



First Sunday of Lent
† Sunday 5th March 2017

Cycle of Prayer: The Needy and Hungry of the World
Keynote: To live in the freedom of God

Book of Genesis 2: 7-9 –3: 1-7

'Then the Lord God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being.' To the Hebrew author the word 'man' was not exclusively male. We hear how God the creator, gives life to mankind, gives to each of us the '*breath of life*' – the Spirit – to bring us freedom and create in us a new relationship with our creator. God's plan for our happiness means we are to be free to accept or to reject this loving relationship. In the words of the serpent tempter in the story: *'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it [the fruit of the tree] your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.'* So it is the woman and the man in the garden lose their innocence: *'then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked.'* The Season of Lent offers us the opportunity to respond to God's Spirit in us and so to live in fulfilment of God's purpose. Time to open our own eyes and see who and what we are and what our true destiny is to be.

Responsorial Psalm 50 [51] – A penitential psalm seeking God's mercy

Letter of Paul to the Romans 5: 12-19

Many people misunderstand the concept and meaning of the term '*original sin*'. Here Paul contrasts the one man Adam – the first parent – with the person of Christ, who heads the new humanity, '*Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the human race because everyone has sinned.*' By 'death' Paul means not only physical death, but also more importantly the spiritual death that comes with sin and total separation from God. In contrast then with Adam, who by his disobedience walked no longer as a friend of God, now we have Christ. '*It is certain,*' says Paul '*that divine grace coming through one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift... Jesus Christ will cause everyone to reign in life... so the good act of one man brings life and makes (us) justified... by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.*'

Gospel according to Matthew 4: 1-11

'Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted...' Jesus' 'temptations' are based on different ways in which we might fail to love God. '*If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves...'* Then from the parapet of the Temple: '*If you are the Son of God throw yourself down...'* And from the high mountain with all the kingdoms of the world laid out before him: '*I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and worship me.*' Jesus responds: '*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength... Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God... You must not put the Lord your God to the test... You must worship the Lord your God and serve God alone.*' This is how we are to live if we are to respond to the Spirit of God given to us and become truly free.

Note: Alternative shorter reading – Romans 5:12, 17-19