



Lifers

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The Gift of Life

The Angel Gabriel came to Mary with an offer. He asked her, “Will you become the mother of the Savior of the world?” Mary said, “Yes!” Mary’s *yes* gives all peoples a model for being truly open to the gift of life.

From studying Blessed John Paul II’s teaching on Theology of the Body, my eyes have been opened to the beauty and purpose that God intends for every marriage. First, I learned marriage is a vocation just like the other vocations. It is a call from God that leads to holiness; marriage is a way of becoming a saint! Through the union that comes through the Sacrament, the married couple grows in sanctity by dying to self and living for God by loving each spouse, their kids, and the world.

Besides the good of the spouses, marriage also has another purpose: that of bringing new life into the world (as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says in paragraph 1601). The creation of new life is mysterious, intriguing, and amazing! The parents definitely have a big role in this process; their marital embrace leads to their co-creating new life with God. Without God and his astounding designs for humanity, we would never be able to procreate.

He, the creator of all things, is the one who really gives the new life.

In their sexual union, the parents actually become co-creators with God. In Theology of the Body, I learned the twofold purpose of this marital embrace: the union of the spouses and the procreation of children (CCC 1643). This is what



God intended when He invented the sexual act! So, in other words, the goal or aim of the sexual act is to bring the man and woman in greater union with each other and with God *and* to be open to new life. Therefore, we must never go against God’s designs by using a form of contraception to prevent a pregnancy. Because one of the purposes of sexual intercourse is procreation, couples engaging in this activity must always be open to this act leading to conception, that is, to new life. In other words, the human family must always be open to new life, just as

Mary was open to new life. Using contraception to prevent a child is like telling God, “No, I will not be open to life. I will not follow the plan You designed for sexual intercourse and marriage.” Let us pray that God will open our minds and hearts to understand and accept the Church’s teaching on this countercultural

issue!

For answers to more questions that this article may raise about contraception or marriage, I suggest reading the section on marriage in Christopher West’s book *Good News about Sex and Marriage*. Another suggestion (which can be accessed very easily) is paragraphs 2360 to 2379 in the *Catechism of the*

Catholic Church. This can be found quickly online at goo.gl/d3BtR.

Life is so blessed. God desires each person to come to heaven and have unending happiness with Him. He desires this for every single person, for every child that He has co-created with each parent. What a privilege married couples have of bringing new human life into the world, for these children may someday receive God’s gift of ultimate fulfillment in heaven!

- Nicholas Koepfel, Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau Secretary-elect of CSC Lifers

“As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.” – Gn 9:7

Joyful Preparation with a Renewed Sense of Hope

In this Advent season we are called to prepare ourselves joyfully for the coming of Christ. All of this preparation leads up to Christmas—Christ’s birth—also known as “the most wonderful time of the year” (John 1:14). The following reflection is something that I had heard once in a homily, which has stuck with me every time I pray about the Nativity of our Lord.

In Christmas, we celebrate that the “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Let’s take a closer look at that: the almighty, all-powerful God took on human form and became one of us. What does that say about the human race? Not only did the almighty God think enough of us to breathe life into us, but He also loves us so much that He, who is, became one of us.

If God became one of us through Christ His only begotten son, what does that say about the value of the human race? What does this tell us about human dignity? To answer simply, if Christ thinks that we are worth it enough to become one of us and to live among us, then should we not also uphold our dignity with such regard? Undeniably, by this very act of Incarnation, we are able to see

that our God is *for us*, our God is a God of hope—not of despair—and our God wants us to bring this message of hope to others, like He did for us. Simply, our God is love.

There are many feasts in the season of Advent that seem to prepare us for the wonderment and awe of Christ’s coming. For example, the Solemnity of the



Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8) and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12) both impart awe and wonder.

In the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we see how God prepared Mary for the coming of Christ by keeping her free from the stain of Original Sin. In this, Mary becomes a

model for us—despite all the sins we have committed in our lives—to teach us to prepare for His coming. Mary’s Magnificat is something that we can learn to call our own in our preparation for Christ.

With the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we are reminded of the image of Our Lady that was given to Juan Diego. In the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we see how Mary came to Juan Diego with a band around her waist, signifying Christ in her womb. This band is a “belly band” and is often what many pregnant women would wear. Blessed John Paul II declared Our Lady of Guadalupe as the “Patroness of the Unborn” which is why we entrust many prayers in the Pro-Life movement to Our Lady of Guadalupe for the Unborn.

As we prepare for Christmas, may we prayerfully recognize significant links like these along the way that will help us truly see God’s love for the human race. May we, in all our actions, learn to love and respect the human dignity each one of us has been freely given from God.. Once the Christmas season is over, may we never forget to stand up and fight for human life, just as Christ did for us.

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