

Fr. Larry's Homily – Feb. 10th, 2008

Good morning! I've preached on this first reading more than any other reading I think in the whole Bible. The book from Genesis, Genesis 3 of course the fall, because I speak on confession and that so often. And I'm kind of like tired of talking about it to tell you the truth.

But we've got to deal with it in summary, very briefly, because it tells us a couple of truths. One we know that sin is basically to disobey God. God made the rules, He said, "if you do this, you will die." So God's in charge. Two: that if we sin, we die. Basically, the devil says you won't die, you get to make the decision; God's the liar or the devil's the liar. But God tells us, and again we hear it in the second reading, that what sin does is kills us. Again, mightn't matter much to you, you mightn't think about it, but it's an eternal death. So sin is something – isn't it amazing the first thing that Jesus deals with is temptation to show us how to deal with temptation; because it's the greatest struggle in our life. That's why we spend forty days every year focusing on how we've got to deal with temptation. That sin will kill us forever. Very important to know that when you and I commit mortal sin it kills our soul.

The third thing that shows us the truth is that, we've talked about it before – where was Adam during the temptation? Right next to Eve but he kept his mouth shut. Again, Eve didn't use the helper that God gave to her, and Adam wasn't strong for his wife Eve in temptation. He did not stand up to the devil and say, "Before you get to my wife you've got to get through me." He was not the spiritual leader; he was not the man God called him to be. And so we have the fall. And because of that, everything that you feel in this life – pain, death, suffering, sickness, war – all became because of our first parents saying no to the will of God. So if you don't think that sin is a big deal, just look around. You'll find out sin is a very big deal.

Now, that's the bad part. Now you get to the New Testament. The first reading of course deals with sin, and then we get to the New Testament. And Jesus shows us how to deal with temptation. And the bridge of this, of course, is the second reading. And it talks about Jesus' death – just through one man all have sinned, now through one man all are redeemed, or justified. So this is what we've got to do as we jump into the New Testament. Again, as people come to me during confessions throughout the places, and they'll sit there and say, "Father, I struggle with the same thing", which I've

talked about before. And I said, that's the problem – you keep trying to do this yourself. If you try to be like Eve in the Old Testament and deal with temptation yourself, you're going to fall. It's just a given. You know it, everybody knows it. That if you try to deal with temptation yourself you're going to fall.

So the true spouse of every soul is who? Jesus Christ. So what's got to happen is that we don't try to do this alone. We do this because when we are baptized, we become one with Jesus Christ. So what you and I have got to do is, first of all, get out of the way and let Jesus deal with the temptation inside of us. Don't try to do it yourself – you can't. You've got to let Jesus do it with you, inside of you, okay? So that's the first thing.

The second thing that's got to happen for this to become real is that you and I have got to forget about ourselves. Huh? Interesting, isn't it? In the first reading we see Adam and Eve, and the devil challenges them to take care of themselves. You will become like God. You will not die. So the devil challenges them, or tempts them to worry about themselves first.

Notice the devil hasn't changed any – he does the same thing to Jesus, does he not? Oh, it says, He fasted for forty days and for forty nights and He was hungry. So the devil appears to Him because He is hungry. And he looks at Him and he says, "Oh, Jesus, if you are the Son of God, take care of Yourself, huh? These stones here, make them bread and eat some food. Take care of yourself, Jesus." Now, none of us would say that, that would be a bad thing, huh? We'd say, "Sure, Jesus, if you can do that, if you can change those stones into bread, if you're hungry, do it." But Jesus, you see, what not concerned about himself, and so it isn't a temptation.

When we're worried about ourselves, then we've got to start worrying a little bit, right? Today you go to any bookstore and the biggest section of the bookstore is self-help. You know I have one friend who's been buying self-help books for twenty years. He gets the latest ones. And again, why do you have to keep buying it for twenty years? Because they don't work! You know self-help says take care of number one. You know, no one else is going to take care of you, you've got to take care of yourself. Well, that's a lie. If you are worried about yourself then you're the god of yourself. But if you entrust yourself unto God, who's going to take care of you? God, Himself. So, the self-help book, you have to help yourselves, but that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is surrender your life to God, and God will take care of you.

And so, the devil is, “Don’t trust God, don’t you trust God, you take care of yourself. Don’t you dare trust God. He won’t take care of you. You’ve got to become like God; you’ve got to decide. Don’t trust this God who may or may not be up there.” And God looks at him and Jesus and He says, “No, we don’t live by bread alone, we live by what God said.” And this comes to the third thing. So first we’ve got to let God, Jesus, live inside of us; second, we’ve got to forget about ourselves; third, we’ve got to memorize God’s word when it comes to our particular problems in temptation.

Again, throughout the times I taught at Prep and when I taught scripture, even in grade school, I would sit there and I would always make the kids memorize something. Because most high school and college kids, what do you think they struggle with more than anything else? Sexuality – trust me. Even already in seventh grade, trust me, if you have kids – oh no, not my kids – trust me on this. So they struggle. And so this is what I used to teach when I taught seventh grade, and this is fifteen years ago. I’d say ladies and gentlemen, when you’re being tempted, and there’s your girlfriend or boyfriend in there wants you to do whatever, I want you to memorize Ephesians 5: 5-7. And I want you to quote it when you’re being tempted. And you all have this memorized, right? Oh, right, Father. It says, “Make no mistake about this: no fornicator, no unclean or lustful person or idolater will have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ or of God. Let no one deceive you with worthless arguments – these are sins that bring down God’s wrath on the disobedient. Therefore have nothing to do with them.” You see, you’ve got to have it memorized, because in the midst of the temptation, when Jesus was being tempted, what did He do? He took the word of God, and He shoved it down Satan’s throat.

When you and I know the word of God, and we’re being tempted in the things that bother us the most, if we have certain passages memorized – and this passage from Ephesians 5: 5-7 is great for sexuality because it tells us the truth. Make no mistake about this, no fornicator – a fornicator is what? Someone who has sex outside of marriage, right? No fornicator, no unclean or lust-filled person – it deals with lust for all of us – will have any inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. So it reminds us of the truth. The truth is: if we do this, we won’t go to heaven, right? And so let no one deceive you with worthless arguments. There comes the devil, there comes our friends, “Come on, this is a foolish thing.” These are sins that bring down God’s wrath on the disobedient. So, when you’re being tempted to do that, when you can take the power

of God's word and shove it down the devil's throat, it'll make you strong. But you've got to do that. You've got to sit there and stop trying to do it yourself and hang on the power of God. And let God deal with the sin, the temptation, and then you'll have strength, because now you're getting strength from God.

The last thing or number four if you will, what we've got to do is if we're going to be successful over temptation, we've got to have one concern: to only please our Father. Jesus says at the end, the way that He finally gets rid of the devil is He says, "You shall love the Lord your God, Him alone shall you serve." That Jesus only wanted to do one thing – He only wanted to please His Father. When you and I come to that place in our lives, that I only want to do one thing, I want to please my Father. Jesus, later on in John's Gospel says, "The world must know that I love Him, and I do everything to please Him." Right? That Jesus says, "I only want to please my Father." That's where His strength came from. Because when you and I come to the strength, then we get the power of love. Which means I'll only do this because I love my Dad, and I wouldn't want to hurt my Dad. And so when the devil tried to get me to worry about myself, take care of my needs, to sin in whatever way, he's helping me say who do you love more? is what it comes down to – do you love yourself more, or do you love the Father more? Jesus says, "I love the Father more than I love myself." And all temptation comes down to that. Who do you love more – you or your Father, who's given everything for you?

So this Lent, as we go into these forty days of temptation, and we have to struggle in our life – and hopefully you struggle. I would say that most people don't even struggle with temptation any more, they just give in. There is no fight there, it's like okay I give in. That when you and I struggle with the tempter we've got to surrender and let Jesus Christ live His way through us; we've got to sit there and we need to be people who forget about ourselves, people who use the word of God because it's a sword to help us fight; and we've got to come to do everything for the love of the Father. When we do that, then we'll be successful. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.