

2B

I don't know if you've heard of the philosophy of dualism. Well it's a type of thinking condemned by the church which sees your body in opposition to your person or your spirit. The spirit which is good is sort of imprisoned within your body which is bad.

Many people in today's world simply take it for granted that there is, in some sense, a hostility between the 'person and the 'body'. It can be traced back to the French philosopher Descartes in the 17th century who saw the body as 'mere matter'. If we see the body and spirit in opposition, the body can then be regarded simply as an object for manipulation or exploitation.

Because of this many Catholics, for instance, continue to reject *Humanae Vitae*, the controversial encyclical of Pope Paul VI of 1968. They reject it on the basis that our bodies are private things we 'possess' and can be used as we see fit, leading to the common refrain that "the Church should stay out of the bedroom". How many people have you heard say: 'I can do what I like with my own body'.

By separating body and spirit man ceases to be a person and a subject. He becomes merely an object. To see someone, or worse still to treat someone as an object, is the exact opposite to loving them. To treat your body as an object shows little or no respect for it.

Descartes had embraced the views of the English scientist Frances Bacon who believed that the goal of all human knowledge is man's mastery over nature. Hence people influenced by this thinking saw the prohibitions in *Humanae Vitae* as preventing man from fulfilling that dream. The same applies to in-vitro fertilization and other experiments which see the body as mere matter. The body can never be reduced in such a way. The 'invisible' spiritual side of man

and woman is expressed through the visible i.e. the body. In that sense, body and soul are one. Your body just like your soul is sacred. That's why sins against the body are serious and St Paul warns us to avoid them at all costs.

The social revolution of the 1960's has changed people's attitude towards the purpose of their bodies. Margaret Sanger, one of the pioneers of the sixties revolution, said that "no woman is free who does not own and control her own body" and the thinking behind this statement has influenced even those within the Church. Pro-abortion people use this same argument for pursuing their agenda.

That's in stark contrast to the second reading today which is saying that you don't own your own body. You are not your own property – you have been bought and paid for. Your body belongs to the Lord and if we're not using it according to his commandments then we are defiling his temple since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

St John Paul 11 in one of his letters said: If there is an enemy who wants to separate us from God that which is most sacred is what He will most violently attack. The battle for man's soul is fought over the truth of his body. Knowing that truth and living by it no matter how painful, will keep us from error and be of benefit to us all.