

July 1, 2018 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

If you were every looking for a short course on salvation history, you will be able to find it in the readings for today. Here are the simple, easy to remember steps: Original Blessing, Original Sin, and the Greatest Blessing.

The Original Blessing: God made us to live. God is the source of all life and gave the gift life to us and made us in his own image and likeness. Life is more than just physical; our life is fundamentally our relationship with God. Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect friendship with God as a part of the Original Blessing. The first reading from the book of Wisdom expresses it in this way: “God did not make death.” (Wis. 1:13) And “God made man to be imperishable. (Wis. 2:23)

Original Sin: Adam and Eve fall through the temptation of the devil and lost paradise, their relationship with God. This is how the Book of Wisdom says it: “By the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.” Ouch! We experience his death, so apparently we belong to the devil’s company? The hard truth is yes, with Original Sin, we did belong to this company. Original Sin is not something we choose, rather it is the condition of being captives of the devil. The tempter stole the friendship we once had with God, through the physical temptation in our bodies. Wisdom says that it was by the envy of the devil that death entered the world. Envious of what? The angels are spiritual beings with spiritual powers that humans do not have. Our intelligence is no match for theirs. This includes the devil and all the fallen angels. The devil was jealous of our bodies, that we were made in God’s own image and likeness, so he tricked Adam and Eve in their bodies, through their eyes, to see that the forbidden fruit was attractive, and so the fell for the trap and ate it. Humanity from that moment was taken captive, kidnapped if you will. Yes, we were of the company of the devil, we experience sin, suffering and death.

Then came the Greatest Blessing. God set in motion a plan to take us back. It began with Abraham, Moses and the prophets, God setting the people of Israel free from their captivity in Egypt, the prophets, one after the other, telling them “I will be your God and you will be my people” and the people of Israel sometimes following the one true God and other times turning to false gods. *But then came Jesus who came not only with a message, but with the very person of God in our*

human form, the body. St. Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians today says, “For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, (read his divinity) for your sake he became poor, (read our broken humanity) so through by his poverty you might become rich.” Jesus is the greatest blessing because he in his rich nature as God took on the poverty of our human nature, the poverty of our sin death and death and died on the cross and rose. Through that act he destroyed the power that sin, suffering and death once held over us. As we hear in the consecration at Mass, he is the new and eternal covenant.

I had lunch on Friday with someone I have known since my college seminary days. His wife has cancer. Right now it looks like she is in remission, however her doctor warned her that given the gravity of her condition, it will almost certainly come back. They take one day at a time. My friend said, “You know, as hard as it is, Cindy’s cancer has also been a blessing. My love for her is more intense than it has ever been, we are closer than now than we were before and our prayer life stronger than before. I am more aware than ever that every moment I have with her is a gift.”

The stories of healing that we read in Mark’s Gospel today are much more than stories of physical healing. If that is all they were, they would be good news would be limited to certain people and only for a short time. All the people what were healed and were raised from the dead are now dead. Rather, these stories are about the greatest blessing, more, they are about restoring the relationship of a father and a daughter and woman who was once isolated in poverty being called “daughter.” In baptism Jesus not only restores the relationship lost through Original Sin, but was raises the Original blessing up to the Greatest Blessing, we are not just friends of God, we are now the adoptive sons and daughters of God, we are Jesus’s brothers and sisters, we members of God’s own family physical members of Christ’ own body, the Church. Sin, suffering and death can never destroy the Greatest Blessing.