

‘That little drop of poison’

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The sin of Adam and Eve was that they sought to be like God. But the glory of their descendants, your glory and mine, is that we are called to be like the Son of God, to be like Jesus Christ, God-with-us.

Despite this amazing truth, each of us carries within a “little drop of poison,” inherited from our first parents, and that drop of poison leads us to think -- like them -- that we can escape God and enjoy absolute and unrestrained freedom.

Our first parents looked at the forbidden fruit on the tree of knowledge of good and evil and were led by the serpent to think that if they ate the fruit they would have special knowledge and become like God.

Because they followed their own will and disobeyed God, they fell from the grace of original integrity, holiness and peace. With their fall and banishment from Paradise, the human struggle began to find and reclaim truth and wholeness. It is a story that we play out again and again in our own lives as we strive to lead lives of integrity and truth and goodness.

Speaking on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in December, Pope Benedict XVI said that -- like Adam and Eve -- we are deluded by that little drop of poison, by the trace of Original Sin, to suspect that God wants to limit our freedom and that we have to break away from that dependence in order to be fully who we are.

That’s all wrong. It is only by trusting in God that we can be the person God wants us to be, to be fully ourselves, that we can find true freedom, truth, our own integrity, wholeness and holiness.

Today we begin our annual pilgrimage of faith
-- with the imposition of ashes and our response to the call to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel”
-- and we go through our commemoration of the Last Supper and Passion of Our Lord,
-- to the glorious triumph of Resurrection at Easter.

These Forty Days are the time for us to look within ourselves, to search out and to overcome -- with the gift of God’s grace -- that “drop of poison” that leads us to prefer our own will to God’s will.

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, they didn’t become like God; they became estranged from God. They found themselves in an alien and hostile world and in a state of disharmony with creation, one another and within themselves.

When we strive to live in accord with God's will and make His will our own, loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind, drawing close to Him through the Sacraments, regular prayer and meditation on Scripture, and striving to love one another as children of the One Father, we, indeed, become more like Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God.

God became like one of us in Jesus, who lived and died and rose again so that we may become like Him. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist He gives us His Body and Blood as nourishment, as food for the journey of faith so that we may become more like Him.

Let it be our goal in Lent this year
to open our hearts to the Lord
so He may cure our troubled souls
with the antidote of His love and truth
and free us to witness joyfully to His presence in our lives
and to more effectively make Him present in our world.

Have a good and happy Lent!