

Sunday 10 B

In today's gospel Jesus takes on the role of a heavenly intruder. Satan, having gained power and dominance over mankind, jealously guards his property and is armed to the teeth. But the stronger man Jesus comes on the scene, 'ties up his adversary, and confiscates the weapons he relies on'.

The great drama of our redemption is captured in this little biblical passage. Jesus overcomes the prince of darkness and reduces him to a weakened state. We're at liberty to choose which Kingdom we prefer – light or darkness. Jesus doesn't force himself into anyone's life. But in choosing Him we won't be too easily deceived.

It is in the Garden of Eden that Satan deceives mankind. After eating from the forbidden tree at the prompting of the serpent, Adam and Eve fall from grace and friendship with God. They were hoodwinked into thinking they would be equal to God. But now their companionship with God is replaced by fear and suspicion. When couples become suspicious of one another in marriage, love usually goes out the window. They start blaming each other. Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent. Playing the 'blame game' is not on Jesus's agenda. It shouldn't be on ours either. Unlike Satan, He 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 on Calvary and makes up for them.

Adam and Eve also realise they are naked and become ashamed in front of each other. That's part of the fallout from original sin. 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 Sundays ago that the opposite of love is not hate but being used. That's why human trafficking is so evil. But in subtler ways we too can be 'users' and even be in denial about it. Before the Fall, man and women wouldn't dream of taking advantage of each other

because in their state of original innocence desiring each other from a lustful motive would never have crossed their minds. That's before the wily serpent showed up in the Garden of Eden.

The catholic catechism puts it like this. As a result of 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. Human passions can spiral out of control. The union of the man and the woman is marred by lust and domination. The 'ME TOO' movement bears this out. Finally fallen man and woman will return to the earth from which they came.

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 smashed. Succumbing to the Evil One is a return to 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. The Paradise we humans lost in the garden is regained in Christ.