

1st Sunday of Lent

I'm beginning today's homily here at the baptismal font. For a number of reasons. Before Jesus goes into the desert he is baptized. This Lenten season is all about solidarity with those who are preparing for baptism at the Easter Vigil. But most of all because there is a tropical garden here, a symbolic garden of Eden with coconuts and bamboo and little bananas. The first scripture we hear today places us in the middle of a garden, an idyllic space where the human is gifted and graced with everything that one could want. But as you hear in the story "everything" is never enough for us human beings. We always want more. There is always something "else", something "other". When are we ever satisfied! And so the author of the second version of the creation story in which God creates the human out of the clay of the earth has the "other", the tester confuse and confound the human, in this case the woman probably because a man wrote the story and in his mind the pain of giving birth was evidence enough that the woman must have been the cause of the fall. We know well enough that the stories of creation are not literal, historical events but rather myths that struggle to explain pain and illness and death. In the mind of early peoples only some 'sin', some disobedience, some transgression could make sense of the senseless. And so the "other" is to blame. The tempter, the serpent, the woman, the man.

But then we come to the second scripture that speaks of the gift which is so much more than the transgression. And here at the altar/ table we bring the gifts of the earth, bread and wine that are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, for us. Here we know for ourselves that our sins, our transgressions can never separate us from the love that is in Christ Jesus for us. Oh, yes, they can separate us from ourselves. They can separate us from "others". Nothing is ever quite enough for us. When are we ever satisfied? Here at this table where we receive the gift of grace overflowing, we ground ourselves in the love that God has for us in Christ Jesus.

And the third station is in your midst. I have here with me a tapestry of the face of Jesus? Look at it. It's a very human face. Does this face speak to you? Does it capture his vulnerability, his humanity, his longing, his loving? Is he someone with whom you could speak as "one friend speaks to another? On this first Sunday of Lent we always here the scripture that speaks of the "testing" of Jesus in the desert. Like the people of Israel who were put to the test in the desert for 40 years, Jesus is "put to the test" by someone/something that is "not-god" This very human Jesus who is weak, tired and hungry does not want to have more and be more than he is. The devil, the evil one is used to finding the flaw. That's what sin is "hamartia" the flaw. Jesus, weak and vulnerable and hungry still is given over to God and won't let his humanity betray him or the God whom he loves.

And we are called to be "grounded" in Jesus because he is like us in all things except sin. We have as our savior, redeemer, Lord, one who knows us as we are, human, weak, vulnerable and flawed.