

Sunday 10 B

I remember being on a clergy retreat once and the retreat master cast Jesus in the mould of a heavenly burglar. Satan, with power and dominance over mankind and, armed to the teeth, jealously guards his property. But the stronger man Jesus comes on the scene, ties up his adversary, and confiscates all the weapons he relies on.

The great drama of our redemption is captured in this little story. Jesus overcomes the prince of darkness and reduces him to a weakened state. Satan is down but he's not out. We're at liberty to choose which Kingdom we prefer, light or darkness. Jesus doesn't force himself into anyone's life. He's not a manipulator like we sometimes are.

It is in the Garden of Eden that Satan enters onto the stage of human history to deceive mankind. After eating from the forbidden tree at the instigation of the serpent, Adam and Eve fall from grace and friendship with God. Their companionship with God is replaced by fear and suspicion. When couples become suspicious of one another in marriage, love usually goes out of the window. They start blaming each other. Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent. Playing the 'blame game' is entering the slippery slope of any relationship. Jesus, unlike Satan, doesn't point the accusing finger at anyone. He actually does the opposite - he takes all the guilt and shame of our sins on himself and atones for them.

Adam and Eve also realise they are naked and become ashamed in front of each other. Part of the fallout from original sin is this shame which we have inherited. Our first parents cover themselves up precisely because they're scared of being looked upon as objects and taken advantage of. We said a couple of Sunday's ago that the opposite of love is not hate but being used by another human being. That's why human trafficking is so evil. But in subtler ways we can also use each other, often without fully realising it. Before the Fall

man and women wouldn't dream of taking advantage of each other because in their state of original innocence the thought of desiring each other from a lustful motive would never have crossed their mind. Sin hadn't been invented.

The catholic catechism puts it like this. After the *Fall*, Adam and Eve's image of God becomes distorted. He's now seen as a God who is jealous of his prerogatives, suspicious of what his creatures are getting up to. Along with that, the soul's control over man's spiritual faculties is shattered. Passions can easily spiral out of control. The union of the man and the woman becomes subject to tensions, their relationship henceforward is marked by lust and domination. We had a good example of that recently with the '*ME TOO*' movement. Finally man will return to the ground out of which he was taken. Death makes its entrance on to the stage of human history.

But all these negatives associated with the *Fall* are reversed by Christ. That's the Good News of salvation. The power which Satan had over mankind is drastically reduced. Succumbing to the Evil One is slavery, but submitting to Christ is true freedom. Through our baptism we become subjects of His Kingdom - the full flowering of which will be in Paradise.