

Made to be Moral

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19
Psalms 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

*1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20***
John 1:35-42

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-13a, St. Paul quotes and responds to what some scholars believe to be Corinthian slogans regarding the popular morality of the time, or misinterpretations of the Christian doctrine. “*Everything is lawful for me*” is answered with “*but not everything is good for me*” (1 Cor 6:12). “*Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food and God will do away with both in the end*” (1 Cor 6:13a) is countered by Paul stressing the resurrection of the body. Later, in the fifteenth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul counters the popular Greco-Roman attitude of “*eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*” (1 Cor 15:32b) with the Christian faith in the Resurrection. Therefore, in affirming Christian moral principles and teachings, Paul had a lot to contend with in writing to the self-indulgent, pleasure-seeking Greco-Roman culture of Corinth.

...how often, if ever, do we consider morality – sin or virtue, and right or wrong...on whether God would be pleased or displeased?

Not much has changed over the last two thousand years since Paul’s birth. After the moral upheaval of the sixties, we hear new slogans in our culture regarding popular morality in which right and wrong, sin and virtue are more often than not measured according to pleasure, emotion and its effect or non-effect on others. Popular slogans including, “I feel good about it,” “It doesn’t hurt anyone,” “All you need is love” or “It

can’t be wrong when it feels so right [because you light up my life”(?!)] are used to justify values that often run counter to Christianity. Others limit moral culpability only to the public realm, believing in the absolute universality of the “right to privacy,” even over personal morality, and “freedom to ‘love’ ”.

In Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, however, the measure of morality is not in how we feel, or how our actions affect others, but, rather, in how they glorify God. The measure of *personal* morality is how we glorify God in our own physical being.

This is illustrated in Paul’s assertion: “*The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:13b). He asks the Corinthians, and us, the rhetorical question – as if the answer is already second nature to us – “*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?*” (1 Cor 6:15). The implication being, if we behave immorally, we do not recognize this simple universal truth about our physical bodies.

As political correctness and pop-morality has grown more accepting and tolerant of various lifestyles and behaviors within our modern culture we may mistake certain actions, certain manners and certain choices as moral. Given all of this, how

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often, if ever, do we consider morality – sin or virtue, and right or wrong – based not on how it pleases us or affects or does not affect others, but on whether God would be pleased or displeased?

The slogans will no doubt continue. Some will assert personal independence – “It is my body and I can treat it as I wish!” or “It’s my life and I will do as I please [and God will love me anyway]!” Paul, however, reminds us, “*You are not your own. You have been purchased at a price*” (1 Cor 6:19b-20). Others may try to be a little more elevated – “God made me this way.” Paul, however, reminds us of a more universal truth – *God did not make us for immorality and sin.*

Let us rejoice in “the way God made

us,” but not as license to live and behave in a manner that is offensive to God. Let us not retreat behind popular slogans and secular morality. Rather, let us remember, as Paul reminds us, that our bodies, and all their attributes, appetites and orientations, are given to help us discover the higher purpose for which we were made – not to descend to base immorality, but to ascend to the glorification of God in whom we live and move and have our being.

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