

I would guess that most of us had the experience as a child of being in a large group – usually a class or sports team – when one person does something wrong and everyone has to pay for it. The whole class stays in after school or misses recess or the whole team has to run. Sound familiar? I remember feeling that was really unfair. But it did remind us that we are connected. We are responsible for one another. Each of us doesn't live in a vacuum – the actions and inactions of one affect all.

Perhaps that's a way of summarizing the second reading when it speaks to us of one man's sin (Adam) bringing death to all and one man's obedience (Jesus) bringing new life. It's not about God punishing everyone because one person sinned, rather it is about recognizing that one sin begets another and another: one lie brings another, and another, one cruel word, one hateful act causes another, one act of violence brings another in retaliation, one failure to reach out to those in need allows another to grow sick or to die due to lack of food or clean water or health care – on and on the sin cycle goes.

Jesus came to break that cycle, to put an end to sin that brings with it death! The same sin that turned nakedness – that is, honesty before God and one another – into something to hide. We were created to live in that nakedness, that honesty – yet we choose the lies, the pretending, the cover-up and soon enough we don't know the difference between the truth and the lie. We can be so filled with shame and blame that we crouch in the shadows. And that's when temptations can lull us into complacency and lure us into destruction – of self and others and our world – in small ways and in large

ones.

To be tempted is to be human. The gospel story reminds us of the humanity of Jesus in being tempted – just like you and me. It reminds us that temptations are not something to be afraid of, for when we fear them we give them power. Rather, temptations must be faced, dialogued about and with and then outwardly rejected. But this is not just done alone. St. Paul says, “*As sin increased grace overflowed all the more.*”

Remember the gospel story says that the “*Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted*” – to face the demons so to clarify and strengthen his purpose. And so for us – we are led into the desert each Lent by Jesus to face our demons, our darkness so to clarify and strengthen our true purpose. That purpose is made clear in Baptism. The first three questions asked: **Do you reject Satan? Do you reject the glamour of evil? Do you refuse to be mastered by sin? And our answer is a resounding, Yes! So that we may live in the freedom of the children of God! We do not journey into the desert alone, but with the Word of God, the Sacrament of Jesus Christ, the people of God fashioned to be the body of Christ and grace overflowing all the more!**