

Homily of Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

Genesis 3:9-15; Psalm 130:1-8; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35

The story of Adam and Eve and their disobedience to God by eating from the forbidden tree and the punishment they received from God was one of the stories that captured my imaginations when I was a child. Our catechism teacher told us that the bump visible on the front of men's throat was called "Adam's apple" because Adam was about to swallow the apple in his mouth when God called him, and as he responded to God, the apple chocked him and got stuck in his throat. We were told the story to teach us the consequences of disobeying God's commandments and yielding to Satan's temptations.

The first reading narrates the blame game of Adam and Eve. Adam blamed God and Eve: "The woman whom you put here with me." Eve was no longer "The bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh" Adam had called her when God gave her to Adam (Genesis 2:3). How quickly human beings turn around in bad times! Eve blamed the serpent: "The serpent tricked me into it." God listed out various punishments for Adam and Eve and banished them "from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which [they] had been taken" (Genesis 3:16-23).

The sin of disobedience of Adam and Eve is called the Original Sin. We all have a share of the Original Sin before the Sacrament of Baptism. The Sacrament of Baptism erases the Original Sin.

Another sin Adam and Eve committed was that none of them accepted responsibility for their action. Each blamed the other. May be, their punishment would have been lighter if each of them had accepted responsibility and did not blame and point accusing finger to one another.

In 1 Samuel 15, when Samuel confronted Saul for not fighting a holy war as God had directed, Saul denied responsibility and presented excuses. "The soldiers spared the best sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:15). Samuel retorted, "Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Administrations, groups, and persons will make huge progress if they look inward, discover the reasons for their failure or problem, take responsibility, and work toward finding solutions. This is more helpful than looking outward for who or what to blame and accuse. This popular saying is very true, "If you point one finger, there are three more pointing back at you." Scripture calls Satan, "accuser of the brethren," who is overcome "by the Blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:10-11). May the Blood of the Lamb help us to overcome 'blaming spirits' and 'accusing spirits.'

Blame game has many negative consequences. It is a stumbling block to possible solutions. It further creates tensions and resentments. John Maxwell says, "People who blame others for their failures [or problems] never overcome them. They simply move from problem to problem." Taking responsibility heals tensions and resentments and creates paths to progress.

Have you ever worked or lived or associated with a faultfinder and accuser? Or, are you one? That was the problem with the scribes in today's gospel. They sneered at Jesus as being possessed by Beelzebul, inconsiderate of all the good works he was doing. Let us stop blaming and accusing one another. Let us stop pulling one another down. Let us stop destroying one another. Let us appreciate God's goodness in each other, encourage each other, and build up each other. Whoever destroys God's goodness in another person blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the blasphemer "will never have forgiveness."

Adam and Eve's temptation is different from that of Jesus. Many times, the temptation to quit from doing God's will comes from relatives and loved ones, as in the case of Jesus in today's gospel. "His relatives ... set out to seize him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" "His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent word to him and called him." St. Paul advises us to be quick to discern when Satan "masquerades [himself] as an angel of light" and resist him.

Another difference between the two temptations is the way Eve responded to the serpent and the way Jesus responded to his relatives. Eve gave the serpent the opportunity to win her over by dialoguing with it. Jesus did not give his relatives such an opportunity. Jesus responded the same way he did when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-12). Jesus used the words of the Scripture to resist and dismiss Satan: "Man shall not live by bread alone." "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve." "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Also, Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do" (Matthew 16:23). No dialoguing, no conversing!

Let us learn from Jesus and heed St. Paul's advice, "Do not leave room for the devil." Other translations: "Give no opportunity to the devil;" "Do not give the devil a foothold;" "Don't give the devil a chance" (Ephesians 4:27). We pray for the grace to do so. Amen.

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