

Sunday of the First Week of Lent

Cycle A

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

Psalm 51

Rom 5: 12-19

Matt 4: 1-11

Michael P. Sullivan, O.S.A.

The loss of innocence is something all of us can relate to in our lives. The first reading today recalls the loss of innocence of Adam and Eve. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves." They squandered their innocence in a quest for power and god-like qualities. The serpent told them they would "be like gods who know what is good and what is evil." Before that all was good and they were in a right relationship with their Creator. Sin is a break in that relationship. It is a fracture between the Creator and the created.

Yes, sin entered the world through one man Adam, and innocence and right order would be restored through one man, the new Adam, the Christ. Paul tells us in his letter to the people of Rome, "for just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous."

As we begin this Lenten season it is a time for each of us to look at and examine the relationship between ourselves and our Creator. Like Jesus we too are tempted. If we are not tempted in life then we are no longer alive. Those who are dead either physically or spiritually do not get tempted. People often mention to me that they have evil or impure thoughts. I ask them if they know why they are tempted by such thoughts. They look at me as if it is something within them of which they should be ashamed. I tell them not so. The reason they have such thoughts is because they are not yet dead but alive. Temptation is an opportunity for us to deepen and strengthen our relationship with the Lord.

May this Lenten period be a time for each of us to look at ourselves and ask some thought questions. Do we allow temptations that are not life giving to cause us to panic or do we see them as an opportunity to grow strong in the Lord? Do we need to re-evaluate behavior patterns that allow temptations to fester and gain power over us? Are we tempted not to forgive either ourselves or others?

"Be merciful, O Lord for we have sinned!" we cry out. Let us accept the mercy of the Lord that is offered us. May our Lenten journey this year be a time of reflection and evaluation of our relationship with our Creator. At Easter may we kneel before our risen Lord with the innocence that once was lost and has once again been regained through the crucified and risen Christ.