

Dear Padre,

What does the Church teach about body art?

I'm a bit squeamish when I see a piercing in a place other than an ear, and when I see a tattoo covering a large part of a person's body I wonder what that person will think about that tattoo in twenty years. But these things are a matter of taste; for example, I don't think there is anything wrong with earrings, but others might.



COLE/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Church has no teaching on tattoos, piercings, or shaping (when a body part is purposely reshaped to fit a cultural ideal). "Do not lacerate your bodies for the dead, and do not tattoo yourselves," say Leviticus 19:28, clearly outlawing piercings and tattoos. But it also says, "Do not...spoil the edges of your beard" (Leviticus 19:27). I broke that law this morning when I shaved.

In their introduction to the Book of Leviticus in the *New American Bible*, revised edition, the bishops teach that the laws in this book are "not merely legislative." They were designed to instill "a way of life in the book's hearers and readers."

We may not have the same obligation to adhere to those rules, but it is important for Catholics to remember 1

Corinthians 3:16: "You are the temple of God." We should do nothing to deface the temple of God. So if you do get a piercing or a tattoo, remember that you're God's temple.

—Fr. Patrick Keyes, CSSR
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A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

The acceptance of our body as a gift from God is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father...Thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy an absolute power over creation.

—ADDRESS TO PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE, JUNE 26, 2018



Calendar

Monday

AUGUST 24

St. Bartholomew,
Apostle

Rv 21:9b–14

Jn 1:45–51

Tuesday

AUGUST 25

Weekday

2 Thes 2:1–3a, 14–17

Mt 23:23–26

Wednesday

AUGUST 26

Weekday

2 Thes 3:6–10, 16–18

Mt 23:27–32

Thursday

AUGUST 27

St. Monica

1 Cor 1:1–9

Mt 24:42–51

Friday

AUGUST 28

St. Augustine,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church

1 Cor 1:17–25

Mt 25:1–13

Saturday

AUGUST 29

The Passion of

St. John the Baptist

1 Cor 1:26–31

Mk 6:17–29

Sunday

AUGUST 30

Twenty-second Sunday

in Ordinary Time

Jer 20:7–9

Rom 12:1–2

Mt 16:21–27