

FIRST READING – A LENT 1

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and the man became a living being.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east;
and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow
every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,
the tree of life also in the middle of the garden,
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And the Lord God commanded the man,

“You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Then the Lord God said,

“It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a helper as his partner.”

And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal
that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God say,
‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The woman said to the serpent,

“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;
but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree
that is in the middle of the garden,
nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”

But the serpent said to the woman,

“You will not die;
for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,
and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”



FIRST READING (CTD.) – A LENT 1

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,
and that it was a delight to the eyes,
and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,
she took of its fruit and ate;
and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her,
and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened,
and they knew that they were naked;
and they sewed fig leaves together
and made loincloths for themselves.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A LENT 1

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Just as sin came into the world through one man,
and death came through sin,
so death spread to all people, because all have sinned.

Sin was indeed in the world before the law,
but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

Yes death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses,
even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam,
who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if the many died through the one man's trespass,
much more sure have the grace of God
and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,
abounded for the many.

And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's trespass.
For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation,
but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.

If, because of the one man's trespass,
death exercised dominion through that one,
much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace
and the free gift of righteousness
exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man's trespass
led to condemnation for all people,
so one man's act of righteousness
leads to justification and life for all people.

For just as by the one man's disobedience
the many were made sinners,
so by the one man's obedience
the many will be made righteous.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A LENT 1

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
He fasted forty days and forty nights,
and afterwards he was famished.
The tempter came and said to him,
“If you are the Son of God,
command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

But Jesus answered, “It is written,
‘Man does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”
Then the devil took him to the holy city
and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him,
“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down;
for it is written,
‘He will command his angels concerning you,’
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”
Jesus said to him, “Again it is written,
‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’
Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain
and showed him
all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour;
and he said to him,
“All these I will give you,
if you will fall down and worship me.”
Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan!
for it is written,
‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.’”
Then the devil left him,
and suddenly angels came and waited on him.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

The purpose of the Lenten readings is to prepare for the participation in the paschal feast.

The Old Testament readings focus upon salvation history as the presupposition of, preparation for, and in some respects a prefiguring of, the redemptive act of God in Christ.

The second readings set forth our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism and in the Christian life.

The gospel readings of series A, after the accounts of the temptation and the transfiguration, which are traditional on the first two Sundays, take up the great Johannine signs, which are prefigurements both of the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection and of our participation in those saving events through baptism.

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

If we are to understand the saving significance of Christ's death and resurrection, the most important presupposition is that human beings are God's creation and yet are fallen creatures. Something has gone wrong. Humanity is not what God intended it to be.

These two great theological truths—Creation and the Fall—are expressed in Gen 2 and 3 in the terms of the then-current mythology: the story Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and their eating the forbidden fruit at the serpent's behest.

There is another equally mythological but less primitive account of creation in chapter 1. This account states in more theological terms that God created man and woman in God's own image and likeness. They are the culmination of creation.

Chapter 2 depicts man and woman more at the center of creation: God makes man and woman, puts them in the garden, and then surrounds them with all the things they need.

In either case, the theological meaning is the same: human beings occupy a distinctive place in God's creation.

The Hebrew word for "man" is adam. Even if the author intended this as a proper name for an individual first man, "Adam" stands for Everyman.

Today, of course, it is difficult to take Adam as an actual historical individual; it is easier to understand him as the personification of Everyman.

Adam's story is the story of us all.

Nor should we press the role of Eve too much, as has often been done in the past (see, for example, 1 Tim 2:13-14) and make woman more responsible than man for the entry of sin into the world. After all, Paul in Rom 5 says nothing about Eve and blames it all on Adam.

Man and woman are jointly responsible for their fallen condition, even if here, as in everything else, each has a distinctive part to play.

The ancient story in Genesis shows profound theological insight. Its basic message is that human beings cannot blame God or an evil fate for their plight—they are directly responsible for it themselves.

Man and woman made wrong choices that conflict with their destiny as God created them. These choices cumulatively weigh against their chance to make right choices, but that does not deprive them of their responsibility.

Responsorial Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

This psalm is also used on the twenty-fourth Sunday of the year in series C. There we suggest that, since it is read as a response to the reading from Exodus 32 (Moses as mediator), it should be interpreted Christologically. It expresses the truth that Christ is the Mediator who, though sinless, bears the sins of the world.

On this Sunday, however, we suggest a different interpretation. Here man and woman take upon themselves the responsibility for their own sinful condition as a result of the fall.

The Genesis story is not about a specific sin or sins, but about the underlying sinfulness of human beings, their basic primary choice, of which specific sins are the fruit.

Psalm 51 is the classic treatment of repentance. It passes beyond mere shame at the consequences of sin (attrition) to an acknowledgment of guilt before God (contrition): “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.”

It sees forgiveness not only as the removal of guilt but as the restoration of the right relationship to God: “Cast me not away from thy presence. ... Restore to me the joy of thy salvation. ... Put a new and right spirit within me.”

For a classical treatment of repentance in the New Testament, see 2 Cor 7:9-11.

Reading II: Romans 5:12-19

As on other occasions, the shorter version is very instructive for understanding the full text.

First, it simplifies Paul's argument by removing the curious digression about the period between Adam and Moses, when people did not live under the Law and therefore could not be held accountable. This is hardly a burning issue for us today.

Furthermore, it interrupts the flow of the argument and even the grammatical structure of the opening sentence. The opening "as" needs a "so" clause to complement it, but instead we have "and so," which denotes the result of the opening clause.

The shortened form neatly drops the "and" before the "so," thus enabling Paul to complete his analogy. The sin of Adam and his consequent death are analogous to the sin of all human beings and the consequent spread of death to all.

But is that the analogy Paul intended to draw? Was it not rather an analogy between Adam and Christ?

Paul's parenthesis makes him lose the thread of his argument, but the concluding clause of the paragraph, "Adam ... who is a type of the one who was to come," and the two "as" clauses in the concluding paragraph, suggest that this was his original intention.

As Adam began a history of fallen humankind characterized by sin and death, so Christ began a new history of humankind characterized by acquittal, life, and righteousness.

Yet, this is not an analogy in which both sides are of equal weight and so the middle paragraph is inserted: If Adam ... much more surely ... Jesus Christ.

Christ's achievement is far greater than Adam's, for Adam only introduced sin and death, whereas Christ introduced acquittal, life, and righteousness.

Death was negative, life is positive. Death's dominion enslaves, Christ's dominion sets free.

Note how fittingly this reading from Romans complements the reading from Genesis. It takes up Adam's fall and balances it with restoration in Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Series A preserves the traditional reading of the Matthean temptation account; series C substitutes the account given in Luke's Gospel. The two versions are practically identical in wording, and the commonly held view today is that both evangelists took the story from the lost common source known as Q.

There is only one major difference between the two versions, namely, the order of the temptations. Matthew has bread-Temple-mountain, and Luke has bread-mountain-Temple. Since Matthew is more given to the rearrangement of his sources than Luke, it seems more likely that it was Matthew who altered Q.

Why did he do so? Probably because he wanted to bring together the two questions relating to Jesus as Son of God. This emphasizes that, for Matthew, Jesus' temptations are messianic in character.

The order of Q-Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes that Jesus is the new Adam, the antitype of the first Adam, who fell when tempted in paradise (A. Feuillet).

Despite the fact that we read the Matthean version of the temptations today, by reading it with Romans 5 and Genesis 2-3 we are almost bound to take them in the Q-Lukan sense, that is, as the temptations of the new Adam.

Reginald H. Fuller