

Ten After Ten Session 18: The Fall..continued

397 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.

398 In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good.

399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image—that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination...visible creation has become alien and hostile to man...Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true...Death makes its entrance into human history.

401 After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated by sin...even after Christ's atonement, sin raises its head in countless ways among Christians. Scripture and the Church's Tradition continually recall the presence and universality of sin in man's history.

402 All men are implicated in Adam's sin. [Yet Scripture] contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ.

403 The Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination toward evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul." Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin.

404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants?...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. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" — a state and not an act.

405 Original sin... is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin—an inclination to evil that is called

“concupiscence.” Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ’s grace, erases original sin and turns a man back toward God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.

407 The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man’s situation and activity in the world. By our first parents’ sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free... Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action, and morals.

408 The consequences of original sin and of all men’s personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition.

409 This dramatic situation of “the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one” makes man’s life a battle.

410 After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall. This passage in Genesis is called the Protoevangelium (“first gospel”): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers.

411 The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the Protoevangelium as Mary, the mother of Christ, the “new Eve.” Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.

412 But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, “Christ’s inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon’s envy had taken away.”... The *Exultet* sings, ‘O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!’