



LIVING THE
FAITH

Our Need for a Savior Foretold in Scripture

In Genesis 3:9-15, God learns of Adam's sin in eating the apple from the tree. Below, Fr. Dale Launderville, OSB, a professor of theology at St. John's University in Minnesota, explains how this Scripture passage is proof of our need for Jesus Christ.

Genesis 3:8 reports that Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day" and "hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

This is the first time in the biblical narrative that we hear of any problems that the first human couple have in their relationship with God.

Genesis 3:8 starts out on a positive tone; it appears that God is close to these two human beings and is taking a stroll in the garden to visit them as he probably did on a number of occasions.

But then the warning signs appear: Adam and Eve do not want God to see them. There is something about themselves that makes them feel uneasy and fearful. Adam says that he was afraid and hid because he was naked (Gn 3:10).

God then asks Adam how he was aware that he was naked (Gn 3:11).

In his uneasiness, Adam shifts the blame for the transgression of eating the forbidden fruit onto



Eve (Gn 3:12).

God then questions Eve, who shifts the blame to the serpent.

The fact that all three — Adam, Eve and the serpent — are punished for this transgression indicates that they share collective responsibility and will need to shoulder this responsibility when they are expelled from the garden.

The "fallenness" described here focuses upon the easy, intimate relationship that this first human

couple enjoyed with God, with one another and with the natural world of the garden.

After the transgression, fear, guilt, hostility, pain and labor challenge them and their descendants. The stories of Cain and Abel and of the wicked generations prior to the flood confirm that the alienation Adam and Eve experienced after their sin was a new condition that their descendants would likewise have to navigate.

Genesis 1:26-27 says that the first human couple was made in God's image. This rich passage, which has generated continuous commentary down through the gener-

ations, makes known that God originally intended that humans exercise stewardship over creation as his trusted lieutenants. By their love for one another and their care for the world around them, the first human couple was to be a source of blessing for creation, bringing it fertility and vitality.

This constructive, powerfully positive role for humans was diminished in Genesis 3 by the rebellious choice they made; they succumbed to the temptation to supplant God as ruler



over creation. The serpent lured them into eating the forbidden fruit with the suggestion that this

divine food would transform them into gods who know everything from good to bad (Gn 3:4).

This hunger for more power by way of knowledge was apparently irresistible for these first humans.

Perhaps this situation is most informative about the human condition we have inherited: We have this hunger for knowledge, which has been intensified by eating the divine fruit, and we realize that this new knowledge is burdensome and places heavy responsibilities upon us.

But we must learn how to use this knowledge within a cosmos in which our first responsibility is obedience to God. Our new-found wisdom makes this obedience even more difficult.

The historical narratives contained in the Old Testament books from Joshua to 2 Kings tell of the repeated failures of God's chosen people to obey the stipulations of the covenant.

God's gracious gesture of choosing the Israelites and blessing

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them gave hope to the entire world that the relationship with God might be restored. But the Israelite story is one of so many backslidings and failures that, in the later prophets, God promises to transplant their hearts (Ez 36:26; cf. Jer 31:33).

God would carry out this drastic surgery in order to replace this inner core of their being that continually made wrong decisions about the covenant relationship.

God even goes a step further by promising to place his own

Spirit in them so that they will obey (Ez 36:27). Here God recognizes that the only way that humans are going to be able to return to right relationship with him is by an infusion of grace that almost seems to take away their freedom of choice.

In Romans 5:15, St. Paul tells us that Christ came into the world to save us from sin and death: “For if by that one person’s transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many.”

All baptized Christians have been incorporated into the body of Christ. Therefore, the primary challenge for us Christians is not to try to correct our faults through greater self-discipline and smarter ways of organizing our communities. Rather, the first thing we are called to do is to acknowledge what Christ did for us and allow his grace to transform our fear and guilt into confidence.

This new status of baptized Christians as children of God leads us to pray in the Easter Exultet: “O happy faulty, O necessary sin of Adam.”