FATHER GARY PENNINGS

PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Each year the Church offers this preparatory season before Easter to refocus our lives on what has eternal significance. For those men and women who are preparing to be baptized at Easter, Lent is a time of intense preparation as they are about to commit their lives as disciples of Jesus. For those of us already baptized, Lent is a time to reexamine our own commitment as disciples of Jesus, so that when we renew our baptismal promises at Easter, we can do so with renewed faith and spiritual vigor.

The first reading for this First Sunday of Lent recalls the "original sin" of Adam and Eve. Our first parents were free to partake of the fruit of any of the trees in the garden, except for one. It represents the graciousness of God and how all creation was made for man's enjoyment, sustenance and benefit. Adam and Eve could even eat from the Tree of Life, which represented the gift of eternal life.

The one prohibition was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God warned, that if they ate of it, they would die. God's prohibition served to retain our first parents' innocence and dependence on God. To partake of the fruit of the tree meant to grasp at control and autonomy, to renounce their dependence on God.

This rebellion against God constituted a rejection of God's sovereignty, a proclamation from Adam and Eve that they chose to do it "their way". Thus, disorder entered God's creation. Adam and Eve were banished from Eden so that they would not eat from the Tree of Life and be eternally in this state of rebellion against God.

We've all been affected by that initial rebellion and we often crave control and autonomy, tempted to live apart from God. Lent is a good time to put things back in right order, to recenter our lives on God's love and grace. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, to turn back to God with all our heart.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,

Fr. Gary