

*Homily for January 17, 2021*

*“Bought so we ought”*

Our first reading is one of the most endearing texts from the Old Testament, the calling of Samuel by name which then sparked his spiritual awakening. The text says: “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him”. And then listen to how our text for today ends: “As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground”. Do you hear what is happening here? Samuel’s life became infused by the Lord’s words, so that in turn his words had an authority and authenticity to them because they grew out of his knowing God so intimately. That what is means when the divine author states: “God let none of his words fall to the ground”.

Another person called by God was Saul of Tarsus. Like Samuel, Jesus repeatedly summoned him: “Saul, Saul,” to which the one so opposed to Jesus asked “Who are you Lord”? And then he heard the Lord say: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting”. As had happened with Samuel, on that day Saul began to know the Lord Jesus. Like the boy Samuel, Saul said “Here I am Lord” This response so changed his life that Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle. His words had and have such authority and authenticity because the Lord was with him so that none of them has fallen to the ground.

In the passage from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6 Paul writes words that are as timely today as when he composed them. I would summarize what Paul is saying this way:

*Because we have been bought by Jesus we ought to glorify God*

The ought in question, has to do with the believer’s understanding and expression of our sexuality. Paul’s argument in these verses is governed by what he says in the last verse:

*For you were bought for a price, therefore glorify God in your body.*

St. Paul is making an association between what Jesus did in his body with what we ought to do with our bodies.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Bishop St. John Chrysostom has this vivid way of capturing how Jesus has bought us and what should therefore be the appropriate response from us.

“Supposing you had a daughter and in extreme madness had let her out to a pimp for hire and made her live a prostitute’s life, and that a king’s son were to pass by and free her from that slavery and join her in marriage to himself; after that you would have no power to bring her into the brothel. For you gave her up once for all and sold her. Such as this is our case also. We let out our own flesh for hire unto the devil, that grievous pimp: Christ saw and set it free, and withdrew it from that evil tyranny; it is not then ours any more but his who delivered it. If you

are willing to use it as a King's bride, there is none to hinder you; but if you take it where it was before, you will suffer. Therefore you should adorn rather than disgrace it."<sup>1</sup>

Because Jesus is the king who has bought us listen to what these means about our relationship with God.

***The Body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the Body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.***

St Paul is teaching us here that our bodies have a noble and divine end, they are for the Lord. They are destined ultimately to be united and conformed to the glorious body of Christ, now living in heaven<sup>2</sup>. Because of this he wants us to understand that our bodies are members of Christ. We are in a profound and eternal way married to Jesus Christ. He is the bridegroom and we his bride.

But that's not all, we are also the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now that's a staggering claim on Paul's part, because it links the Christian not just with the second person of the Trinity, Christ, but also with the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Here he's describing the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in the believer, and thereby making the body into a temple. Now, that's a very Jewish concept. The Jews had the idea of the Jerusalem temple as essentially the dwelling place of God on Earth. You can see this—it goes all the way back to Exodus 40, when Moses builds the tabernacle. The tabernacle is just a portable tent, but when the glory cloud of the Lord descends upon the tabernacle in Exodus 40, it transforms it into a temple. It transforms it into a sanctuary. It transforms it into the dwelling place of God on Earth. So for Paul, every single Christian's body is the equivalent of the tabernacle of Moses, except now the Spirit of the glory of God is dwelling within the body of the individual and not in a tent made by human hands.

Here is what St. Paul wants us to see, because we have been united to God in this way, we are to use our bodies in a way that is very different from the non-believer, especially when it comes to how we express ourselves sexually. In Corinth there was a saying that went like this:

***“Mistresses we keep for pleasure, concubines for the sake of daily intercourse, wives to bear us legitimate children and to be our faithful housekeepers.”<sup>3</sup>***

Isn't that something; for the Corinthians, sex was seen as a recreational activity that was accentuated by the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, pleasure, beauty and passion. Her Temple was prominent in Corinth.

Paul wants us to know that because we have been bought for a price by Jesus we ought to take to heart these words from our passage:

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<sup>1</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [First Corinthians](#) (p. 112). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>2</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [First Corinthians](#) (pp. 108–109). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>3</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [First Corinthians](#) (pp. 107–108). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

“The body is not meant for fornication”. Actually fornication is not the best translation of the word “pornea”. It is every form of sexual immorality Paul is warning against. To make his point he says we are to “shun immorality. The word means to flee from and escape. Following Saint Thomas Aquinas, spiritual writers have advised that while other vices call for a tactic of resistance, sexual immorality calls for the tactic of flight, lest passion be enkindled by toying with the occasion.<sup>4</sup>

St Paul then goes on to write:

***Every sin that a person commits is outside the body: but the fornicator (Greek: porneuown) sins against the body itself:***

Would not overeating, drunkenness, and drugs also be sins against one’s own body? Paul is obviously saying that there is something unique about sexual sin. Perhaps an example might help: A husband who drinks to excess is harming his relation with his wife, but one who commits adultery directly attacks their relationship, their being “one body. When you are one body with Christ, sexual immorality is adultery, a violation of the one-body union with Christ.<sup>5</sup>

So here is the take home message for us today. We live in a culture that is has obsessed with recreational sex, as was 1<sup>st</sup> Century Corinth. The perennial challenge for the follower of Jesus Christ is to recognize the seriousness with which we have to combat the temptation to sexual sin.

This can happen when with Samuel we hear and respond ever more to the call of God on our lives. As we ponder the meaning of what it means for us to be joined to Christ in our bodies and to remember we are Temples of the Holy Spirit.

***Because we have been bought by Jesus we ought to glorify God in and with our bodies.***

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<sup>4</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [First Corinthians](#) (p. 110). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>5</sup> Montague, G. T. (2011). [First Corinthians](#) (p. 111). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.