

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #22

READING I Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

A reading from the Book of Genesis

The **LORD GOD** formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

Then the **LORD God** **planted** a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed **there** the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the **LORD GOD** made various **trees grow** that were delightful to look at and **good for food**, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good **and evil**.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the **LORD GOD** had **made**.

The **serpent** asked the **woman**,
"Did **GOD** really tell you **not** to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"

The **woman** answered the serpent:
"We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is **only** about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that **GOD** said, 'You shall **not eat** it or even touch it, lest you die.'"

But the **serpent** said to the woman:
"You **certainly** will not **die!**"

No, **God** knows **well** that the moment you eat of it

Genesis = JEN-uh-sihs

Begin with a tone of awe and wonder. Do not rush this reading. Take your time.

Eden = EE-d*n

Pause before you begin the words of the serpent and the woman. You must use facial expression and vocal variety as you proclaim the story.

READING I

The book of Genesis, as its name implies, is about origins. It begins with a poetic description of the origin of time and space brought about by God's Word. On the sixth day, God creates humanity in the divine image and gives them responsibility over the land and beasts. After this poetic account of the earth's origin in which everything is good, the next chapters are a narrative account of the origin of sin. The goodness of creation has become disordered.

Our reading today begins with Genesis' second view of human origins.

First described as made in the divine image, the human being is now described in more earthy terms. God forms the man (*adam*) out of clay of the ground (*adamah*), and breathes life into him. From the same ground from which *adam* is formed, God makes various trees grow, with special mention given to the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The lectionary omits God's command to *adam*, in which the Lord tells him he can eat from any tree of the garden except from the tree of knowledge. "The moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die." Another

omission from the lectionary is the creation of woman. Since it is not good for *adam* to be alone, God creates one who is a fitting helper for him. She is called Eve, her name derived from the word for "life," because she is mother of all the living (3:20).

With the man and woman placed in the garden, another character, the serpent, enters the story that unfolds the origin of sin. The cunning serpent uses a shrewd question and deceitful answers to tempt the woman. Though the word "sin" does not appear in the story, we can see a common experience of the movement from tempta-

your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is **good** and what is **evil**.”
 The woman saw that the tree was good for **food**, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. **So** she **took** some of its fruit and ate it; and she **also** gave some to her **husband**, who was **with** her, and **he** ate it.
 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they **realized** that they were **naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and **made loincloths** for themselves.

Pause before you say this last paragraph. Emphasize the words in bold.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6, 12–13, 17 (3a)

R. Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.
 Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.
 For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always: “Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight.”

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.
 Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

READING II Romans 5:12–19

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

[Brothers and sisters:
 Through **one** man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as **all** sinned]—
 for **up** to the time of the law, **sin** was in the world, though sin is **not** accounted when there is **no** law. >>

You are setting the stage for the one who is to come, the one who will take us from sin and death to life. Speak with authority.

tion, to sin, to consequences, and the underlying rationalization and motivations.

The temptation begins with the serpent suggesting how unreasonable God must be to deny the fruits of all the trees. The woman’s response, as often happens when temptations are dangled, is not entirely truthful. She claims that God has forbidden even touching the tree, or face death. The serpent now has an opening to further temptation, suggesting that God does not want humanity to be like gods; God is unfair! For the woman, the food of the tree now looks good, pleasing, and

desirable, illustrating how attractive sin can be to both the mind and the senses. When ‘adam also eats of the forbidden fruit, their eyes are opened; they have indeed gained knowledge of good and evil. Recognizing their nakedness, feeling shame and vulnerability, they clothe themselves, beginning to hide even from God.

The engaging details of the story, rich in iMagination and symbolism, invite audiences to reflect on their relationship with God, and how the loving bond can be strained or even broken. Yet even with the consequences of the couple’s disobedience

and hubris, the loving, forgiving God will remain ever present as the story continues.

READING II Throughout the reading from Romans, Paul writes as a Jew who knows the tradition well, including the account of Adam and Eve in today’s first reading. He employs several methods of argumentation, using strategies employed in Judaism as well as those of Greek rhetoric. Paul presumes that his audience knows both the story of Adam’s sin and that of Christ’s saving death on the cross. In the verses just before today’s

St. Paul is a teacher in this letter. You are teaching and proclaiming about "the gift" we have been given through Jesus Christ. Read with clarity. Articulate your words.

Pause before you conclude.

But **death** reigned from Adam to Moses,
even over those who did not sin
after the pattern of the **trespass** of Adam,
who is the type of the **one** who was to come.

But the gift is **not** like the transgression.
For **if** by the transgression of the one, the **many** died,
how much more did the grace of God
and the **gracious** gift of the **one** man Jesus Christ
overflow for the many.

And the gift is **not** like the result of the **one** who **sinned**.
For after one sin there was the judgment that **brought**
condemnation;
but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal.

[For **if**, by the transgression of the one,
death came to **reign** through that **one**,
how much more will those who receive the **abundance**
of **grace**
and of the **gift** of justification
come to reign **in life** through the **one** Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, just as through **one transgression**
condemnation came upon all,
so, through **one righteous** act,
acquittal and life came to all.

For just as through the disobedience of the **one** man
the **many** were made **sinners**,
so, through the obedience of the **one**,
the **many** will be made righteous.]

~~[Clementine Bible 5:12, 17-19 (see back)]~~

reading, he wrote about the effects of Christ's death: justification, peace, access to grace. He continues to unfold the meaning of this extraordinary manifestation of God's love even for sinners.

Paul refers to Adam as "a type of the one who was to come." In biblical interpretation, a "type" is a person, event, or object that precedes or foreshadows a later one, resembling the later figure in some way. The type is both alike and unlike the one that follows, and the later figure is always greater than the initial type. (For example, the sacrificial lamb at Passover is a type of

Christ, the sacrificial lamb on the cross, who is far greater than the original.) Adam is a type of Christ because his transgression had a far-reaching effect on the human race, resulting in death, while Christ's death on the cross had an even greater effect on the human race, bringing the gift of life. They are alike in that both Adam and Christ are in solidarity with humanity. Yet Paul develops the unlikeness between Adam and Christ much more than their likeness.

In a sustained comparison, Paul presents Adam as the type, and Christ as the one who is greater in every way. On Adam's

side are sin, transgression, disobedience, judgment, condemnation, and death. The death resulting from Adam's sin is so powerful and pervasive that Paul personifies it; death "reigned," acting as a tyrant over humanity, even over those who did not sin.

On Christ's side, the repetition of "how much more," along with the words "abundance" and "overflow," make it clear that Christ is greater than the ancient type, Adam. Christ, obedient and righteous, brings grace, justification, acquittal, and life. Paul uses the word "gift" over and over, sometimes to refer to a specific effect of the