

How would you feel if you gave someone a very thoughtful—or maybe expensive—gift, something you had put a lot of effort into, and that person simply looked at it and added it to the pile of other gifts or took it back to the store and exchanged it for something else. It would probably hurt a little bit wouldn't it? Think about that in the context of today's second reading: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body." In that section, Paul is writing specifically about sexual immorality, which is a very serious problem in our society, but since we are already too obsessed with sex, immorality can be expanded out to include other immoral actions such as drunkenness, over-eating, and laziness just to name a few. We should avoid all forms of immorality. Why? "Do you not know that **your** body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? **For you have been purchased at a price.** What price? Each and every one of us has been purchased by the blood of the Son of God!

You are not your own because Jesus paid the price for you. You—meaning each one of us—belongs to HIM. How radically different that message is from what we hear everyday in our society which says, "It is my body, I can do whatever I want with it." We are not our own because Jesus paid the price for us, we belong to him. And remember this. Paul wrote that our "bodies are members of Christ" which has a double or maybe even triple meaning. First meaning: We were given the Holy Spirit at baptism and then sealed with the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. We are also filled with the Holy Spirit whenever we ask it to enter us. We share that spirit with Jesus and his Father; this unites us to the Holy Trinity and allows us to share in the life of the Trinity. Second meaning: We are members of Jesus' body because we have received his body and blood in Holy Communion. The eucharist is NOT SYMBOLIC. Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist: body, blood, soul, and divinity. Not meaning to be blasphemous or crude, but we are what we eat. When we consume Jesus' body in the Eucharist, we become part of his body. Third meaning: Since we all share in consuming that one Eucharistic body we are all part of that one body. Because of this unity in the one body of Christ, every sin we commit is a sin against God and against each other. When we sin, we infect the body of Christ with a virus. The only cure to this virus is to ask God to forgive us. Less serious sins cause minor illnesses; these can be taken care of by simply asking God directly to forgive us. More serious sins—mortal sins—can only be treated through sacramental confession; we need

the ministry of Christ's church to help us deal with mortal sins. Jesus knew this which is why he established the sacrament of reconciliation and gave his priests—the apostles and their successors—the authority to forgive sins. If you doubt this, read the account of Jesus' first appearance to the Apostles after his resurrection in John's gospel(chapter 20, verse 23).

We have been purchased at a price. The price paid was Jesus' blood shed on the cross. Why did a price have to be paid? In atonement for our sins. Saint Paul tells us in the letter to the Romans: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The wages of sin is death...why? This goes into something which I am planning on dealing with at a much deeper level during Lent. One of the big themes in the cycle B readings which we will be using this year is the theme of covenant and sacrifice and what happens when a covenant is broken. Lent begins in one month on February 14th. Yes, Ash Wednesday is on Valentine's Day; don't even think of asking for a dispensation from the fasting and abstinence regulations for Ash Wednesday this year.

Every single one of us has been purchased at a price. Jesus was willing to shed his blood for each one of us...personally. He did this of his own free will. A price had to be paid because a covenant was broken and the wages of sin is death. Knowing that if the price wasn't paid we would be eternally separated from God, the Son of God chose to enter into human history and pay a price that we could not pay on our own. Again, for each one of us, personally. You were purchased for a very great and very precious price. What does that tell you about how much God loves you? Jesus paid a price to give us a great gift—our lives and the hope of living our lives eternally with him in heaven. Don't throw that gift away.