

The Theology of the Body

By Kathleen Tobin



A few years ago, my husband and I attended our first two Theology of the Body Institute (TOB) courses, both taught by Christopher West. They were like a retreat nourishing the spirit, mind and body. The TOB sessions were based on talks given by St. Pope John Paul II during his Wednesday audiences from 1979 to 1984, in which he gave an integrated vision of the human person and reminded people of their dignity, being created in the image and likeness of God.

One thing that touched my heart was the beauty of being “woman”, the Mariological aspect of every woman found in Mary’s Fiat: “be it done unto me according to Your word”. She received God in His Holy Spirit so fully that she conceived Him in her womb. We, women, are all gifted with such dignity, such a capacity to receive, to conceive life (physically and spiritually), to collaborate in the beautiful creativity of God.

During the course, Christopher mentioned that he knew there were many people present who were undergoing a time of great suffering in their lives. He said that many times we feel that somehow, we deserve the suffering and we feel that God is punishing us. But TOB reminds us that we are each unrepeatable, made in the image and likeness of God, who is Love. He said to the class, God wasn’t punishing you, He chose you because He had faith in you that you would have the courage to do the right thing. I cried. Those words pierced my heart like a sword. God has faith in me, but I had little in myself. I had believed the lie for many years that I was unlovable and replaceable, that I had to earn God’s love. But it is God that loved me first and He sent His only begotten Son to save me, even before I was born. What a huge healing moment that was in that encounter with God’s love, mercy, and grace. It made a very traumatic moment into something beautiful, a collaboration with God, rather than a punishment.

It was also mentioned how frequently we are like the “stoic or the addict.” We block out/reject what we don’t have the strength to resist or we overdo it, seeking to fill our hearts and our needs with something that only God can fill fully with His infinite love. We are called to “stay in the ache”, not run from the pain of what life brings, but to go with Jesus into the parts of our heart, our lives, that are painful and let Jesus bring His healing grace.

God stopped the world, giving us time to stay with Him in silence, in the quiet of this time of quarantine and to give Him our pain and brokenness, so that He can heal us in His grace.



Kathleen Tobin, residing in Bucks County PA, is a graduate from the University of Scranton with a BS in Physical Therapy, has worked for the Church, both nationally and internationally, and with her husband Shawn has been a Marriage Prep instructor for both Agape Ministries and Ascension Press and founded Catholic Beads & More, which sells handcrafted Rosaries, chaplets and other religious products.

Website: <https://katholicbeadsandmore.com/>