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** Knights of Malta **

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Chancellor's Update

Original Sin

A few weeks ago, a person asked us the question how things got this bad. A clergy man answered. It is simple, just a three-letter word “Sin.” Then came the question “What sin?”

In the beginning of the human race, Adam and later Eve with him, had primitive happiness in a state of justice, integrity and immortality. Adam as the future father of the human race had a supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, which was a real friendship with God and pledge of eternal happiness in the next life. God wanted to test Adam’s obedience, so He gave him a command: “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat... In that day thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.” Adam was under the strict obligation to keep sanctifying grace because it was the necessary means to the fulfillment of God’s design to attain the end, which it was God’s will Adam should reach.

The devil in the form of a serpent persuaded Adam to transgress the divine command. This action incurred the wrath of God. As a punishment Adam brought death upon himself, lost his preternatural gifts, and his body and soul suffered change for the worse. Man was captive under the power of the devil, who had recovered natural rights over an inferior being.

Adam’s sin was an act of the will which perversely turned him away from God and set him seeking satisfaction and good elsewhere. If Adam had not sinned, there would have been no need for the second Adam, Jesus in that office.

To conclude this short study of the fall and original sin, we may call attention to the fact that the whole of it is based upon the truth and the reality and the supernatural character of sanctifying grace. Without this the fall becomes a myth and original sin an absurdity. Consequently, since the most fundamental error of Protestantism is its denial of the reality or its grievous misunderstanding of the nature of grace, Protestant theology is always hopelessly at sea and at loggerheads with itself when dealing with original sin.

Again, the dependence of the dogma of the fall and original sin upon the reality of grace at once puts this dogma into its place among those that are essentially mysterious. It is beyond the power of our reason fully to understand it, even to prove its existence. This we know only by revelation. But once it is accepted it makes nearly everything else clear. The fall explains the life and death the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the whole sacramental system. Without original

sin the Church, which is the permanent means established by God to make good the damage done by Adam's sin, would be a useless encumbrance, and the Church religion, in the full meaning of the word, would soon flounder and disappear. And ever the history of the world, especially that of the chosen people, can only be properly understood in the light of this dogma.

God was above him, and God had restricted his freedom of action by forbidding him to touch one tree. Then to him came Satan, speaking through the serpent, and asking why he did not eat of that tree.

“Why should so noble a being as you suffer such a restriction upon your liberty? Eat of the tree, break through the bonds imposed upon you, let your freedom be unfettered. Become as God yourself, knowing all things and daring all; be subject to no one, have no master; be lord of yourself, serving none other.” In some such way, as the sacred writer himself indicates, the temptation entered into Adam's mind. There is in it no insurgence of concupiscence, no mere simple disobedience to a moral percept; but there is the sheer rebellion of mind and will against the ultimate supernatural claims and rights of God. It is the elementary conflict between the natural and the supernatural, which must always be possible to created freedom, until all its capacities and desires are fully extended and satisfied by the immediate possession of the Infinite Good in the beatific vision.

Now let us look at today's society. Eons or generations later Satan uses the same presentation to the women of the world. He says, “You have nobility and dignity; become as gods yourself.”

So, the women publicly when gathered as a group in a demonstration or before a television camera, declare, “I am a woman. I have rights.” “My body my choice!” “No one can tell me what I can do with my body.” If the women are reacting the same way as did Adam, will God's reaction, whenever it comes, be different? It will be too late to turn back the clock.

The Council of Trent (Session V, Can. 1) sums up under one canon the Catholic teaching about the immediate effects produced in Adam by his sin, to wit, that he lost the sanctity and justice in which he had been established, that he incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and thereby death, likewise captivity under the power of the devil, and that both as to soul and body he was changed for the worse. That Adam lost his holiness and justice is too clear to need any long demonstration. It is at the root of the whole Catholic teaching on the Redemption. One of the themes running all through St. Paul's epistles is that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, died to regain for us what the first Adam had lost, and that through his redemptive and re-creative work we are revived by sanctifying grace, and become, by adoption, the sons of God. This is what the second Adam won for us; this is what the first Adam lost.

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