

Once every three years, we read the account of the Fall of Man at Sunday Mass, to begin Lent. It reminds us that somewhere in the murky past, we human beings had at least one moment of purity, when we enjoyed a better life--a life without all the struggles we now have.

In other words, we weren't always this way. We did not always lurch through our experiences in such a Homer-Simpson-like manner. Our hearts did not always start fluttering whenever we see an ice-cream cone or a chocolate-chip cookie. We did not always have such a hard time concentrating on God's Word, while meanwhile having such an easy time concentrating on why so-and-so should have spoken to me before speaking to that other person—how dare she snub me!

We would still live in that paradise, in that peaceful Garden of a bigger life—if only we human beings did not have such a hopeless penchant for false pride.

“Oh, okay, Mr. Serpent. You're saying we human beings actually know better than God? Really? Well, we wouldn't necessarily have thought that... But if you say so.”

False pride. True pride would have said to the serpent: “Wait a minute. God made us. He loves us. He has the best plan. Maybe we don’t understand His rules perfectly. But we will understand, in the end. All will come clear in God’s time. Meanwhile, we trust our heavenly Father!”

But we human beings tend to confuse ourselves with God. Satan preyed on this. He tricked us into doubting the heavenly Father’s Providence. And we fell.

Death. We fell from grace in the garden, and our mortal nature kicked-in. We are dust, and unto dust we shall return.

But wait. Maybe death came as a REMEDY for the Fall?

We lost the peace of perfect friendship with the Creator, and so doubts and struggles beset us daily. Death means the conclusion of all this confusion and strife. Death means that our fallen-ness doesn’t last forever. The Lord has opened up a doorway that leads to something else, something other than just a life of tv, and failed diets, and paying bills, and never quite getting everything right. Death is the doorway to that different, unexplored country.

In our gospel reading, Jesus faced death squarely. He approached starvation and dehydration. But He said to the Satan: “Man lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God, and we owe our service to Him alone. We must not put His Providence to the test.”

God may test US. He may give us an unusually hard Lent. A terribly frustrating Lent. A Lent of good intentions that limp along lamely, well short of the mark.

If the Lord uses this Lent to draw us into a dark night of the soul, and we don't feel His presence, and any good and hopeful future seems a long way off—we will praise and bless Him for it. Nothing draws us closer to God than when He demands that we live by pure faith, without any consolations in this world.

Each of us has his or her own particular problems. But we all have one problem in common: We are members of the fallen human race. And the Lord offers us all a common solution to our problem: Faith. Faith in Jesus Christ and faith in the heavenly Father Who, out of pure love, sent His eternally begotten Son to live a human life, so that we sinful human beings could get to heaven.

We want the intimacy with our Creator that we lost when our First Parents fell, the intimacy that we hope to have in the heaven that Jesus won for us. Indeed, we DO have that intimacy even now. When we let the Spirit lead us stumblingly out into the desert, into the dark cloud of fearless Christian faith.