



FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

A reading from Genesis.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man
and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.
¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man,
“You may freely eat of every tree of the garden,
¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

^{3:1}Now the serpent was more crafty
than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made.
He said to the woman,
“Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”
²The woman said to the serpent,
“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,
³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree
that is in the middle of the garden,
nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”
⁴But the serpent said to the woman,
“You will not die,
⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,
and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food
and that it was a delight to the eyes
and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,
she took of its fruit and ate,
and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.
⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked,
and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Word of God, word of life. or The word of the Lord.

FIRST READING

The story is well known; that should serve as a warning to the reader to read more slowly than initially inclined. The story is high drama; for the reader that's a singular opportunity. There is nothing ho-hum about the narrative surrounding the original sin. Tell the story as to a group hearing it for the first time. Bring to the reading an understanding that appreciates the naïveté of Eve and Adam, respects the treachery of the serpent, and mourns the tragedy of the fall.

PSALMODY: Psalm 32

SECOND READING: Romans 5:12-19

A reading from Romans.

¹²Just as sin came into the world through one man,
and death came through sin,

and so death spread to all because all have sinned

¹³for sin was indeed in the world before the law,

but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses,
even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam,
who is a pattern of the one who was to come.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if the many died through the one man's trespass,

much more surely have the grace of God

and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,

abounded for the many.

¹⁶And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin.

For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation,
but the gift following many trespasses brings justification.

¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one,
much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace
and the gift of righteousness
reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all,
so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.

¹⁹For just as through the one man's disobedience
the many were made sinners,
so through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Word of God, word of life. *or*

The word of the Lord.

SECOND READING

This is not a simple reading. It is a logical argument leading to the conclusion of verses 18 and 19. It is essential that the reader be absolutely clear as to the progression of the argument before presenting it to the assembly. It is a reading that demands practice. (Every reading merits practice. Out loud! This one demands it.) The pace must be slower than usual so that the hearer has time to capture and follow the argument.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

¹Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.

²He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished.

³The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”

⁴But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

⁷Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,

⁹and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

¹¹Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Perhaps the relief and wonder of being “waited on” by angels (a delightful scene to imagine) will be heightened if the words of our Lord sound as though they were spoken by one at the end of an arduous wilderness fast.