

# CATHOLIC

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LIVING THE PROMISE  
OF CELIBACY



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■ Andrew Brown and Klarissa Chichioco speak to teens at the Echoes of Worth retreat.

## Restoring the human heart with **THEOLOGY OF THE BODY**

*Echoes of Worth retreat imparts to teens ‘what they already know but cannot explain’*

**T**URNING POINT MOMENTS - flashes in time when the Holy Spirit is at work and we realize it. More important, we act on it. That’s what happened for Echoes of Worth (EOW) founders Andrew Brown and Klarissa Chichioco, two ministry leaders in the Diocese of San Jose whose paths crossed and ignited into a powerful ministry in 2015.

“This is truly the work of the Holy Spirit,” Andrew says, reflecting on how he and Bay Area colleague and youth minister friend Alley Torres ran with an idea. Inspired after hearing Catholic author and speaker Christopher West, well-known for his ground-breaking work on St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body (TOB), Andrew and Alley envisioned a simple “lock-in” event in a parish hall to introduce the material to teens and “restore the human heart to the original unity of man and woman before original sin.”

BY LYNETTE  
MAGNINO

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY CATHY JOYCE

Moving on a parallel course, Klarissa, director of youth and young adult ministry at neighboring Queen of the Apostles Parish in San Jose, also had invited Christopher West to speak. Motivated after reading West's "Theology of the Body for Beginners," she knew she needed to bring this content to her parish.

"When we heard about Klarissa, we knew we had to get her on board," Andrew shares enthusiastically, highlighting the energy of the initial flame that erupted into Echoes of Worth. As pastoral associate at St. Lucy Parish in Campbell, Andrew took his years of youth ministry experience and joined together with Alley and Klarissa to create the ministry.

This marked the beginning of the Echoes of Worth retreat which launched for the larger San Francisco Bay Area just seven months after the trio's initial intuition that people were hungry for the TOB message. That hunch resulted in 150 teens and 50 adult volunteers from five dioceses and 20 parishes attending a life-changing retreat. Five years later, while Alley stepped away on sabbatical to raise her young family, Andrew and Klarissa agree the retreat has proven its worth and they continue to be energized by its effects.

"Theology of the Body speaks to the human heart, to human longing," Andrew says, explaining how the retreat ministry project operates within the larger family of Creative Catholic Works, a 501©3 non-profit media and event organization driven to inspire and educate.

"We chose 'Echoes of Worth' as the name of the project to reflect the beauty of Theology of the Body teachings (from audience 19), and Chapter 1 (verses 26 and 27) in the book of Genesis," Andrew notes. He refers to St. John

Paul II's writings on man's commitment to understand the divine gift of "self," which is "inscribed in the depths of the human heart, as a distant echo of original innocence," and points to God's creation of mankind in his image.

The Echoes of Worth retreat occurs annually at a retreat venue in the Santa Cruz mountains for two nights and three days, but founders remain open "to wherever the Spirit leads us," Klarissa says. The Diocese of Sacramento's Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry partnered with EOW to expand beyond the Bay Area when Andrew and Klarissa led 56 teens from parishes on a weekend retreat March 29-31 at Trinity Pines Catholic Center in Colfax.

"We also host a pre-retreat 'formation day' to train our adult leaders who will lead small groups and chaperone the retreat," Klarissa explains, thrilled that they've been able to bring in experts from the Theology of the Body Institute to reveal the treasury of knowledge on the topic.

Andrew, Klarissa and volunteer leaders witness the fruits of the retreat firsthand, encouraged and blessed as participants' receptivity consistently radiates thanksgiving and joy. Teens, young adults and parents alike embrace the information in poignant ways which speak to their respective life journeys.

"Teens have an emotional response," Klarissa says, describing how the addition of music and video clips engage them, summoning up real-life struggles. "Young adults are logical and rational," she adds, seeing in them that their understanding of the content allows for intellectual conversations later. "For parents, it's both," she says, indicating that "they've been through a lot and may have old wounds" which manifest emotionally and intellectually.

"Eyes light up and things click" as participants



■ Andrew Brown participates in a small group discussion with teens at the Echoes of Worth retreat.

listen to presentations and “people are very open and receptive for many reasons,” Andrew says. He believes a critical turning point occurs when people recognize how TOB “gives words and language to articulate what they already know but cannot explain.”

“They can see the idealistic nature of this invitation,” Andrew underscores signalling a sad truth. “We’ve been deprived by the culture’s message to indulge, indulge, indulge, so we repress, repress, repress.” He suggests that people’s inner and innate knowledge of God’s design yearns to be made visible in their lives.

“So we say, Jesus can redeem, redeem, redeem,” Andrew insists, ever-confident that TOB helps people to look at their bodies and see that sex isn’t bad, it’s a gift, and each person is a gift. “Who wouldn’t like that message?” he professes.

Klarissa and Andrew want Echoes of Worth to be a conduit for sharing TOB widely. “We hope teens will bring it back to their families, youth groups and schools,” Andrew says. In his role at St. Lucy Parish, he takes every opportunity to convey the TOB message in marriage preparation, Natural Family Planning and faith formation programs. He also speaks regularly to a variety of groups at churches and schools on behalf of the ministry.



Klarissa, too, puts great focus on TOB in her youth and young adult ministry at Queen of the Apostles Parish. She also can be heard as the voice of “Theology of the Body Minutes” on Relevant Radio taking TOB to the masses in “bite-sized chunks” so that listeners can reflect on the messages and integrate them into their daily lives. †

■ Andrew and Klarissa speak with teens at the Echoes of Worth retreat at Trinity Pines Catholic Center in Colfax.



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