

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

On Good And Evil

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 4:1-11. (R1) Gn. 2:7-9; 3:1-7. (R2) Rom. 5:12-19.

Mr. Abraham ordered his tailor to make him a pair of trousers. After six weeks of endless delays, Abraham cried out in desperation, "Good heavens, Jacob, it has already taken you six weeks to make my pants."

"So?"

"So, you ask? Six weeks for a pair of pants? Riboyne shel O'lem! It took God only six days to create the world!"

"Nu," shrugged Jacob, "look at it..."

To awaken to Jesus, we must become aware of the evil in the world, as it exists in our everyday lives. Death, loneliness, pornography, infidelity, dishonesty, cruelty and oppression are the names of just a few of the evils that encompass us. Because evil is so much a part of daily life, we tend to take it for granted and learn to live with it. Before we can struggle against evil and seek Jesus who can save us from it, we must first be aware of evil.

The first reading for the First Sunday of Lent tells us where evil came from. A problem that has always intrigued man has been the problem of evil. "If God is so good," people asked, "how come there is so much evil in the world?" Zoroaster — and the Gnostics, Manichaeans, Albigensians, after him — all attributed evil to a bad god. In the beginning, Zoroaster taught there was a good god, Mazda (the god of light), and a bad god, Ahriman (the god of darkness). Ahriman was supposed to be the evil-causer.

The Jews, fiercely monotheistic, could never subscribe to such a solution. The authors of Genesis explained evil as coming, not from a good god, but from a bad man. This man had it so good in his paradisaical world, that the trickery of a fallen angel — the snake! — was needed to prod him into rejecting God's words.

This initial disobedience, like opening a Pandora's box, unleashed evil into the world. Chapters four to eleven in Genesis show how this evil escalates in ever-widening ripples, infesting everything and everybody. Like a creeping paralysis, it snuffs out all good life and living. Today, it seems almost triumphant! "Truth forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne."

The biblical authors, however, didn't see it that way. They foresaw another woman and her seed coming in some distant future who would crush evil, stem its tide, and reverse it.

St. Paul called Jesus this new Adam, bringing a new beginning. As the first Adam turned away from God and unlocked the kingdom of chaos, so Jesus launched the new kingdom of good and order. "As through one

of it is voluntary evil — that is, evil we can control. Much evil is out of our control. But Jesus brought into the world a whole new love — a love that makes all evil seem less burdensome. He has brought us hope — a promise of a better life. So this first week of Lent, think about evil and how you can exclude it from your life.

man's disobedience all became sinners, so through one man's obedience all shall become just." (R2)
In the gospel Jesus enters into direct conflict with the evil one. This time not in a paradisaical world, but in a barren desert devoid of all life, symbol of the havoc of sin. No promise of security, power or glory by the evil one can turn Jesus aside from His Father's will. The new Adam triumphed and conquered where the first Adam had failed.
Evil is all around us. Some

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