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ANNIVERSARY

Quiet Care and Confidence: Leanne Payne

by Annette Comiskey

I first heard about Leanne Payne after the release of *The Broken Image* in 1981. It impacted Andy's life more than any other book up to then. I read it too and came away amazed at Leanne's deep understanding of how we become wounded and inclined to sexual brokenness. Most importantly, Leanne demonstrated how that brokenness was no match for God's healing power.

Suffice to say she quickly became an important part of our lives without having ever met her! Andy first heard her teach at a conference in June 1982. He came away with even more respect for her; she was becoming his main mentor in how to exercise God's healing authority through prayer on behalf of the sexually broken.

She loomed as a spiritual giant in our lives. I assumed I would never really get to know her, but I was wrong. Leanne became more than a revered name; she became a real presence in our lives.

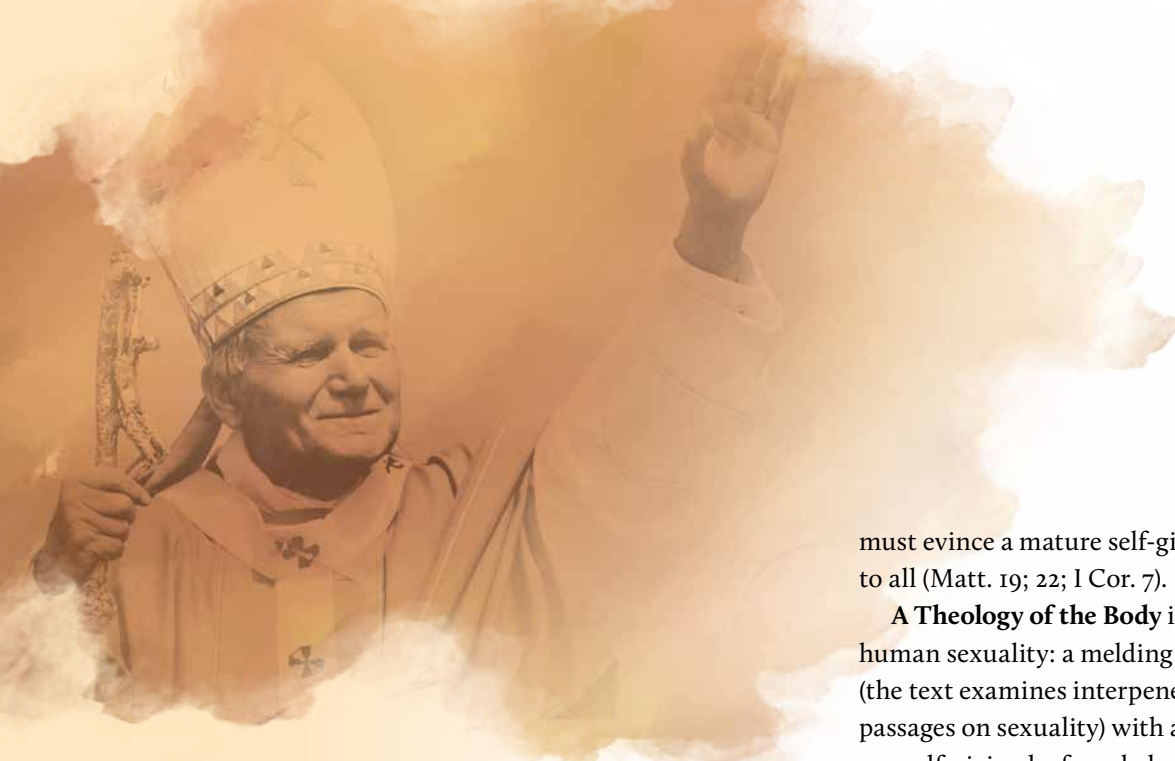
The first few years of our marriage provoked a lot of curiosity: how could someone from a same-sex attracted background really fall in love with a woman? I fielded a lot of rude questions from persons who looked at me with either pity or outright unbelief. Leanne was different. Upon meeting her, I knew right away that she saw our marriage as no different than any other marriage. Of course Andy could fall in love with me! Leanne knew that

was God's intent for Andy's sexuality, and that He had power to sustain Andy's faithful love for me.

I soaked up the confidence she had in us! She was also amazingly perceptive about others. Time and time again I would see her respond tenderly to the needs of people who were at once wounded and expectant of Leanne's healing touch. It wasn't always dramatic. Once she stopped in the middle of a teaching to ask one of her team members to go sit with someone, to put her hand on another's shoulder and simply "be" with the hurting one.

We got to know her well over the years. She became a dear friend to me. A statue of an angel she gave us when our kids were small sat on our fireplace for decades. She took our eldest son shopping for a winter coat in his freshman year at Wheaton College, the city of her last residence.

I am forever grateful to Leanne for what she taught me about the Lord's power to heal. But the real gift to me was the friendship we shared and the belief she had in us. **DSM**



Father's Song: St. John Paul II

by Andrew Comiskey

I am a father. I respect good fathers, especially older ones who live their fatherhood well.

St. John Paul II is one such father for me. He surprised me as a role model and guide. As the pope throughout my adult years as an evangelical, I admired him from a distance. My reserve was rooted in suspicion of the celibate priesthood; Catholic abuse scandals surfaced in the late nineties and I wondered, "Are these guys covering their sexual conflicts in cassocks?" I knew only headlines, no real priests to challenge my mistrust. "Besides", I thought, "How can a celibate know anything about my marriage fused by love and the fire of four small kids, and our fight for transformation of sexual brokenness?"

Enter Christopher West who handed me a copy of **A Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan** by Pope John Paul at a conference in Denver. I couldn't put it down. I devoured this massive, not uncomplicated ode to why our bodies are good and must be launched for the other's good (Matt. 19; Gen. 1, 2), how lust is no match for Jesus' redemption of our bodies (Gen. 3; Matt. 5: 27, 28; 1 Jn 2:16; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 6), and how celibacy for the Kingdom

must evince a mature self-giving born of God and evident to all (Matt. 19; 22; 1 Cor. 7).

A Theology of the Body is the best book ever on human sexuality: a melding of sound biblical theology (the text examines interpenetrations of key biblical passages on sexuality) with a philosophical insistence that our self-giving be founded on progressively valuing of the whole of another. How else can we represent Him as image-bearers? How else can marriage and conjugal love make visible the greatest mystery, Jesus giving all for His bride (Eph. 5: 21-33)?

TOB became for me the Father's song, sung by the Pavarotti of pastors. Next to Scripture, it influenced me more than any other book. John Paul urged me to keep giving and growing through the fire of family life, allowing core values to be refined in the blessings and the challenges. I can say after 40 years that I have a more profound regard for Annette's womanhood than I ever have.

St. John Paul II loved human love; from young adulthood, his studies and care of persons majored on the beauty and complexities of man for woman, woman for man. What a gift. What a sacrifice for him to lay down marriage for the Kingdom. For us. I savor his fathering, among the best of the 20th century. He fathers me still. Thank you, St. John Paul II. **DSM**

*"A Theology
of the Body is the
best book ever on
human sexuality..."*



Blazing the Truthful Path: Robert Gagnon

by Abbey Foard

I SAT AT A ROUNDTABLE OF CHRISTIAN THERAPISTS in Kansas City last year when an ordinance to ban “conversion therapy” for minors was brought before the City Council. I hoped to find solidarity among individuals with a clear Christian anthropology related to these LGBT concerns. I was grieved that some members of this group felt little conviction to stand for truth. Many seemed more influenced by popular soundbites than a truly Christian understanding of the human person.

I find solidarity with Robert Gagnon, author of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon Press, 2001). I find a teacher, a guide. Ivy League educated Gagnon mastered biblical languages and textual criticism. As a Presbyterian caught in the splintering of his denomination between the orthodox and the LGBT+-affirming, he wrote the definitive book on what Scripture conveys about homosexual practice. He did so thoroughly in the light of history, language, and extrabiblical sources that inform the context of Old and New Testament authors.

Affirming the biblical foundation of sexual complementarity—man for woman, woman for man—Gagnon unpacks heterosexual gift-giving as God’s only vision for human sexuality. He un.masks each argument (and then some!) for interpreting homosexual behavior as normative. Through in-depth scriptural interpretation, he paves a clear and compassionate path for all Christ-seekers seeking truth in sexual identity and practice.

Gagnon yielded a path to easier acclaim. Not unlike those of us in healing streams, he personally and professionally swims against the current. He stands with boldness and clarity to do his part to purify the Church and advocate for weak and vulnerable ones. He corrects

modern sexual ethics that define freedom as following any feelings or desires we may have. Gagnon gets intellectual and theological “skin in the game” to secure (in truth) ones whose behaviors are at odds with God’s vision for their lives.

And isn’t that the Christian way? To be prophetic mouthpieces, even in the face of misunderstanding and mockery? To advocate to make Jesus’ bride pure and spotless, not more wounded and confused?

I have deep respect and gratitude for Gagnon. His scholarly excellence undergirds healing communities in their person-to-person application of truth. Gagnon understands that applying such truth pastorally requires merciful sensitivity. But for all who struggle with passions that bind them, Gagnon reminds us: “*How can God’s deliverance be anything less than liberation from the control of such passions?*”

We at Desert Stream agree. Sexual and relational brokenness run deep in our lives, but the mercy of God runs deeper—always moving to liberate our holiness and wholeness in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). Gagnon has given the Church a great gift of biblical scaffolding to secure us whose passions run amiss. Thank you, Robert Gagnon.

DSM

1 Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 282.

Scandalous Hope: Josef Pieper

by Marco Casanova

NATURAL MAN CAN NEVER SAY as triumphantly as can the Christian: It will turn out well for me in the end.”¹ – Josef Pieper
My time in the seminary was a happy one. I met passionate, Jesus-loving friends, and had the advantage of learning from excellent minds in Catholic academia. Josef Pieper was no stranger to our lectures. His writing intrigued me. As a young seminarian with dominating same-sex attraction, I was aching for hopeful liberation.

Pieper formed his thinking on the greatest mind ever in Church history. Extraordinary in his thinking and writing, St. Thomas Aquinas laid historic foundations for Christianity. 700 years later, another brilliant scholar, Josef Pieper, was captivated by Medieval Aquinas during war-ridden Germany. He saw Aquinas as a pastor of the human condition and hopeful of humanity’s divine elevation.

Pieper is a boost for me. When sloth grips me like a muscle cramp, I’m tempted to check out of the race. That’s when Pieper lifts me to stand as a man. The soul of Catholic thought is hopeful: man’s nature is capable of supernatural heights. *Jesus plans to divinize us.* This is the *scandal* of Christianity, the outrage that makes Lucifer irate over our Incarnate God. When the saving blood of Jesus runs through our very veins, the Genesis plan of “Imago Dei” reaches a new level. Now, we not only reflect Him, we’re His family.

Pieper unlocks hope for me in my sexuality. The Incarnate Jesus assumed a sexual nature, and so my sexuality has an esteemed place in the divine, “scandalous” plan to raise me into wholeness.

I once gave same-sex attraction too much a say over my life. I silently believed that my nature was irredeemably “gay”, and I incapable of becoming a potent man for woman. Pieper reminded me that God ennobles my nature, “entirely surpassing what I can do for myself.”² Chastity was no longer only a quest to be sober from sexual sin. Chastity became my *freedom from* a LGBTQ+ “anthropology”, and *freedom for* Eden – living the wholeness of my masculine sexuality.

The Father has obvious high stakes on my redemption. He gave His own Son for me. Jesus is committed to me in my fight to be chaste, I’m committed to Him. What I do with my body and to whom I give it is essentially a question of how much I hope in this Jesus. According to Pieper, He’s worth it and He is able. **DSM**

¹ Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 115.

² Ibid, 99.



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PUBLISHER/EDITOR

Andrew Comiskey

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Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

Staff

FOUNDING DIRECTOR

Andrew Comiskey

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Abbey Foard

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Marco Casanova

DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

Annette Comiskey

LIVING WATERS USA MANAGER

Dean Greer

ASSISTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE AND ASSISTANT DIRECTORS

Amber Wheeler

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Please address all inquiries to:

DESERT STREAM

706 Main Street

Grandview, MO 64030

(816) 767-1730 Fax: (816) 767-7221