

**YEAR A: 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT                      2017**

We tend to procrastinate, from cleaning & homework to mending friendships. Some have the tendency/ability to put things out of my mind until it's time to deal with them.

One issue we are prone to put off or ignore is the reality of temptation and sin in our life. This is understandable. Well, at the beginning of Lent our mother and teacher the Church is telling us it's time to grapple and deal with them. In fact the Ash Wednesday Gospel began with Jesus saying "The time has come."

So on Wednesday we marked ourselves with ashes to express to the Lord and to each other and to remind ourselves that we are fallible human beings whom God has made from the dust of the earth; and that as such we are sinners, and that we trust in His love and mercy. Then today every single one of our Readings confront us with the reality of temptation and sin.

Adam and Eve's experience reminds us that temptation is often very subtle and sin is often very appealing – otherwise we wouldn't do it! (The fruit was enticing to look at and good to eat). It passes itself off as something good for us or at least satisfying to us when in reality it hurts us and often hurts other people too.

Adam and Eve were tempted to decide for themselves what was right and wrong, what they could and couldn't do rather than open their hearts and minds to the wise morality of God who loved them and wanted the best for them. Their temptation seemed appealing to them but it had disastrous consequences for them and for others.

In the Second Reading Saint Paul speaks of something I don't fully understand but I believe because it has been a constant teaching of the Church since the time of the Apostles. That through the sin of the first man and woman sin has entered the entire world and into each one of us. Because of their sin you and I are born with a weakened human nature that is susceptible to temptation and sin and finds it appealing.

It doesn't seem fair but it's the way it is. Perhaps it's because we are all connected, because the human race is all one big family and like any family what happens to one affects everybody.

But Saint Paul's letter to the Romans also mentions something else I don't fully understand but do believe. That just as we all suffer because of one man's disobedience and fall, so too we are all restored to life and made righteous and justified by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ. God doesn't abandon us in our sinful state but lifts us up and makes us children of God, a new creation.

Even this man Jesus Christ was tempted. In the Gospel we see that the Devil tempted Jesus to choose the easy way rather than the best way. Jesus is tempted to be a populist Messiah who gives the people what they want, like lots of bread to eat. He is tempted to be a showman Messiah who catches attention with death defying feats like jumping from tall buildings. And he's tempted to be a worldly Messiah who will rule the people like kings rule a kingdom. But Jesus knows his destiny is to be a suffering Messiah.

Our own temptations are not that different to Adam's, to Eve's and to Jesus'. Like Adam and Eve we are tempted to decide for ourselves a morality that we find comfortable and pleasing, and like Jesus we are tempted to take the easy way rather than the right way.

So many people have said to me "Father I don't need to go to confession. I haven't killed anybody or committed adultery." But sin and temptation are not just the big ticket items like murder and adultery; these are not the only sins we have to watch.

Lent is the time for us to recognise those temptations and sins that tend to creep up on us: resentment, selfishness, jealousy, impatience, impurity, indulgence, dishonesty, pride and others.

When Adam and Eve were tempted they listened to the tempter and so started to doubt and question what God had said to them. When Jesus was tempted he heard what the Devil said but he listened to what God his Father was saying in the Scriptures. This is the right way for us to deal with temptation too, to turn to God in prayer and listen to Him, trust Him, know he wants what's best for us, and obey Him.

The time has come. The time to look at my life and relationships, the time to recognise my temptations, the time to turn to God the merciful Father and listen to Him, the time to hear his call to conversion and confess my sins, the time to recapture the joy of being made righteous and justified by Jesus Christ.