

1st Sunday of Lent
March 1, 2020
“Selfishness or Godliness?”

Gen 2:7...3:7

Rom 5:12...19

Mt 4:1-11

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the most difficult lessons to learn in life is how to become unselfish. We all need food, clothing, and shelter – Most of us have to work hard to acquire and keep these necessities of life. If we have a spouse and children, then we must provide these things for them as well. Consequently, having a spouse and children requires great personal unselfishness. Sadly, some spouses and parents never learn unselfishness – and marriage and family dysfunction are always the result!

We are selfish whenever we are lacking in consideration for someone else. We are being selfish when we love our neighbor less than ourselves – And we are selfish whenever we choose ourselves over the Lord God – when we make anything in our life or our world more important than God, His commandments, His will, and His plans!

Few people commit sin because they want to do something just because it is evil. We sin because something is good or attractive in itself. However, it is forbidden to us in the way we want to use it or possess it. There is some pleasure, some material thing, or some power or control that is not ours to have or to take. Nevertheless, we choose it because of its attractiveness. Furthermore, it becomes even more desirable if the culture endorses the choice we are about to make – This is especially true if someone else is complicit – and enables us in what we are about to do.

The tree of knowledge, in the Garden of Eden, was symbolic of much that God is in Himself. In eating its fruit, Adam and Eve, selfishly, chose themselves over the Lord God who created them. They rebelled, by wanting to be the equal of God. They listened to satan and were complicit with one another. What is tragic is that they lost the very grace that God had given them as a sharing in His own divine life and love!

Adam and Eve were selfish – They passed on this selfishness to all the children who came from them – Furthermore, they could do nothing to correct what they had done! Only God could correct everything – And the Father sent the Son in the person of Jesus

to bring about this wonderful restoration!

In St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus prepares for his ministry and for his ultimate gift of unselfishness by going into the desert for 40 days. In the desert, he spiritually contended with the devil and emerged victorious.

When confronted by satan, Jesus did not use his power to quell his hunger by serving himself. Instead, he accepted his hunger as part of the human condition and did not change stones into bread. Next, Jesus refused to jump from the parapet of the temple to show power and to gain the adulation of the masses who would follow him for the wrong reasons. Finally, Jesus rejected the wealth and the kingdoms of this world for what was promised in God's kingdom: eternal life and joy and bliss and love in the presence of God Himself!

There are three things with which we must deal if we are always to choose unselfishly. We must first realize that no created thing or pleasure will ever completely satisfy us or fulfill us. We were created for God alone – and only in God can we find that for which we incessantly search to possess.

The second thing we must learn is that our habits of sin and our addictions stem from our failure to deal with the hurt and the pain we must face as part of our life here. We must deal honestly with the challenges we face and the wounds we all carry to be able to deal with them externally – or heal them in our deepest selves. We must also break from those people or things which, invariably, get us into the sin which alienates us from God.

The third thing required of us is prayer – on-going prayer. This is the kind of prayer that keeps God before us – or, at least, close by in everything that we do!

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot save ourselves. We need God's grace and we need the power of Jesus about which St. Paul speaks in today's reading from Romans. Although our sinfulness stems from Adam – our salvation comes from Jesus!

So, let us pray that during these 40 days of Lent, we avail ourselves of all that Jesus unselfishly continues to do for us!

Amen.

March 1, 2020

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