

Accepting Limitations

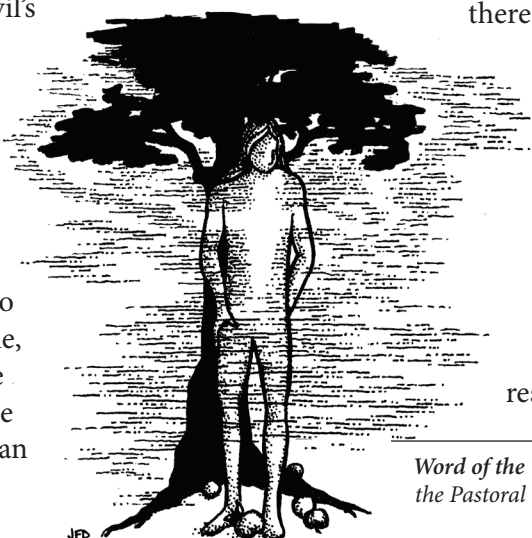
This Week's Readings at Mass

- Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7 • The fall of humankind
- Romans 5:12-19 • Humanity's sin through Adam
- Matthew 4:1-11 • The temptation of Jesus

As we move into this Lenten season of penitence, the readings for this first Sunday revolve around the themes of temptation and sin. The first reading recounts the story of the “Fall” of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. The second reading reflects back on that story. The Gospel reading, on the other hand, gives a glimpse of how we might be tempted yet remain faithful to God as Jesus was. It is as if Jesus’ obedience brings the first story full circle, giving us hope that we aren’t all doomed to give in to temptations to do what is wrong.

Between the first reading from Genesis when Adam and Eve eat the fruit they aren’t supposed to eat, and the Gospel reading of Jesus resisting extreme temptations in his hunger and exhaustion, we are given two examples of how to deal with our own temptations. Adam and Eve were seemingly set up for an easy, blissful life with all they needed and more at their disposal. Yet the slightest suggestion from the serpent that they shouldn’t be limited in what they had or in their power and knowledge was all it took for them to decide they knew better than God. How often we give in so easily when presented with options for more things even though we already have enough!

On the other hand, Jesus was in extreme physical need when he resisted the devil’s temptations to feed himself and claim power. He had more reasons to give in, and most of us would be understanding if he did. But rather than grasp at physical comfort, reassurance, and strength, he chose to remain vulnerable and humble, even frail. When God became human in Jesus, he chose to be fully human and endure human



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“The woman answered the serpent: ‘God said, You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.’”

Sheepish Question:

But seriously, about temptation: How am I like Adam or Eve?

limitations, from his 40 days in the desert all the way through to his agonizing death.

What is the lesson here then? Perhaps it is about not grasping for more things, more power, or more security, but trusting we will be cared for, even in our vulnerabilities and need. Jesus accepted and lived with his human limitations. Certainly, it’s uncomfortable and oftentimes outright painful to have physical, emotional, and intellectual limits as we live out our lives in imperfect bodies in an imperfect world. God isn’t a masochist who wants us to be in pain and need, any more than God wanted that for Jesus, but Jesus shows us there is dignity in being limited, and there is strength in needing God.

Questions of the Week

- 1 In what areas of your life are you most vulnerable to being tempted into choosing something that is not good for you?
- 2 How might you call upon the support of God and others to resist temptations this Lent?