

14. January 2024

The body, a temple of the Holy Spirit

1 Cor 6:13-20 (Reading from the Novus Ordo)

Brethern, Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods; and God will destroy them both. But the body is not for sexual immorality; it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. God raised up the Lord and he will raise us up too by his power. Do you not realise that your bodies are members of Christ's body; do you think one can take parts of Christ's body and join them to the body of a prostitute? Out of the question! But anyone who attaches himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that people may commit are done outside the body; but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God? You are not your own property, then; you have been bought at a price. So use your body for the glory of God.

The Word of God is a great light that enlightens us and gives us clarity. The Word of God continues to speak to us in our time, and if we are guided by it, God's blessing will come upon us. The idea that the present age can correct or reinterpret the Word of the Lord, as if we now know better, is false. It is not! It is the Word of God that gives light, not human wisdom. Therefore, let us listen very carefully to today's biblical message, especially at this time when mankind often lives far away from these words of the Apostle Paul, and perhaps does not even want to hear them. But they are still true!

Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; what dignity has been given to it as the dwelling place of God! The Lord wants to dwell in our weak bodies and enlighten us. Our whole being must be penetrated by the light of God, so that our thoughts and actions conform to His will.

Lust, which disfigures both body and soul, is incompatible with our dignity. How can the Spirit of God dwell in us if we allow ourselves to be carried away by our disordered inclinations?

The suffering that results from disordered sexuality, both for ourselves and for others, has far greater consequences than we can imagine. Our capacity to love is diminished and we lose our integrity, our inner strength, our union with God and with ourselves because we allow ourselves to be carried away by our passions.

We know that sexuality is for marriage. St Paul makes it clear to us that there is a unification and a corresponding bond with the person with whom impurity is committed. Both the sexual act and the persons involved are degraded. This degradation also occurs when the person seeks pleasure in his or her own body, for then the ability to love and give oneself to another person is reduced or even blocked. I would add that indulging in sexual fantasies is also a perversion. In the case of homosexual practices, the unnatural element is added.

Pastoral care should help people to deal with sexuality in accordance with God's will. But they will not be helped if, for example, priests bless couples living in a relationship contrary to God's plan, as a new and confusing Vatican statement proposes. This is a deeply contradictory sign and leads in the wrong direction.

It is not easy to resist the provocations of sexual pleasure! The scourge of pornography plagues more than a few people, sometimes even those who really want to live according to God's will.

Therefore, the sin of lust must not be trivialised. On the other hand, we should not be discouraged when we have to fight on this battlefield. The temptation to impurity touches a weak spot in many people, and God will surely have mercy on them if they strive to live in chastity, even if they suffer relapses from time to time. Let no one fall into despair or become too obsessed with this matter!

Let us try to resist temptations with all our strength, through an ever-deepening life of prayer and by keeping a watchful eye on our thoughts! Those who have taken the vow of chastity should be very vigilant and avoid too close a relationship with a person of the opposite sex. This also applies, of course, to married people when it comes to relationships outside of marriage. Young people, too, must be careful not to enter into a sexuality that separates them from God.