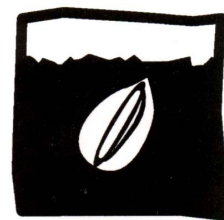


1st Sunday of Lent A

***You must worship the Lord your God,
and serve him alone. (Mt 4:10)***



First Reading

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

The Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. The Lord God caused to spring up from the soil every kind of tree enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, "Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death.'" Then the serpent said to the woman: "No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

Second Reading

Romans 5:12.17-19

Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned.

If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves". But he replied, "Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God". The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God" he said "throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone". Jesus said to him, "Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test". Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these," he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me." Then Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone." Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

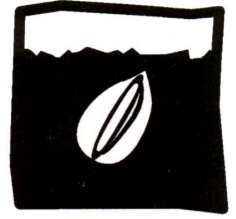
Meditation

We begin the forty-day lenten journey in the desert where the new Adam becomes freer as the conscience becomes sharper. United with all who are suffering from famine and oppression, Jesus, the new Moses, relives the forty years of Israel's struggle in the solitude of the exodus. Through the descriptive narration of this ordeal, the evangelists suggest that Jesus, true God and true man, was tempted by Satan throughout his life.

Jesus' mission is the focus of his adversary's attack. Would he be able to accept being poor, ignored and weak? Would he be able to refrain from selling short the reality of his incarnation by using miracles, force, and seduction as if he were superhuman? Would he be the Servant-Son according to the heart of God, or Prometheus, relying upon his own power to steal fire from heaven? Every time Jesus felt in his heart the temptation to be a worldly messiah, he rejected it, relying solely on the word of God. He fled the crowds who clamoured for his marvels and wished to make him king. He rebuked Peter who came between him and the way to his passion. Jesus wished to drink the bitter cup of his death, not to save himself once he was nailed upon the cross.

This stands as a strong judgment against many of our choices, our appetite for consumerism, our solicitation of profit and our unbridled ambition. How can we set priorities at the beginning of Lent without contemplating Jesus who is turned toward the one source of all his actions, the word of God?

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Second Reading

Romans 5:12-19

Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. Sin existed in the world long before the Law was given. There was no law and so no one could be accused of the sin of "law-breaking", yet death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law.

Adam prefigured the One to come, but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man's fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift. The results of the gift also outweigh the results of one man's sin: for after one single fall came judgment with a verdict of condemnation, now after many falls comes grace with its verdict of acquittal. If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's

fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Gospel

Matthew 4:1-11

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