Seek for goodness

Read the lives of the saints, like John Paul II in *Witness to Hope*

Read the lives of great figures in history: Benjamin Franklin, Gandhi, St. Catherine of Siena, John Henry Newman

Each person carries a spark of God, the great figures of history allow that spark to shine

"The giving of the white stone (Rev. 2:17) with the new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man. It is the divine judgment, the solemn holy doom of the righteous man, the 'Come, thou blessed,' spoken to the individual...The true name is one which expresses the character, the nature, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the man's own symbol – his soul's picture, in a word – the sign which belongs to him and to no one else. Who can give a man this, his own name? God alone. For no one but God sees what the man is...It is only when the man has become his name that God gives him the stone with the name upon it, for then first can he understand what his name signifies. It is the blossom, the perfection, the completeness, that determines the name: and God foresees that from the first because He made it so: but the tree of the soul, before its blossom comes, cannot understand what blossom it is to bear and could not know what the word meant, which, in representing its own unarrived completeness, named itself. Such a name cannot be given until the man *is* the name. God's name for a man must be the expression of His own idea of the man, that being whom He had in His thought when he began to make the child, and whom He kept in His thought through the long process of creation that went to realize the idea. To tell the name is to seal the success – to say 'In thee also I am well pleased'" (*George MacDonald: An Anthology*, 7-8, emphasis in original)

Beauty, truth, goodness in the created things leads us to what is Uncreated

"According to Plato, 'eros' represents the inner power that draws man toward all that is good, true and beautiful"
(*TOB*, 5 Nov. 1980)

Step Two: Adoration one hour per week

Practice of Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Life is about falling in love with Jesus – either slowly in marriage, or faster in celibacy for the kingdom; and we must spend time with the One we love

People start looking and acting like those they spend a lot of time with

"The third reason I keep the Holy Hour is to grow more and more into His likeness. As Paul puts it: 'We are transfigured into His likeness, from splendor to splendor.' We become like that which we gaze upon. Looking into a sunset, the face takes on a golden glow. Looking at the Eucharistic Lord for an hour transforms the heart in a mysterious way as the face of Moses was transformed after his companionship with God on the mountain"
(*Treasure in Clay*, 188-189)

Who do you look and sound like? You'll know by the company you keep.

Step Three: Sacraments and prayer

Mass, confession and prayer

"The spouses must implore [God] for such 'power' and for every other 'divine help' in **prayer**; how they must draw grace and love from the ever-living fountain of the **Eucharist**; how 'with humble perseverance' they must overcome their own faults and sins in the sacrament of **penance**' (*TOB*, 3 Oct. 1984)

In each Mass Jesus the Bridegroom becomes "one flesh" with His Bride, the Church

"I never met my father-in-law; he died before my wife and I met. But I admire him tremendously because of the following story. At Mass the day after his wedding, having just consummated his marriage the night before, he was in tears after receiving the Eucharist. When his new bride inquired he said, 'For the first time in my life I understand the meaning of Christ's words, 'This is my body given for you'" (*Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 10)

In confession, mention not only actions but also the deliberate, sinful movements of your heart, ask for grace to heal your ethos

Pray before consummating your marriage

Step Four: Shut out sights and sounds that debase the human body, sex and marriage

"As you've all noticed, our society is absolutely saturated with sexual stimuli. Absolutely saturated! It's hard to go about an hour in the morning without having something assault your senses. You

drive to work and you see three billboards with scantily clad individuals. You turn on the T.V., you see people engaged in some sexual activity. I went to Dillard's, which is a department store, the other day, to buy a coffee pot. In every single aisle, there was a perfume ad with a naked man and a woman in this passionate embrace. And I'm thinking, "I want to buy a coffee pot. I do not want to see pornography and here it is....I know friends who get up on Sunday morning and take the lingerie ads out of the newspaper because they are just as bad as Playboy. There's no point in having their fifteen year old boys assaulted with this...You've got to start shutting these things out. You've got to say, "I don't want to listen to that. I don't want to see this. I don't want to look at this magazine. I don't want to watch this movie. Because it fills me with thoughts I'm not going to be able to act upon" (Janet Smith, "Contraception: Why Not?")
Exercise "custody of the eyes"

Step Five: Spirit of sacrifice

Devil's most powerful spiritual weapon is our fear of suffering/death

"Through death [Jesus]...destroy[ed] the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free[d] those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life" (Heb. 2: 14-15)

Every sin a "running away from suffering"

Start with small, unnoticed sacrifices

Mortification is not directed at the body (as if it were bad) but at the disordered passions, at transforming one's heart, one's ethos

Step Six: Devotion to Mary

Pray the rosary daily

Bishop at Vatican with rosary around hand

Ask Mary for the graces to see every woman as if she were the Blessed Virgin Mary

Pray for the virtue of purity

"The **reverence** born in man for everything bodily and sexual, both in himself and in every other human being, male and female, turns out to be the most essential power for keeping the body 'with holiness'...Precisely this **keeping of the body 'with holiness and reverence'** is to be considered essential for the virtue of purity" (TOB, 28 Jan., 4 Feb. 1981)

The reverence we have for Mary should also translate into the reverence we have for our spouse: this is "purity"

Step Seven: Solid sexual psychology

Sexual sins sometimes have strange roots

Pedophilia is often perpetrated as a sin of power rather than lust

Masturbation is often means of relieving stress rather than lustful

Sexual addictions

"To form an equitable judgment about the subject's moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety, or other psychological or social factors that lessen or even extenuate moral culpability" (CCC, 2352)

Don't give up hope: God is on your side, and God's grace is always stronger than sins

Step Eight: Study and share the TOB

Some introductory works

Men and Women Are From Eden by Mary Healy

Theology of the Body for Beginners by Christopher West

The Theology of the Body in John Paul II by Fr. Richard Hogan

First Comes Love by Scott Hahn

"Naked Without Shame: A Crash Course on the Theology of the Body" by Christopher West

"Nemo dat quod non habet"

Importance of sharing what you've learned

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 12th Step)

"Only a microscopic percentage of people on this planet have been exposed to the good news of the theology of the body. You are now one of them...Understanding, living and sharing the truth of your masculinity and femininity is not 'yet another task' to add to your Christian life. Living according to the truth of our embodiment as male and female takes us to the heart of the Christian life" (*Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 126)

Best way to learn something is to teach it, put it into your own words and concepts

Step Nine: Use Natural Family Planning, not contraception

NFP forces us to take sex seriously, which leads to treating the other person seriously; contraception takes sex casually, which leads to taking the other person casually

NFP makes your sex life better

"I have a friend who has seven brothers and sisters. They were all raised Catholic and very few of them are practicing Catholics now and all of them are contraceptors, except one couple. The couple that is not contracepting but using Natural Family Planning, had four children, all planned, etc. The other couples, again, have no children, all contracepting, two income households, lots of disposable income, lots of time for romance and fun. And one night the eight of them were having a very

open discussion about their sex lives. And all of the women, the contracepting women, were complaining that they felt that they were just being used in the sexual act. They felt this was just one more thing that was expected of them and they felt used. And the men were complaining. They were complaining that they had been reduced to begging for sex which they found demeaning and that they were engaging in sex with a woman who just wasn't all that engaged. She might just as well be watching TV. And they're having this conversation and the couple using Natural Family Planning, were looking at each other quizzically and saying, "What are they talking about? Is sex not interesting? Is sex not as interesting as TV? Begging for sex? I don't know what this is all about. We're doing just fine." Now, if you were to look at these couples: the contracepting couples – two incomes, fitness club, designer clothes; the couple with the four children – getting pudgy, gray, financially stressed, not as much sleep, etc. Which couples are having the satisfying sex life? It's amazing, but it's the opposite of what one would expect. And I think there is something there, in Natural Family Planning, that causes this kind of closeness and love between a couples that is really the heart and soul of what makes sex good. It's not about having a designer body and designer clothes and lots of disposable income. That won't buy you a good sex life. It's really trust and love and tenderness and really knowing and communicating with the individual with whom you are having sex. And that's what Natural Family Planning is about" (Janet Smith, "Contraception: Why Not?")

NFP requires sacrifice from **both** spouses

Step Ten: Choose sides, there's a war going on!

"In *The Lord of the Rings* we see forces gathering for a battle of cosmic significance. Two cultures are pitted against each other. On one side is the Shire, a land steeped in the joys of home, kinship, friendship and ancestral ties – a world shaped by marriage and family. On the other side is Mordor, a land devoid of love, marriage, family and any personal commitments, a world whose goal is to demolish the Shire and everything it represents. At the center of the war is a ring. This ring is not one that binds through covenant love but one that enslaves through lust, deceit and ambition. It is in fact the antithesis of a wedding ring. You could call it the 'anti-marriage ring.'" We, too, are in a world where forces are gathering for a great war – in our case, a culture war. We, too, are facing an 'anti-marriage ring,' in the form of an undermining of the marital bond and all that it safeguards: the family, the dignity of man and woman, the sanctity of human life. Our enemies in this battle are not human beings but 'principalities,... powers,... the world rulers of this present darkness' (Ephesians 6:12), whose goal is nothing less than to destroy humanity...Divorce, contraception, abortion, cloning, and same-sex marriage are all an attack on God's plan

for life and love. And because marriage is the deepest symbolic revelation of God's relationship to us, these evils obscure the face of God. Thus we, too, are in the 'Wars of the Ring.' Like the characters in Tolkien's novel, each of us is called to play our part in bringing the *anti-marriage ring* to its ultimate destruction – in the fiery pit where it was forged – and to build instead a culture founded on truth and love" (*Men and Women Are From Eden*, 103-104, emphasis in original)

In this war, "the tip of the spear" is sexuality

In this war, there is no "neutrality": whose side are you on?