

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

First Sunday of Lent—Year A

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

First Sunday of Lent - A

Reading 1

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made.

The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"

The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman:

"You certainly will not die!

No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil."

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom.

So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

R. (cf. 3a) **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

For I acknowledge my offense,
and my sin is before me always:
“Against you only have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight.”

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,
and a willing spirit sustain in me.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Reading 2

Romans 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19

Brothers and sisters:

Through one man sin entered the world,
and through sin, death,
and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned—
for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world,
though sin is not accounted when there is no law.

But death reigned from Adam to Moses,
even over those who did not sin
after the pattern of the trespass of Adam,
who is the type of the one who was to come.

But the gift is not like the transgression.
For if by the transgression of the one, the many died,
how much more did the grace of God
and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ
overflow for the many.

And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned.
For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation;
but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal.

For if, by the transgression of the one,
death came to reign through that one,
how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace
and of the gift of justification
come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, just as through one transgression
condemnation came upon all,
so, through one righteous act,
acquittal and life came to all.

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

Verse Before the Gospel

Matthew 4:4b

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

Gospel

Matthew 4:1-11

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert
to be tempted by the devil.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights,
and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God,
command that these stones become loaves of bread.”

He said in reply,

“It is written:

*One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth
from the mouth of God.”*

Then the devil took him to the holy city,
and made him stand on the parapet of the temple,
and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.
For it is written:

*He will command his angels concerning you
and with their hands they will support you,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.”*

Jesus answered him,

“Again it is written,
You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.”

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain,
and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence,
and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you,
if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.”

At this, Jesus said to him,

“Get away, Satan!

It is written:

*The Lord, your God, shall you worship
and him alone shall you serve.”*

Then the devil left him and, behold,
angels came and ministered to him.

Exegesis

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

Our pericope from *Genesis* is often referred to as *The Second Creation Story*. It includes the story of the creation and the fall of humanity. Some scholars date the writing of this text approximately 950 B.C.

The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *LORD* is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *God* is *Elohim*. Both these words for *God* appear throughout the OT. This is the only chapter in Sacred Scripture where they appear together. The Hebrew word that is translated as *man* in this verse and throughout is *adam*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *ground* is *adamah*. The Hebrew word that is translated as both *life* and *living* is *hay*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *being* is *nepes*. *Nepes* originated from the word describing the *throat* or *neck*. It has evolved from this verse to mean *living being*, *life*, *person*, and most especially *soul*. The LXX translates *nepes* as *psyche*, the common Greek word for *soul*. *Nepes/psyche/soul* is, in the human being, the receptor of Divine Life, the Breath of God.

Several scripture passages reflect on the creation of humanity from the dust of the earth.

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on the faithful. For He knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust.” (Ps 103: 13-14). “As for you, let man alone, in whose nostrils is but a breath; for what he is worth.” (Is 2: 22). “For the Spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty keeps me alive.” (Job 33: 4). “So as long as I still have life in me and the breath (*Ruah*) of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak falsehood, nor my tongue utter deceit!” (Job 27:3).

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. The Hebrew word that is translated as *garden* in this verse and throughout is *gan*. *Gan* appears elsewhere in the OT to reference the *garden of God*. “Yes, the Lord shall comfort Zion and have pity on her ruins; her deserts He shall make like Eden, and her wasteland like the garden (*gan*) of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of song.” (Is 51: 3). “I made it beautiful, with much foliage, the envy of all Eden’s trees in the garden (*gan*) of God.” (Ez 31: 9). (See also Ez 28:13 and Joel 2:3).

It is interesting that the LXX translates *gan* into Greek as *paradeisos* which is a word that is used by Jesus from the Cross to speak of the Paradise that awaits those who love Him. When Jesus turned to the repentant thief from the Cross, He said, “*Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*” (Lk 23: 43). *Paradeisos* is derived from a Persian word that means *garden*, or *orchard*, or *park*, i.e., *place of pleasure*. The word is used three times in the NT; in addition to Luke 23:43, it appears in *2 Corinthians* and *Revelation*. “And I know that this person was caught up into Paradise (*Paradeisos*) and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter.” (2 Cor 12: 4). “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God (*Paradeisos*).” (Rev 2: 7).

Eden was thought to be a place located in southern Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. It gets its name from a Samaritan word *eden*, which means *fertile plain*. A similar-sounding Hebrew word means *delight*.

Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Hebrew word translated as *ground* is again *adamah*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *life* is again *hay*. The Hebrew word that is translated as

Exegesis

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

knowledge is *daat*. *Daat* appears again in this Genesis story. “For God knows (*daat*) when you eat it your eyes will be open.” (Gen 3: 5). “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized (*daat*) that they were naked;” (Gen 3: 7). Outside of *Genesis*, *daat* only appears one additional time in Sacred Scripture, and it also points to a knowledge that comes from God. “And I have filled him with a divine spirit of skill and understanding and knowledge (*daat*)...” (Ex 31: 3).

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The Hebrew word that is translated as *serpent* in this verse and throughout this pericope is *nahas*. *Nahas* can also be translated as *snake*, *sea-serpent* or *dragon*. The LXX translates *nahas* in this verse and throughout the OT using the Greek word *ophis*. Some experts contend that there is no indication that the serpent represents Satan from this text. My instinct is to use scripture to interpret scripture. I believe that all Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired, and therefore it should always be our guide. Several passages support the widely held belief that the serpent represents the devil in this story. “By the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.” (Wis 2: 24). “But I am afraid that, as the serpent (*ophis*) deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts may be corrupted from a sincere and pure commitment to Christ.” (2 Cor 11: 3). “The huge dragon, the ancient serpent (*ophis*), who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it.” (Rev 12: 9).

The Hebrew word that is translated as *cunning* in this verse is *arum*. *Arum* can also be translated as *clever*, *shrewd*, or *crafty*. The LXX translates *arum* into the Greek word *phronimos*. Matthew uses *phronimos* when he captures the words of Jesus speaking of the cunning of the devil. “Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd (*phronimos*) as serpents (*ophis*) and simple as doves.” (Mt 10: 16).

St. Paul sums up well the fall and restoration of humanity. “So, too, it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being,’ the last Adam a life-giving Spirit. But the Spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the Spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man from heaven.” (1 Cor 15: 45-47). “Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned.” (Rom 5: 12).

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

Psalm 51 is revealed by an ancient heading to be related to the incident of David's infidelity with Bathsheba. "To the Choirmaster. A psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet came to him after his affair with Bathsheba." (Ps 51: 1-2). The story is found in the 2 Samuel 12. "The Lord sent Nathan to David..." (2 Sam 12: 1). "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan answered David: 'The Lord on His part has forgiven your sin; you shall not die.'" (2 Sam 12: 13).

Psalm 51 is a penitential psalm and an individual lament. It is a prayer for the pardon and confession of sin, and prayer for restoration and renewal. It consists of 21 verses. Psalm 51 is titled *The Miserere: Prayer of Repentance* in the NAB and *Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God* in the ESV.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *mercy* is *hanan*. *Hanan* can also be translated as *gracious, generous, or to show favor*. The Hebrew word for *God* is *Elohim*. The phrase that is translated as *greatness of your compassion* is derived from the single Hebrew word *hesed*. *Hesed* is often translated as *steadfast love*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *wipe out* is *mahah*. *Mahah* can also be translated as *wipe clean, wash clean, annihilate*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *wash* is *keebase*. *Keebase* is primarily used in reference to the washing of garments. The Hebrew word that is translated as *cleanse* is *tahare*. *Tahare* means to *pronounce clean or purified*. The image of God washing, cleansing, wiping out, and purifying from sin is a common prophesy, a promise, and a command in Sacred Scripture. It is I (the Lord), I, I, who wipe out, for My own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more. (Is 43: 25). I have brushed away your offenses like a cloud, yours sins like a mist; return to Me, for I have redeemed you." (Is 44: 22). "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away." (Acts 3: 19). "Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before My eyes." (Is 1: 16). "Cleanse your heart of evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved." (Jer 4: 14). "He will sit refining and purifying (*tahare*), and He will purify (*tahare*) the sons of Levi, refining them like gold and silver that they may offer due sacrifice to the Lord." (Mal 3: 3). "Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon His name." (Acts 22: 16). "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God." (Heb 9: 13-14).

For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: "Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight." The Hebrew word that is translated as *acknowledge* is *yadah*. *Yadah* is also translated as *know, be aware and reveal*. *Proverbs* speaks of the importance of awareness and acknowledgement of our sins. "He who conceals his sins prospers not, but he who confesses and forsakes them obtains mercy." (Prov 28: 13). The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the importance of acknowledging our sins before God. "For our offenses before You are many, our sins bear witness against us. Yes, our offenses are present to us, and our crimes we know." (Is 59: 12).

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17

King David acknowledges that it was God whom he sinned against. “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan answered David: ‘The Lord on His part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die.’” (2 Sam 12: 13).

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of this promise of God. “I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it with a natural heart, so that they may live according to My statutes, and obey and carry out my ordinances; thus they shall be My people and I will be their God.” (Ez 11: 19-20).

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. The Hebrew word that is translated as *salvation* in this verse is *yeshua*. *Yeshua* is the root of the word *yeshua/Joshua/Jesus*.

Exegesis (Continued)

Romans 5:12-19

Scholars agree that Paul wrote his *Letter to the Romans* in late 57 A.D. It is believed that he wrote it from Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey. There was an established Jewish community in Rome, with at least twelve active synagogues. There also was the presence of a Christian community, obviously, as Paul is directing his letter to them. The Roman historian Suetonius wrote of an edict declared by the Emperor Claudius in the year 49 that ordered the expulsion of Jews from Rome who were proclaiming Christ as the Messiah. The historical origin of the Church in Rome remains a mystery, however.

Our pericope is titled *Humanity’s Sin through Adam and Grace and Life through Christ* in the NAB, and *Death in Adam, Life in Christ* in the ESV. St Paul portrays Jesus as the New Adam. Whereas Adam fails, Jesus does not.

Brothers and sisters: Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned—for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *sin* is *hamartia*. *Hamartia* means *failure* or *wrongdoing*. At its root, it means to *miss the mark*. The Greek word for *death* is *thanatos*. The Greek word that is translated as *men* is *anthropoi*, which includes men and women. St. James articulates well the connection between sin and death. “Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity, it gives birth to death.” (Jas 1: 15).

The Greek word translated as *type* in this verse is *typos*. *Typos* was originally used to describe the mark or impression left after it was struck with an instrument. The impression that remained looked similar to the instrument itself. The word evolved to describe

Exegesis (Continued)

Romans 5:12-19

what we now call an archetype. Adam is the type of sinful humanity and Jesus is the type of humanity redeemed. St. Paul makes this contrast between Adam and Jesus often. Jesus becomes the new Adam to reverse the sin of Adam. “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life.” (1 Cor 15: 21-22a).

For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *justification* is *dikaioma*. *Dikaioma* describes our requirement of being in right relationship with God. Jesus came to restore that broken relationship caused by sin. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. “If He gives His life as an offering for sin, He shall see His descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through Him. Because of His affliction He shall see the light in fullness of days; through His suffering, My servant shall justify many, and their guilt He shall bear.” (Is 53: 10-11).

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous. The Greek word *dikaios* that is translated here as *righteous* is a very significant word in Sacred Scripture. *Dikaios* can also be translated as *justice*, or *fulfillment of the law*. The Prophet Jeremiah foretold that the gifts of the Messiah would be *righteousness*, *sanctification* and *redemption*. “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is right and just in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they will give him: ‘Lord of justice.’” (Jer 23: 5-6). The word *dikaios* appears 92 times in the NT and 344 times in the LXX. The Hebrew equivalent is *sedaquah*. *Sedaquah/dikaios* is about being in right relationship with God, especially important is being connected to God in faith and trust. In Sacred Scripture *sedaquah* is first attributed to Father Abraham referencing God’s covenant with him. “And he (Abraham) believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness (*sedaquah*). (Gen 15: 6)

Hebrews speaks of the obedience of Christ. “Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered; and when He was made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.” (Heb 5: 8-9).

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 4:1-11

At Jesus' baptism which immediately precedes the temptation scene we are told that heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, "And a voice came from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased'" (Mt 3: 17). In this great theophany Jesus is revealed clearly as the Son of God. Now Jesus full of the Holy Spirit is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tested by the devil. It is noteworthy that the devil begins his testing of Jesus by twice challenging His identity. "If you are the Son of God." The clarity of Jesus' true identity is being questioned and challenged by the devil. The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God. Even his lowly demons know who Jesus is, they are the first to profess that Jesus is the Holy One of God. The first test that Jesus must face is His own identity as God's beloved Son. It is precisely in the face of severe testing that Jesus clearly defines Himself as the faithful and obedient Son of God.

In light of Matthew's motif of revealing Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT, it is important to recall that Israel was referred to as God's Son. "When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called My son." (Hos 11: 1).

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. The Greek word that we translate as *tempted*, or in some translations, *tested* is *peirazō*. It is the same Greek word that was used to describe the fire tempering of metal. In that process the impurities are burned off and the molecules in the cooling process re-align to make the metal stronger and purer. Jesus comes out of this experience focused, and His face is "set like flint" on Jerusalem, and on the Cross. The Greek word *peirazō* is used in the LXX for the testing of the people by Yahweh in the wilderness, and their testing of Him (e.g. Exod 16:4; 17:2; Deut 8:2; Ps 94:9). The Hebrew word for *tempted/testing* is *neesah*.

From the Cross Jesus will again be tested, again questioning His true identity; "If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. (Mt 27: 40). Jesus remains obedient to the end. It is from the Cross that Jesus' true identity as the Son of God becomes definitive.

By the devil. Matthew, as does Luke, uses the word *diabolos* for *devil*. Mark uses *satanas* in his temptation narrative. *Satanas* means tester or accuser as applied in the *Book of Job*. *Diabolos* means divider or prince of discord. Matthew uses both *satanas* and *diabolos* throughout his Gospel. Later in this pericope Jesus refers to the devil as *Satanas*.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." The period of forty days and forty nights reflects both the forty years in the wilderness by the Israelites and the forty days that Moses spent fasting in the desert. Again, Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT. "Remember how for forty years now the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep His commandments." (Deut 8: 2). "Then, as before, I (Moses) lay prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, because of all the sin you had committed in the sight of the Lord, and the evil you had done to provoke Him." (Deut 9: 18).

Jesus replied to the devil by quoting scripture, a portion of this passage from *Deuteronomy*: "He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger and then fed you with manna, a food unknown to you and your fathers, in order to show you that not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord." (Deut 8: 3).

Exegesis (Continued)

Matthew 4:1-11

Then the devil took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down." The Greek word that is translated in this verse as parapet is pterygion. Pterygion is usually translated as pinnacle. In this setting it is referring to the summit or the edge of the temple. It was perhaps the highest point of the temple already on the highest elevation in the city.

"For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." It is interesting that the devil would be quoting Sacred Scripture to Jesus, especially as it refers to angels, of whom he is one who has fallen. He is quoting from Psalm 91. "For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways. With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone." (Ps 91: 11-12).

Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." Jesus quotes scripture back at the devil. "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test, as you did at Massah." (Deut 6: 16). The psalmist speaks of the Israelite People putting the Lord to the test. "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day of Massah in the desert. There your ancestors tested Me; and tried Me though they had seen My works. Forty years I loathed this generation; I said: 'This people's heart goes astray, they do not know My ways.'" (Ps 95: 8-10).

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." This is reminiscent of Moses on the mountain. "The Lord said to me (Moses)... Go up to the top of Pisgah and look out to the west, and to the north, and to the south, and to the east. Look well, for you shall not cross this Jordan. Commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall cross at the head of this people and shall put them in possession of the land you are to see." (Deut 3: 27-28).

At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve." Jesus again quotes Scripture at the devil. "The Lord, your God, shall you serve, and by His name shall you swear." (Deut 6: 13). The Greek word that is translated in this verse as worship is proskyneo. Proskyneo means to bow down, prostrate oneself, make obeisance, or pay homage. The Greek word that is translated as serve is latreuo. Latreuo means to serve and be devoted to, but it too can mean to worship or venerate. I Samuel also speaks of serving and worshipping God alone. "The whole Israelite population turned to the Lord. Samuel said to them: 'If you wish with your whole heart to return to the Lord, put away your foreign gods and your Ashtaroth, devote yourselves to the Lord, and worship Him alone.'" (1 Sam 7: 2-3).

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him. Later, as Jesus was about to face the Cross, He refused the ministry of the angels. "Do you think that I cannot call upon My Father and He will not provide Me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? But then how would scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" (Mt 26: 53-54).

Reflection

As we begin the Holy Season of Lent our first reading is appropriately taken from the beginning of the Book of Genesis, the story of creation: “The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. God reveals Himself to us as Being itself and therefore the source of all being. God also reveals Himself to us as Love itself and love is the sharing of life. And so God chooses to share His life with us. This is where the word for life that permeates sacred scripture begins!

One of my favorite spiritual authors back in the time when I was really searching was a Jesuit priest by the name of John Powell. He was a prolific writer that sold millions of books. Some of his more popular books were; *The Christian Vision, Fully Human-Fully Alive, Happiness is an Inside Job*. He was a psychologist by training and a well-known priest. He conducted missions and retreats as well. He had an extremely popular series of talks that he called the *Fully Alive Experience*. He always started that series of talks with this statement, “Fear not that you might die, fear that you may never really live.”

That opening statement hit me like a ton of bricks years ago. I realized that I was just existing and not really living. I was going through the day-to-day motions of life. Like many people I was not really living in the present moment, open to the beauty of life all around me. So often we live carrying baggage from our past, pain and scars from experiences that have hurt us. Often we are plagued by the inability to forgive and so we carry grudges and feel alienated. Often we live with anxieties of what the future may have in store for us. If we live stuck in the past and paralyzed in fear of the future we never really live in the present moment.

Jesus once said, “I came so that you might have life and have life to the fullest.” (Jn 10:10) In this weekend’s Gospel Jesus begs us four times to “be not afraid.” Jesus is calling us to trust in Him in all things. He tells us not to worry about the future. He wants us to live in the present moment, to become like a child in the arms of a loving parent. He wants us to be fully present to Him at all times. Out of love for us, Jesus is assuring us of his providential care. The lilies of the field grow and bloom wherever they are planted by God and they prosper. They bloom from within and have everything within themselves that they need.

It is also interesting to note that the word for life that is used by Jesus is not the word of biological life (*bios*). It is the word that speaks of the fullness or abundant life. It is the word used for eternal life (*zoe*), because the life breath of God is the source of that life. All we have to do is remain connected to the source, God! So come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

During my life as a priest and as an active Catholic layperson before my ordination, I have been blessed to know many Spirit filled people. As I grew spiritually and allowed the Holy Spirit increasingly into my life I discovered an interesting phenomenon. I would meet a Spiritual person as a first-time encounter, and I felt that I had known that person my entire life. There is something extremely profound in sharing the same Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Sharing in the One Spirit unites us as the Body of Christ. It unites us in a common mission toward a common destination, eternal life with Christ.

Growth in the Spiritual life provides heightened awareness of God's grace working in the world. Life in the Spirit allows one to see the movement of the Spirit and the hand of God in everyday life. With it comes a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. In a way it is like seeing life through the eyes of God. St. Paul said it best when he said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."

Along with the heightened sense of God comes an increased awareness of evil in the world all around us. Just as our first parents, Adam and Eve, were confronted with Satan in the Garden of Eden, Jesus is confronted with Satan as He begins His public ministry. At His Baptism Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and then immediately led by that same Spirit into the desert to be challenged by Satan. Moving from the desert into His public ministry He was confronted by demons at almost every turn.

As a priest humbly standing in Persona Christi, in the person of Christ, I too found myself seemingly in constant Spiritual battle. I soon discovered that good Spiritual people around me were sharing in the same struggles with evil. I recall so many times that I felt certain that I was losing the battle. For weeks on end, I felt like I had a great leviathan by the tail, and I could not let go for fear of being destroyed. It was St. Paul who would remind me that I was trying to fight heavenly powers and principalities with worldly power. That led me to my knees in prayer and led me to seek my Spiritual brothers and sisters to engage with me in the battle. This forged an even deeper solidarity with my spiritual prayer group.

At times I was too engaged in the battle, such that I would lose sight of the mission at hand. Perhaps that is one of Satan's tools to keep us focused on him and not on Christ. The devil wants us either to be too engaged with him or living in the other extreme of denying his existence. I have learned that there must be a healthy balance in this battle. It is important to trust in the power of God. I have learned what I call holy detachment. I pray for guidance with all of my strength, follow the voice of Jesus in my heart with everything that I have and then placing it all in the hands of God. He is in charge! The victory has already been won on the hill of Calvary! The only power that Satan has is the power that we allow him. The key is to allow the Holy Spirit into our hearts to become Spirit filled, Spirit led and Spirit giving people and so we pray, come Holy Spirit fill the heart of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

F. Glenn