

Homily - 1st Sunday of Lent (Yr A) - 1st March 2020

Why does God create a universe that includes suffering and evil?

Why does God create a beautiful garden that includes a tree, the fruit of which Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat?

Does God know in advance that Adam and Eve will eat of this tree and therefore be excluded from this beautiful garden?

What is the serpent, and who is this person variously called Satan, the Devil, the Tempter?

Is he on a par with God, locked into some kind of eternal struggle, or is he ultimately under God's control?

'Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.....then the devil left him and angels appeared and looked after him.' The first and last verses of today's Gospel, the whole of human life in microcosm leading to total justification, the beatific vision and being care for by angels.

Being human is not a stroll in the park, a stroll through paradise or a picnic in Eden. Being human is a struggle. This is a beautiful and wonderful planet, and there are many joys and consolations along the way. But as we actually experience it day by day it is a place of trial, of change, of challenge. What many of us do for much of the time is to try to avoid the struggle altogether! We busy ourselves in our own little worlds imagining that our own little power games can insulate us from all the changes that are going on around us.

'Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness.' This world of change, this wilderness, this place of temptation into which we have been led, belongs to God. God wants us to grow. God wants us to put our faith not on bread but on every word that comes from his mouth. God wants us to love in complete freedom and integrity, 'to worship the Lord, your God, and serve him alone.' It is in a wilderness where all this must happen, but it is an open ended wilderness, a wilderness imbued with hope, a wilderness where the Devil will be defeated, where angels will appear and where those angels will lead us into the very presence of God.

I have not answered any of the questions I set at the beginning. Suffice it to say that we are in Jesus, nailed with him, not to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but to the tree of Life itself. We are in Jesus, traversing the wilderness, defeating evil once and for all, and approaching a garden that no human words can ever describe.