

Preparation for the Sacrament of Penance

Parent Session 3

Freedom in Christ: Who is Jesus and Who are we?

Introductory Thought Starter: Jesus is the New Adam

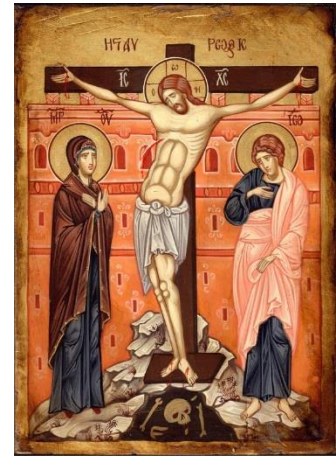
- ✱ “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19)

<i>Adam and Eve</i>	<i>Jesus Christ</i>
Created in the image and likeness of God; they enjoyed an intimate relationship with God and were placed in the garden to tend it and protect it from evil—Eden representing the Temple in which God would be worshipped and offered sacrifice.	The incarnate Son of God—Jesus truly shared in our humanity in every way but sin. He is the perfect image of the Father’s love—sent to reclaim humanity, Jesus is the new Temple (greater than Eden, greater than the Temple in Jerusalem).
Adam and Eve fail to recall God’s commands to them and place their trust in the serpent’s assertions.	Jesus, during His temptation in the wilderness, knows God’s commandments and refuses to accept the lies of the Devil.
Adam and Eve fail to cry out to God—they do not ask for God’s help in fighting the temptations.	Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, cries out to the Father and receives help to do the Father’s will.
Eve was drawn forth from Adam’s side after he had been put into a “deep sleep”	After Jesus’ dies on the cross, his side is opened with a lance and from it pours forth water and blood—the sacramental signs of Baptism and Eucharist from which His bride, the Church, is born.
Adam and Eve take and eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—they claim the prerogative to declare for themselves what is right and wrong, to be their own gods	Jesus, on the night before His sacrificial death, offers Himself as true food. His own body and blood become the fruit of the new Tree of Life—and consuming this fruit brings us into intimate communion with Him.

What insights or connections or thoughts do you have after reflecting on Jesus as the New Adam?

Opening Prayer

“It is truly right and just, with ardent love of mind and heart
and with devoted service of our voice,
to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,
and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.
Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal Father,
and, pouring out his own dear Blood,
wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.
O love, O charity beyond all telling,
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!
O truly necessary sin of Adam,
destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!
O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”



From the Exultet chanted at the Easter Vigil

“In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance.”

St. Thomas Aquinas

Baptized in Christ: God’s Vision and Plan for Humanity

Because of sin, humanity has lost our original grace—we no longer live out the truth of being created in the image and likeness of God. We need a Savior to offer us super-natural grace!

Jesus came to be the link, the union, between humanity and God

As true man, he can offer God the sacrifice needed for our sins

As true God, his sacrifice can extend to all humanity and be effective in taking out the connection between sin and death.

Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the perfect sacrifice rooted in obedient love—it restores the harmony that sin destroyed and makes it possible for us to know, love and serve God as His

beloved children. Jesus' resurrection proves He has the power to defeat sin and death; and His power extends through the ministry of His Church to each and every human being who seeks it.

For Reflection:

How would explain who Jesus is—why can He win our salvation?

What do you think is the most important thing about being a Christian?

Life as a Christian

Life as a Christian is a total commitment to following Jesus Christ—His command to “repent and believe” requires a fundamental reordering of our entire life. Becoming Christian is not like taking on a new hobby or a new job or becoming a member of an organization—it’s more like getting married: it changes everything! Priorities, attitudes, actions, choices, goals... everything!



Jesus commands us to model our souls and lives after His—we are to become “little Christs” in the world. He gives us all the help we need through the Sacraments. The Sacraments offer us an encounter with the Risen Christ—truly capable of and willing to pour His grace into our lives so that we can be renewed, restored and reborn.

Because we are still living in a fallen world and susceptible to the temptations/weaknesses we still possess, the life of a Christian is filled with failures and trials. God places before us the vision of perfected love and intimate communion—and our task is to persevere in our life’s journey as He remakes us in the image of His Son.

For Reflection:

What is your interpretation of this statement: “When we sin, God does not love us less, but we love ourselves less.”

“God doesn’t just want more from us, He wants more for us!” What do you think this comment means?

The Purpose of our Human Nature

Made in the image and likeness of God, we possess:

- **Rationality**—we know ourselves and can think through problems in light of our goals and choose effective means for attaining our goals
- **Freedom**—we are agents, choosing what to do and why to do it; while we are susceptible to the suggestions and commands of others due to our social nature, we recognize in ourselves the ability to act on our own initiative
- **Morality**—we have within ourselves a conscience, a sense of objective right and wrong planted in us by our Creator; we seek goodness (even when we choose to do what we know is wrong, we usually work hard to justify that it is a “good” choice for us)
- **Capacity to Love**—we are designed to be in intimate union with our Creator and with each other; we seek connection and the ability to serve others, seeking the good of the other for the sake of the other



As Christians, our human nature has the ability to achieve its primary purpose—to bring us to heaven as members of God’s family. We best reflect our human nature by using this gifts as God intends—when they reflect our identity as creatures made in God’s image and likeness.

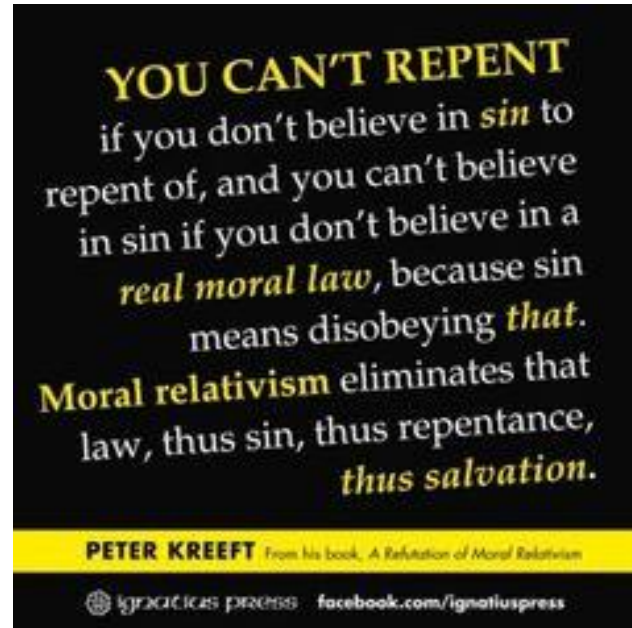
So...

We are most rational when we come to know and love God.

We are most free when we choose to obey His commands.

This is the foundation of Christian morality—in seeking to do what God commands, we are exercising our rationality and freedom to their full capacity.

The choice to sin is a terrible misuse of our rationality and freedom.



For Reflection:

Describe a situation where our human capacities are expressed in fullness and truth (perhaps something you actually observed or a story you have heard):

Our rationality and freedom are best expressed in choosing to do good. How can this foundational truth of Christian morality change our attitude about God's commandments?

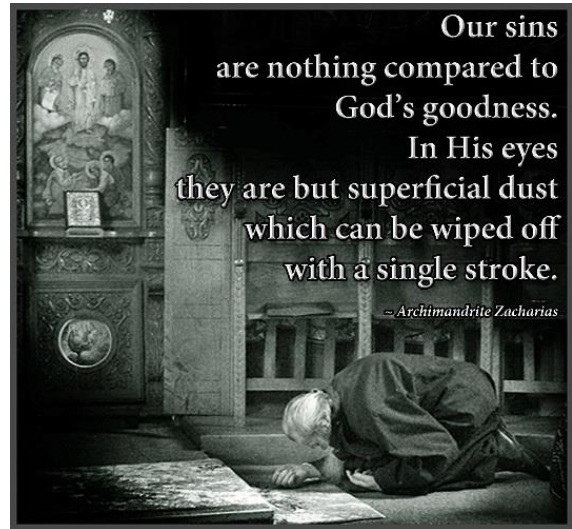
“Only if liberated from falsehood and sin can the human person, thanks to the obedience of faith that opens him to the truth, find the full meaning of his existence and have peace, love and joy.”

Pope Benedict XVI, 3/6/2006

Encountering God's Mercy

Consider God's call to Adam and Eve after they had sinned: *"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'"* (Gen 3:8-9)

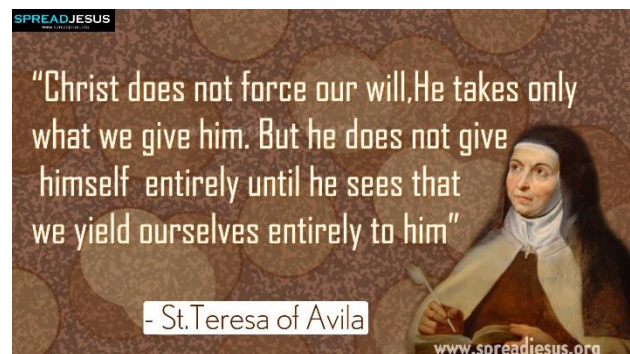
Adam and Eve's first impulse after their sin is to hide themselves from God. They feel that same guilt we experience when we know we've done something wrong, and it causes us to be separated from him. ***Do you ever feel a desire to hide yourself from God? Why or why not?***



When God comes to the Garden, he already knows Adam and Eve's sin. He seeks them out not to call them to account for their actions and pay the price for their mistake; he isn't looking to scold them or punish them. God is calling them back—out of shame and hiding, back to himself. He wants to repair the damage that sin has done.

God loves us so much that he won't let anything at all stand between us and his love. Before Adam and Eve have even expressed sorrow for their sin, God seeks them out. This is the incredible beauty of God's mercy! As St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

God doesn't wait for us to come back to him after we have sinned—he comes looking for us, just as he looked for Adam and Eve. In his merciful love he searches for us to bring us home. He is called to each of us: *"Where are you?"* ***What is your answer? What are some areas of your life that you need to surrender to God's merciful love?***



The Foundation of the Moral Life is not avoiding sin!

- Sometimes morality can be reduced to a list of “do’s” and “don’ts.”
 - From this perspective, the goal of life becomes to push the limits and boundaries so that we can appear to be obedient and yet still do what we want anyway.
 - We become “dealers” and “schemers” rather than act as beloved children.
 - God invites us, in the name and power of His Son Jesus Christ, to claim our identity as beloved children—and live that way!
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- ***So the foundation of the moral life is the beatific vision—our heavenly home, our true destiny.***

For the Christian, moral choices do not begin with the questions of...

What do I want to do?

How can I justify/rationalize it?

For the Christian, moral choices begin with these questions:

What does God desire?

How can I best express my true identity as God’s beloved child?

Modern-Day Battlefields Against the Seven Deadly Sins



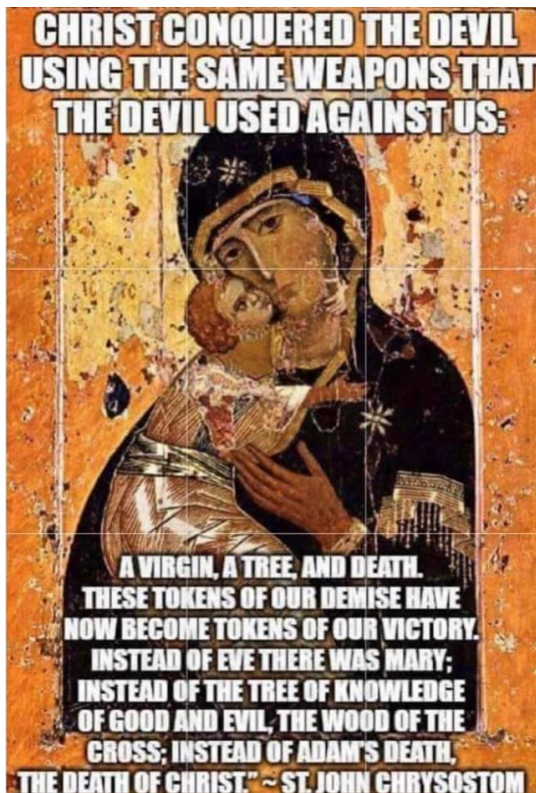
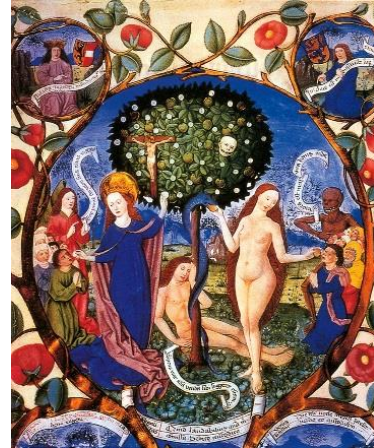
“As creatures made in God’s image, we are called to become ever more like him, not only through the perfection of our intellect, but also through our growth in the virtues.”

Pope Benedict XVI (4/18/2007)

Closing Prayer: Mary, the New Eve

“The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.”

(St. Irenaeus)



Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy,

Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope!

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;

to thee do we send up our sighs,

mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, O most gracious advocate,

thine eyes of mercy toward us;

and after this our exile,

show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. *Amen*

“God loves every one of us with a depth and intensity that we can hardly begin to imagine. And he knows us intimately, he knows all our strengths and all our faults. Because he loves us so much, he wants to purify us of our faults and build up our virtues so that we can have life in abundance.”

Pope Benedict XVI (4/18/2010)

What to expect when you go to Confession

Greeting



the priest welcomes you with a blessing or greeting

Sign of the Cross



make the sign of the cross and say, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..."

Confession



confess all your sins to the priest

Sorrow



say, "I'm sorry for these and all my sins"

Penance



the priest assigns an external act (prayer, fasting or almsgiving) to help one stay focused on God and away from sin

Act of Contrition



pray the Act of Contrition

Absolution



the priest says the prayer of Absolution forgiving you for your sins

#EncounterMercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



#TheLightIsON for you.

"What people don't realize is how much religion costs.

They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross."

- FLANNERY O'CONNOR -

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