

PROJECT COMPASSION, TEMPTATION FOR ALL & AUTUMN UPON US

Mt 4.1-11 Gen 2.7-9, 3.1-7 Rom 5.12-19

We start off with the second account of Creation in Genesis, as there's not just one, so literal interpretation is obviously not the way to go! The symbolism is there of the forbidden fruit (*and note no apple gets mentioned – NY NY symbol of the Big Apple, Beatles' original label and now big IT brand, and note the symbolic bite out of the Apple icon!*) of the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, with the slithering, slimy, sneaky snake of temptation in the middle. Knowledge here is experiential and relational, not just intellectual, and implies knowing it all, and so usurping God's power and presence with a mastery of life and autonomy not appropriate to the human condition, but rather accepting our limitations and working on our strengths.

Innocence is lost through disobedience and blame transmitted from man to woman to snake, but they really can't say *'The Devil made me do it'!!* Nor can you or I! Free will is humanity's gift and a power which can be misused by selfishness, pride and greed, as it is here. And so they then have to get their gear on and face up to life in the real imperfect mixed world of trials, tribulation and joys, with mortality as part of the deal.

We've been through Ash Wednesday, with the reminder of mortality and the need to repent and believe the Good News, with Jesus' summons to *'pray, pay and obey'* (*I jokingly did suggest a collection on Ash Wednesday!*), sorry, I meant to *give to those in need, pray privately (as well as publicly) and to fast or go without for a positive purpose*. The external show is what is not needed, but the ashes do helpfully remind us of the meaning of the season we enter in Lent.

Then we have the contrast with Jesus, fully immersed in the human condition, with no short cuts to glory, facing up to temptation after his baptism by John, and prior to the start of his public ministry, the 40 days in the desert symbolic of the need for preparation and reflection, and of the time Israel spent wandering in the desert on a circuitous route to find the Promised Land, and that we now face in moving forward to Easter.

The temptations of Jesus are about what we all have to deal with in ourselves, resisting selfishness, pride and showing off or seeking the admiration of others. Jesus' later response is to provide bread for the hungry, reach out to those in trouble and to call and challenge others to follow his example. His message is about a God of love, a love to be lived and shared with heart and soul and mind, and whose will is that free will is used well by resisting and rejecting the ongoing darker temptations of our daily lives.

The Project Compassion theme this year is ***“Go Further Together”***, as we view an account of life for indigenous people in the Philippines, and how villager Shirley has become a leader in her community for education, growth, development, human dignity and equality. This is a real reflection of the support we provide for the good work of Caritas Australia through Project Compassion.

As I talked to our Grade 3’s on Friday, in preparing for First Reconciliation, while we welcome them this weekend, Lent is a time of doing something practical to help those in need, and Project Compassion is a very real way of doing that. We see something in this story of the need to be generous, accepting, forgiving and supportive of each other and of those in our broader world.

We might conclude with a prayer together, with slideshow, based on our themes for Lent:

God of all peoples and nations, as you accompany us on our Lenten journey, may our fasting strengthen our commitment to live in solidarity, our almsgiving be an act of justice, and our prayers anchor us in love and compassion. Awaken our hearts and minds that we might be one human family as we all go further together. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

john hannon First day of Autumn (even though it’s not equinox!) 1st March 2020