

## Prayer

Reviewing last week's homily on original sin we must recognize that our sin is not so much the breaking of laws, as it is a rebellion against a Father who is Love. It is the rejection of a relationship. And this rejection is the work of our enemy – a once-good angel, who, out of envy of human beings, rebelled at God's love for them. His desire is to steal, kill, and destroy – you and me.

And what is God's response to all of this? Again, remember Jesus' most beloved parable, The Prodigal Son. The Father does not reject the younger son when that young man wishes the Father were dead. He gives him what he demands – for the Father respects our free-will, and then waits for him to return with longing. But even that parable doesn't get at the depth of God's love. God's greatest response to human sin is: He became a creature to save His creature. God takes on our flesh so as to repair the Bridge to Heaven.

This is the conclusion of the Great Story. And in thinking about what God's response to our rebellion is we should remember two things. First, God is in our midst, pouring out His Spirit among us so we can understand all this. Pray for that Spirit to move in your life as you think about all of this. But, second, that enemy of ours is angry any time the Great Story is told, because he doesn't come out well – and, in fact, he's thwarted by the story from accomplishing what he wants – our destruction. So, there will also be resistance to the story – don't be surprised at that.

In the Great Story there is a certain symmetry. As there was in the beginning of the story a man, a woman, and a (fallen) angel, so in the great healing and redemption of humanity there will be a man, a woman, and an angel. In today's homily I have two goals. First, to set out Mary as the New Eve, and, second, to show Jesus is the New Adam.

For the past 500 years Mary has been controversial among Christians. How much attention and honor should we pay to her?

What's her relationship to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ? To say that Mary is the greatest human person in history is not to take anything away from Jesus (who is a divine Person, with a human nature). But to understand why we call her this we must understand her role in the Great Story, and the rebuilding of the bridge to heaven. Let's begin with John 2:4. This is the wedding feast of Cana, Jesus' first miracle. Mary asks Jesus to give the embarrassed couple more wine. And Jesus' response to her is, "Woman, how does your concern affect me?". Why "Woman?" That doesn't seem very nice – kids don't say that to your own Mom.

But let's turn back to Genesis 3:15. After the serpent has seduced Adam and Eve into rebellion against God, God tells the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head while you will strike at his heel." On the very day humanity rebelled, God promises restoration - to undo

the serpent's work through the Woman. "Woman" is the title Jesus uses for Mary to identify her as the new Eve.

Now let's go to the Annunciation in Luke 1: 26-27. "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David, and the virgin's name was Mary." The Old testament foreshadows the new. This is called typology. Eve is a type of Mary. The Bible is a story heading somewhere as told by its divine Author. Eve is a virgin, conceived without sin, betrothed to a man, visited by a (fallen) angel, presented with an offer. She is disobedient to God's desire, resulting in death for humanity. Mary is a virgin, conceived without sin, betrothed to a man, visited by an angel, presented with an offer. She is obedient to God's desire resulting in life for the human race.

Mary wasn't play acting that day in Nazareth any more than Eve was in the garden of Eden. Mary could have said "No." We know that because Eve did say "No!" If Mary had said "no" we don't know how we

would have been saved. But she said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” The whole world owes her honor and thanksgiving. Without the obedience of Mary, we would have no hope. That is why we call her the New Eve and the greatest purely human person in history.

And that leads to Jesus’ identity and to some points I mentioned a couple weeks ago. John 18:1 says, “Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered.” It is Holy Thursday, Jesus is in a garden. What’s He doing in the Garden of Gethsemane? Wrestling with a decision and His own offer from the Father – to repair the bridge – to become the Bridge – or not. The Devil is also there. Jesus is in agony sweating blood. Jesus is the New Adam. To understand this more clearly read Romans 5:18-19. “Just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act acquittal and life came upon all. For just as through the disobedience of one

person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous.”

Adam is a type of Jesus. Everything starts over in Jesus. While Jesus is a man, He isn't merely a man. He's also God. Let's go to John 1:1. This is the New Testament creation account. (So, the Bible actually has three creation accounts). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.” Can you hear echoes of Genesis 1? Things are starting over: a new creation.

Concluding in John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” I'll talk more about why he came among us on Wednesday night.

And next weekend, how we are to respond to our redemption. But now

I would like to introduce Lind DeBolt who will speak to us about the

Annual Catholic appeal.