

*the language of the body*1. The Grace of the Sacrament – recap.

Christian Marriage is a Sacrament. What do we mean by this? A visible sign that confers an invisible grace. Think of Baptism. The visible sign is the pouring of water; the invisible grace is incorporation into the Body of Christ. Think of Confirmation. The visible sign is the anointing with oil; the invisible grace is the infusion of the Holy Spirit. Notice in each case that the invisible grace is human nature coming into some kind of a contact with God, or into contact with one of the Persons of the Trinity, and being in some way transformed by this contact: incorporation into the Body of Christ of the one being baptised, infusion by the Holy Spirit of the one being confirmed. And not only being transformed in some supernatural way, but specifically being taken into the divine life of God. This is what we mean by grace. Taking us up into the divine life of God is what sacraments do. As we saw in Cycle E, the sacramental grace of marriage is a sacramental participation in the union between Christ and his Church. The bridegroom and the bride participate sacramentally in the union between Christ and his Church. Their marriage is the making visible of this invisible reality. Their marriage contains a “particle” (TB90) of the Christ-Church union. We also saw in Cycle E how the Christ-Church union on the one hand and the husband-wife union on the other shed light on each other. The one-flesh union between husband and wife helps us to get a handle on this oneness of the union between Christ and the Church. The union between Christ and the Church, the selflessness of the love, the total self-giving to the point of death, is held up as a model for husband and wife to image and reproduce in their conjugal union. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” (Eph 5:25). We saw also how marriage must also be redemptive, because it’s a sacramental realisation of Christ’s union with the Church is redemptive. This is how marriage is a sacrament – the husband-wife union is a sacramental realisation of the Christ-Church union, a sacramental realisation of the covenant between God and Man. That’s a summary of the Cycle E that we looked at last time, the sacramental grace of Marriage.

2. What is the Sacramental Sign of Marriage?

The cycle we’re looking at today focuses on the visible sign that effects or brings into effect the Sacrament of Marriage. In Baptism the visible sign is the pouring of water. In Confirmation it’s the anointing with oil. What is the visible sign of the Sacrament of Marriage? Is it the holding of hands? Is it the exchange of rings? Is it the signing of the civil register? These are all signs, but they are there to help explain what is happening invisibly. (Signing of the civil register is there for civil validity, though it is also functions as a sign). They are like the so called “explanatory” signs of baptism: the clothing in a white garment, the lighting of the baptismal candle. They help to explain what is happening invisibly in the sacrament, but they are not the effective sign that actually confers the sacrament. So what is the visible sign that confers the sacrament of marriage? Answer: what John Paul calls “the language of

the body”. The main task of this cycle is to explain what he means by “the language of the body”.

### 3. Spousal Meaning of the Body – recap.

So far, throughout the preceding cycles, we’ve been taking about the “spousal” meaning of the body. In Cycle A, Original Man, we saw how God created the human body with a meaning – that man is made for giving himself in a communion of persons. It’s written into his body, as maleness and femaleness. This is what we mean by the “spousal” meaning of the body. But it’s also God’s personal signature written into the human body. It speaks of something that is fundamental to his divine nature. God himself is Gift. The way he has chosen to reveal this about himself is that he has created the human body and written it into the human body in its maleness and femaleness. This is the “spousal” meaning of the human body. You remember that the first man and the first woman chose to give themselves to each other in conjugal union. But behind this was the giving hand of God with which they were simply cooperating. And at a deeper level still it was the “original” way in which God chose to give himself to them. This is all contained in the “spousal” meaning of the body, and all recognised with perfect clarity by the first man and first woman in the clarity of vision that came with Original Innocence. We saw in Cycle B how Man’s perception of the spousal meaning of the body was almost entirely lost with the onset of concupiscence, and yet is gradually regained through the power of the redemption at work in the human heart. And we saw in Cycle C, Eschatological Man, how a new “spiritualisation” of the body occurs that signals the final and definitive way that we are to live the “spousal” meaning of the body. In the “other world” the spousal meaning of the body is lived out in God’s direct self-gift to Man and in the response of Man’s self-gift directly to his Creator.

### 4. Spousal Meaning of the Body /Language of the Body

It is this living out of the “spousal” meaning of the body specifically in marriage that John Paul calls “the language of the body”. You might say that the “spousal” meaning of the body is a static attribute of the human body, there to be read and interpreted by Man. The “language of the body” is the dynamic counterpart when the spouses come together to live out the “spousal” meaning of the body in their conjugal lives. It is the reciprocal giving of maleness and femaleness in the conjugal union at all the different levels of bodily interaction between the spouses.

### 5. Ethos of Marriage as “Language of the Body”

Let’s give some content to this “language of the body”. We’re not talking just about the marital act of sexual intercourse that is the consummation of their conjugal union, though this is an aspect of the “language of the body” and indeed the ultimate expression of the “language of the body”. It includes all the acts of mutual self-giving that form an integral part of conjugal life and conjugal love: the acts of service that husband and wife perform for each other, the mutual subjection that Ephesians 5 talks about, the openness to the loving service of their spouse, the love that husband should

have for his wife in imitation of Christ to the point of giving his life, the mutual work of redemption that is a dimension of conjugal love because conjugal love participates sacramentally in Christ's redemptive love for the Church. These are all examples of the "language of the body" taken directly from Ephesians 5, the ethos of marriage, which John Paul refers to as 'a stupendous expression of the "language of the body"' (TB117). Love, gift, faithfulness, service..., all these virtues that constitute the ethos of marriage, these are all in the first place "words of the spirit" (TB104), but in Man they find expression in the "language of the body". It is as Body that Man exercises love, gift, faithfulness, service... . He has no other way. And when he does so he "speaks" with the language of the body. All these acts of self-giving that constitute the conjugal life of husband and wife are then brought together, consummated, in the marital act as the highest expression of the "language of the body". Genesis 2:24: "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh." Ephesians 5 places this quotation from Genesis at the conclusion of the text on the ethos of marriage to show that it really is the consummation of all the mutual self-giving that takes place between man and woman in the daily living out of their conjugal union. It is the primordial expression of the "language of the body" placed right at the beginning of Man's creation as male and female, indicating the Creator's intention for marriage. This gives a preliminary idea of what John Paul means by "the language of the body", and it's this "language of the body" that is the essential sign that brings into effect the Sacrament of Marriage.

#### 6. Words of Consent – charged with intentionality

Each of the seven sacraments of the Church has a minister, a form of words, and a symbolic action. In Baptism the minister is normally a priest or deacon, though in exceptional circumstances anyone can baptize. The form of words is "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". The symbolic action is the immersion in water or the pouring of water. For the Sacrament of Confirmation the minister is normally a bishop, though it can be delegated to a priest. The form of words is "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit". The symbolic action is the anointing with oil on the forehead. In each sacrament all three elements are essential to the realization of the sacrament: Sacramental Minister, Sacramental Words, and Sacramental Action. The same is true for the Sacrament of Marriage. The ministers are the spouses themselves. The essential words are the words of Consent: "I take thee to be my lawful wedded wife to have and to hold from this day forward...". The pronouncement of these words of consent are said to be the *ratification* of the sacrament, later to be consummated by conjugal intercourse. But for these words of consent to validly ratify the sacrament they must be charged with intentionality. (TB 103). Bridegroom and Bride must have *some understanding* of God's design for marriage and they must *fully intend* to live their conjugal union in accordance with God's design. This is the purpose of the preliminary questions that the priest asks of the Bridegroom and Bride at the beginning of the rite. "Are you ready freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?" "Are you ready to love and honour each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?" These requirements summarise the ethos of marriage described in Ephesians 5: the mutual giving and receiving of loving service that constitutes the daily life of the spouses in conjugal union, and the consummation of their mutual giving and receiving in

conjugal intercourse. This, as said before, is the “language of the body” that is proper to husband and wife.

### 7. “Rereading the language of the body in truth”

The ethos of marriage lived out in the “language of the body” is not an arbitrary set of norms, nor a social contract devised by Man. It is objective and perennial, something written into the institution of marriage by the Creator himself, and valid for all time. It is the task of the spouses not to come up with a *modus vivendi* for their shared life, but to take up the same “language of the body” as in the beginning of creation, to get hold of the objective and perennial “language of the body” as given by the Creator himself in the creation of man and woman. “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh.” They need to get hold of this perennial and objective “language of the body”, so that their words of consent are charged with the full intentionality of living out their content. John Paul calls this “rereading the language of the body in truth”. For the ratification of the marriage to be valid they utter the words of consent, having reread the “language of the body in truth”, and with the intentionality of living out the full content of what they have vowed in their words of consent. It means they utter the words of consent with some *understanding* of what it means to live out their conjugal union as designed by the Creator, and with the *intention* of living out their conjugal union as designed by the Creator. In other words they utter the words of consent with intentionality, having “reread the language of the body in truth” (TB107). They then go on to live out the content of their words of consent by living out or “speaking” the “language of the body” in their conjugal lives. They become authors of the “language of the body” in their own conjugal union, having “reread the language of the body in truth”, and in particular in the consummation of their union in the marital act.

### 8. The ongoing process of rereading the language of the body.

For the spouses to contract marriage validly they do not, of course, have to have a complete understanding of the “language of the body”. For example they do not have to know that the husband’s love for his wife is an image of Christ’s love for the Church. To contract marriage validly they do not have to know that their conjugal union is a sacramental realisation of the Christ-Church union. They do not have to know that their conjugal love is redemptive or that it is a participation in Christ’s redemptive love for the Church. In short they do not have to be experts in the Theology of the Body. This more complete reading of the “language of the body” would greatly enrich their conjugal union, but it is not necessary for the initial validity of the marriage. What is necessary for validity is firstly a minimum understanding of the “language of the body”, as detailed in the rite of marriage (“freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other”, “for the rest of your lives”, “to accept children lovingly from God”), and secondly the intention to live their conjugal union accordingly. It is to be hoped that in the living out of their conjugal union, and particularly in the devout and reverent consummation of their union, their rereading of the “language of the body” will ever deepen. Hence the strength of this concept of “rereading”. It’s an ongoing, ever deepening process. The initial “rereading of the language of the body in truth” is based on their own perception of God’s intention for

marriage, aided by the Word of God that reveals the divine Author's intention. In other words they take up the "language of the body" as given by the Creator to our first parents. Next they themselves become the co-authors of the "language of the body" in their own conjugal lives and in the consummation of their union, having reread the "language of the body" in truth. Then, insofar as the divine Author's objective design for conjugal union becomes a living reality in their own conjugal union, they are able to "reread" in their own conjugal union the "language of the body" at a deeper and fuller level, perhaps even experiencing in the "language of the body" something of the ultimate reality that it sacramentally realises, namely the mystery hidden in the mind of God from all eternity, the union between Christ and his Church.

#### 9. It's in the final consummation that the sacrament is realized.

The "language of the body" plays an essential role at three moments in the realisation of the sacrament of marriage. The spouses utter the words of consent having "reread the language of the body in truth". They go on to live out in their everyday lives of conjugal union the content of what they have consented to, the mutual self-giving in the complementarity of their maleness and femaleness, and in doing so become co-authors of the language of the body. Finally they celebrate or "speak" the language of the body in conjugal intercourse as the consummation of the multiple ways in which they have lived out the "language of the body" in their everyday lives. It is in this final consummation that the visible sign of the sacrament is realised. It is in this final consummation that the celebration of the sacrament is completed and the marriage is fully realised. It is in this final consummation that the one flesh union between husband and wife is effected. It is in this final consummation that the union between Christ and his Church is made visible as the supernatural grace of this sacrament.

#### 10. Prophetism of the body

For this reason John Paul also speaks of the "prophetism of the body". In the celebration of the "language of the body" in mutual self-giving and in the consummation of that self-giving, the spouses proclaim the future consummation between Christ and the Church (TB104), the amazing plan that God has for mankind, the secret plan hidden in the mind of God from all eternity; with this essential difference – that it proclaims it not just as a future event but as made sacramentally present here and now in the one flesh union of the spouses.

#### 11. Consent and consummation united in the "language of the body"

This gives some idea of the sacredness both of the consent given at the altar and of the marital act celebrated in their conjugal privacy. For a couple to engage in sexual intercourse without recognising the bigger reality that they are caught up in at that moment is like going to mass week after week and enjoying all the sensory spectacle of the liturgy without ever having been told that we are caught up in a higher, supernatural reality. This is not a new teaching. The Church has always known that marriage is ratified in the words of consent uttered at the altar, and consummated in

the privacy of the home and that both elements are essential to the realisation of the sacrament, though at different times in history the Church has emphasised one element or downplayed the other. With the concept of the “language of the body” John Paul has united the two elements in their true relationship while giving each their proper weight.

## 12. The Song of Songs – a song of human love

Two books of the Bible contribute to the richness of this concept “the language of the body”. The first that John Paul looks at is the Song of Songs. This is an erotic love duet between the Lover and the Beloved. In traditional exegesis of the Scriptures this is given an allegorical interpretation – the Lover being God, the Beloved his people, which becomes resolved with the Incarnation into Christ and his Church. Some mystics also give it the allegorical interpretation of the love between Christ and the individual Christian. But it is also on the most obvious level a song of human love<sup>1</sup>. And this is the starting point for John Paul and the Theology of the Body.

See TB108 for a selection of texts

Song 1:1-2, 4

Song 1:10

Song 1:15

Song 2:13-14

Song 4:1-4a, 5, 7

Song 2:17

Song 5:15-16

## 13. Attraction to the person

TB 108: ‘The words of both the Lover and the Beloved are concentrated on the body, not so much because in itself it constitutes the source of reciprocal fascination, but above all because the *attraction towards the other person* lingers directly and immediately on it.’ Remember from Cycle A the situation of Original Innocence and the experience of Original Nakedness. The human body was not something detached in human awareness from the person. Body and Person were seen as an integral whole, or rather recognised not so much as inseparable but as identical. The nakedness of the human body was not something fixated upon but a window onto the full depth of the human person. The words spoken by the Lover and by the Beloved are an articulation, a verbal enunciation of the “language of the body” read with the clarity and fullness of Original Innocence, and with the perfect freedom that characterised the Original Situation.

(The love that unites them is of a spiritual and sensual nature together. (TB111). So it is only a love that is fully sensual and fully spiritual that enables a rereading of the “language of the body” in truth. Having reread the “language of the body” in this fullness of truth that is both spiritual and sensual, only then to they constitute the sign of the reciprocal gift of self.)

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<sup>1</sup> J. Winandy OSB “to be taken simply as what it manifestly is: a song of human love”

#### 14. Feminine traits symphonic with the personal whole

TB 108: ‘This is a “language” reread at one and the same time with the heart and eyes of the bridegroom, in the act of a special concentration on the whole female “I” of the bride.’ This “I” of the Beloved speaks to the Lover through every feminine trait, and the lover articulates his experience of each of these feminine traits in words of “ecstasy”. These feminine traits of the Beloved are experienced by the Lover individually, discretely, but also at once as an entire symphony and inseparably from the full depth of the Beloved’s personal subjectivity. The whole symphony of the Beloved’s feminine traits is a manifestation of the whole Person in her femaleness and is part of the richness of the “language of the body” – as is the Lover’s ecstatic articulation of his experience of this symphonic and personal whole.

#### 15. Song of Songs an unabashed celebration of Erotic love

We’re looking here at the aspect of love that is called *eros*. Love is concerned with the wellbeing and fulfilment of the Beloved. This is *agape*. But Love is also concerned with the fulfilment of self. This is *eros* from which we get the adjective *erotic*. It seems to me that there is in fact no distinction between the two in terms of the form that love takes: love, when it is authentic, is always a gift of self. Self-giving leads to the fulfilment of the Beloved and at the same time leads to the fulfilment of self. *Eros* and *Agape* are, I would suggest, simply the two possible motives for the gift of self: fulfilment of self and fulfilment of the Beloved. In the original situation these two motives or forces of motivation would be both present in perfect proportion. Here in the Song of Songs the love duet between Lover and Beloved is an unabashed celebration of *eros*, the unabashed ecstasy at finding in the Beloved the source of one’s own fulfilment. This too is part of the richness of the “language of the body”.

#### 16. Brother and Sister integral to the “language of the body”

The Lover calls the Beloved “sister” (TB 110). This term reflects a recognition that at a deeper and more fundamental level they are “brother” and “sister” in that they share a common childship to God. It is a recognition that she has been created not for him but for her own sake, and that it is only through response to a divine calling, that becomes her own personal and subjective choice, that she gives herself as Bride. Even then at this deeper level they remain “brother” and “sister”. His appellation “sister” could be interpreted as a recognition of the “spousal” meaning of the body in the communion of persons that is prior to the particular vocation of marriage and that speaks of the eschatological communion of persons that supersedes marriage in the “other world”. The Lover’s awareness of all of this depth of content is integral to full richness of the “language of the body” read in truth by the Lover.

#### 17. Language of the body in the “truth of personal dignity”

The Beloved appears in the eyes of the Lover as a “garden closed” and as a “fountain sealed”. (TB 110). Femaleness consists not just in the visible traits of femininity but in a hidden depth that goes beyond and beneath the visible. This is the mystery of her femaleness that, like a hidden garden or a sealed fountain, chooses to reveal itself by an act of subjective determination. Her self-gift cannot be elicited. It can only be given. This dimension of femininity is integral the language of the body in all its richness and truth. The Lover cannot enter into the hidden garden or drink from the fountain without the Beloved’s permission – only when she freely chooses to open the garden or unseal the fountain. This is to reread the language of the body “in the truth of personal dignity”.

### 18. Seeking and finding

John Paul also speaks of the *increasing closeness of the spouses* that comes about through the ever deepening “rereading of the language of the body”. (TB 111). This is an ever deeper initiation into the mystery of the person, without implying the violation of that mystery. (TB 111). This is reflected in the Song of Songs by the alternating experiences of seeking and finding between the Lover and the Beloved. At one moment the love duet speaks of a search full of longing, and at the next of their mutual rediscovery. This brings them to a point of joy and calm, that leads them in turn to a new search into each other.

Tell me, O love of my soul,  
Where are you going to pasture your flock...? (Song 1:7)  
Through the streets and through the squares;  
I will seek the beloved of my heart. (Song 3:1-4)

In the Song of Songs human eros reveals the face of *love ever in search and never satisfied*. The echo of this restlessness runs through the verses of the poem:

I opened to my beloved,  
But my beloved had departed, he was gone.  
My soul failed me, I did not find him;  
I called for him but he did not answer. (Song 5:6)  
I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
What shall you tell him?  
That I am sick with love. (Song 5:9)

Consciousness of a mutual belonging to each other leads to an ardent mutual aspiration and search. Mutual aspiration and search bears fruit in a deeper consciousness of mutual belonging. This in turn activates a new mutual aspiration and search. We are looking at yet another dimension of the “language of the body”, this alternation between seeking and finding, motivated by *eros*, that results in an ever closer interpenetration of the spouses in conjugal union. John Paul calls it the *subjective dynamism* of eros. (TB 112).

### 19. Yearning for union with Christ

In reaching each other *they ceaselessly continue to tend towards something beyond*. (TB112). This “something beyond” is Christ in whom alone they will find their complete fulfilment. The seeking of the Beloved is at the deepest level motivated by

a longing for union with Christ. Christopher West writes that “reverence for Christ is nothing but a spiritually mature form of sexual attraction”. (CW: TB explained p81). The attraction is increasingly characterized by reverence for one’s spouse as a sacramental realization of Christ; their mutual self-giving in conjugal union is increasingly characterised by reverence for the Christ-Church union that their own conjugal union sacramentally realizes. The ecstasy at finding the Beloved is at the deepest level on account of the Beloved being for the spouses the sacramental embodiment of Christ. But union with Christ experienced sacramentally in conjugal union must ultimately be superseded by direct union with Christ in the beatific vision. This was recognised by St Augustine (“Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee”) and is confirmed by Benedict XVI (that eros must eventually go beyond the merely human and find its fulfilment in Him whom the beloved signifies, namely Christ), in *Deus Caritas Est*.

Heather Ward (Gift of Self p104): “Through the day-to-day living in union with another I grow in the experience of loving as willing...I also find this life-in-partnership reverberating spiritually, making me more aware of that other union even more basic to my existence...A lifetime of *living* the icon, marriage, produces similar recognition, without in any way denying the solidity and validity of the human bonding.”

## 20. The “language of the body” becomes the “language of the liturgy”.

We return now to the visible sign that realizes the sacrament of marriage. Actually we have never left it because we have been speaking all the time about the “language of the body” which is the visible sign that brings into reality the sacrament it signifies. The sacrament is ratified in the words of consent uttered by the Bridegroom and Bride having reread the “language of the body” in truth. The sacrament is then consummated in the marital act, the highest expression of the “language of the body”. If marriage is a sacrament, it is also a liturgy, comparable to Baptism and Confirmation. Except that in celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage, it is a liturgy that begins at the altar, the ministers of this sacrament being the spouses themselves. It is continued by the ministers in the mutual self-giving of conjugal life, and brought to completion only in the consummation of their conjugal union in the marital act. This gives some indication of the holiness of the conjugal act and should have a profound effect on the reverence with which this sacrament is celebrated. The “language of the body” becomes the “language of the liturgy”. (TB116, TB117). Its rereading in truth is prerequisite to the validity of the consent celebrated at the altar. It is lived out in conjugal union and in the consummation of the conjugal union. ‘The “language of the body” is an uninterrupted continuity of the liturgical language.’ (TB117b).

## 21. Tobias and his prayer for deliverance

The Song of Songs seems to evoke the situation of Original Innocence. The Book of Tobit is by contrast very much rooted in the historical situation of fallen Man. Among other things it’s a story of demonic possession, and deliverance. The young Tobias finds himself betrothed to a young woman that is diabolically possessed.

(Sarah has been betrothed to seven men in succession, each of whom gets bumped off by the demon present in Sarah on their wedding night.) Now it's the turn of Tobias. But before they consummate their union in the marital act Tobias, with Sarah by his side, begins their wedding night with this prayer:

“You created Adam, and you created his wife Eve  
to be a help and support for him....  
You said ‘*It is not good that the man should be alone;  
Let us make him a help similar to himself.*’  
Now it is not out of lust that I take this kinswoman of mine,  
But with rightness of intention.  
Grant that she and I may find mercy  
And that we may grow old together.”  
And they both said “Amen, amen.” (Tob 8:5-8)

## 22. Tobias evokes the original design for marriage

Notice that he takes these words into his prayer: ‘*It is not good that the man should be alone; Let us make him a help similar to himself.*’ These are the words of Genesis 2:24. In doing so he evokes God’s original design for marriage, for conjugal union. In other words he rereads the “language of the body” in truth. And he enters into marriage having reread the “language of the body” in truth. Furthermore, he says in his prayer that “it is not out of lust” that I take this kinswoman of mine, but with rightness of intention”. This is a rejection of the concupiscence that precipitated the fall and deprived marriage of its sacramental dimension. As an answer to this prayer, not only is Tobias saved from the fate of his predecessors, but Sarah is delivered of her demonic possession.

## 23. The couple are granted an “advance” on the grace of Redemption

The wedding night of Tobias and Sarah takes the form of a liturgy. In fact it is a liturgy. It begins with a prayer. But it is specifically a prayer calling down upon their conjugal union the grace of redemption. Historically this is impossible. The redemption is brought about by Christ and his total self-gift to and for the Church in his death and resurrection, and with the Book of Tobit we’re still in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, this is what Tobias asks for in his nuptial prayer. And it appears to be granted in that Sarah is delivered from her demonic possession. Remember that between the Original Situation of Innocence and the Redemption in Christ the institution of marriage ceased to be a sacrament. It seems however, that in this unique case, in answer to Tobias’ “rereading of the language of the body in truth” and in answer to his prayer for redemption, Tobias and Sarah are granted an “advance” on the grace of Christ’s redemption and the sacramental grace of marriage.

## 24. A liturgical celebration of God’s self-gift to Man

Tobias and Sarah are a particularly clear symbol of Christ and his Church. The angel Raphael’s words to Tobias seem to speak of God’s redemptive plan for mankind in Christ: “She was destined for you from eternity, and you are the one to save her.”

(TB114). And not just a symbol of Christ and his Church, but a sacramental realization of the Christ-Church union, with a particularly explicit revelation of the redemptive dimension of this union. The conjugal union between Tobias and Sarah becomes a liturgical celebration of God's self-gift to Man in the spousal and redemptive union between Christ and the Church. His self-gift to Sarah in conjugal union becomes spousal and redemptive, as in the Christian Sacrament of Marriage, in answer to his prayer calling down an advance of the spousal and redemptive Christ-Church union.

#### 25. Erotic and redemptive dimensions of the language of the body

Thus these two books of the Old Testament, the Song of Songs and the Book of Tobit, highlight particular dimensions of the "language of the body". The Song of Songs, evoking as it does the primordial situation of Original Innocence, reflects the *eros* dimension of the "language of the body". The Book of Tobit, set very clearly in the fallen, historical situation, reflects the redemptive dimension of the "language of the body". Both contribute to the fullness of content that constitutes the visible sign of the Sacrament of Marriage.

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11<sup>th</sup> June 2009