

Commentary on the Readings for February 26, 2023

The First Sunday in Lent

The readings for today are somewhat of a biblical history of sin. This is appropriate for the beginning of Lent. We need to be reminded that we are sinners. Even Jesus was tempted; but by the power of the Holy Spirit within, He did not fall. We human mortals are not so fortunate. Yes, we also have the Holy Spirit's help in warding off sin; but our pride, selfishness and human weakness get in the way. So what is sin? Let us go through the readings and then return to this question.

In the **First Reading** from the *Book of Genesis (2:7-9; 3:1-7)*, we hear how sin came into the world through Adam and Eve. They lived in a paradise (heaven?) where they had everything including access to God; but pride got in the way, and they disobeyed God's direct command. That really upset the "apple cart;" and we have been living with problems ever since. In this case they did not love God enough to be faithful. That is what sin is!

The **Responsorial Psalm (51:3-17)** is the great "Miserere," a Prayer of Repentance patterned on the sorrow of King David and a prayer we should all be familiar with as an Act of Contrition

The **Second Reading** is from *St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (5:12-19)*. In this passage, Paul is comparing how sin entered the world, through the fall of the first man and woman, to the reparation that came through a God-Man's death and resurrection. The first event imprisoned all humanity, spiritually. The second event freed all those who believe in and live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the *Gospel of Matthew (4:1-11)*. In this passage we hear the familiar story of Jesus being tempted in the desert after a retreat of 40 days in which He neither ate nor drank. Many theological theories can be gleaned from this passage; but let us just concentrate on the fact that Jesus was tempted because He was human as well as divine. Although the suggestions and offerings made by Satan were inviting, to accept them would have been against all that Jesus stood for. Most of all, it would have been against the will of the Father who sent Jesus into this world for a specific purpose—the salvation of mankind who had been imprisoned since Adam.

Now, do we really need to answer the question posed above? Sin is not just the breaking of rules and regulations; it goes much deeper than that. When we sin, we are acting just like Adam and Eve who wanted to be like God or like gods. We are, in essence, saying, "I am as good as God and don't have to obey Him." *The Holy Season of Lent* is a time to rethink our values, our lifestyle and our relationship with our God. It is also a time to consider a "conversion of heart." This is how the Holy Spirit can lead us; just as He led Jesus safely out of the desert. Something to think about during your prayer time this week! **MFB**