



**Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection on
the Sunday Readings**

**March 1, 2020 – First Sunday of Lent
Genesis 2: 7-9; 3 1-7 Psalm 51: 3-6,
12-13, 17**

Romans 5: 12-19 Matthew 4: 1-11

“One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4: 4b)

On Ash Wednesday, just a few days ago, we entered the most solemn season of the liturgical year. Lent is a time of repentance and preparation, a time to pray and reflect upon Our Lord's journey to Jerusalem and to his passion and death on the cross. It is also a time for us to open our minds and hearts and souls to the saving power of Jesus Christ, who although fully and eternally divine, entered into the fullness of humanity and suffered and died for our sins. He is the spotless lamb, the innocent victim, and the perfect sacrifice to reconcile all men and women so that they might attain eternal salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through his death and resurrection on Easter morning, Christ conquered sin and death, opening the gates of heaven.

Today's readings essentially summarize the whole of salvation history: creation, de-creation and re-creation. In the first reading from the Book of Genesis, the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve is recounted. While both the man and the woman resided in perfection, obedience, and an intimate relationship with the LORD, the serpent (Satan) tempted them and convinced them that they should disobey the God's one command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent told Eve: *“No, 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 evil.”* Both succumbed to *pride*, perhaps the deadliest of all the sins, for it leads to the rationalization of all other sins, by elevating the person (in their own minds) above all, including God.

In the reading from the Gospel of Matthew, we learn of Jesus' temptation in the desert following his baptism by John in the Jordan River. Weakened from hunger after forty days and forty nights of prayer and fasting, he was set upon three times by the devil, who sought to corrupt Jesus and turn him away from the Father. Unlike Adam and Eve in the garden, Jesus spurned the entreaties of Satan, commanding him to be gone.

In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul tells his readers: *“Through one man, sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned.”* This man, of course, was Adam. Paul contrasted the condemnation of all men through Adam with the gift of grace and redemption attained through Jesus. *“Just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all.”* We are justified through our faith in Christ, who came to save all men and women; we manifest that faith in our thoughts, words and deeds. In accepting the mantle of discipleship, we share in Christ's redemptive mission by witnessing his Gospel message, drawing others to the Lord.

Throughout the Season of Lent, let us offer prayer and sacrifice to the Lord, allowing his grace, hope, peace and love into our hearts, and strive to be a beacon of Christ's mission so that we might be ready to share in his Easter Glory.

Deacon Steve Szmuto