

2nd SUNDAY B
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The late John Paul the second, may he rest in peace, wrote an extended meditation called the *Theology of the Body*. According to Pope John Paul 2, the human body has a language that proclaims the mystery of God. Yet because of sin, our vision is blurred. The mystery that our baptized bodies speak of, is given in 1Cor. 6, saying, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? You are not your own! Therefore, glorify God in your body.”

In the world, women’s bodies have been sold, beaten, abused and forgotten because of the sin of male privilege, dominance and fear.

In the United States, the persons -the bodies of the enslaved Africans were turned into the first black gold. African bodies were turned into a commodity to be bought, sold, experimented upon, bred, trashed and jailed because of the sin of greed, white supremacy, and fear.

The justifications for slavery and white privilege gave rise to the justifications for abortion. The body of an unborn is no longer a person – it is just a baby, therefore it has no human or civil rights and as the property of the woman ‘it’ can be disposed of as she sees fit. It can be experimented upon, can be genetically altered to get the right product –usually a boy of high intelligence or giftedness, or it can be terminated. We see this happening in the Peoples Republic of China.

As Christians we are called like Samuel from our sleep by God to raise a prophetic voice that says our bodies ---male and female, black, white, and brown, abled and dis-abled, documented and un-documented, American and un-American, free or on death row --our bodies are a Temple of God’s Holy Breath, our bodies are a language that glorifies God!

Because we glorify God in our bodies, Satan seeks to **Bind, Torture and Kill** our bodies and in the United States it is black bodies that receive special hatred.

From jail in Birmingham, Rev. King wrote to the ministers and priests who told him that African Americans ought to wait longer for their civil and human rights: “When you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’ then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait” (*Letter from a Birmingham Jail*).

Against this sense of “nobodiness,” the Gospel of life proclaimed by the Catholic Church and taught by John Paul the II says, Glorify God in your body! In

your blues black selves, male and female, glorify God! As mother Mary sang, "My soul proclaims the greatness of God. My being rejoices in God, my savior."

In the U.S. the being of African Americans is constantly called into question. For this reason, we live in an era of the new Jim Crow where 2 million Americans are in jail and tens of millions of Americans are caught up in the injustice that is our prison system. This system of injustice is given strength by Homeland Security laws, enforced by fascist immigration laws of Arizona, Alabama and Missouri and nurtured by the fear of all things Muslim. This system is founded on the perversion of the American and Christian creed which says, "all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". It was perverted by a Supreme court justice who ruled in 1857 that a black man has no rights which a white man need respect. And so, in America, blacks were lynched –hung from trees all over the country, North and South, and no legislation was ever passed to make it a federal crime. From lynching to the mass incarcerations of the war on drugs we continue to bind, torture and kill mostly black, brown, women and unborn bodies. This is Satan's war on the human body in the U.S.

Some of you come from other countries where the binding, torture and killing of minorities take place. In Ireland, it was British Protestant privilege over the Catholic Irish. In India, Brahman class privilege over the so called untouchables. Perhaps in Indonesia it is the Muslim majority dominating the Christian minority. It was Serbian Christians, Croatian Catholics and Muslims ethnically cleansing their land. In the U.S., it was and is white supremacy over black humanity.

I share these dangerous and uncomfortable thoughts with you today because the soul of America is at stake. We Catholics have to wake from our slumber and recognize that God is calling U.S., God is calling you, to be in solidarity with one another. In this country, solidarity with the immigrant and with your African American brothers and sisters is essential to save the soul of America. It is important to have African American expressions of our Catholic American Faith. Why? Glorify God in your body; my being proclaims the greatness of God! (Where in this church is a black Madonna?)

Some here come from countries that have experienced police state fascism, or the rule of the 1% over the 99%. Unless we Catholic Christians use our prophetic voice as it comes out of the African American experience and immigrant communities, our U. S. will become a police state ruled by the corporate 1%. represented by the Group, Goldman Sack.

Black Catholics have been uncommonly faithful to a church that has been common and un-faithful to them. We see this in the closing of churches and schools in the inner city where the preferential **option** for the poor is not taken.

James Cone in his most recent book, *"The Cross and the Lynching Tree"* explains his journey as a black Christian by writing, "How could any theologian explain the meaning of Christian identity in America and fail to engage white supremacy, its primary negation?" How can you be both Black and Catholic in America, in Philadelphia, in Camden? The priest pedophile scandal, the closing of schools and parishes in the inner cities and the 'nobodiness' of African Americans in the Catholic Church are challenges to our Catholic faith where the words of St. Paul say our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

In this Eucharist, a type of incarnation happens when the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This type of incarnation continues when you come forward to receive the body of Christ saying amen - taking into your body the flesh and blood of Jesus. By this act, God in Jesus is in solidarity with you. In the same way, we are called to be in solidarity with each other, especially those whose personhood has been systematically victimized in this nation.

In holy communion, two bodies become the one body of Christ. It does not matter the sex, sexuality, race, or language. All are gathered around the table of the Lamb and they are blessed! Empowered to glorify God.

In the new words of the Eucharist, we hear the words of Jesus, "This is my body given up for you. This is my blood poured out for you." When we give up our bodies for the other, our blood for the other, then we re-member Jesus and save the soul of the United States!

Body of Christ!

Body of Christ!

Glorify God in your body!