

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time - B

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - Genesis 3:9-15

The early chapters of the Book of Genesis have much to teach us about why things are as they are today. Today's first reading tells us of the goings on immediately after Eve, then Adam, ate of the forbidden tree. Is this a true account, exact in every detail? We don't know as there were no witnesses there taking notes. What we do know is that all mankind is descended from Adam and Eve and that we all bear the stain of their first (the original) sin. We also know that the Holy Spirit guided the human author of this account thousands, if not millions, of years later to set down the theological truths which God wanted to be revealed.

⁹ The LORD God then called to the man

The man is not referred to as "Adam" until after this reading. He is known now simply as "the man." The name "Adam" comes from his origins: Genesis 2:7 says that God formed him from the dust of the ground – *adamah* in Hebrew.

and asked him, "Where are you?"

Isn't God omnipotent? Doesn't He know everything? Yes, He is, and yes, He does – what He is doing is telling the man that He knows something is wrong and He is inviting the man to tell Him about it. The question really is "Where are you in your relationship to me?" It is always God who issues the invitation to confess our sins to Him – He does it with a little nudge of the conscience. God knows all our sins, but He wants us to verbalize them so that we are sure that we know what they are.

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden;

The King James Version says "heard your voice." What was the sound they heard? Psalm 29 describes the "voice" of the Lord (read Psalm 29:3-9).

but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

He recognized that he was lacking something – it's not clothing he is lacking, it's God's grace.

¹¹ Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked?"

Since they are the only two humans in all creation, God is pointing out that it is his conscience which has pointed out his sin.

You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!"

God now points out what the sin was – he has eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is now able to recognize that they have done evil and have lost grace. In his pride he had thought that by eating of the tree he would be able to decide for himself what was good and what was evil, but sin is absolute – sin is not relative to the situation and/or the participant.

¹² The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me – she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it."

The man, instead of acknowledging his sinfulness, that he has disobeyed God, tries to shift the blame and in doing so blames God Himself: If God hadn't given him the woman, this never would have happened ("The woman whom YOU put here"). Why does God approach the man first? After all, the woman was the first to eat (Genesis 3:6). Before God made the woman, He had put the man in the garden to work it and to keep it (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew word (*shammar*) translated as "keep" can also be translated as "guard" (keep safe). After this commission, then God commands the man not to eat of the tree. If he was to guard the garden, he must guard everything and everyone in it, including his companion; and there must be something to guard against. The man failed to keep the serpent from influencing his wife and himself – he had only one command to obey: Do not eat of the tree.

¹³ The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?"

Having not gotten an admittance of sinfulness from the man, God turns to the woman. Asking her to look at the cause of what she had done.

The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it."

The command not to eat had been given to the man before the woman was created. The man had instructed the woman, but she did not heed his direction but chose instead to listen to the serpent. She had chosen the serpent over her husband – a form of adultery. Remember that the Bible is all about covenant – family. She ate with the serpent rather than with her husband. She had communion with him.

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life."

The devil will not have influence over any of God's creation except man (who was made from dirt). The only example we have in Holy Scripture of demonic possession of animals is in Matthew 8:30-32 (Mark 5:11-13; Luke 8:32-33) where demons enter a herd of swine who then commit suicide rather than be possessed.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."

Have all women (or men, for that matter) had total separation/rejection between them and Satan? Obviously not, but "the woman" was sinless until this event and her name is changed to Eve as a

result (Genesis 3:20). There has been sparring between the devil and mankind ever since. Total enmity occurred when another sinless woman came along; a woman whose own son referred to her as “woman” as a sign of respect. The Blessed Virgin Mary.

2nd Reading - 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

During ordinary time in Cycle B, the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians is proclaimed immediately after Easter. We will hear from 2 Corinthians for five weeks.

In Saint Paul’s time, Corinth was the capital of the province of Achaia and the seat of the Roman proconsul. Julius Caesar built it in 44B.C. on the ruins of a Greek city of the same name. It had two ports, one on the Aegean Sea and the other on the Gulf of Lepanto. It soon became a prominent center of commerce with a much higher standard of living than its neighbors. It was also a loose-living city.

Saint Paul established a Christian community at Corinth during his second missionary journey (A.D. 50-52), spending about one and one-half years there aided by Silas and Timothy. About a year after Paul left, the city was visited by Apollos, a brilliant preacher and also briefly by Saint Peter. Some two years later some Christian Jews from Palestine arrived; people who Saint Paul calls “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13). This bad influence prompted Saint Paul to write his first letter to the Corinthians shortly before Easter 57. The false apostles twisted what Saint Paul said in his first letter; accusing him of being all talk, irresponsible, and ambitious – pointing out that he had not returned to Corinth. This caused Saint Paul to write this second letter, probably near the end of 57 or in early 58, in preparation for his visit which will come after his visit to Macedonia.

¹³ Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we too believe and therefore speak,

Saint Paul quotes the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Psalm 116:10. The Hebrew reads “I believed, even when I said.” In either language, faith is the cause.

¹⁴ knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence.

In Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, one of the questions he answered was the reality of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). Here, he announces that the resurrection is the reason for his hope. Implied in this statement is that Saint Paul did not expect to be alive on the last day.

“He who raised Jesus from the dead will raise us also if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love the things which He loved, abstaining from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking and false witness” [Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (ca. A.D. 135), *(Second) Letter To The Philippians*, 2].

¹⁵ Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.

All things are intended immediately for the salvation of those who come to the faith; ultimately and principally for the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Not only the soul, but the soul with a right to a glorified body. The inner being is renewed daily in that the person who strives continuously to please God grows in the life of Christ, becoming more and more like Him.

¹⁷ For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

Compared to the rewards of eternal life the trials of this life are nil.

¹⁸ as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen;

The supernatural realities are not discernable to the eye.

for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

“Consider, dearly beloved, that life’s troubles, even if distressing, are still of short duration, whereas the good things that will come to us in the next life are eternal and everlasting. ‘What is seen is transitory,’ Scripture says, but ‘what is not seen is eternal.’ Accordingly, let us endure what is passing with out complaint and not desist from virtue’s struggle so that we may enjoy the good things that are eternal and last forever” [Saint John Chrysostom (ca. A.D. 392), *Homilies On The Second Epistle To the Corinthians*, 9.3].

^{5:1} For we know

The certainty of Christian hope.

that if our earthly dwelling, a tent,

Our present body is an earthly tent because it is not the glorious body to be had after the resurrection.

should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

Greek philosophers looked at the body as a prison of the soul – Saint Paul doesn’t share this belief as this would mean that we would be forever disembodied spirits. The Greek word translated as “dwelling” was used especially for the temple. God will provide us with a sacred body, not the result of natural process but of God’s resurrection.

Gospel - Mark 3:20-35

Mark's gospel begins with John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. After His temptation in the desert (which occupies two verses), Jesus sets out to call His disciples; working miracles around the Sea of Galilee. Our reading for today occurs immediately after Jesus appoints the twelve apostles.

²⁰ He came home.

Jesus has returned to Nazareth.

Again (the) crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. ²¹ When his relatives

Literally, "those around him" which could mean "friends," "family," "relatives" or "household."

heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

This is equivalently an accusation of demonic possession. His family wants to take control of Jesus lest He embarrass them. Mary is apparently with the family members as we hear at the end of this reading (verses 32-35).

²² The scribes who had come from Jerusalem

A new set of opponents come on the scene.

said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul,"

"Beelzebul" means "lord of the dwelling" or "baal the prince." Translations from the Vulgate have "Beelzebub" which means "lord of the flies." "Beelzebub" is not found in the Greek manuscripts. Nowhere in pre-Christian literature is Beelzebul identified with a demon, although he is clearly identified here as such.

and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons." ²³ Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan?"

Jesus is arguing that His exorcisms do indeed signal the collapse of Satan's rule, but some power other than a demon is needed to explain His works, since Satan is not so foolish as to destroy his own works.

²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

Jesus has entered Satan's house, put him under restraint, and is now plundering his household by performing exorcisms. Not only is Jesus not on Satan's side, He is his enemy.

"Mention has been made of the unclean spirit whom the Lord shows to be divided against himself. The Holy Spirit, however, is not divided against himself. Rather He makes those whom He gathers together undivided against themselves, by dwelling within those who have been cleansed, that they may be like those of whom it is written in the Acts of the Apostles (4:32), 'The community of believers was of one heart and mind'" [Saint Augustine of Hippo (between A.D. 392 and 418), *Sermons On Selected Lessons Of The New Testament*, 21,35].

²⁸ Amen, I say to you,

An oath. He is telling the truth.

all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them.

All sins (including murder, unchastity, and apostasy) can be forgiven.

²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin."

The fact that all sins can be forgiven should not be overlooked by excessive concentration on the exception. There are actually four sins against the Holy Spirit:

1. Despair concerning the possibility of salvation.
2. Presumption of God's mercy and forgiveness.
3. Denial of the truths of faith.
4. Final impenitence and refusal to turn to God.

³⁰ For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The sin in this exchange is the failure to discern the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry.

³¹ His mother and his brothers arrived.

In Hebrew parlance, a cousin or other close relative is a brother or sister.

Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. ³² A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers (and your sisters) are outside asking for you." ³³ But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and (my) brothers?" ³⁴ And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ³⁵ (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

In Jewish society, family relationships are extremely important. The family took its meals together and aided one another. Jesus uses this concept of family to cause His followers to judge their relationships in the light of the criterion of the Father's will. The reign of God makes demands on the personal commitment of a disciple, which must transcend at times all natural bonds of family

or ethnic grouping.

“It is He who said that no one belongs to His family except those who do the will of His Father. To be sure, He graciously included Mary herself in this number, for she was doing the will of His Father. Thus He spurned the earthly name of His mother in comparison to heavenly kinship. . . . Do not be ungrateful, pay your duty of gratitude to your mother, repay earthly favors by spiritual ones, temporal by eternal ones” [Saint Augustine of Hippo (ca. A.D. 400), *Letter 243*].