

Let's listen again to that second reading. It gives us a very rich spirituality of the body, of Christ's Body and of our own bodies.

*The body is not meant for fornication: it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God, who raised the Lord from the dead, will by his power raise us up too.*

*You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ; do you think I can take parts of Christ's body and join them to the body of a prostitute? Never! But anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.*

*Keep away from fornication. All the other sins are committed outside the body; but to fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God.*

So, our body is for the Lord, as He is for our body. That's what the Eucharist means. "This is my body given for you." My amen to that doesn't just mean that I believe the consecrated bread to be the Body of the Lord. It also means, "Lord Jesus, this in return is my body, given for you." This union of bodies in the Eucharist nurtures and deepens the first union which took place between us in Baptism, when we became members making up the body of Christ. Through these sacraments we are really united bodily with the risen Body of Jesus. He is the deepest reality of our very bodies.

So, we are no longer our own property. Just as Jesus has given Himself up for us, we have surrendered ourselves

to Him and, through Him, to one another. St. Paul says that we have been bought and paid for. The price of that transaction was the giving up of Himself on the Cross by Jesus. Our bodies are thus marked with the sacrifice of Jesus, with his blood, with his death, with his love. But they are also marked by the Resurrection of Jesus. Through Baptism, our bodies become the possession, the dwelling place of Jesus who both died and rose again. Sin marks us for death. Baptism marks us for resurrection to eternal life. Eucharist feeds this life within us. I am the Bread of Life.

But we are not just all body. We are also soul. Body and soul were never intended by God to be separable or separated. It was sin and so death which caused that. We are conceived in the womb as body and soul, together and inseparably. In fact, it would be better to say that we are conceived as body *in* soul, soul *in* body. Our body is not an appendix to our soul, nor our soul an afterthought to our body. I am not just my spiritual component, as if my body were a disposable container. I am my body as much as I am my soul, and this wholeness of who I am has been created by God and redeemed by the Cross and resurrection of Christ. His gift of Himself to me in the Eucharist, body, blood, soul and divinity, affirms and confirms the whole of me, body and soul, in His love and life. Holy Communion feeds in me the wonderful union of my whole being with that of Jesus. Through Jesus, I am then united with the Father in the Holy Spirit and with every other human being and all other creatures.

Some might think this too idealistic. Others may deny it. Yet these truths lie at the root of our humanity as designed and created by God. In the Creed, we profess God to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and therefore of our visible bodies and invisible souls. We profess the Son of God truly to have become man for our sake and for our salvation. We profess his real death and resurrection in the body he assumed. And we profess the resurrection of the body of all those He has ever created and the renewal of creation.

Sin against the body, then, in any of its forms, is not sinful just because I disobey a rule that says I mustn't do this or that. The real offence in bodily sin is that it violates my bodily union with Christ. It pretends that baptism never happened or that Eucharist doesn't mean oneness of flesh with Christ. It weakens my love for Christ and insults His Cross and Resurrection. It also suggests that I don't truly believe that the destiny of my own body is to be raised from the dead. It leads to fragmentation of my integrity of body and soul, an integrity we also call chastity.

St. Paul mentions fornication in the reading, which was the scandal he was dealing with in the church in Corinth. But the word he uses also means any sexual immorality. Elsewhere in his letters he lists catalogues of what such sins include. The Church sums them all up by teaching that (CCC, 2352) the deliberate use, for any reason, of the sexual faculty outside marriage as created by God in the beginning, or any improper use of it within marriage, is contrary to its purpose. We all know, of course, that the

circumstances of life will mean that the extent of someone's personal guilt can vary enormously. God alone knows our full truth. It's incumbent on all of us, especially the pastors of the Church, to demonstrate Christ's own compassion for anyone struggling in these matters, especially the young. Compassion does not mean to condone what's wrong, of course, for that would harm further a person's true good, and would disobey Christ's own admonition to "go and sin no more."

The Lord in his merciful love does not leave us alone either when we struggle or when we fall. He invites us to accept and rejoice in the beauty of our bodily and soulful existence in uniting it with His through Baptism and the Eucharist. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is there to assist us to keep finding new hope and strength in His mercy. For those who are married, the Sacrament of Matrimony itself is a constant source of grace which can be tapped to grow and persevere in mutual love, compassion and forgiveness. Christ is the greatest friend of our human happiness and fulfilment, in body and in soul. Lord, help us to belong to you, to struggle for you, to surrender to you, every day, body and soul, that we may know your joy and your strength. At every Mass, you give up your body anew for us. Help us to do likewise every day until that day when you will raise us body and soul from the grave, never again to be separated from you, from ourselves or from the immense beauty of creation held majestically together in your glorious Risen Body.