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October 14, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we know, so many trends in our society are in conflict with our beliefs and Church teaching, especially regarding the understanding of the human person and human sexuality. These trends make it even more challenging to educate children and to form them as disciples of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, it is particularly important that our children learn a healthy, fulfilling view of human nature which is consistent with an authentic understanding of Christian anthropology. *Theology of the Body* provides an articulation of this understanding, and I am looking forward to this new initiative for our Diocese.

To that end, I write to you concerning the incorporation of certain concepts of *Theology of the Body* into the curricula of the Catholic school and Religious Education programs in our Diocese. *Theology of the Body* is based on the teachings of Pope Saint John Paul II and beautifully presents the Catholic Church's teaching on what it means to be human. It emphasizes that God has created us in His image, knows us and loves us individually, and has endowed us with an inherent dignity. *Theology of the Body* also calls to mind important passages from Genesis, where God made us male and female, created the institution of marriage between a man and a woman, and intended for the gift of our sexuality to be expressed within marriage. These age and grade appropriate lessons will help our children better understand the gift of their bodies and what it means to be human. At times though, when we speak of *Theology of the Body*, there may be a misunderstanding regarding some of its teachings. If such misunderstandings or questions arise in your Catholic school or Religious Education communities, please do not hesitate to reach out to your principal, C/DRE or pastor.

Daniel Breen, Secretary for Education, and our Office of Catholic Education are directing this important effort in our Catholic schools and Religious Education programs. We are blessed to have an internationally-known expert in *Theology of the Body*, Christopher West, here in our own Diocese, and we are partnering with him and his *Theology of the Body Institute* in this effort.

Our initial focus is on the formation of our administrators and teachers in our schools and Religious Education programs. Mr. West and his team began this effort at our annual education conference on September 18th. At the same time, planning is underway so that students in our Catholic schools and Religious Education programs will receive this important formation beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. While some schools and programs are already teaching *Theology of the Body*, it is my expectation that every school and religious education program will eventually incorporate this beautiful teaching of the Church, for the sake of the children in our care.

Please be assured of my ongoing prayers for our Catholic school and Religious Education communities.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg