

Annual mass to commemorate  
**National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month**

**October 2, 2011**

**Please hang the attached flyer in your parish to offer support to couples who desire a child or those who have lost a pregnancy, infant, baby or child.**

A PDF copy of the flyer is attached to TLC  
Visit [www.nfponline.org](http://www.nfponline.org)

**2011 Theology of the Body conference:**

**Why the Fig Leaf? God, Sex and Sensibility**

Order Conference DVDs at [www.aodonline.org/store](http://www.aodonline.org/store)

**The Round-up:**

Below is a summary from Dr. Mary Healy's talk at this year's conference.

**Dr. Mary Healy, 'Reclaiming Eden' Talk Highlights:**

*The Primordial Sacrament*

Dr. Mary Healy, an associate professor of scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, was the second keynote speaker to present at the Theology of the Body Conference held at Madonna University this summer. Her topic dealt with the first marriage between Adam and Eve. One of Dr. Healy's opening remarks was to describe marriage as "the primordial sacrament: the most ancient revelation of God."

Let us break down this statement a little more carefully starting with the word *primordial*. In the dictionary, it is defined as "pertaining to or existing at or from the very beginning." What this means then is that marriage was the *first* sacrament, the *original* sacrament. As we all know, a sacrament is a visible sign of an inward grace; a grace that was



Image from: flickr.com

meant to reveal the very nature of who God is.

*In the beginning...*

These days, with the divorce rate hovering near 50% and nearly 40% of children born to unmarried parents, marriage may seem like anything but an ancient revelation of God. What went wrong? Why the disconnect between God's original plan and the tattered remnants of a sacrament that we call marriage today? Dr. Healy explained that, to understand what marriage is supposed to be we must go back to the beginning and God's original plan for marriage.

What was the first marriage like? Recall the body-soul that Bill Donaghy described in his opening talk for the conference (July TLC).

In the beginning, Adam and Eve did not understand duality between the body and soul; each could only be understood in relationship to the other. Dr. Healy explained that, rather than hindering the view of the soul, the body illuminated the soul; was a brilliant window to the soul. Seeing the body and soul in union meant that Adam and Eve never had to doubt that they were truly loved and understood as creations of God by the other. They never feared they would be used or abused by the other, thus, they were naked without shame.

*The choice is ours.*

It must be said here that we were not forced to live in Eden nor for Adam and Eve to love one another or God. God gave us this thing called "free will" and the reason he gave it to us was because love is only love if it is freely given (and love was what we were created for). Think of it this way, it is the difference between someone being told to say "I love you" with a gun held to their head and "I love you" from

your spouse while you are cuddled up together on the couch. God understood this difference and thus placed the Tree of Life *and* the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil at the center of the garden. God told Adam and Eve that if they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that they would surely die. This did not mean that they would drop dead at that moment, but it was spiritual death, a severance from his divine love.

Enter Satan in the form of a serpent. He approaches Eve and asks her if God told her that she could not eat from any of the trees in the garden. Eve replies that they may eat from all except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil. Satan has a plan here when he replies: "You certainly will not die. No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad (Genesis 3:1-5)." Satan is trying to deceive Eve by making God seem like the enemy of her happiness; that God does not want her to be as powerful as he is.

We all know the rest: Eve eats the forbidden fruit and offers it to Adam who also partakes. The moment they eat the

fruit, their eyes are opened and, indeed, they see what is good but, tragically, they also see evil. They have separated themselves from God's love and chosen their own selfish path.



**Why the fig leaf?**

The moment Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, their eyes are opened and they realize that they are naked; and sewing fig leaves together, they cover themselves. As so many have said before, they cover themselves out of shame but there is something more to this action. They now see what is evil and it obscures what is good. They *see* the body now, not as a transparent window to the soul, but rather, an object to be grasped at and possessed. Dr. Mary Healy described Adam and Eve's new experience quite poignantly: "The opposite of love is not hatred, it is lust, grasping the other person's body for yourself: this is the complete opposite of what true love is". Now, there was lust in Adam's eyes when he looked at Eve and vice versa. Adam and Eve were no longer certain that the person looking at them really saw their whole person: body and soul.

Covering themselves with the fig leaves was a protective mechanism to shield them from the other who would grasp at their body in lust.

God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and as he was doing this he told the Eve, "Your husband shall rule over you (Genesis 3:16)." Dr. Healy explained this passage, saying that this was not an injunction by God on the hierarchy of marriage but rather a prediction. God knew that, because they had broken ties with him, man would now rule over woman. The relationship of mutual self-giving and respect that Adam and Eve had once enjoyed was obliterated in an instant by their rejection of God's love.



**Our Redemption**

God's loving nature would now allow him to leave Adam and Eve in complete despair and hopelessness. He countered the snake's deceit by making another prediction about the offspring of Adam and Eve (one that would be fulfilled centuries later):

"He will strike your head while you strike at his heel (Genesis 3:15)."



*Image from: redeemerokc.org*

Dr. Healy explained that the offspring of Adam and Eve that would crush the head of Satan was Jesus Christ. Jesus would strike the snake down once and for all, but Jesus would not walk away unscathed. Indeed, God references Jesus' passion and death on the cross when he says "...[the serpent] will strike at his heel."

Through Christ's resurrection and conquering of death, he has shown us the way back to Eden. When he comes again, we will experience the fullness of what God originally intended for us in the Garden of Eden.



*Dr. Mary Healy is an associate professor of scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and author of the book "Men and Women are from Eden."*

*Please email topics, articles, questions, and suggestions to TLC at [jndorsten@gmail.com](mailto:jndorsten@gmail.com)*