

Lecture – Week 1

Title: The Body as Gift

You did not make yourself. That sentence might sound obvious, but it is actually one of the most controversial claims you can make in our time.

Everything around you tells a different story: that you define yourself, design yourself, even recreate yourself if you wish. That your body is raw material to shape however you like—or a problem to overcome.

But here's the truth: before you ever made a single choice, your body was already there. Forming. Breathing. Growing. You did not choose your lungs. You did not design your voice. You did not write your genetic code. You received it. Every part of your body, from your eyelashes to your femur, was given to you.

And because it was given, it must be received.

This is where our year begins—not with biology alone, but with humility. You are not the owner of your body. You are its steward. That is the whole foundation of this course. Not control. Not customization. But stewardship. You've been entrusted with something. Something fragile, powerful, finite, and filled with purpose.

The Latin word for gift is *donum* (*DOH-noom*). It's not just a pleasant surprise. It's a sign of relationship. When you receive a gift, you honor the giver. You take care of it. You do not throw it away or pretend you earned it. To call the body a *donum* is to say something deeper: your very existence is not your achievement. It is grace.

But it's not enough to just say the body is a gift. We also have to ask: what kind of gift is it? What kind of structure does it have? What is it for?

That brings us to a second Latin word: *corpus humanum* (*KOR-poos hoo-MAH-noom*)—the human body. Not a machine. Not an ornament. A unified, living whole. The body is made of systems, but it is not a system. It is a person expressed in form. That's what the word *humanum* means—not just a body, but a human body. A personal body. Yours.

And what do we see when we study it? We see *ordo* (*OR-doh*)—order. Hierarchy. Interdependence. We see structure that supports purpose. Cells form tissues. Tissues form organs. Organs form systems. And systems form the whole. Nothing works alone. Nothing is irrelevant. The respiratory system doesn't deliver oxygen unless the circulatory system moves it. The brain

doesn't send signals unless the digestive system provides energy. The muscles don't contract unless the nerves tell them to.

This isn't just fascinating. It's moral. The body teaches us something that most of the world has forgotten: that limits are not failures. They are instructions. You cannot be in two places at once. You cannot eat endlessly. You cannot live without sleep. These are not restrictions to resent. They are boundaries that shape growth.

And this is why the Christian tradition speaks of the body with reverence. Because the body is not a throwaway shell. It's not a temporary container. It's the visible form of the human person. It is through the body that we speak, serve, suffer, and love. It is through the body that we pray. It is through the body that we die.

You were made in the image of God—not just in your thoughts or your spirit, but in your whole being. *Imago Dei* (*ee-MAH-go DAY-ee*) is not an abstract idea. It's a calling. It means your body is not your own. It means it was never meant to be wasted, manipulated, or ignored. It was meant to be lived in wisely, gratefully, and faithfully.

So where do we begin?

We begin by noticing. By paying attention. By remembering that your body is not a possession to manage, but a mystery to receive. The textbook will give you details—cells, tissues, organs, systems. Learn them. Study them. But do not forget what they are signs of: that you were made. You were formed. And the shape of your body tells the truth about who you are.

That is the first truth of this year. You did not make yourself. But you have been given yourself. And now, the question is: what will you do with what you've been given?