

## Advent Ignatian Retreat 2022

### SECOND WEEK: I AM A LOVED SINNER

**Grace for the Week:** This week I pray for the grace of awareness of those places where I am in need of God's mercy, and an awareness that I continue to be loved by God notwithstanding the ways in which I do not make a return of that love.

#### Day One of the Second Week

In the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius invites retreatants to pray with the sin of Adam and Eve. Scholars and theologians have different ways of understanding the nature of the sin that is expressed by the story in the third chapter of Genesis.

In his book *Living the Lord's Prayer*, Albert Haase, OFM, characterizes the sin of Adam and Eve in this way:

The wise stewards of Eden, Adam and Eve, tended this garden with wonder and awe. And they saw their Creator reflected in this divine handiwork. But the moment Adam and Eve looked at that offered fruit [that the serpent tempted them with] with eyes of desire, devoid of original awe, everything changed. "The woman saw that the tree was...to be desired to make one wise." They now looked at creation with self-centered concerns, observing its elements as threads *for* a tapestry, no longer threads *of* a tapestry. Utility replaced childlike wonder. The mind supplanted the heart. Many descendants of Adam and even to this day do not see a tree until they have need of paper.

The fourth of the Universal Apostolic Preferences articulated by the Society of Jesus is Care for our Common Home. In the 2019 document setting out the four Apostolic Preferences, we read

We resolve, considering who we are and the means that we have, to collaborate with others in the construction of alternative models of life that are based on respect for creation and on a sustainable development capable of producing goods that, when justly distributed, ensure a decent life for all human beings on the planet...[C]aring for nature in this way is a form of genuinely worshipping the creative work of God.

*How do I relate to the created world?*

*Have I lost a sense of wonder?*

*Do I respect the result of the "divine handiwork"? Do I act as though "caring for nature...is a form of genuinely worshipping the creative work of God"?*

#### Day Two of Second Week

To continue your reflection on how we understand the sin of Adam and Eve, consider this excerpt from Michael Himes' *The Mystery of Faith*:

The temptation which the serpent presents to the first human beings is not disobedience, nor is it pride. The temptation is that if they eat the forbidden fruit they will become like God. That may be the most important line that evil is given in the Scriptures: Eat this and be like God. The temptation you will observe, is to reject what we have learned. In the first chapter of Genesis we heard that we have been made in the image and likeness of God. In chapter three the serpent's temptation is, in effect, "Don't believe that you're like God. How can *you* be like *God*? God is great and powerful and majestic and wise; you're not like *that*. Being human is a messy business. You don't want to be human. You have to abandon being human in order to be like God." The origin of sin, according to the Hebrew tradition, is the rejection of the goodness of being human. It arises from the insistence that we human beings are not the image and likeness of God, that we must become something other than and more than human beings in order to truly be like God. In other words, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, the first sin – the entry of evil into creation – is the refusal to accept the goodness and rightness of being human. Evil is the refusal to accept the goodness of creation. To put it slightly differently, the sin which is the origin of all evil in the world is the rejection of God's first judgment on us: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good."...The acceptance of the serpent's judgment, rather than God's is what leads to all the evil in history.

*Do I accept "the goodness and rightness of being human? More broadly, do I accept God's judgment on all God created?*

*How do I understand the sin of Adam and Eve? What does the Genesis story teach me about sin?*

### **Day Three of Second Week**

As you reflect on the ways you fail to make a return of God's love, consider this prayer of Walter Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*:

We mostly do not have big sins to confess,  
only modest shames that do not  
fit our hoped-for selves.

And then we find that your knowing is more  
powerful than our secrets.  
You know and do not turn away,  
and our secrets that seemed too powerful  
are emptied of strength,  
secrets that seemed too burdensome  
are now less severe.

We marvel that when you find us out  
you stay with us,  
taking us seriously,  
taking our secrets soberly,  
but not ultimately,  
overpowering our little failure  
with your massive love  
and abiding patience.

We long to be fully, honestly  
exposed to your gaze of gentleness.  
In the moment of your knowing  
we are eased and lightened,  
and we feel the surge of joy move in our bodies,  
because we are not ours in cringing,  
but yours in communion.

We are yours and find the truth before you  
makes us free for  
wonder, love, and praise — and new life.

As you sit with the sentiments expressed in this prayer, ask yourself

*In what ways do I tend to control my life and treat it as my possession rather than to embrace it freely as God's gift to me?*

*What signals to me that I am either unfree or losing my freedom in a situation?*

*In what areas of my life can I be tempted to hold on, to resist change, to act compulsively, or in ways that don't reflect God's love?*

*Are there times I hang onto resentment?*

*Are there people I have difficulty forgiving?*

*Am I envious or jealous of others?*

*Are there situations where I see pride causing me to act in ways I am later sorry for?*

*Are there times when righteousness is replaced by self-righteousness?*

*Are there times where I have failed to take an opportunity to make a difference?*

### **Day Four of the Second Week**

In *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, Louis M. Savary writes

Social sin is systemic, that is, it is manifested and “lives” in the social structures functioning in the larger society. Jesus spent much of his public ministry stirring up

awareness of some of the most hurtful social evils of his day, like religious hypocrisy among the priests and Pharisees, corrupt systems of justice perpetuated by the lawyers and scribes, unfair treatment of the poor by the rich, biased treatment of women, the social ostracism of tax collectors and the ritually impure, etc. Truly, Jesus bore the damaging effects of these social sins because he felt their evil impact daily on his own body and soul and on those around him.

He had not contributed to these social sins or tolerated them, as we have. He was like us in all things but sin. Yet these evils were laid on him. They diminished him and his ability to convert people to a change of heart. What diminished him and the people were not only the personal sins of Caiaphas, Pilate, or Judas, but also, perhaps even more powerfully, the social evils of humanity.

In one of his meditations, Savary encourages us to ask for the grace to “see the pervasive power of social sin and how I personally, if unconsciously, reinforce it.”

As I consider Jesus confronting...

.....the Pharisees about their religious hypocrisy

.....the lawyers about the unnecessary burdens they place on ordinary people

.....the moneychangers in the temple in their greed and obsession with profit

.....the mistreatment and financial abuse of women

.....the social ostracism of the ritually impure

*What do I want to say to Jesus about the social sin I witness in today's world?*

I converse with Jesus as I reflect on the following questions:

*What is my contribution to the existence of social sin or its amelioration?*

*What is it that keeps me from doing all I can to address social sin?*

*What is the grace I need from God to more actively take my part in my sphere of influence?*

## **Day Five of the Second Week**

### **Matthew 13:24-30**

He proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds\* all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ His slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest;\* then at harvest time I will say to

the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.”””

*What are some “weeds” within you – deeply-rooted areas of vulnerability, darkness and struggle that can pull you away from God and your truer self? Ask God to help you see these “weeds” clearly and specifically.*

*What is some “wheat” within you – deep inner realities that bring life, freedom, and union with God? Ask God for the ability to see and savor these life-giving areas.*

### **Day Six of the Second Week**

In the Spiritual Exercises, repetition is an invitation to go back over a prayer experience in order to allow for deeper appropriation of the particular mystery. It is not repeating the material in sense of going back and looking for something new. Instead you want to return to the points where you experienced the greatest movement allowing yourself to savor, deepen and better appreciate the experience, allowing it to be reinforced.

So on this last day, simply return to the moment in one of your prior prayer periods this week where you felt the greatest movement toward or away from God. The place of deepest affect. Go back there and see what else God wants to share with you.

### **Day Seven of the Second Week Review of the Week**

On the last day of each week during the retreat, you are invited to review and pray back over your journal for the preceding days of prayer this week. As you do, consider

*Where was I most moved?*

*What was God’s presence like?*

*What do I want to share in my small group?*