

+

If you enjoy the series *The Chosen*, you may also like the wonderful series of books by Fulton Oursler. Mr. Oursler's best-known book from the series is on the life of Christ entitled *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, in it the characters and events of the life of Christ from the Nativity to the Resurrection, are brought to life. Oursler also wrote an interesting book on the Old Testament, called *The Greatest Book Ever Written*, the book begins with the creation of Adam and Eve. He writes, *Adam opened his eyes and looked into the face of his Maker. It was his first human act in the world as he stood, tall and straight...his feet in the red earth. His dark eyes were full of wonder and a vast and perfect innocence...out of nothingness he had emerged in that first act of opening his eyes, coming from nothingness into space, an instant non-existent, the next being alive and looking into the face of his Maker, a countenance all wisdom and compassion and hope.*

Oursler captures brilliantly Adam's overwhelming joy when Eve was created and presented to him. He imagines too the moment the serpent entered the garden, how the serpent, Lucifer, *was a tall and glittering creature, a part of him coiled in the grass but the rest of him, green with golden rings, rising like a graceful stem of some enormous flower, his cordial face...his voice polite and interested.* The serpent tricked Eve, he twisted God's words, he would have Eve believe that he knew better and that he knew the truth that God was hiding. To eat of the fruit would make them equal to God. Eve bit into the fruit and gave to Adam to eat. Oursler wrote of this moment, *darkness was at its earliest with a stealthy spread of chill, creeping in with the young shadows, and bringing with it sadness that overwhelmed the lonely husband and his wife; a melancholy, a foreboding of something accusing and punishing and inescapable, surrounding them in the cold and gloom...And then they heard the Voice...calling from the darkness: Adam!*

Adam and Eve when they dwelt in the garden of Eden, before the Fall, were the very image of what St. Paul encourages us to be, *followers of God, as dear children*, they were *children of light*. And the great sadness of the Fall is that Adam and Eve enjoyed a relationship with God the likes of which we may not know this side of heaven. They had daily evening walks with the Lord through the garden, but in disobeying the commandment of God they were separated from Him. And the glittering serpent was right, Adam and Eve knew good and evil, the evil of

disobeying God, which ushered death into the world. But with Adam and Eve's fall, bringing down all of creation with them, and their expulsion from the garden begins the process of the redemption of all mankind and all creation.

We might be amazed at how effectively the devil has twisted God's creation. How he tempted Adam and Eve and helped to usher in sin and death into the world. But let us not forget that along with Adam and Eve, so was the serpent cast out of the Garden of Eden in Genesis. He was cast out of heaven, cast out of the Garden of Eden, he is cast out of a poor gentile daughter in the Gospels with just a word from Our Lord. And we hear this morning that Our Lord casts him out of a person whom he had also caused to be mute. The crowd in this morning's Gospel marvel at Jesus' power. They have no explanation for how He is able to deliver people from the power of the devil with just a word, and why those suffering the effects of the fall; the deaf, the mute, the palsied, the paralyzed, the leprosy, are all healed with just a word or touch from Jesus. The only explanation is that He is the Son of God. And while so many in the Gospels were not able to accept that, what they do not realize is that they are witnessing a powerful sign that the redemption of all mankind and of all creation, which began with Adam and Eve's fall, has arrived and is Jesus Christ, the new Adam. We are taught that if Jesus is the new Adam, the His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is the new Eve. Jesus resists the temptations of the devil and overcomes sin, death, and the grave, so that we may all return to Eden, as children of God, which Adam and Eve were intended to be forever. The Blessed Virgin Mary shows us how to live the Christian life by hearing the Word of God, and treasuring it in her heart.

The Church intends that each and every one of us become new Adams and new Eves. The Church obeying the words of Christ and desiring to help us along in our journey to the New Eden, the Kingdom of Heaven, provides us with a physical act to remove the curse of the old Adam through the Sacrament of Baptism. In Baptism we vow to *renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them.* We renew this vow again at Confirmation, and through the waters of Baptism and the strengthening of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation we are made children of God, inheritors of the *Kingdom of Christ and of God.* The requirements then of us who would be lifelong children of God is to keep the Word and Commandments of the New Adam, of our Lord and

Savior, Jesus Christ, and to follow the example of the New Eve, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in hearing the Word of God and keeping it. We who have made Baptismal and Confirmation vows, or intend to make them, solemnly promise before God that we will worship Him faithfully, attending Mass weekly, praying and confessing our sins daily, studying the Scriptures and the faith, trying our best to keep the feasts and fasts of the Church. Simply put, *to Love the Lord...with all of thy heart, with all of thy soul, and with all thy mind...and thy neighbor as thyself*. For if we do these things then we keep our souls filled with the things of God and will leave no room for sin and evil.

Oursler may be right, the serpent that day in the garden may have been beautiful and glittering, charming his way into Adam and Eve's confidence. But by far more beautiful and brighter shall the robes of the faithful be around the throne in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us press on this Lent and every day renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil until we finally come to the Kingdom of Heaven, that it may be said of us:

*These through fiery trials trod;
These from great affliction came;
Now before the throne of God,
Seal'd with His almighty name:
Clad in raiment pure and white,
Victor-palms in every hand,
Through their dear Redeemer's might,
More than conquerors they stand.*