

First Sunday in Lent
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

The knowledge of good and evil, *i. e.* knowledge of everything, was in ancient times considered an attribute of the gods. The serpent promised Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be like the gods in their omniscience. That the serpent did not lie is shown by the fact that after eating the fruit, the man and the woman recognized their nakedness and sought to conceal it. Although not part of today's lection, the couple's acquisition of the divine knowledge is the reason God banished them from the Garden of Eden so that they will not eat of the tree of life and thereby gain the other attribute of divinity, immortality (3:24).

Psalm 32

Laments often promise to announce God's salvation or to instruct others in God's way if God answers the psalmist's plea. See, for instance, Psalm 51:14. The fulfillment of this promise took the form of a *thanksgiving* psalm. In general, a thanksgiving summarizes the original lament (32:5) and then proceeds to tell everyone who will listen of God's faithfulness to those who keep the divine commandments. In this particular case the lament in question lamented the psalmist's guilt, and the composer now addresses those who, like him, are sinners.

Romans 5:12-19

In the first century Jewish writers disagreed about how sin and evil entered the world. One view, expressed in pseudepigraphical works like 1 Enoch, was that sin and evil entered the world through the revolt of the heavenly beings described in Genesis 6:1-4. Others—and Paul would be included among them—accounted for sin and evil by reference to Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. This view allowed Paul to portray Jesus as the "second first man," the "second Adam," whose obedience even unto death restored the human race to righteousness.

Matthew 4:1-11

Translators normally render the Greek word *peirasthenai* in Matthew 4:1 "to be tempted," but the word actually means "to be tested." The Greek reader would have understood that the purpose of the experience in the Judean Desert was to "test" Jesus to discover who he was. Satan (the "prosecutor"), who also tested the righteous Job (Job 1-2), conducts the examination. Did Jesus "pass" the test? The author answers this by having the Satan leave Jesus and having the angels come to minister to him.

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