

TWELFTH SUNDAY - CYCLE A

This Sunday we deal with an essential and important truth of our Catholic Faith, namely, that at the beginning of the human race a tragedy occurred which still affects each one of us tremendously. It's something we don't like to think about; much less talk about or admit. We call this tragedy **original sin**, that is, a sin at the origin of the human race. St. Paul tells us today that a sin entered the world through one man and, through sin, death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. @

There, I said it. Ok, it's a downer. Like I said, we don't like to be told that we sin. But, it is a fact of life. And one of the facts of that life resonates throughout the Gospel today....**fear**. God our Father created Adam and Eve in a place of happiness and endowed them with a share in His own divine life. There was to be no suffering, there was to be no death, there was to be no fear. God gave them but one command. But the devil lied to them, telling them that if they disobeyed God they themselves would become like gods, deciding for themselves what is good and what is evil, and that they would not die. (Sounds a little bit like 2008 doesn't it?) They believed the devil and disobeyed God. They were cast out of the place of happiness. They soon learned what suffering was all about. They now faced death.

Unfortunately, we their descendants face all of the above as well. The original sin of disobedience and pride which is passed on to us is not just their bad example; it is something which happens inside us. Born good, left alone without the grace of God, we have a desire for sin; a propensity to choose the wrong thing. That is one major reason why children should be baptized at an early age; if their parents are living the faith and can promise to help share the light of faith with their child.

We know that there is a great deal of evil and sin in our world. A fool says that there is not. It began with Adam and Eve and spread right away. One of their sons, Cain, killed his own brother, Abel, out of jealousy. And since then there have been so many wars, tyranny of dictators, oppression of the poor, slavery, prostitution, yes, abuse of children, abortion, euthanasia, and the list goes on. **No wonder we can be afraid.**

Sometimes, we find it hard to be good. Our desire for pleasure, wealth, popularity and total freedom get in the way. And, after hearing of Jeremiah's plight with his so called "friends" how can we not add a bit about that nasty "little" sin of **gossip**?

Few things, if any, are more precious to a person than his or her good name. And yet, if we ourselves have suffered from having our good name damaged or have been the victims of calumny, we probably have done our share of lessening other people's good names as well; sometimes knowingly, sometimes intentionally and sometimes even maliciously.

This, my friends, is a form of bearing false witness, as forbidden by the eighth commandment. But many are so concerned about the sixth commandment that they often forget about the eighth. Yet one of the worst sins a Catholic can be guilty of is to intentionally damage a person out of gossip, accusation or simple dislike. Remember that Jesus Himself was a victim of just such talk. Someone once said to me, "I gossiped unnecessarily." I ask you, *just when is it ever necessary?* It seems we humans have a perverse need to gossip about another person in order to make us feel better about ourselves. This, too, falls back to the original sin of pride.

However, Jesus our Savior has to a great extent undone the work of Adam and Eve. That's why the New Testament calls Him the New Adam and the Church calls the Blessed Virgin the new Eve. He has won for us the grace to conquer the trials, temptations and sufferings of this world, including those we bring on ourselves or others.

Though our human nature is wounded by original sin, it is not corrupted. We have the freedom and ability to live the life Jesus calls us to live. He has founded His Church not only to carry on His message but to strengthen us in the face of fear and death and sin! He has given us the means of saving our souls!

We can live lives of prayer and good works. We have Confession to help us keep the divine life strong in us. We have Holy Communion to give us nourishment and life. St. Paul goes on to say, A...it is even more certain that through the one Man Jesus Christ came to so many an abundant free gift.@

We must live in the real world. Jesus wanted us to be different than what we are. We all share temptation and sin. But Jesus offers us **hope!** ACome to Me all you who labor and are burdened.@ ATake My yoke upon you and learn from Me.@ AYou will find rest for your souls.@ ABe not afraid!@