

1st Sunday of Lent

Every time I play the piano, I make mistakes. I know where they are. Not everyone can hear them, but I do. I know where I fail and how often I fail.

Each one of us knows our failures. Sometimes we hide them well. Other people often don't see them. But each of us knows as we go through our day all the mistakes we make, and all the sins we commit: We yell at people we love. We get lazy at work. We don't do chores at home. We fall in love for the wrong reasons. We develop habits we wish we could stop. We give up too soon on our studies. So-called friends convince us to perform actions we thought we would never do. We sin. We know it. And so does God.

The first sin of Adam and Eve resembles the sin we all commit. God told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was probably for their protection, to keep them focused on what is right. Like any parent, God knew what was best for the children. But the serpent told Eve that God is jealous, God was lying: Eating from the tree would bring Eve knowledge, not punishment; it would make her divine like God, not mortal like a human. Eve heard this temptation with her ears. Then she saw temptation with her eyes.

She looked at the fruit. She saw that it was food. We have seen food that looks good to eat, even though someone has warned us it is not nutritious, it's too expensive, or the quantity is more than we should swallow. But we tell ourselves, "It's food." So we eat.

Eve looked at the fruit again. She saw that it was pleasing to the eyes. We have seen objects and people who are pleasing to the eyes, even though others have warned us that people, pictures and video games that are fun to watch may lead us to infidelity, irresponsibility, and immorality. But we tell ourselves, "It's pretty." So we look.

Eve looked at the fruit a third time. She saw that it was desirable for gaining wisdom. We have seen people, magazines and web sites that make us think we will be wiser if we spend time with them. Others have told us to beware of drunkenness, drugs, pornography and other addictions. But we tell ourselves, "I'll gain experience." So we give in.

Each of us has learned what is right and wrong, but many times we hear and see things that change our views. Once we sin, we often take someone else with us. We invite them into thoughts of prejudice, words of insult, and improper partnerships. After Eve ate the fruit, she gave it to Adam, and he ate it too. Like Eve, often when we sin, we sell sin. We convince other people to join us.

At the beginning of Lent, our first reading shows us our own mistakes. We will do penance these next six weeks because we are sinners and we want to change.

If your sin is keeping you from loving as you should, serving the community, or coming to communion, then do something about it this Lent. Each of us knows our mistakes whether we are playing the piano or passing the time. We know when we fail, and so does God. Amazingly, God still loves us and gives us another chance to do penance, confess our sins, and change. That chance is what we call Lent.

Sunday, March 5, 2017