

Lent 1A

A shopkeeper seeing a boy hanging around his tempting display of fruit, went out to him and said, 'sonny you wouldn't be in any way trying to pinch my apples, would you?' 'No Sir, said the startled boy, 'I'm trying not to'.

In the First Reading Adam and Eve gave in to the subtle temptations of the serpent. Even though this story is told in figurative language - *snakes don't speak for a start*, it still contains the fundamental truth that us humans at a particular stage in our evolutionary advance got 'too big for our boots', thought we knew better than our Creator, and when tempted by an outside evil force, of our own free will, rebelled against God.

The temptation of Adam and Eve underpins all others i.e. for man to live without God, or to dethrone Him. The atheistic philosopher, Frederick Nietzsche saw man as being accountable only to himself, not God – the imperial self he called it.

The serpent, in today's reading, said to Adam and Eve, 'if you eat from the forbidden tree you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. By believing this lie, man ousts God and decides for himself what's right or wrong. Isn't that the in-thing these days?

In certain quarters today there is even a denial of Original Sin which we inherited from Adam and Eve. To say there is no Original Sin would suit the Evil One down to the ground. The Church says that man, because of Original Sin, finds forbidden things attractive and it is only Christ who can save us from making the wrong choices. But many secularists disagree and say it is education, not the grace of God, which helps people make informed choices. Of course what they are forgetting is that people can easily make the wrong informed choices.

Being in the information age makes us more prone to be fed with misinformation or half-truths. It is rather interesting to note that it was only after Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge that they made the wrong informed choice. To give children too much knowledge, for instance, about certain sensitive issues too early, is a rather dangerous road to go down. It betrays ignorance of the effects of Original Sin and our fallen nature by those who should know better. It's definitely not bliss. Children are not immune from the after-effects of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Being part of a church community can help us to keep temptations at bay. Being a lone ranger Christian is a contradiction in terms. The devil will be happy if we do that. It is often loners who commit the most heinous crimes.

In the animal world it's fascinating to watch a pride of hungry lions stalking a herd of wildebeests. It's only when they isolate one of them from the main herd that he becomes easy prey. We're easy meat for the Tempter as well when we distance ourselves from the Church community and treat religion as merely a private affair just between us and our God. Without the Church's guidance and the support of others we become vulnerable. Even Jesus, after his ordeal with the tempter, needed angels to comfort Him.

So let us take comfort from the fact that the tempter has indeed been overcome. With God's grace the victory will be ours too.