

# Theology of Body for teens: God's plan for love offers alternative to distortions in popular culture

By Ron Garcia

FOR THE CATHOLIC HERALD

In 2000, John Paul II wrote in his apostolic letter *Novio Milenio Ineunte*, "Sometimes when we look at the young, with the problems and weaknesses that characterize them in contemporary society, we tend to be pessimistic.

"The jubilee of young people however changed that, telling us that young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ."

I was recently convinced of this when I taught a "Theology of the Body for Teens" class at the Bishop O'Connor Center in Madison. I was asked to co-write this article with one of my students, John Carey.

However, when he e-mailed me what he had written about his experience with the Theology of the Body for Teens, it was immediately clear that his work would stand on its own.

Following is what John Carey wrote:

## A teen's perspective on Theology of Body

By John Carey

Americans watch 250 billion hours of television annually, and the average person will spend approximately two months out of the year watching TV — and not much TV is wholesome today. It's estimated that 90 percent of teens have been exposed to pornography on the Internet. The glorification of promiscuous sex is promoted on the television and on the Internet, but it doesn't help



## THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

anyone — and not many people today understand why.

*Theology of the Body*, written by Pope John Paul II, answers that question for us. *Theology of the Body (TOB)* teaches us that sex, love, and our bodies are elevated to sacred and holy in the eyes of the church. It is a far more perfect view of these things than what most teenagers see today on the TV or on the Internet.

Popular culture inculcates values and distorts the truths of our faith to teenagers, which can cause immeasurable pain. The church offers a better way to find and keep love, which is brilliantly shown in the new program, *Theology of the Body for Teens*, offering teenagers a version of the pope's teaching which is easy to understand.

As the introduction to the program states, most teenagers simply think that the Church teaches that you should give up everything that you want and follow meaningless rules, which inhibit and imprison you — or go straight to hell.

It's an easy mistake to make; it's what my generation is told by the media. Teenagers are taught that teenage sex can be safe and without any consequences, that pornography is normal and harmless, and many other things. Catholic teaching disagrees in the strongest way with these lies,

because Jesus gave us a better way to find love and to keep it.

The *TOB for Teens* class imparts this knowledge. The good news of the Church's teaching on sex and love needs to be spread throughout our youth today, and this curriculum is a wonderful way to do that.

Each chapter in the book focuses on a different aspect of the Church's teaching, ranging from dating with purpose and purity to the different vocations. They each offered a hopeful and joyful presentation on the truths about human sexuality. Some of the material I was familiar with from my classes at St. Ambrose Academy, yet the teachers went into detail on different aspects, which we had merely touched on. It was a valuable learning experience for all of those involved in the class.

I am very grateful that *TOB for Teens* allowed myself and others to take a more detailed look at God's plan for love. It is very clear to me now that the word needs to be spread about this joyful and holy alternative to the lies which popular culture teaches teens across the world. *TOB for Teens* is an excellent way to do that. Teenagers need to understand why the church teaches what it teaches, and that there is a better way to find love, happiness, and ultimately heaven.

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# Theology of the Body for Teens

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As John Paul II said in *Novio Millennio Ineunte*, "If Christ is presented to young people as He really is, they experience Him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept His message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross."

The Diocese of Madison is sponsoring training on the **Theology of the Body for Teens** program on Saturday, June 23, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the Bishop O'Connor Center in Madison. The training is for religious education specialists, youth ministers, and catechists interested in learning how to implement

the program at their parishes. For more information and registration, go to [www.madison-catholic.org/oecl/TOB/TOB\\_for\\_Teens.asp](http://www.madison-catholic.org/oecl/TOB/TOB_for_Teens.asp).

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Participants in the Theology of the Body for Teens program in Madison. (Submitted photo)