

## ***“Gratitude and Holiness”***

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dearly beloved, your body is a temple. Don't believe it? God says it is. And you know what a temple is – it's a HOLY place – because it is where God dwells. That's you – your body – the temple of God the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul puts it this way – “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own .....”  
(1 Corinthians 6:19)

“You are not your own” – that's how the Apostle Paul speaks of your body. You confess this to be true in the First Article of the Apostles' Creed when you say – “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.”

“You are not your own” – it is the Lord who has created you – but there's even more! St. Paul goes on to tell you this – “for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

You were bought with a price – and you know what that price was – one far more valuable than gold or silver. It is the price of your Savior's “holy precious blood” and His “innocent suffering and death.”

“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.” But oh, how often, you forget this – how often you think just the opposite – how often you think that you are, indeed, your own. That you are all alone – and therefore, God has no say over how you treat your body – and so, you live accordingly.

“My Body, My Choice” is not just the mantra of those who support the killing of children while still living in the womb – it is the mantra of the sinful nature – shared by each and every one of us.

You think your body is yours to do with as you please – and so you live in your body as if God does not matter. In a way in which you matter most. In a way in which your thoughts, desires, and actions, are soiled with sin. In a way in which your body, and your life, is most UN-holy.

But that is not God's will for you – that's not what He wants for you – because, indeed, it is not GOOD for you. Your heavenly Father loves you and wants what is GOOD for you – and so He tells you what is GOOD.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter ...”

God tells you what He wants for you – “your sanctification” – that is, for you to be “holy.” This, He says, is GOOD for you – and for your fellow man.

“The passion of lust” – intense longing, extreme covetousness – God says you are not to live like that. It is the Gentiles – that is, those who do not know God, the unbelievers – who live like that.

Another apostle, St. John, puts it this way: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.” (2:15-17)

Okay, you've heard the Word of the Lord who calls you to be holy – and you may agree that this is truly “good, right, and salutary” – but there are forces that are aligned against you, which are constantly at war with you – the world, and your sinful flesh.

And you know this to be true as well – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes is all around you. You can't escape it. You go to the movies – it's there. You watch TV or videos – it's there. You read a novel – it's there. You go to the beach – it's there. You walk down the street – it's there. You come to church ----- yes, even there.

The reality is that you cannot escape the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes – and you can't reason with it either – you cannot overcome it of your own will – it is just too strong, and constant – and you are too weak.

Its as you confess in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed – that you cannot, by your own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ, your Lord, or come to Him – so also, you cannot, by your own reason or strength, fight off the temptations of lust and walk away from it.

But you are not ALONE. You have help. Remember, that your body is a temple – the temple of the Holy Spirit. And where the Holy Spirit dwells – there is the Help of God – for that is who the Holy Spirit is, the “Helper,” the “Advocate,” the “Paraclete,” the “one called to your side to help and defend you.”

You are not alone – God the Holy Spirit is with you, to help you – but I have to warn you – you might not like His help.

To use the language of Isaiah the prophet – God the Holy Spirit helps you by leading you out into the desert. Isaiah says that “a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way ... they shall not go astray.”

Holiness and cleansing come through the desert – and this is the answer for lust. Lust is all around – but through daily contrition and repentance it is put to death. In the wilderness there is little food and water – in the wilderness things struggle to survive – and so it is in the wilderness that the Lord provides the “Way of holiness.”

In the wilderness the things of this world do not flourish and grow strong – because the Lord is there, with you, and He is your strength. In the wilderness the Lord abundantly provides for His children – giving Bread from heaven – and water from the Rock.

It is the Lord who is with you – the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you – that is the remedy for lust. You can't stop seeing, hearing, and even experiencing the temptations when they come – but you can stop feeding them, they can be starved.

God's desire is that "each one of you know how to control his own body" – and this the Holy Spirit does by leading you to keep watch over your eyes, ears, and all your members, your reason and all your senses – by not seeking out that which will tempt you – by not dwelling on that which seduces you – by not acting out in a way which is unholy or impure.

And, by thanking God for your body and the GOOD gift that it is to you. Thanking God that you are NOT your own – that you are His. Thanking Him that you are not ALONE – but that He dwells with you. Thanking Him that you have been bought with a price – that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all uncleanness – that God the Holy Spirit sanctifies you by His blood.

And finally, thanking God the Father that you have the privilege of honoring Him and glorying Him with your body – through Jesus Christ your Redeemer – by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.