

01/18/15 2 B

-- One nightmare public figures face all the time is being quoted out of context. Just ask Pope Francis, with his remarks like *Who am I to judge?* Even priests face the danger of being misunderstood.

-- St. Paul did as well. A few verses earlier in the chapter our 2nd reading comes from, he quotes himself saying: *Everything is lawful for me.* He was speaking about what foods the Christians in Corinth could eat.

-- But some of them took it to mean they could engage in all sorts of practices their culture took for granted. That included the temple prostitution that took place at the pagan temples in town.

-- Paul had to correct them on this matter, so he added: *Not everything is beneficial.* And then he told them that their bodies are members of Christ. They were not something to do with as we please.

-- What we do in our bodies, and in particular our sexuality, is important. It reflects who we are and what we are about. St. Paul tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we should treat them (and others) like that.

-- We may not have temple prostitution as a part of American culture. But our prevailing cultural attitudes, especially toward sexuality, hardly reflect an attitude of treating our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit.

-- Just take the saying: *We have a right to control our own bodies.* Many in the women's movement have used this to justify abortion. Putting aside the fact that the unborn child is not just a part of a woman's body, that flatly contradicts what Paul said: *You are not your own, for you have been purchased at a price.*

-- That also shoots down the argument that terminally ill people should have the right to give themselves a lethal dose of drugs. We do not have a right to kill ourselves, even though we can use drugs to alleviate the pain of a terminal illness. Our bodies are simply not our own.

-- So, as followers of Christ, we have to stand against the prevailing attitude that consenting adults who use “protection” can do what they want to, sexually speaking. Sometimes that comes with the caution that not to violate a permanent commitment such as marriage, but not always. Witness public figures who have so-called open marriages.

-- In contrast to that attitude, St. Paul holds out the virtue of chastity for all of us, married and unmarried. We must respect the way God created us. We must respect the bodies of others.

-- We are responsible to our creator as well as ourselves for how we conduct ourselves in our human bodies. And, in the end, exercising this virtue of chastity is not really a restraint on us. It frees us to be what we are intended to be as God’s creatures, created in his image.

-- Yes, as human beings and as followers of Christ we are called to freedom. But this freedom is not to do whatever gives us pleasure at this moment in time. In the end, that can lead down a destructive path.

-- True freedom in Christ respects who we are as his creatures, made of both body and soul. True freedom means acknowledging that we are not our own. We belong to Christ.

-- When it comes to our sexuality, this means living the virtue of chastity in our state of life. It means being faithful to our commitments.

-- We may not be perfect all the time in doing that. But, as long as we are really trying to live the virtue of chastity and to have proper respect of ourselves and others, we will truly be glorifying God in our bodies.