

10 Sun Yr. B 17-18

The Book of Genesis tells us about the creation of the world and about the creation of men and women. But this didn't take place exactly as Genesis tells us. What really happened is this. God created man, but he became lonely. So God paraded before him all the animals God had created, but none took the man's fancy. So God said,

'Look, I can fashion a creature for you and I will call it "woman" and she will cook for you, wash and iron, look after all the housework. She will never answer back or nag and be totally subservient to you.'

'Wow', said the man. 'What will that cost me?'

'That will cost you an arm and a leg', replied God.

'Gee that's expensive. What would I get for just a rib?'<sup>1</sup>

But is this true? The story is a myth, akin to Aboriginal Dream Time Stories. A myth is a sacred story which has something profound to tell us. For a fundamentalist the Bible is interpreted as if it is literally true. What is human and what is divine in the Bible gets all mixed up and in the process the word of God is misinterpreted.

The creation story is a sacred story about the nature of evil in the world, and uses images of a garden, of forbidden fruit, and of course the cunning serpent. This tells us about sin; a rebellion against God, a betrayal, a loss of innocence, an exile from God and with God's creation as symbolised in the loss of the Garden of Eden.

Whist the story is set 'In the beginning' it is a story for all time. It is not a story about a particular man and woman but about every man and woman. Adam's name means *the ground*, Eve's name means *life giving*.

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Plant, *Releasing the Captive, Reflections For The Year of Mark*, Mulgrave Vic: John Jarrett Publishing, 2011, 239 & 243.

Adam and Eve were given a great gift from God, the gift of free will, the right to choose between good and evil. To choose evil is an abuse of this freedom and, childlike, Adam and Eve hid themselves away from God rather than face the consequences. But God who Jesus called loving Father, came looking for them. What a loving thing to do.

“Where are you?” This question is not just addressed to Adam and Eve, but to us as well, every time we rebel against God’s way of living in the world, when we betray or lose our innocence in one way or another, when we hide from God and exile ourselves from his care, concern, understanding and forgiveness.

A demanding question, “Where are you ... in your relationship to me, to others, and to yourself?”<sup>2</sup> We can be so like Adam; we hide when we are called to account. We all know when we have done the wrong thing, conscience is deep within us, placed there by God. Conscience is something we can deny or worse still blot out altogether.

This is when we fall for the serpent’s deceit that in eating the forbidden fruit we will not die but become God-like and know all things. The serpent’s deceit is that we can do anything we want to do, be anything that we want to be, regardless of anybody or anything. Just ME!

Talk about destroying the harmony between God and humankind in the mythical Garden of Eden!

But that is exactly what sin is. It destroys relationships, by the hurts we do to each other, the hurts which we cling onto and will not let go or forgive and these in turn hurt our relationship with our creator God.

If we try to hide from God we are in fact hiding from ourselves and running away from ourselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Flor Mc Carthy SDB, *New Sunday & Holy Day Liturgies, Year B*, Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1999, 212.

“Where are you, there is something we need to talk about?” God is not indifferent. God does care about how we are travelling. “Where are you?” are the words of someone who cares, it’s not about punishment, but about facing up to what has gone wrong. The forgiveness of sins is about taking responsibility for them and moving on from them in peace

In the Adam and Eve story God did not punish them for breaking up the unity and harmony of the Garden. This division, fuelled by ego, mistrust, the blaming of each other and fear, was brought on by themselves. Likewise with ourselves: ‘We are not punished so much **for** our sins as **by** our sins.’<sup>3</sup> *Repeat*

But then, to feel no guilt is a scary place to be; it is to be morally numb, a sign that all is not well. At the other end of the scale, to be continually guilt ridden is just as sickening. A loving reconciliation with God is that gentle, peaceful balance between the denial of the need for, and, the refusal to accept the forgiveness of sins.

The serpent does not have the last say in this story. God does. Adam and Eve survived In all our family stories, God has the last say because Jesus came to overthrow the evil one and to establish the Kingdom of God in our world.

But more than that. Jesus establishes between God and ourselves a new relationship. We are more than just God’s creatures. Because of our faith in Jesus we enter into a more intimate relationship with God. Indeed,

And looking around at those sitting in a circle about him, (Jesus) said. ‘Here are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of God that person is by brother, and sister and mother.’ Mk 3:35

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<sup>3</sup> Op Cit. Flor Mc Carthy SDB, 213