

**Redemption in Christ**      Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time      Wednesday,  
October 21, 2015 8:15 AM      **Rom 6:12-18;** Lk 12:39-48 (Christ created a pattern of service and love and sacrifice to the Father, and that is redemption; that redeems what God originally created good, brings it back to its original possibilities.)

**“Sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires.”**

Today St. Paul is continuing his reflection on the theology of sin. Now what is sin? **Sin is the irrational in the field of human choice, and so it involves lack of beauty, lack of goodness—sometimes called evil—lack of truth in human choices.** Now this impairs nature; it afflicts nature, and nature can't help it. **Nature cannot recover from the effects of sin.** Nature can recover from forest fires, which are a kind of evil, but merely on the physical plane. Nature can recover from hurricanes and volcanoes and all sorts of evils on a physical plane. Nature cannot recover from the evil that is sin because it's not simply a lack of good, it's also a lack of beauty and it's a lack of truth, and it has to do with humanity and humanity's choices, and **humanity has dominion over nature.** It's just a fact. Once human beings came on the scene, everything changed. Evolution itself is now in the charge, as it were, under the direction of humanity; so it's a big thing; so sin is a big thing. And that's what he is talking about.

Now he used the word “slavery.” He says, well, **there are two choices: you are either a slave to sin, to the irrational, or you are a slave to righteousness, righteousness being divine justice, a pattern revealed, he says, in the gospel.** In other words, **following Jesus' teachings,** not only thinking about them, but actually doing them.

But he used this word “slavery.” It's a very interesting word. **Slaves are not their own master.** One of the great illusions people have is that they are their own master: “I can do whatever I want,” so I hear people say. Well, **we are not our own master.** That's what St. Paul is saying. Either you are mastered by the irrational, you are a servant or a slave of the irrational, or you are a slave to God. Which do you want? You are not your own master; you never will be, can't be, it's not set up that way. But of course sin is also a deprivation of truth, so **people can in sin believe they are their own master; that's part of their delusion brought about by sin.**

Now **slaves can be freed, and the act of freeing a slave is called “redemption.”** That's what the word redemption means. That's how it became part of our theology because to free someone from sin is to redeem a slave. **In the ancient world actually slaves could redeem themselves** because they could own money and they could save their money and buy themselves back—which is literally what redemption means, buying back— from their masters. In chattel slavery in the United States, that was not part of the deal; a slave could never buy himself or herself back since they were not legal persons and therefore had no rights. But in ancient times slaves were legal persons and had a few rights. Except, as Paul will say, **you can't buy yourself back from this kind of slavery.** The debt, so to speak, is too great. It weighs on people and makes them weaker and weaker, and hence more addicted.

I remember once an interview with a Mafia hitman, and the interviewer asked, “Well, doesn’t that bother you that you are killing people in cold blood?” And he said, “Ah, at first it did.” At first it did, because **we are all created with a certain sort of sensitivity that can be formed into a conscience, but that very sensitivity can be killed too.** It can be hardened, stifled, sniffed out. And that’s what sin does: it hardens people, it desensitizes them, it makes them more callous. **So it’s quite unlikely, it’s quite improbable that once people start on the path of being a slave to sin that they will ever change on their own, even though technically they are free to.** Technically in every choice they are free to do differently from what they did before, but **the power of habit becomes stronger and stronger and stronger as time goes on; so we become addicted.**

So we need something. We need something we don’t have. **We need something nature doesn’t have. This is the gift of redemption in Christ. God comes to our aid.** God comes to remedy a situation that nature cannot remedy by becoming part of our picture. God inserts himself into human life in the person of **Jesus of Nazareth**, not really a man, but the Second Person of the divine Trinity taking up a human nature, and now by living the life God intended originally within the context of the world with all of its cruelty, wickedness, perversity, pride, and so on, he **rendered his life to God as a gift. He created a pattern of service and love and sacrifice to the Father, and that is redemption; that redeems what God originally created good, brings it back to its original possibilities.**

But now **we have to make the choice to follow.** That’s what St. Paul calls, then, slavery to righteousness. It means that **we do not claim our own mastery, but we admit we are here to serve God and God’s purposes,** believing that when we do, we are truly free, because we are created for it. So **if we are created for it, we are doing what we are for.** We aren’t created just to be arbitrary. **We are created actually to be good.** We are created to be righteous. We are created to be just. **So when we are, we are truly free.**