

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 28, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #5

“The consequences of sin will stay with man until he returns to the earth, that is, until he dies.”
(The Navarre Bible, Pentateuch, p. 56)

Throughout the course of Christian history, countless men and women have questioned God’s presence, compassion and mercy. Many of these questions arose from the unfortunate situations which occurred in the lives of these individuals. As I mentioned last weekend, Sacred Scripture is a divine revelation of God’s abiding love. The sacred author records God’s loving interaction with our first parents as they were being exiled from the Garden. Sin has stripped them of everything. They stand naked and ashamed. God sews clothes for Adam and Eve to both protect them and cover their nakedness. This is a most intimate moment shared between God and man. As God the Father works diligently, with His own hands, to clothe his disobedient children, God the Son accepts the garment of mankind’s sinful flesh; dying in shame for our salvation.

Adam and Eve begin life outside of the Garden. They have two sons, Cain and Abel. Let us pause to reflect upon this moment. Mankind, in an act of loving union, brings forth life. This act witnesses to the creative action of God in the beginning. Unlike God who creates in perfect simplicity and innocence, when man brings forth new life, sin is present. There is no serpent to tempt Cain; sin is already present from his birth. The ancient tradition of Cain and Abel teaches how the seed of sin grows fruitfully in the heart of Cain. His perceived injustice at the presentation of sacrifices giving honor to God, spurns him on to violence and the killing of his innocent brother.

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel, your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’ And the Lord said, ‘What have you done?’” (Genesis 4:9-10)

The sacred author concludes the story of these first two brothers with Cain receiving a mark from the Lord as he departed his presence. The great theological masters would propose the mark given to Cain symbolizes the mark of separation man’s sinful choices places upon his relationship with God. Sin, and the continued separation springing from it, would continue to grow in the hearts of men until it seemed to eclipse the whole of humanity. Only one man, Noah, would find favor in the eyes of God.