

Reading

1 Corinthians 6: 13–15. 17–20

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

- ¹³ The body is not meant for fornication;
it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
- ¹⁴ God, who raised the Lord from the dead,
will by his power raise us up too.
- ¹⁵ You know, surely, that your bodies are members
making up the body of Christ.
- ¹⁷ But anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.
- ¹⁸ Keep away from fornication.
All the other sins are committed outside the body;
but to fornicate is to sin against your own body.
- ¹⁹ Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit,
who is in you since you received him from God.
- ²⁰ You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for.
That is why you should use your body for the glory of God.
- The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

N-4 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians

In his first letter to the diverse groups of Christians in the busy port at Corinth, St Paul answers their questions on living the moral life, as well as making comments on their motives, behaviours and difficulties. He gives them the great teaching about Jesus Christ as the head, and everyone in the Church making up the members of his body. Each person or member has unique dignity, and unique gifts to contribute to the healthy functioning of the whole body. Each person has a part to play in relationship with others, and a certain responsibility and power to be aware of and respond to the needs of the whole body, joined to Christ the head, and filled with his spirit. A marriage, as a 'little church' or 'domestic church', has similar characteristics. The husband and wife in the marriage are united in unselfish love, which has its source in God's love which is like a spring, welling up inside them. They and the members of the family each share in the responsibility to give themselves for one another, unselfishly building a healthy happy 'body' that is the couple and the family.

In this reading

St Paul is teaching how important it is to live a moral life, with respect for your own and your partner's body. God took on human flesh in Jesus, showing us that the body is as important as the soul or spirit — we live in a physical world in a physical way with our bodies, and what we do with our bodies affects our spirits, because body and spirit are inseparable. In marriage we are called to live a joyful and fulfilling life through a faithful, exclusive and committed partnership. Our sexual relationship is a beautiful and essential ingredient of our marriage. Fornication is sex outside the marriage relationship, which violates the commitment at the heart of marriage, and always causes huge hurt, and both mental and spiritual anguish. St Paul tells us that Christ's death paid a price to set us free from sin — including sexual sin. The reading describes this saying 'we have been bought and paid for'. We are to live in this freedom and enjoy the gift of our sexuality in marriage, remembering that we have the spirit of Christ in us, and that Christian freedom is always tied to responsibility.

Reflecting on Scripture together

Use the 'Reflecting on Scripture together — a simple way' in the introduction 'Choosing your Wedding readings'.

Further Reflection

Following the 'slow reading' process, here are some questions for further reflection:

- Talk together about what being faithful means to you, and why sexual infidelity in particular, in thought, word or action, is so damaging to a relationship. What have you noticed or experienced about this in contemporary culture?
- Our sexuality is a natural and beautiful gift given to us by God, which involves the whole person — not just our bodies, but our minds and spirits too. How do we care for each other, fulfilling each other's needs and desires, physically, emotionally and spiritually?

- We give ourselves — all we have and all we are — to one another in marriage. You might like to tell each other what you most appreciate about them, and what you receive from them that makes such a difference to your life. What you hope to give to the other through the stability of your married relationship.
- What do you like about this reading, and why might it be a good reading for your wedding?