

Session 2: Creation and the Fall

HYMN: This is My Father's World



This is my Father's world,
and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world.
I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and
seas:
all things His hand has wrought.

This is my Father's world.
The birds their carols raise;
the morning light, the lily white,
declare their Maker's praise.

This is my Father's world.
He shines in all that's fair.
In rustling grass I hear Him pass;
I see Him everywhere.

This is my Father's world.
O let me ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so
strong,
God is the Ruler yet.

This is my Father's world.
Why should my heart be sad?
"The Lord is King," the heavens
ring;
"God reigns; let earth be glad!

PRAYER: See Eph 1:17-19.

Let us pray:
O God,
grant us a spirit
of wisdom and insight
to know You clearly.
Enlighten our innermost vision,
that we may know the great hope
to which You have called us,
the wealth of Your glorious heritage
to be distributed
among the members of the Church,

and the immeasurable scope
of Your power
in us who believe.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
— Amen

READING: Gn 3:1-6

A reading from the Book of Genesis
Now 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?"

The woman answered the serpent:
"We may eat of the fruit
of the trees in the garden;
it is only
about the fruit of the tree
in the middle of the garden
that God said,
'You shall not eat it
or even touch it,
lest you die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman:
"You certainly will not die!
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 bad."

The woman saw that the tree
was good for food,
pleasing to the eyes,
and desirable for gaining wisdom.
So she took some of its fruit
and ate it;
and she also gave some
to her husband,
who was with her,
and he ate it.
The Word of the Lord
— Thanks be to God

Session 2

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

God made us. He made us
in His own image and likeness,
to know Him, love Him,
and serve Him in this world,
and to be happy with Him for ever
in the next.

Our likeness to God
is chiefly in our soul,
which, like God, is a spirit,
and is immortal; it can never die.
We must take more care
of our souls than of our bodies,
for Christ said,
"What does it profit a man
if he gain the whole world,
and suffer the loss
of his own soul?"

Unfortunately, we humans inherit
the guilt and stain
of the sin committed by Adam,
who was the origin and head
of all mankind.

This sin, called original sin,
was the sin of disobedience
which Adam and Eve *committed*
when they ate the forbidden fruit.
All mankind has *contracted*
its guilt and stain
except the blessed virgin Mary,
who, through the merits
of her divine Son,
was preserved from it
from the very first moment
of her conception.

BIBLE READING

Gn 20-33

In your Bible reading
for this week,
you will see how God
continued to search for man,
calling and testing the "patriarchs"
of His chosen people —
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob —
hoping to find people He could use
to accomplish His plan
to save the whole fallen human race.

We will discuss in detail
God's plan for our salvation
the week after next.

However, before we can do so,
we must tackle the question
"Who is Jesus Christ?"

Creation and the Fall

Introduction

God is good and all-powerful. He created the world good¹ — not perfect, but "in a state of journeying toward its ultimate perfection"² — and He cares for everything He created.³

However, moral evil⁴ — sin — is present all through human history. It cannot be ignored or dismissed as "a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure."⁵

Ever since the first man and woman committed the original sin,⁶ the world has been virtually inundated by sin.⁷ In fact, the very condition of the world as a whole is sinful,⁸ so that we can speak of "the *sin* of the world,"⁹ not just "the sins."

Sin is the "reverse side" of the good news¹⁰ — the Gospel — of Jesus Christ.¹¹ The good news is that He is our Healer; the reverse side is that we are sick.¹² The good news is that He is our Shepherd; the reverse side is that we are sheep.¹³ The good news is that He is our Saviour; the reverse side is that we are sinners.¹⁴

Both aspects are important. The sick must accept the doctor's diagnosis before they can be healed. Sinners must be convinced of their guilt¹⁵ before they can be pardoned. We must understand original sin before we can understand salvation.¹⁶

However, before we can understand sin, we must know how God created humans to relate to Him in love, for only then can we see sin as it really is: a rejection of God¹⁷ and a misuse of the freedom He gave us.¹⁸

First, therefore, let us describe humans in their original innocence.¹⁹

Science and the Fall

Immediately, we see what looks like a contradiction.

The Church teaches that God created humans happy and good, but that they disobeyed God and *fell* to what we see today. However, science teaches that humans started out as apes, but gradually *rose* to what we see today.

There are two misunderstandings here.

First, the Church does not claim that Adam and Eve were superior to us in learning, culture, language, the making of artifacts, *etc.* Even before their fall, they might seem to us, if we could see them today, to be savages, creatures to be exploited or, at best, patronized.²⁰

In many respects, therefore, humans have *risen* from the condition of Adam and Eve. It is in quite different respects — we shall describe them in this talk — that Adam and Eve were our superiors.²¹

1 See Gn 1:4,10,12,18,21,25, 1:31.

2 CCC 310

3 See Wis 11:24-25.

4 See CCC 385.

5 CCC 386, 387

6 See CCC 390.

7 See CCC 401.

8 See CCC 408.

9 Jn 1:29

10 See Is 40:9-10.

11 CCC 389

12 See Lk 5:31.

13 See Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34.

14 See Lk 5:32.

15 Jn 16:8

16 If we "tamper" with the doctrine of original sin, we undermine "the mystery of Christ" (see CCC 389).

17 See CCC 386.

18 See CCC 387. Also see the talk on "The Beatitudes."

19 See Pope John Paul II: General Audience, September 12 1979.

20 See C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V.

21 If we could meet them today as they were before their fall, and if we were holy enough to perceive just how superior they were, we might be inclined to fall at their feet (see C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V). Read Lewis' *Out of the Silent Planet* to see what a society of such beings might be like. Read his description of the King in his *Peregrinatio*, 17, to see why we might "fall at his feet."

Second, the Church agrees with science that in creating the world, God progressed from the less perfect to the more perfect.^{2 2} The Bible says that God did not create everything all at once, but took six days.^{2 3} He shaped Adam himself out of something lower and less perfect — the Bible calls it "the clay of the ground" — before He "blew into his nostrils the breath of life."^{2 4} The Church, then, has no quarrel with the theory of *biological* evolution.^{2 5}

However, the Bible does not give us the details. It is not a science book. Its purpose in describing the origin and make-up of the universe is not "to provide us with a scientific treatise," but "to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe." Any other purpose is "alien" to its intentions.^{2 6}

Human nature

Humans have a unique place in creation. Made in God's image,^{2 7} our nature is both spiritual and material;^{2 8} we are body and soul.^{2 9} We have only one nature, not two, but in that nature spirit and matter are united.^{3 0}

We are most like God in our souls,^{3 1} but our bodies also image God, for they are human bodies precisely because they are animated by spiritual souls.^{3 2}

A human is a *person*: not just *something*, but *someone*. As persons, we are capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession, and of entering into communion with other persons.^{3 3} ("Communion" means "union with":^{3 4} not a fusion, or melting together, which abolishes difference, but the unity of two distinct beings. "Union is seen in Christianity as communion, unity as community."^{3 5})

Of all the material things that God has created, only humans have the capacity to know and love Him.^{3 6}

Original innocence

God established the newly created Adam and Eve in friendship^{3 7} and familiarity^{3 8} with Himself, as we see from the fact that He settled them in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and care for it.^{3 9}

Moreover, from the very beginning, He called them to share in His own divine life by *knowledge* and *love*.^{4 0} This divine life would transform their human nature. For example, by their human nature they could expect to die, but by the divine nature to which God planned to raise them, they would be immortal.^{4 1}

Adam and Eve's first state is called the state of "original holiness and justice"^{4 2}

22 See CCC 342.

23 See Gn 1.

24 Gn 2:7

25 I.e., "the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter" (Pope Pius XII: *Humani Generis*, 36). However, since "souls are immediately created by God" (Pope Pius XII: *Humani Generis*, 36), the Church does not accept materialist, reductionist, or spiritualist evolution. (See the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 1.)

26 Pope John Paul II: Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 3 1981

27 See Gn 1:27.

28 See CCC 355.

29 Our soul is our "innermost aspect," our "spiritual principle" (CCC 363), sometimes called the human spirit (see CCC 367).

30 See CCC 365.

31 See CCC 363.

32 "The human body shares in the dignity of the image of God" (CCC 364). Therefore "a man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honour, since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day" (Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 14).

33 See CCC 357.

34 From the Latin *com* ("with") plus *unitas* ("union").

35 Vatican Working Group on New Religious Movements: *Jesus Christ: The Bearer of the Water of Life*, 4, "Is social commitment...?" (See the talk on "The First Three Commandments," Appendix 4.) Also see the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, 14.

36 See CCC 355.

37 CCC 374

38 CCC 378

39 Gn 2:15

40 CCC 356, 375

41 See CCC 376, 1008.

or "original innocence."⁴³ In this state, they enjoyed perfect harmony with the rest of creation.⁴⁴ To them, work meant collaboration with God in bringing the rest of creation to the perfection God intended for it,⁴⁵ as when God brought all the birds and animals to Adam for him to name them.⁴⁶

They also enjoyed perfect harmony with each other. But above all, they enjoyed perfect harmony within themselves.⁴⁷ "The mastery over the world that God offered them" was above all "*mastery of self*."⁴⁸ They were totally free from the things that enslave *us*: the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and the desire for self-assertion.⁴⁹

They were "unimpaired and ordered" in their "whole being";⁵⁰ that is, nothing in them "impaired" anything else; everything was "in order." In contrast, we suffer internal conflict among our desires: for example, when we want to eat chocolate but also to stay slim, or to go on a hike but also to sleep in. We also suffer internal conflict between our desires and what we know to be right: for example, when we want something owned by someone else but we know that we should not steal.

'A not unlikely tale'

As we often do, we turn to C.S. Lewis to help our imaginations.⁵¹

For millions of years, God improved the animal form, which He planned to raise to the level of humans who would image Himself. He gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of the articulation necessary for speech, and a brain complex enough for the electric and chemical changes that embody rational thought. He made it clever enough to do things that a modern archaeologist might take as proof of its humanity.⁵²

But it was still only an animal, because all its physical and psychological activity was directed to purely material and natural goals.

Eventually God created Adam and Eve from a male and a female animal by giving them a new kind of consciousness. They did not cease to be animals, and we have no reason to suppose that He made any change in their physical form,⁵³ but now they could reflect on themselves, saying "I" and "me"; now they could know and love God; now they could make judgements about truth, beauty, and goodness.

This new consciousness was not limited, like ours, to what was going on in their brains, but extended to all their physical and psychological activity. In Adam and Eve, organic processes (like digestion and circulation⁵⁴) conformed to their will, not the patterns of biology. Their organs submitted desires to their will, not in spite of them, but because they chose. To them, for example, sleep was not the loss of consciousness we undergo, but deliberate and conscious repose.⁵⁵ Even their bodily processes of decay and repair were subject to their will, so they may have had control over the length of their lives.⁵⁶

42 CCC 375

43 Pope John Paul II: General Audience, September 12 1979

44 See CCC 374.

45 See CCC 378, 302.

46 See Gn 2:19-20.

47 See CCC 374. Their whole being was "unimpaired and ordered" (CCC 377).

48 CCC 377

49 See CCC 377.

50 CCC 377

51 Lewis says, "I am a rationalist. For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning" (C.S. Lewis: *Literary Essays*, "Bluspels and Flalansferes"). The "not unlikely tale" which follows comes from C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V.

52 Like the orangutan Fu Manchu's wire, which he used to slide between a locked door and its casing so as to slip the latch. He made it himself and bent it into a shape which allowed him to hide it from his keepers between his upper lip and gum. For his ingenuity, he was made an honorary member of the American Association of Locksmiths. (See Eugene Linden: *The Parrot's Lament*, 1999.)

53 Since then, human bodies have continued to evolve, producing the present "rich variety of persons, cultures, and peoples" (CCC 361).

54 And we may add ovulation, fertilization, conception, etc.

55 See C.S. Lewis: *Poems*, "The Adam at Night."

56 J.R.R. Tolkien has a similar idea. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn, after 120 years as King of Gondor, tells Queen Arwen, "I am the last of the Númenóreans and the latest King of the Elder days, and to me has

Besides having command of themselves, Adam and Eve had command of all the lower animal lives with which they came in contact. Even now we hear of rare individuals, like St. Francis, who have a mysterious power of taming animals.⁵⁷

Lewis fleshes out these ideas in his book *Perelandra*. "Perelandra" is the name of another planet. The Lady of that planet — like Eve in our world — is familiar with God: she often says that God is telling her something.⁵⁸

She is strong, able to pull herself up sheer cliffs.⁵⁹ She is never "the passive recipient of any emotion" or thought: feeling, thinking, and even sleeping are things she does, not things that happen to her. When she sleeps, for example, "her face is full of expression and intelligence."⁶⁰

On Earth, after Adam and Eve had fallen, we became subject to death — but we "did not learn to die quickly,"⁶¹ as the Bible testifies: Noah and his descendants died at the ages of 950, 500, 438, 433, 464, 239, 239, 230, and 148, in that order.⁶²

Relationship with God

God created Adam and Eve in His image and established them in His friendship. However, they could not be His friends as equals, for they and God were different *kinds* of beings. They were *created*, while God was their *Creator*; they were not self-existent, while He is. Their relationship with God, therefore, could not be symmetrical; that is, their relation to God could not be the same as God's relation to them. Their playing field could not be level.

As created beings, dependent on their Creator, Adam and Eve had limits, which, in trust, they had to freely recognize and respect.⁶³ They were limited both by the patterns of physical creation (like gravity) and by the moral norms that govern the use of freedom (like the law against murder).

These limits are symbolized⁶⁴ in the Bible by "the tree of knowledge of good and bad," from which God told them that they were *not free* to eat. "The moment you eat of it, you are surely doomed to die," He warned.⁶⁵

It is hard to imagine what, if anything, Adam and Eve would understand by the word "die," for up to this point, they had not experienced death as a reality.⁶⁶ God was asking them, then, to *trust* Him, like a mother warning a child who has never experienced burning not to touch a hot stove.

God had created everything else *for* them, but He had created *them* to love Him and to accept everything as a gift from Him, offering it back to Him in trusting love.⁶⁷ Living in friendship with God, therefore, meant living in *free submission* to Him.⁶⁸

Now to us, submission to God is an incessant battle; again and again we have to wrench our wills away from ourselves and toward Him. But to Adam and Eve, it was no such thing. Whatever delight they experienced from the rest of creation, whatever joys they experienced from each other in the form of friendship and sexual love, God came first in their love and their thoughts — without painful effort, but with a joy and ease which extended to all their faculties and senses. Like all love, it

been given not only a span thrice that of men of Middle-Earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift" (J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Lord of the Rings*, Part Three, The Return of the King, Appendix A). Indeed, it was increasing misunderstanding and fear of death that helped to bring about the downfall of Númenor. (See J.R.R. Tolkien: *Akallabêth*, or "The Downfall of Númenor.")

57 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

58 See C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 5, 6.

59 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 6

60 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 9, 10

61 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 17

62 See Gn 9:29, 11:10-26. Abraham was 75 when God called him (see Gn 12:4), 100 when he begot Isaac (see Gn 21:1-5), and 175 when he died (see Gn 25:7).

63 See CCC 396.

64 CCC 396

65 See Gn 2:17.

66 See Pope John Paul II: General Audience, October 31 1979.

67 See CCC 357, 358.

68 See CCC 396. Each of the italicized words is important.

entailed self-surrender, but without a struggle, with only "the delicious overcoming of an infinitesimal self-adherence which delighted to be overcome — of which we see a dim analogy in the rapturous mutual self-surrenders of lovers even now."⁶⁹

Again, Lewis embodies this idea in *Perelandra*. There, God's command is never to sleep on the "fixed land," but always to return to the floating islands before nightfall. The Lady obeys this command simply for "the joy of obeying." She says that even before she understood the reason for the law, she "knew there was joy in looking upon the Fixed Island and laying down all thought of ever living there."⁷⁰

The test

Now from the moment a created being becomes conscious of God as God and itself as self, it is faced with the choice of "God or self for the centre."⁷¹

At first, Adam and Eve made God their centre, not only because they found God's will for them agreeable, but also because His service was their keenest pleasure.⁷² They accepted all their delights from Him, therefore, as a matter of course, as by-products of a life directed toward Him.⁷³

However, God wanted them, "as intelligent and free creatures,"⁷⁴ to make Him the centre not unthinkingly, as a matter of course, but "by their free choice and preferential love."⁷⁵ To give God that preference, they themselves had to *know* they were doing it.

Accordingly, some kind of test was necessary. As Samuel Johnson said, "We can hardly be confident of the state of our own minds, but as it stands attested by some external action; we are seldom sure that we sincerely meant what we [in fact] omitted to do."⁷⁶ Sir Alec Guinness quotes Edward Garnett⁷⁷ — "How can I know what I think until I hear what I say?" — and his wife Constance⁷⁸ — "How can I tell what I feel until I see what I do?"⁷⁹

The Bible makes the same point in the Book of Job. The Lord says to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job, and that there is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil?" But Satan replies, "You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock are spread over the land. But now put forth Your hand and touch anything that he has, and surely he will blaspheme You to Your face." And the Lord says, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand upon his person."

With that, Satan takes everything Job has. In his grief, Job casts himself on the ground, but all he says is, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

When the Lord points out that Job "still holds fast to his innocence," Satan replies, in effect, "He has borne his suffering patiently so far, because he seeks to avoid greater suffering and to receive greater favours from You. But now put forth Your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and surely he will blaspheme You to Your face." And the Lord answers, "He is in your power; only spare his life."

This story⁸⁰ ends happily. Job continues to "live in free submission" to God, and God confirms him in His friendship, blessing his "latter days more than his earlier ones."⁸¹

69 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

70 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 9

71 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

72 See C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V.

73 "Being, power, and joy descended from God in the form of gift, and returned from man to God in the form of obedient love and ecstatic adoration" (C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V).

74 CCC 311

75 CCC 311

76 Samuel Johnson: *Letter to Hester Thrale*, July 20 1775

77 English writer and critic (1868 - 1937)

78 English translator (1861 - 1946)

79 Alec Guinness: *A Commonplace Book*

80 Notice that the Book of Job makes no claim to be history.

81 See Jb 1, 2.

The Fall

However, Adam and Eve's story is different. We do not know how long they maintained their original innocence, but sooner or later they sinned.⁸² They stopped trusting their Creator for their happiness, and, misusing their freedom,⁸³ disobeyed His command.⁸⁴

The Bible says that their sin was to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁸⁵ The language is figurative, but it does describe a deed that actually took place at the start of human history, and, for our purposes, it describes it accurately.⁸⁶ By their sin, whatever it was, Adam and Eve chose themselves over God and against God, against the requirements of their creaturely status and therefore against their own good.⁸⁷

This is what the first human sin consisted of,⁸⁸ and all subsequent sin has been the same: disobedience toward God resulting from lack of trust in His goodness.⁸⁹

In *Perelandra*, after the Lady has fully and finally made the decision to obey God, she understands sin clearly.⁹⁰ Disobedience, she says, "would have been cold love and feeble trust. And out of it how could we ever have climbed back into love and trust again?"⁹¹

The motive

What prompted Adam and Eve to disobey God?

Consider the three things that prompt us: the world, the flesh, and the devil.⁹²

For Adam and Eve, it was not the world, for, unlike us, they were not slaves to covetousness.⁹³ Moreover, the whole world was already theirs;⁹⁴ there were no worldly goods they did not already possess and enjoy.⁹⁵

It was not the flesh, for, unlike us, they were not slaves to the pleasures of the senses.⁹⁶ Their whole organism — physical and psychological — was completely subject to their will and their will perfectly disposed, though not compelled, to turn to God.⁹⁷ Besides, there was no physical pleasure they did not already enjoy.⁹⁸

As Lewis says in *Perelandra*, they had a command from God, they were utterly uncertain about the results of breaking it, and they were enjoying happiness so great that hardly any change could be for the better.⁹⁹

Why, then, did they disobey?

There was nothing to prompt them to choose themselves in preference to God except the bare fact that the selves they chose were *their* selves.¹⁰⁰

82 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

83 See the talk on "The Beatitudes."

84 See CCC 397.

85 See Gn 3:6.

86 See CCC 390; also see Pope Pius XII: *Humani Generis*, 38-39.

87 See CCC 398.

88 It was not, as some people mistakenly think, a sin of lust.

89 See CCC 397.

90 See C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 17.

91 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 17

92 "The three enemies we must fight against all the days of our life" (see *The Penny Catechism*, 348).

93 See CCC 377.

94 See Gn 1:28-29.

95 For a description of this enjoyment, read C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*.

96 See CCC 377.

97 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

98 Do not think that the devil offers us pleasures which God does not. Lewis' imaginary devil Screwtape says, "I know that we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is [God's] invention, not ours. He made the pleasures; all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which [God] has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable" (C.S. Lewis: *The Screwtape Letters*, 9). Ancient Christian writers assure us that marriage, which the Anglican marriage service says was "instituted of God in the time of man's innocency," would have been more pleasurable, not less, before the Fall.

99 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 10

100 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

This is a point we will come back to. First, however, let us consider the "seductive voice, opposed to God" which "lurks" behind their disobedience: the voice of the serpent in the Book of Genesis.¹⁰¹ The Bible and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel — a devil — called "Satan."¹⁰²

* * * * *

Angels and devils

Angels¹⁰³ are spiritual persons with intelligence and free will, but without physical bodies. They are immortal: they do not die. By nature, they are "servants" and "messengers of God," as we see in the Bible.¹⁰⁴ For example, we read, "Bless the Lord, all you His angels, you mighty in strength, who do His bidding, obeying His spoken word."¹⁰⁵

The angels are associated with humans in adoring God. For example, the priest prays at Mass, "And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of Heaven,¹⁰⁶ we sing the hymn of Your glory."¹⁰⁷ In the First Eucharistic Prayer, he prays, "Command that these gifts be borne by the hands of Your holy Angel to Your altar on high."¹⁰⁸ At the end of a funeral Mass, he prays, "Hasten to meet him, angels of the Lord,"¹⁰⁹ and "May the angels lead you into Paradise."¹¹⁰

Moreover, angels look after us. From infancy to death, we are each surrounded by the watchful care and intercession of our *guardian angel*.¹¹¹ "I assure you," Christ said, speaking of children, "their angels in Heaven constantly behold My heavenly Father's face."¹¹²

Now Satan was originally Lucifer,¹¹³ a great angel, but he and the other demons became evil by their radical,¹¹⁴ irrevocable, and free choice to reject God and His reign.¹¹⁵

"Then war broke out in Heaven: [the Archangel] Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. Although the dragon and his angels fought back, they were overpowered and lost their place in Heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent known as the devil or Satan, the seducer of the whole world, was driven out; he was hurled down to earth and his minions with him."¹¹⁶ And a loud voice in Heaven cried, "Woe to you, earth and sea, for the devil has come down upon you!"¹¹⁷

101 Gn 3:1-15

102 From the Hebrew *satan* ("to plot against another"). See CCC 391.

103 See CCC 328-336.

104 In the Old Testament they closed the earthly paradise (Gn 3:24), protected Lot (Gn 19), saved Hagar and her child (Gn 21:17), restrained Abraham's hand when he was about to kill his son Isaac (Gn 22:11), communicated the law by their ministry (Acts 7:53), led the People of God (Ex 20:20-23), announced births and callings (Jgs 6:11-24,13), and assisted the prophets (Is 6:6, 19:5).

In the New Testament, the angel Gabriel announced the births of St. John the Baptist and Jesus (Lk 1:11,26). Throughout His life, Jesus was surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the first-born into the world, He says: 'Let all God's angels worship Him'" (Heb 1:6). To this day, the Church repeats their song of praise at the birth of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Lk 2:14). They protected Jesus in His infancy (Mt 1:20, 2:13,19), ministered to Him in the desert (Mt 4:11; Mk 1:13), and strengthened Him during His agony in the garden, when He could have been saved by them from His enemies (Mt 26:53; Lk 22:43). Moreover, it is angels who proclaim the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection (Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7) and it is they who will announce Christ's second coming and serve at His judgement (Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41, 24:31; Lk 12:8-9).

105 Ps 103:20

106 Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, and Powers are names for five of the nine "choirs" of angels; the others are Seraphim, Cherubim, Principalities, and Virtues.

107 We respond, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; Heaven and earth are full of Your glory" (see Is 6:3).

108 This prayer may be inspired by Rv 8:3.

109 Funeral Mass, Final Commendation

110 Funeral Mass, Procession to Place of Final Committal

111 See CCC 336.

112 Mt 18:10. See also Lk 16:22; Ps 34:8, 91:10-13; Jb 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12.

113 The name means "light-bearer." St. Jerome and other Church Fathers gave the name to the angel who became Satan by taking Is 14:12 ("How have you fallen from the heavens, O morning star, son of the dawn!") in conjunction with Lk 10:18 ("I watched Satan fall from the sky like lightning").

114 Meaning "down to the roots," from the Latin *radix, radicis* ("root").

115 See CCC 391, 392.

116 Rv 12:7-9

Jesus, Who said He had seen Satan fall from the sky like lightning,¹¹⁸ called him "the prince of this world."¹¹⁹ That is why the devil, in an effort to tempt Jesus away from His duty,¹²⁰ could promise Him "all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence."¹²¹

Satan "brought death to man from the beginning," Jesus said, "and has never based himself on truth; the truth is not in him. Lying speech is his native tongue; he is a liar and the father of lies."¹²²

'Know for myself'

It was a lie by which Satan deceived Eve: he told her that the moment she and Adam ate from the tree of knowledge of good and bad, their eyes would be opened and they would be "like gods who know what is good and what is bad."¹²³

That was the temptation: to stop trusting and obeying God and to find out *for themselves* what was good and what was bad.

Similarly, after our talk on the Commandments, a lady said, "I sometimes wish I had committed these sins so I would *know for myself* they were wrong."

Elementary-school children trust their parents and teachers about the evils of drugs, but in high school, they want to *find out for themselves*.¹²⁴

After learning how Adam and Eve fell, an eight-year-old said, "But isn't that the way it always is? Daddy says, don't go near the cliff because it's dangerous, but I do, because I want to *see for myself*."

We should not be deceived by Satan's argument that we must do evil in order to understand it, combat it, and avoid it more effectively. (We can see the fallacy here most clearly, perhaps, in the case of drugs, or of a hot stove.)

In *Perelandra*, the King and the Lady reject Satan's temptation. Later, trying to explain how they know what evil is even though they have remained innocent, the King says, "We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking. There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young; there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep."¹²⁵

Pride

St. Augustine calls the devil's temptation an instigation to pride¹²⁶ in the sense of *self-assertion*.¹²⁷ In pride, Adam and Eve, who depended on God for their very existence, tried to set up on their own, to exist for themselves,¹²⁸ like Him. God had planned to divinize¹²⁹ them — make them divine, like Himself — but they wanted it without Him, before Him, and not in accordance with Him.¹³⁰

"As a young man wants a regular allowance from his father which he can count on as his own, so they desired to be on their own, to take care for their own future, to plan for pleasure and security, to have [something of their own] from which, no doubt, they would pay a reasonable tribute to God in the way of time, attention, and love, but which, nevertheless, would be theirs, not His."¹³¹

117 Rv 12:12

118 Lk 10:18

119 Jn 12:31-33, 14:30-31, 16:11

120 See Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13.

121 Mt 4:8-9

122 Jn 8:44

123 Gn 3:5

124 Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God" (Mt 18:3).

125 C.S. Lewis: *Perelandra*, 17

126 Augustine: *De Civitate Dei* XIV, xiii. See Sir 10:12-13.

127 See CCC 377.

128 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

129 See CCC 398, 1988, 2670.

130 See CCC 398.

131 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

They stopped trusting God for their existence and the fullness of life. At Satan's suggestion, they began to suspect that God was a rival, curtailing their freedom; that they must get rid of their "dependency" on Him if they wanted to be fully themselves.¹³² They became unwilling to rely on His love, which they began to see as "untrustworthy";¹³³ instead, they turned to the tree of knowledge for the power to shape the world, to make themselves gods, "to overcome death and darkness" by their own efforts. And thus they trusted "in deceit rather than in truth" and sank "into emptiness, into death."

But "if we sincerely reflect" on "ourselves and our history," we have to admit that this describes not only Adam and Eve, but all of us: "we all carry within us a drop of the poison of that way of thinking."¹³⁴

The sin of pride — asserting ourselves against God — "is the fall in every individual life, and in each day of each individual life, the basic sin behind all particular sins: at this very moment you and I are either committing it, or about to commit it, or repenting it." It is "committed daily by young children and ignorant peasants as well as by sophisticated persons, by [those who live alone] no less than by those who live in society."¹³⁵

Consequences for Adam and Eve

For Adam and Eve, the consequences of their rebellion were tragic.¹³⁶

- They lost their familiarity with God; they became afraid of Him, imagining Him to be jealous of His prerogatives, or rights.¹³⁷
- They lost their internal harmony; the control of their souls' spiritual faculties over their bodies was shattered.
- Lust and domination took the place of their marital harmony.
- Alienation and hostility replaced their harmony with the rest of creation.
- Finally, they suffered the consequence explicitly foretold¹³⁸ by God: creation became subject to decay, and death made its entrance into human history.

By their human nature, Adam and Eve were mortal: they would die. However, by the divine nature to which God had planned to raise them, they would be immortal: they would not die.¹³⁹ But divine nature had to be a gift from God, and, by their sin — which was an attempt to be like God in competition with God and therefore apart from God — they had cut themselves off from God as far as they could.

As an *unavoidable consequence*, then, they would now be subject to death. This is precisely what God had warned them about when He said, "The moment you eat" from the tree of knowledge of good and bad, "you are surely doomed to die."¹⁴⁰

Another consequence was that the soul's control over the body was shattered:¹⁴¹ Adam's body "lost the grace whereby every part of it was accustomed to be obedient to the soul."¹⁴² It was *as God's delegate* that the soul had had this authority over the body and the psyche; when it revolted against God, it ceased to be His delegate and lost its authority.

Now God began to rule the body according to the patterns of ordinary

132 Compare the temptation in C.S. Lewis: *Peregrina*, 8-10.

133 See Daphne duMaurier: *The Archduchess*.

134 Pope Benedict XVI: Homily, Mass on the 40th anniversary of the close of Vatican II, December 8 2005

135 For example, we know that our time on earth is God's gift, and "we try, when we wake, to lay the new day at God's feet. But before we have finished, it has become *our* day and God's share in it is felt as a tribute which we must pay out of our own pocket, a deduction from the time which ought, we feel, to be our own" (C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V).

136 See CCC 400.

137 See CCC 399 and Gn 3:22-24.

138 See Gn 2:16-17.

139 See CCC 376, 1008.

140 "Literally, 'You shall die the death,' or 'by death you shall die'" (Scott Hahn: *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, Three; see also Scott Hahn: *First Comes Love*, Chapter 6). This emphatic repetition may imply two different kinds of death, for Adam and Eve did not die a natural death on the day they ate from the tree, but did 'die' in the divine nature God offered them (see CCC 376, 1008).

141 See CCC 400.

142 Augustine: *On Merit and the Forgiveness of Sins*, Book I, Chapter 21

biochemistry, and so it began to suffer pain and senility as well as death. He began to rule the psyche according to the psychology of the higher apes, so human consciousness became what it is now: limited to a small part of the brain.

From now on, desires began to arise from the body and the psyche not as the soul chose, but according to the ordinary patterns of biochemistry, psychology, and environment. And all the human will could do was force them back by sheer power, thus forming the subconscious as we now know it.

Henceforth, the human soul was not only a weak king over human nature, but also a bad one. Having turned from God to itself, making itself its own idol, it could not turn back to God except by painful effort.

The attitudes most congenial to it now were pride — the desire to be lovely in its own eyes; envy — the urge to depress all rivals; and ambition — the search for more and more security. Accordingly, it began to send down into the psyche and the body desires far worse than those they sent up into it.¹⁴³

Consequences for the world

By his success with Adam and Eve, who were the father and mother of the entire human race, the devil acquired a certain domination over them and the world.¹⁴⁴ In fact, the world as a whole became subject to him¹⁴⁵ "who thenceforth had the power of death."¹⁴⁶

In addition, the devil can acquire a more specific domination over certain individuals. The Bible tells us that Jesus "cast out" devils from a number of people who had been "possessed" by them.¹⁴⁷

Since Baptism brings about liberation from sin and its instigator, the devil, the priest pronounces one or more exorcisms over people right before Baptism. An exorcism is an "adjuration in which the devil is either commanded to depart from a possessed person or forbidden to harm someone."¹⁴⁸

During the *Scrutinies*, in which the Church prepares those about to be baptized, the priest says one or more of the following: "Defend them from the power of Satan"; "For Satan's crushing yoke, exchange the gentle yoke of Jesus"; "By Your power, free these elect [these "chosen"] from the cunning of Satan"; "Free those who are enslaved by the father of lies"; "Free from the grasp of death those who await Your life-giving Sacraments and deliver them from the spirit of corruption"; "Free them from the slavery of Satan, the source of sin and death, who seeks to corrupt the world You created and saw to be good."¹⁴⁹

Although Satan acts in the world out of hatred for God, causing grave spiritual injuries and, indirectly, even physical injuries, both to individuals and to society, we remain free. Satan is powerful, but his power is not infinite: he is only a creature, a being made by God. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, his activity among humans will not go on forever; "he knows his time is short."¹⁵¹ On the night before He died, Jesus reassured His apostles: "You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world."¹⁵²

143 See C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V.

144 Remember that God had given Adam dominion over the whole world (see Gn 1:28-29).

145 See Rom 8:20.

146 See CCC 407.

147 See Mt 8:16,28-32, 9:32-34, 12:22, 17:14-18; Mk 1:23-26,32-34, 5:1-13, 7:25-30, 9:14-26; Lk 4:33-35,41, 8:26-33, 9:37-42, 11:14.

148 John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Exorcism." Fr. Hardon (1914-2000) was professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Detroit, author of the *Catholic Catechism* and one of those consulted by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, later Pope Benedict XVI, in the writing of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

149 Prayers of the Faithful on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. Some are more explicit: "In the name of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we ask You to remove from these Your servants all unbelief and hesitation in faith, the worship of false gods and magic, witchcraft and dealings with the dead, the love of money and lawless passions, enmity and quarreling, and every manner of evil."

150 See CCC 395.

151 Rv 12:12

152 Jn 16:33

Indeed, St. John says that "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."¹⁵³

Transmission of the consequences

We cannot fully understand the transmission of original sin to the whole human race¹⁵⁴ — the fact that through one man's disobedience, all became sinners.¹⁵⁵

However, in Adam and Eve, the parents of the race, it was human nature itself that God had endowed with holiness and justice.¹⁵⁶ By their sin, our first parents altered that nature: the soul became perverted and its relation to the rest of the organism was disturbed.

It was not like the start of a bad habit or the loss of an organ. It was more like a mutation, a genetic variation, which could be inherited; more like the emergence of a new species.¹⁵⁷ Adam and Eve could no longer transmit human nature to their descendants in its original innocence, but only in a fallen state.¹⁵⁸

Adam and Eve *committed* the original sin, but we *contract* it, like a disease. For us it is a state, not an act.¹⁵⁹ In this state, human nature is wounded in its original powers, inclined to sin, and subject to ignorance, suffering, and death.¹⁶⁰

However, it has not been totally corrupted. Baptism erases original sin and turns our nature back toward God, as we shall see.¹⁶¹ Even so, the consequences of original sin persist and condemn us to a lifelong spiritual battle¹⁶² with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

A fallen world

The Fall is "the key to history," says Lewis. "Terrific energy is expended — civilizations are built up — excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong. Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin."¹⁶³

As the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge¹⁶⁴ put it, "A fall of some sort or other" is "the fundamental postulate¹⁶⁵ of the moral history of man. "Without this hypothesis, man is unintelligible;¹⁶⁶ with it every phenomenon is explicable."¹⁶⁷

The Fall explains our own behaviour, St. Paul says. "I do not do the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend. My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind."¹⁶⁸ Think of the love with which a marriage begins, and of the selfishness which corrupts it.

The Fall explains the behaviour of so-called "innocent" babies and children, even before they know right from wrong. Just listen to an infant's scream of pure egoism or watch a youngster's efforts to get around his parents' rules.

It is, indeed, *a fallen world*.

Conclusion

Why did God allow the original sin?

Because He had given Adam and Eve the free will they needed to relate to Him in love, and free will entailed, by logical necessity, the possibility of their rejecting

153 1 Jn 3:8

154 See CCC 404.

155 Rom 5:19; .

156 See CCC 404.

157 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

158 See CCC 404.

159 See CCC 404.

160 See CCC 405.

161 See CCC 405. See also the talk on "Baptism and Confirmation."

162 See CCC 405.

163 C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book II, 3

164 1772-1834

165 Or "axiom"; something that must be assumed.

166 That is, it cannot be understood.

167 That is, can be explained. Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Table Talk*, May 1 1830

168 Rom 7:15,19,22-23

Him.

Why did God permit the original sin's *consequences*? Why did He not just erase them?

He could have done, but He would have had to do the same for the second sin, the third, and so on, forever.¹⁶⁹ And that would mean taking away our free will, for if He always corrected a wrong choice, we could not be said to have any real choice at all.

The fact that God *did not* erase the original sin's effects does not mean that He *could not* do anything about them, or that they took Him by surprise and spoiled His plan.¹⁷⁰ God saw (or, better, *sees*) the whole of history, including Jesus' crucifixion, in the very act of creation.¹⁷¹

In giving us free will, God permitted the original sin and its consequences, but even when we lost His friendship through disobedience, He did not abandon us to the domain of death.¹⁷² On the contrary, He immediately promised that He would conquer evil and restore human nature.¹⁷³

But that is "the reverse side" of original sin,¹⁷⁴ and beyond our topic for this session, except for a few hints:

- St. Augustine said that God "would never allow" any evil "if He were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself."¹⁷⁵
- St. Leo the Great said, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away."¹⁷⁶
- St. Paul said, "Despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it."¹⁷⁷
- The Church says that God "wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and still more wonderfully restored it."¹⁷⁸

Accordingly, the Church dares to sing in the *Exsultet* at the Easter Vigil, "O happy fault ... which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"¹⁷⁹

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169 C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*, V

170 See the talk on "God's Will."

171 See the talks on "God's Will" and "The Question of Suffering."

172 See Eucharistic Prayer 4.

173 See the *Protoevangelium*, or "first Gospel," in Gn 3:15. This seems to be God's way. For example, when the Israelites complained against God and Moses during their crossing of the desert, "the Lord sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died." Even after they repented, the serpents did not vanish. Instead, Moses, at God's command, "made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he recovered" (Nm 21:4-9). Similarly, Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all who believe may have eternal life in Him."

174 See CCC 389.

175 Augustine: *Enchiridion* 11, 3

176 Leo the Great: *Sermon* 73

177 Rom 5:20

178 Collect for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Mass during the day)

179 CCC 412