

Preparation for the Sacrament of Penance

Parent Session 2

The Story of the Fall and Original Sin

Introductory Thought Starter

What is required for some action to be good?

What is required for some action to be a sin rather than a mistake or accident?

If we are made in God's image and likeness, why do people sin?

The Story of the Fall: Introduction

Where does it come from?

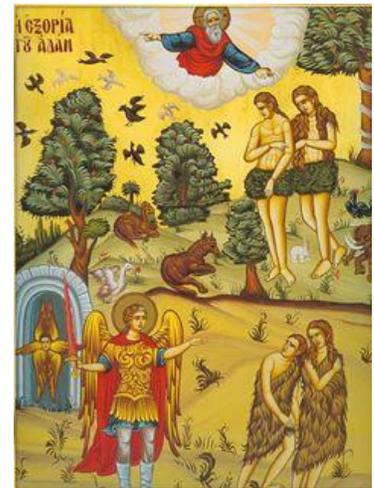
- The story was written down around 950 B.C. (during the time of King Solomon)
- It is from the “Yahwist” school and is a continuation of the creation account in Gen. Ch. 2

What does it communicate to us?

- The story of the origin of evil—tells about the **act** of sin, the **state** of sin, the **force** of sin
- Explains our present human condition: why sin, suffering & death
- Explains God's way of acting in the world

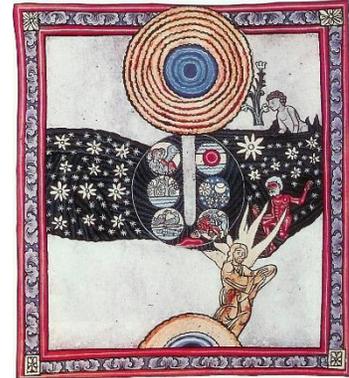
How do the Creation Accounts in Genesis 1 & 2 Set Up the Story?

- All of God's created world is beautiful, intricate and ordered—all is “very good”
- The garden of Eden, at the center of creation, is the *temple* of the earth
- The two trees, in the center of the garden, are the *altar* of the temple
- Adam serves as *priest* in the temple and at the altar—to offer sacrifice and to mediate



3 Commandments for Living in the Garden (Gen 2:15-17)

1. Cultivate the garden—*help it mature, bring to fruition*
2. Protect it from evil—*guard it, be willing to sacrifice*
3. Don't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—*don't claim God's prerogative for self*



Six Days of Creation, from Hildegard of Bingen, Eibingen Scivias, 12th c.

Why Rules in the Garden (or in life?)

- Because creation is not arbitrary—it is real and predictable in both the spiritual and material world. Rules identify the reality in which we exist.
- Rules arise out of God's rightful authority to command
- Rules create the possibility for excellence
- Rules help us order our life to achieve the highest and best—help us prioritize and focus

For Reflection: *How do you explain the necessity of rules to your children? What is the purpose of the rules in your home?*

The Story of the Fall: Genesis 3:1-24

<p>¹Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made. The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"</p> <p>²The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³it is only about the fruit of</p>	<p><i>Serpent="nahash," a life-threatening monster, a mortal enemy</i></p> <p><i>"cunning"—gives us a word play in Hebrew between Adam's nakedness (arom) and the serpent's cunning (arum)</i></p> <p><i>The devil's question misrepresents God's prohibition—making it seem ridiculous and provoking a reply</i></p> <p><i>The woman is addressed and she answers---yet it is Adam's duty to protect the garden from evil.</i></p> <p><i>The woman did not name the tree—there are two trees in the middle, only one of which was forbidden.</i></p>
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<p>the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it lest you die.’”</p>	<p><i>The woman added her own exaggeration to God’s law—making it easier to reject the law as ridiculous and unfair.</i></p> <p><i>Sin begins with distorting truth—forgetting the truth and the One who speaks it. The best strategy to tempt us to sin is a ‘half truth.’</i></p>
<p>For Reflection: The Root of Sin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin begins with forgetting or distorting the truth • When we buy into the distortions, we can move to rationalizing rule breaking <p><i>Think of a time when you broke a rule. What was the rule? What made you willing to break it—how did you talk yourself into it?</i></p>	
<p>⁴But the serpent said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! ⁵No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad.”</p> 	<p><i>The “you” in text is plural—Adam and Eve are both being addressed by Satan</i></p> <p><i>Satan denies the consequence of sin—asserts himself as an alternative source of truth</i></p> <p><i>Satan’s statement implies God has ulterior motives—that He does not want what is best for them</i></p> <p><i>Satan appeals to their pride and self-exaltation—they can achieve what they want apart from God, they can be a god</i></p> <p><i>To “know...”—to assert for oneself what is right and wrong</i></p>
<p>For Reflection: What is Satan’s lie?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deny the consequences of sin (you will not die!) • Suggest God is withholding some good from us (God knows full well..) • Suggest we can be happy apart from God (you will be like gods) <p><i>Describe an example of how these lies are presented to us in our modern temptations...</i></p>	
<p>⁶The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she</p>	<p><i>The theme of ‘seeing’ continues—the woman looks with a heart ready to sin</i></p> <p><i>‘good for food’—the action is possible; I can think about making it happen.</i></p> <p><i>‘pleasing to the eye’—the action is desirable, I want to do it; I am setting my heart on it.</i></p>

<p>took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.</p>	<p><i>‘desirable for gaining wisdom’—the action is freely chosen to attain some goal; I am setting my will to choosing it.</i></p> <p><i>Both sin by committing an evil act; Adam also sins through omission—he fails to stand up for God’s law, he fails to protect the garden and his wife.</i></p>
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For Reflection: The Steps of Temptation

- Mind: it’s possible (the tree was good for food)
- Heart: it’s attractive (pleasing to the eye)
- Will: it’s my choice (desirable for gaining wisdom)

Describe a time when you were tempted to do something wrong—how did the temptation engage your mind, heart and will?

<p>7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.</p> <p>8When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.</p> <p>9The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” 10He answered, “I heard you in the</p>	<p><i>The immediate effect of sin is awareness of vulnerability and shame—this is the ‘insight’ of self-absorption.</i></p> <p><i>Nakedness—what used to symbolize trust and openness now symbolizes danger and shame.</i></p> <p><i>The state of sin makes us want to hide ourselves from others.</i></p> <p><i>God and humans had a ‘face-to-face’ relationship; a relationship rooted in the natural grace they had possessed and now lost.</i></p> <p><i>‘breezy time of day’—evening.</i></p> <p><i>Being in a state of sin makes us want to hide from God—from goodness, purity and truth that would highlight our sinfulness.</i></p> <p><i>In the Middle East, a garden is a grove of trees (an oasis).</i></p> <p><i>God’s question is an invitation to confess—God certainly doesn’t need information! God’s question reflects His desire for reconciliation.</i></p> <p><i>Being in a state of sin makes us afraid of God—knowledge of sin</i></p>
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<p>garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.”</p>	<p><i>leads us to forget our knowledge of God’s love for us.</i></p> <p><i>The man knows they are naked before God—no loincloth can hide the state of his soul from His creator!</i></p>
<p>¹¹Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!”</p>	<p><i>“who told you?”—God is asking the question every parent hates to ask, “who do you believe instead of me?” “Who has twisted truth and yet been trusted?”</i></p> <p><i>God’s statement is his second invitation to confess.</i></p>
<p>¹²The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.”</p>	<p><i>Adam commits his second sin—the sin of refusing to repent, of blaming others for one’s choices</i></p> <p><i>Adam blames both his wife and God.</i></p>
<p>¹³The Lord God then asked the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”</p>	<p><i>The woman also commits this second sin by refusing to confess and repent.</i></p> <p><i>The woman refuses to acknowledge her desires and choice to sin.</i></p>
<p>¹⁴Then the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all wild creatures; on your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life.”</p>	<p><i>The story now moves to the consequences of sin—breaking God’s laws have real consequences.</i></p> <p><i>Banishment reflects the separation and disorder of sin—the harmed relationships that are at the root of all sin’s consequences.</i></p>
<p>¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and</p>	<p><i>These details of what serpents look like and how they behave symbolize God’s punishment of evil.</i></p> <p><i>Enmity—bitter conflict, mortal enemies, life-long battle.</i></p> <p><i>The struggle with evil will continue down through the generations.</i></p>

between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”



¹⁶To the woman he said: “I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master.”

¹⁷To the man he said: “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life.”

¹⁸Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.

The second half of this verse is called the “Proto-evangelium”—the first announcement of the Gospel.

This description of the battle’s end is prophetic of Jesus’ victory over evil on the cross.

1st Consequence of Sin: disunity/harmed relationship between body and spirit; we struggle to cooperate with God’s living-giving spirit.

2nd Consequence of Sin: disordered relationships between people; focused on selfishness and power struggles.

3rd Consequence of Sin: disunity/harmed relationship between the human person and the rest of creation.

God gave us dominion over creation, to exercise his kingship as his steward—to care for creation and help bring it to fruition. Because our obedience was the ‘cornerstone’ of this created order, our disobedience has ramifications throughout all of creation.

4th Consequence of Sin: physical death and spiritual death. We cannot remain in union with God if we break that union through sin. Our sin’s greatest consequence is a disordered relationship with God. Death is a consequence of sin.

The “original grace” that was part of our soul has died. Through Jesus Christ, supernatural grace can be poured into our souls, restoring us to communion with God.

For Reflection: Consequences of Sin

- Internal Struggles
- Disordered Relationships
- Difficulty in making a living
- Death

What is at the root of all these consequences of sin? What do these consequences reveal about the nature of sin?

²⁰The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living. ²¹For the man and his wife the Lord God made leather garments, with which he clothed them.

²²Then the Lord God said, “See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad!

Therefore he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever.”

²³The Lord God therefore banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken.

²⁴When he expelled the man, he settled him east of the garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

“Eve” literally means “mother of living.” The man naming his wife Eve is symbolic of their faith that death and punishment are not the end of the story—there is life to live!

God’s caring for the couple are a sign that His compassion is not ended. God will not abandon the couple in their sin, but with His help and guidance they will continue to serve and love Him.

“one of us”—God speaking to heavenly beings, or with a ‘royal we,’ or as the Holy Trinity.

Humanity cannot reach eternal life on their own, through their terms and through their power—the fruit of the tree of life must be offered to us by our savior...

Adam has lost his ‘natural’ priesthood—and is now driven from the sanctuary. Sin causes division and separation.

The man and his wife cannot come back—there is no way out of this dilemma but forward!

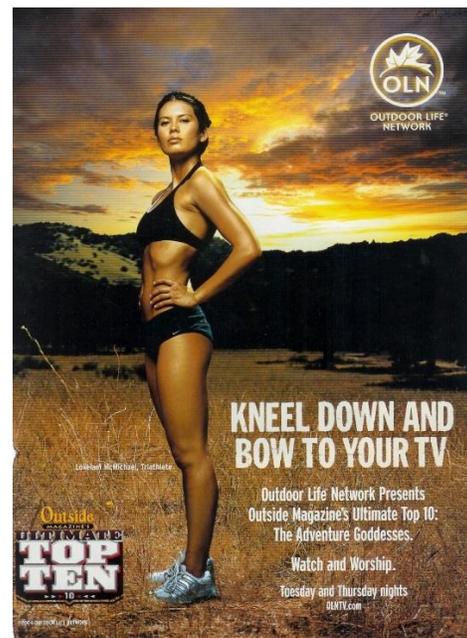
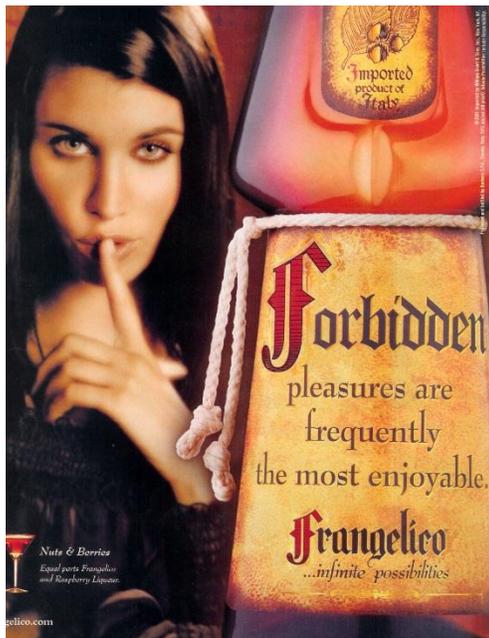
Principle Themes of the Story of the Fall

- Evil did not originate within human persons—we must be tempted to choose evil
- Evil can do no harm to our souls until we freely cooperate with it—we cannot be forced to sin
- The consequences of sin are real because God’s rules reflect reality and truth
- God desires our love, which requires our free choice—thereby opening up the possibility of our refusing love.

“What does it mean to be a sinner? ... To stand in opposition not only to the eternal moral code, but also to the living and holy God, imitating Satan’s old-age attack, the creature’s senseless but profoundly exciting attempt to dethrone, degrade, and destroy his creator. ... [Sin’s] ultimate sense is destruction.”

Romano Guardini

Satan’s Age-Old Attack—we face the same lies, the same temptations



What is the Way Out of Our Mess?

“Before all else, men must **learn that they are sinners**; they must take stock of what they have become through sin... He must consent and accept—with all his moral dignity, his freedom and responsibility—a Father’s love. He must learn the **humility that seeks grace.**”

Romano Guardini

***Jesus is God’s Solution, the New Adam, Prefigured in Genesis 3:15
from Him, we eat of the new Tree of Life as we receive Holy Eucharist***



Going to Confession, as a Sacrament of Healing, requires us to admit that we are “sin sick”—that we need a Savior to forgive us, heal us, and restore us—this is what we celebrate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

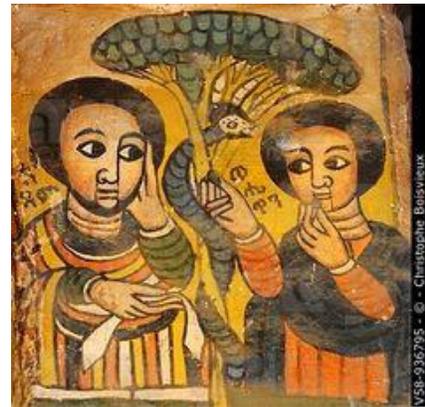
What does the Catechism Teach About the Fall and Original Sin?

“**Sin is present in human history**; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the **profound relationship of man to God**, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as **humanity’s rejection of God and opposition to him...** We are tempted to explain [sin] as merely a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure, etc. Only in the knowledge of God’s plan for man can we grasp that **sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives** to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another. The account of the fall in Genesis 3 **uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event**, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. ... the whole of human history is marked by the original fault committed by our first parents. ... The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the **‘reverse side’ of the Good News** that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation, and that salvation is offered to all through Christ.

God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship **only in free submission to God**. ... Man is **dependent** on his Creator and **subject to the laws** of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom. Man, tempted by the devil, **let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command**. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

Scripture portrays the **tragic consequences** of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately **lose the grace of original holiness**. ... The **harmony** in which they had found themselves is now **destroyed**. [And] **death** makes its entrance into human history.

By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin **affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state**. [Original sin] is a **deprivation of original holiness and justice**, but human nature has not been totally corrupted.



Catechism of the Catholic Church, selections from paragraphs 385-412