

Twentieth Sunday of Ordinary Time (English Mass)
Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)
August 20, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“To Thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.” (Hail, Holy Queen Prayer)

Through the use of science and technology, we have become quite skilled being able to change or alter a person’s physical appearance. We can undergo a serious medical procedure, commit to a diet with exercise, or purchase a coloring product from a shelf. Despite our most skilled efforts coupled with the entirety of our financial resources, there are things we will never be able to change. One of the “unchangeable” dilemmas we are plagued with—We are all children of Eve. Each of us share in her subsequent disobedience and punishment. We are all condemned to journey as exiles in this “valley of tears” until we die. This is what it means to admit, in the prayer, that we are all “poor banished children of Eve.”

As pitiable as our reality is, it does get worse. The same “Old Serpent” who was there, in the beginning, to tempt Eve, is still here tempting us. Although we may not perceive of this spiritual reality, we do have a numberless horde of adversaries, driven by an intense hatred, seeking to destroy us. No matter what image we use to describe our accuser, he/they (Mark 5:9 *“My name is Legion, for we are many”*) are still with us. Before we proceed any further, allow me to stress a few things which I deem necessary. The first and most important of these concerns fear. We are NOT to fear the enemy. The enemy (a general term purposely used to not scare our little ones) is NOT God, nor do they possess any power equal to the power of God. Ask yourself this question: “Why am I not tempted all of the time?” If the enemy could tempt all of the time, then they would. They would do more than just tempt us, IF they could. Yet, they cannot. This is because they are still under the authority of God. They are only allowed, or permitted, to harm or tempt us depending upon how far God allows them to proceed. Movies and ministers, in their desire to gain your money, may present the enemy as something greater than they are. Please always remember, God is still in-charge. Secondly, the enemy is still present and active even if we choose to ignore them and not speak of them. Finally, we need to remember the old saying concerning the effect of curiosity upon the cat. As much as any person may enjoy scary movies or books, we should not be curious about nor think we can master the enemy. Stories abound of individuals rushing headlong to conduct battle thinking they could defeat the enemy, only to be quickly vanquished by this most intelligent and powerful foe. Remember please, the enemy has been tempting mankind longer than any of us have been alive.

I think I just offered a Catholic public service announcement with the last paragraph. Needless to say, we are so very underwhelming in this battle. All of the children of Eve are underwhelming; except one. This daughter of Eve does what we cannot do. By her sinless humility, she crushes the head of the serpent, as prophesied in Genesis 3:15. Mary, the Mother of God is that woman. She is also our Mother as she was presented by Jesus, by God, as He died upon His Cross in John 19:26-27.

My family, the humility of Mary (Luke 1:38 *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.”*) defeats the pride of the enemy. Many of our greatest

church thinkers and writers knew this to be true. They would encourage their listeners to ask her help in the midst of struggle, temptation and despair. They would remind them of her motherly assistance by referring to Saint Luke's Gospel. *"And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judah. And she entered into the house of Zachariah, and saluted Elizabeth."* (Luke 1:39-40). Family, Sacred Scripture tells us Mary traveled to assist Elizabeth with haste. Elizabeth was her cousin. You are her child! How much more "in haste" do you imagine she will come to assist you in your need. Coupled with that point, if we continue reading Sacred Scripture we find another point which is extremely relevant. *"And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine."* (John 2:3). Family, Mary anticipated this embarrassing issue and asked her Son to remedy it before the bride and groom even noticed. She was looking out for them and she was their guest. How much more is she looking out for us who are her children?

My family we are weak, being saddled with the punishment of Eve. We have an intelligent and powerful adversary seeking to overcome us. Left to our own talents and skills, we are completely overmatched. God does not want this. He does not want any of us to fall in this battle. Therefore, He gave each of us the greatest gift a Son can ever give. He gave us His own Mother to watch over us and defend us. We would be fools not to graciously accept this gift and ask her to watch over us as she did Him.