

Homily for Friday 23rd Week of Ordinary Time
 1 Corinthians 9:16–19, 22b–27
 Psalm 84:3–6, 12
 Luke 6:39–42

One of the themes that is a thread woven through 1 Corinthians can be stated this way. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ our lives take on a new dimension because we belong to Jesus. Nowhere is this stated more clearly than in 1 Corinthians 6:20:

You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Here Paul is using the language from the slave market. In the Roman slave markets people would be bought and sold. Paul is stating here that we have been redeemed from the slave owner – the devil- by the savior - Jesus Christ. His death on the cross was the price of our redemption and so now we are to live in such a way that we glorify Christ in our bodies.

In the reading from Corinthians appointed for today Paul articulates clearly how he is to glorify God in his body. He is to proclaim the good news of Christ in such a way that he wants to adapt the approach of the proclamation in order to suit those amongst whom he is preaching and teaching. The Mission Statement of Paul’s life is encapsulated by the arresting phrase:

I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

What does he want to save them from? Well in Corinth, it would have been to save them from a world view marked by debauchery and vice. There was verb used at that time “Corinthize”. If you said “I am going to Corinthize” this weekend people would know you were about to partake in a weekend of very loose living.

The city of Corinth was known as a community of vice and it was Paul’s desire to be the kind of person who would be able to reach out and save some from such a profligate society. In Corinth, as in modern day Canada, people believed their bodies were their own property to do with as they pleased.

This is one of the consequences resulting from being indentured to the enemy of our soul, the devil. After all, he says we can be like God, deciding for ourselves what is good and evil. Such a mindset is in the end deadly. In our present lives it dulls and deadened the soul to the will of God and can ultimately separate that soul from God for all eternity.

It is only by grace that people can come to see that Jesus’ death matters “for me”. It is only when people like St. Paul and people like you and me take to heart the call placed on us to witness to the gospel that we can be used in the service of Jesus to save some.

Such a perspective brings into mind that we are all called to share in the New Evangelization. Such a sharing asks of us a kind of perseverance that will carry on to the end of our lives -

witnessing to the great redeemer. We are to see the life of Christian witness as a race that requires fortitude and courage, conviction and determination.

To share in the New Evangelization also requires of us a true self-knowledge where we are acutely aware of the log in our own eye. That is, we admit those ways where we do not live glorifying God in our bodies. People who live with a self-reflective attitude will be so receptive to grace and mercy because they know how much they need God's kindness in their own lives. Then in turn such people will be able to approach others who may be far from Christ meeting them where they are and through prayer and care draw them closer to Jesus and so save some.

It is important to remember that the call of the New Evangelization is for all. We are not all called to be priests, or religious. But we are all called to say with Paul

for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission

As disciples of Jesus we have also been entrusted with this Commission. May we therefore glorify God in our bodies by taking our part in the great commission of grace. Because Jesus has freed us we can echo Paul and declare:

I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them¹

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.* (1993). (1 Co 9:19). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.