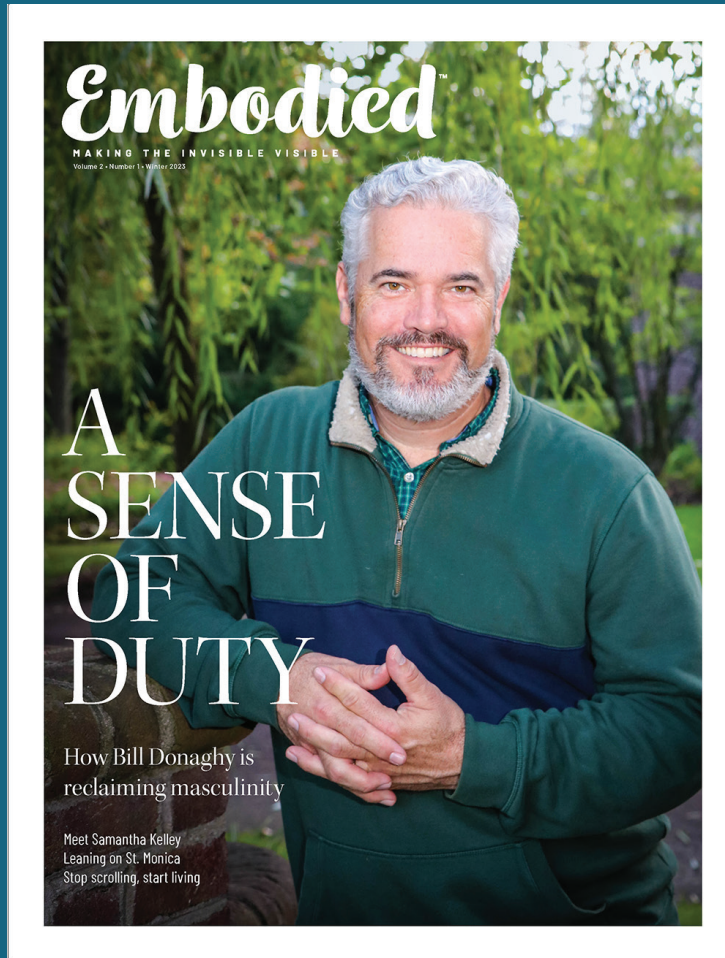




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DISCUSSION GUIDE

WINTER 2023

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In “It’s the Small Things” (page 5), Ann Gundlach discusses a particular instance in which the Theology of the Body (TOB) inspired her to step out of her comfort zone and affirm the dignity of her neighbor by offering to lend a helping hand. *Is reading this magazine your first exposure to TOB? Is there a general or specific way it has shaped your life thus far? Inspired by the message of TOB, is there a particular circumstance in your life in which God may be calling you to act?*
2. In “The True Meaning of History” (page 6), Katrina Zeno breaks down Saint John Paul II’s understanding of Sacred Scripture as a love story that defines, illuminates, guides and gives great meaning to human history. Zeno recommends reading the Gospel of Luke for at least 15 minutes every day. *What are some other ways you might incorporate reading and studying Scripture into your daily life? How can reading Scripture help you to navigate the times and discern the particular call God has for the life He has given you and/or the specific season of life in which you find yourself?*
3. Kathleen Basi’s article on social media (page 8) challenges us to really examine our use of – and perhaps attachment or even addiction to – technology, particularly our phones and social media apps. *What aches (triggers) in your life drive you to scrolling? If you use social media, do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks? What would your life look like without social media and/or a smart phone? How might you achieve a better balance?*
4. The article featuring the Liesmeyers (page 12) is another example of how technology has the potential to distract us from living out the fullness of our vocations (whether we are currently called to be students, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, etc.). Examine your own relationships. *How does the use of technology affect how you view and connect with the people in your life? Does technology bring deeper meaning and understanding to those relationships? How might re-establishing “old-fashioned” communication with friends and loved ones help you to better see all the people in your life as embodied souls?*
5. G.K. Chesterton is often attributed with saying, “In Jesus, God became a human being because God knew we could not love what we couldn’t put our arms around.” Inspired by Lindsay Caron’s article on the “Special 15” (page 17) and Maria Cossell’s reflection on the heart of God (page 39), *what is one way you and/or your family can be more intentional and focused after receiving Holy Communion at Mass and/or when praying before the Eucharist?*
6. Samantha Kelley (“Feminine Fierce,” page 18) and Katie Lovett (“The Potter Knows What He Has Made,” page 27) both address many crucial identity issues facing young people today. Kelley challenges the women she works with to understand that their femininity goes deeper than what they do, how they look and what others think of them. Phil Ervin, in “Reclaiming Masculinity” (page 30), similarly observes, “the military background and lumberjack tendencies aren’t what make a guy like Frank Roberts masculine. It’s his sense of duty and sacrifice.” *Examine your own life and understanding/living out of your femininity or masculinity. What are some of the particular struggles you face in living out your male or femaleness? Where and/or in whom are you most likely to misplace your identity and sense of self-worth? Who are some positive models of femininity/masculinity in your life?*
7. Saint John Paul II often called upon these words of the Second Vatican Council: “...man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (*Gaudium et Spes* 24). JPII saw this beautifully manifested in the human family, particularly in the call of parents to offer their lives as gift to each other and their children, mirroring and making present the love of God. In her article discussing the book she co-wrote with Patti Armstrong (page 24), Roxane Salonen discusses how this gift of self looks when your children are away from the faith. She reminds us that the gift of self is not dependent on the openness of the recipient, but rather on the willingness of the one who suffers to offer that grief up as a fruitful sacrifice. *Whether or not you are a parent, what are ways you are being called to make a gift of self? What types of prayer help sustain you when that gift is rejected? What are examples, beyond Saint Monica, in the saints and in the Scriptures of God making suffering fruitful?*
8. Dr. Deborah Savage’s article on the masculine genius (page 28) along with the interview of Bill Donaghy (page 30) both suggest an antidote to the culture’s narratives about men that range from toxic masculinity (Donaghy offers a “tonic of masculinity”) to the feminization and even elimination of masculinity. Dr. Savage writes that upon reading Genesis 2, we can discover that man’s special genius is to put his

natural knowledge of “things” at the service of his family, community, and even the world. Bill Donaghy further examines man’s two-fold mission (whether he is single, married, or celibate): to protect and cultivate. *Name and discuss any examples of authentic masculinity in your own life, in the culture and in the Communion of Saints. How can men reclaim their role in the family, the Church and society?*

9. Most people are familiar with the promise in wedding vows to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live.” Movies and pop culture conveniently skip over the part of the Catholic vows where the couple must pledge “to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church.” In TOB, JP II affirms the fullness of the wedding vows when he describes true love as free, total, faithful and fruitful. Bill Donaghy affirms, “The greatest thing I can give, the gift of my seed, the microcosm of me, gets the door slammed in its face [with contraception].” In “We Should Have Done This Long Ago” (page 40), George and Robin turned to contraception out of fear. Once they found healing in their marriage and experienced a renewal and deepening of their faith, they turned to Natural Family Planning (NFP) to live out the call to “responsible and generous parenthood.” They discovered that this didn’t mean freedom from suffering, as they lost two children through miscarriage and found NFP challenging at times. Still, by following God’s vision for love and marriage, their marriage was ultimately saved, and their family eventually welcomed two more children. *Are you familiar with the Church’s teachings on contraception? What is the difference between contraception and NFP? Putting aside the morality of contraception, why might a couple decide to practice free, total, faithful and fruitful love?*

10. Several times in this issue we have discussed the gift of self. Often, we are referring to giving ourselves in love to a spouse or children. In “A Hymn of Praise” (page 44), we are invited to reflect another way in which we can share in God’s creative power: through the use of our artistic talents to glorify God. We are given the words of JP II: “With loving regard, the divine Artist passes on to the human artist a spark of His own surpassing wisdom, calling him to share in His creative power.” *Upon looking through this photo essay, what are some “everyday” ways you can make a gift of self through your talents?*

LEADER SHEET

1. If one or more members of your group are unfamiliar with TOB, be sure to read the excerpt from Christopher West's book in the table of contents and/or refer them to the recommended reading and resources sheet.
2. You may want to begin by discussing practical ways to carve out the time in your day to read Scripture. It's going to look very different depending on a person's state of life. A student, a young professional and a professed religious may have the regularity in their schedule to set a specific time every day. A mother or father of young children may have to be more flexible and creative in finding the time. Someone who is an empty nester may want to take advantage of opportunities in their parish to read Scripture with others. If someone does not have the time or isn't in a place to read the Gospel of Luke as Zeno suggests, be sure to affirm that any exposure to the Scriptures is good and will draw us closer to Christ. There is no wrong answer here; depending on where a person is in his/her faith journey, it can be as simple as reading a daily quote from Scripture via an email, to reading the Magnificat, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, attending daily Mass, or committing to reading a very academic Scriptural exegesis, or even taking a class on salvation history at a local theology school or seminary.
3. Not everyone in your group may have social media and/or a smart phone. Even so, we all have "worldly comforts" we often turn to instead of God when we are stressed and overwhelmed. Encourage your group to really examine their attachments to the things of this world and how they may interfere with real relationships. One of the challenges may be that even if we manage to have good boundaries, those closest to us may not understand or even recognize the negative side of technology. Examples of aches or triggers that drive us to the misuse of technology and/or worldly comforts include: loneliness, boredom, stress, overload, a desire for consolation, a need to be distracted, and discomfort with silence and stillness.
4. This is not an indictment on people who use social media; be sensitive to those members of your group who may rely on social media to make a living. Technology can help connect people who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to encounter one another; it can help mobilize people to help with a particular cause or need; and it can help those living far apart to still feel close to one another. But technology also has the power to overwhelm people with information and a need to amass more followers; its algorithms are known to prioritize posts that incite strong emotions, particularly anger and rage; and it can ironically make us feel lonelier as virtual connection can never take the place of person-to-person encounter. Encourage members of your group to start small: less texting, more phone calls. And then gradually build from phone calls to coffee dates. If applicable, encourage them to ask themselves a series of questions before posting to social media. Why am I posting this? Will this improve anyone's life? Am I looking for affirmation outside of my relationship with God? Am I encouraging virtue or vice? Will I stand by this post a year from now?
5. Examples of ways to be more prayerful after receiving the Eucharist may include: stay and pray three Hail Mary's after the closing hymn, light a candle at a side altar, make a habit of going to Confession more regularly, read the prayers provided in the missal, follow along and sing all hymns at Mass.
6. Be sensitive to the fact that some individuals in your group likely know someone or may be suffering themselves from gender identity issues. Be sure to encourage everyone to deepen their understanding of what it means to be male and female. It's so much more than appearance. It may also be helpful to remind your group that we are embodied souls. This means that it's not just my body that is male or female, but my entire being including my soul. The two cannot be separated. My gender informs who I am, how I experience the world, and how I relate to God and to other people. Often, we may stake our identity in our achievements, career, a sport we play or a relationship. This is dangerous because then my worth depends on my success in those areas. Kelley affirms that there is freedom when I know that I am loved regardless of my performance. It will be hard to find examples of authentic femininity and masculinity in the culture and yet even in many films being made today, what we know to be true often triumphs. Perhaps an overly simple example is in the Disney film, "Tangled." We see both lead characters find in the end that love demands a complete gift of self – but that gift looks different as males and females. Eugene (male) is willing to give his very life for Rapunzel and

RECOMMENDED READINGS & RESOURCES

Question 1:

- Book: “Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II’s Theology of the Body” by Carl Anderson and Jose Granados
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC): #1700
- Online article: “Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body” by Dr. Edward Sri <https://catholiceducation.org/resources/five-key-features-of-the-theology-of-the-body>
- Online article: “Theology of the Body” by Dr. Mary Shivanandan. <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/mshivana/tob-encyc-soc-thought.htm>
- Online video: “Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Living JPII’s Theology of the Body” by Dr. Edward Sri <https://edwardsri.com/2016/10/19/03-men-women-the-mystery-of-love-living-jpiis-theology-of-the-body/>
- Study: “Men and Women are from Eden: A Study Guide to John Paul II’s Theology of the Body” by Mary Healy

Question 2:

- CCC: #1437; #2653
- Online article: “What is the Best Edition of the Bible for Catholics?” by John Burger <https://aleteia.org/2020/06/23/what-is-the-best-edition-of-the-bible-for-catholics/>
- Online article: “Catholic Exegesis: A Streamlined Overview” by St. Paul Center <https://stpaulcenter.com/catholic-exegesis-a-streamlined-overview/>
- Website and App: Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) <https://divineoffice.org/>
- Website: Catholic Company Morning Offering <https://www.morningoffering.com/>
- Website: Daily Mass Readings, USCCB <https://bible.usccb.org/daily-bible-reading>

Questions 3 & 4:

- CCC: #2293-2294
- Online article: “The Myth of Neutrality” Center for Humane Technology <https://www.humanetech.com/insights>
- Online video: 60 Minutes, “Brain Hacking”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awAMTQZmvPE>

- Website: Center for Humane Technology (secular resource) <https://www.humanetech.com/>

Question 5:

- CCC: #1373-1381; #2655
- Online article: “Critical Moments: How Should Catholics Pray Before and After Mass?” <https://www.simplycatholic.com/critical-moments-how-should-catholics-pray-before-and-after-mass/>
- Online article: “Three Prayers to Say After Receiving Communion” by Madeleine Coyne <https://blessedisshenet.com/blogs/blog/prayers-after-receiving-communion>

Question 6:

- CCC: #362-368; #369-373
- Online video: “Made for Each Other: Sexual Difference is Essential to Marriage” by the USCCB <https://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/sexual-difference-video/>
- Online video: “The Transgender Movement: What Catholics Need to Know” by EWTN <https://www.ewtn.com/tv/shows/transgender-movement-what-catholics-need-to-know>
- Website: Fierce Athlete <https://fierceathlete.org/>

Question 7:

- CCC: #2629-2633
- Book: “What Would Monica Do?” by Patti Maguire Armstrong and Roxane Beauclair Salonen
- Online article: “Prayers for Children Who Have Left the Church” by Sarah Damm <https://blessedisshenet.com/blogs/blog/prayers-children-left-church>

Question 8:

- CCC: #358
- Church document: Into the Breach, An Apostolic Exhortation by Bishop Olmsted <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/into-the-breach-3981>
- Online video: Into the Breach Video Series (based on the apostolic exhortation) by the

