

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The first reading this weekend speaks about our fall – the Fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. The ancient language may make this seem somewhat distant and unrelatable to us (let’s be honest, it seems kind of weird that a snake would entice someone to eat a forbidden fruit). As I mentioned in my homily last weekend, though, at the heart of this temptation and fall was a lack of trust in God. Adam and Eve had EVERYTHING! Everything was given to them, and they rejected it because they didn’t believe that God really wanted to take care of them, that He loved them, that He was not against them but for them. This same lie is affecting us today, as we too often refuse to let God father us, care for us. In our need to be self-sufficient (“just in case God won’t really be there for us”), we end up *rejecting* Him and His love.

How, then, does this affect our lives. We read about the immediate effect on Adam and Eve. Prior to this story, after Eve was created, Genesis tells us that they were naked without shame. What is this saying? There was no need to hide from each other or anything else. They were able to bear all to each other in that true act of intimacy – which means “Into me: see” – and not fear being used or abused.

As soon as they eat of the fruit, the Scripture says that their eyes were opened, and

they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. (Genesis 3:7)

Sometimes we say, “I feel naked,” even though we have clothes on. This means we feel exposed and vulnerable. Prior to this, Adam and Eve had no need to feel vulnerable for there were no threats – God was not a threat (He was their protector), they were not a threat to each other, the world was not a threat to them (they held the appropriate dominion over all creatures), and they weren’t a threat to themselves. In this one move, they suddenly realize their peril: as they have broken their trust relationship with God by using part of His wonderful creation for their own personal gain, they realize that the other might do that to them. The peace that reigned between humanity in these four ways – God, world, each other and self – was now broken! What is the first thing Adam and Eve do when they lose their peace? They cover their differences – they make loincloths. Now Eve is afraid of being used by Adam, and Adam is afraid of being used by Eve. They are afraid that the other might use them for personal gain. They have to look inward and protect themselves.

What does this look like for us today? I think it is very obvious in our relationships that there is this brokenness. How many relationship – marriage, family, friendships – end up divided because of the lack of ability to trust one another. The desire to dominate and control, as well as the fear of that domination, keep us from being truly open with each other, keep us from that “into me: see” God intended for us. Alas, for this broken world!

But God had a plan! While we do not hear about it in this reading, within the same chapter, we hear that there will come *another* who will be at enmity with the serpent, who will crush his head. This ONE is Jesus Christ.

We hear in the Gospel today how Jesus goes “head to head” with Satan. Satan (“the tempter”) approaches Jesus with the same temptation he gave to Adam and Eve (and to each of us) – Don’t trust God! He starts with Jesus where he started with Eve – FOOD: *Make these stones into bread*, he says. Jesus replies that God alone is sufficient, that He will care for our wants and needs: **“One ... live[s]... on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). *I can trust my Abba*, He says! The Devil tries to get Jesus to test God and to worship power, politics, and fame, but Jesus answers with the deep and abiding trust in God. He will not succumb to these temptations. Why not? Not because He Himself is God and so had infinite power – for He emptied Himself and took on the weakness of our humanity in all things, and so endured the temptations just as much as we do – but because He knew who He was – the Beloved Son of God. Firm in that identity, He also was firm in the identity of God as the loving Father who would care for Him.

What does this mean for us? We also are beloved children of God! This is true not just in word but in **FACT**. Almighty God adopted us in Baptism and made us His children. When we are firm in our identity, and the identity of God as our loving, merciful and provident Father, we are able to resist temptation, to resist temptation! If we truly knew who we are, evil would have no hold on our lives, for we would know, like Jesus, that *we belong to God*, and that He is taking care of us.