

LESSON FIFTH.

ON OUR FIRST PARENTS AND THEIR FALL.

39 Q. Who were the first man and woman?

A. The first man and woman were Adam and Eve.

In the beginning God created all things; something particular on each of the six days of creation (Genesis i.). On the first day He made light, on the second, the firmament, or the heavens, and on the sixth day He created man and called him Adam. God wished Adam to have a companion; so one day He caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and then took from his side a rib, out of which He formed Eve. Now God could have made Eve as He made Adam, by forming her body out of the clay of the earth and breathing into it a soul, but He made Eve out of Adam's rib to show that they were to be husband and wife, and to impress upon their minds the nature and sacredness of the love and union that should exist between them.

40 Q. Were Adam and Eve innocent and holy when they came from the hand of God?

A. Adam and Eve were innocent and holy when they came from the hand of God.

God placed Adam and Eve in Paradise, a large, beautiful garden, and gave them power over all the other creatures. Adam gave all the animals their appropriate names and they were obedient to him. Even lions, tigers, and other animals that we now fear so much, came and played about him. Our first parents, in their state of original innocence, were the happy friends of God, without sorrow or suffering of any kind.

***41 Q. Did God give any command to Adam and Eve?**

A. To try their obedience God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of a certain fruit which grew in the garden of Paradise.

He told them (Genesis ii.) they could take of all the fruits in the garden except the fruit of one tree, and if they disobeyed Him by eating the fruit of that tree, they should surely die. God might have pointed out any tree, because it was simply a test of their obedience. He gave them a very simple command, for if we are faithful in little things we shall surely be faithful in greater. Moreover, it is not precisely the consideration of what is forbidden, but of the authority by which it is forbidden that should deter us from violating the command and prove our fidelity. Thus disobedience to our parents and superiors, even in little things, becomes sinful. Some one might say: "Why did God not try their obedience by one of the ten commandments?" Let us examine them. "Remember the Sabbath." That one would be unnecessary: for every day was Sabbath with them; the only work was to praise and serve God. "Thou shalt not steal." They could not; everything was theirs; and so for the other commandments. Therefore, God gave them a simple command telling them: If you obey, you and all your posterity will be happy; every wish will be gratified, neither sorrow nor affliction shall come upon you and you shall never die; but if, on the contrary, you disobey, countless evils, misery and death will be your punishment. The earth, now so fruitful, shall bring forth no crops without cultivation, and after years of toil the dead bodies of yourselves and children must lie buried in its soil. So having the gift of free will they could take their choice, and either keep His command and be happy, or disobey Him and be miserable.

***42 Q. Which were the chief blessings intended for Adam and Eve, had they remained faithful to God?**

A. The chief blessings intended for Adam and Eve, had they remained faithful to God, were a constant state

of happiness in this life and everlasting glory in the next.

Our first parents and their children were not to remain in the garden of Paradise forever, but were, after spending their allotted time of trial or probation upon earth, to be taken body and soul into heaven without being obliged to die.

43 Q. Did Adam and Eve remain faithful to God?

A. Adam and Eve did not remain faithful to God, but broke His commandment by eating the forbidden fruit.

As it is told in the Bible (Genesis .iii.), Eve went to the forbidden tree and was standing looking at it, when the devil came in the form of a serpent and, tempting, told her to take some of the fruit and eat. It does not appear that she went and tasted the fruit of all the other trees and finally came to this one, but rather that she went directly to the forbidden tree first. Do we not sometimes imitate Eve's conduct? As soon as we know a certain thing is forbidden we are more strongly tempted to try it.

See, then, what caused Eve's sin. She went into the dangerous occasion, and was admiring the forbidden fruit when the tempter came. She listened to him, yielded to his wicked suggestions, and sinned. So will it be with us if through curiosity we desire to see or hear things forbidden; for once in the danger the devil will soon be on hand to tempt us—not visibly indeed, for that would alarm us and defeat his purpose, but invisibly, like our guardian angels; for the devil is a fallen angel who still possesses all the characteristics of an angel except goodness. But this is not all. Eve not only took and ate the fruit herself, but induced Adam to do likewise. Most sinners imitate Eve in that respect. Not satisfied with offending God themselves, they lead others into sin.

Why should the devil tempt us? God created man to be

in heaven, but the fallen angels were jealous of man, and tempted him to sin so that he too should be kept out of heaven and might never enjoy what they lost; just as envious people do not wish others to have what they cannot have themselves.

44 Q. What befell Adam and Eve on account of their sin?

A. Adam and Eve on account of their sin lost innocence and holiness, and were doomed to sickness and death.

They were innocent and holy because they were the friends of God and in a state of grace, but by their sin they lost His grace and friendship. "Doomed" means sentenced or condemned. The first evil result, then, of Adam's sin was that he lost innocence and made his body a rebel against his soul. Then he was to suffer poverty, hunger, cold, sickness, death, and every kind of ill; but the worst consequence of all was that God closed heaven against him. After a few years' trial, as we said, God was to take him into heaven; but now He has closed it against Adam and his posterity. All the people in the world could never induce God to open it again; for He closed it in accordance with His promise, and man was an exile and outcast from his heavenly home.

45 Q. What evil befell us on account of the disobedience of our first parents?

A. On account of the disobedience of our first parents we all share in their sin and punishment, as we should have shared in their happiness if they had remained faithful.

Does it not seem strange that we should suffer for the sin of our first parents, when we had nothing to do with it? No. It happens every day that children suffer for the faults of their parents and we do not wonder at it. Let us suppose a man's father leaves him a large fortune—houses, land, and money—and that he and his children are happy in the enjoyment of their inheritance. The children are sent to

the best schools, have everything they desire now, and bright hopes of happiness and prosperity in the future. But alas! their hopes are vain. The father begins to drink or gamble, and soon the great fortune is squandered. House after house is sold and dollar after dollar spent, till absolute poverty comes upon the children, and the sad condition of their home tells of their distress. Do they not suffer for the sins of their father, though they had nothing to do with them? Indeed, many families in the world suffer thus through the faults of others, and most frequently of some of their members. Could you blame the grandfather for leaving the estate? Certainly not; for it was goodness on his part that made him give. Let us apply this example. What God gave Adam was to be ours also, and he squandered and misused it because he had free will, which God could not take from him without changing his nature; for it is our free will and intelligence that make us men, distinct from and superior to all other animals. They can live, grow, feel, hear, see, etc., as we can, but the want of intelligence and free-will leaves them mere brutes. Therefore, if God took away Adam's intelligence and free will, He would have made him a mere animal—though the most perfect.

When a man becomes insane or loses the use of his intelligence and free will, we place him in an asylum and take care of him as we would a tame animal, seldom allowing him to go about without being watched and guarded.

Let us take another example. Suppose I have a friend who is addicted to the excessive drinking of strong liquor, and I say to him: "If you give up that detestable habit for one year, I will make you a present of this beautiful house worth several thousand dollars. It will be yours as long as you live, and at your death you may leave it to your children. I do not owe you anything, but offer this as a free gift if you comply with my request." My friend accepts the offer on these conditions, but the very next day deliberately breaks his promise. I do not give him the house, because he did not keep his agreement: and can any one say

on that account that I am unjust or unkind to him or his children? Certainly not. Well, God acted in the same manner with Adam. He promised him heaven, a home more beautiful than any earthly palace—the place Our Lord calls His father's house (John xiv. 2) and says there are many mansions, that is, dwelling-places, in it. God promised this home to Adam on condition that he would observe one simple command. He had no right to heaven, but was to receive it, according to the promise, as a free gift from God, and therefore God, who offered it conditionally, was not obliged to give it when Adam violated his part of the agreement.

The example is not a perfect one, for there is this difference in the cases between Adam and my friend: when my friend does not get the house, he sustains a loss, it is true; but he might still be my friend as he was before, and live in my house; but when Adam lost heaven, he lost God's friendship and grace, and the loss of all grace is to be in sin. So that Adam by breaking the command was left in sin; and as all his children sustain the same loss, they too are all left in sin till they are baptized.

*** 46 Q.** What other effects followed from the sin of our first parents?

A. Our nature was corrupted by the sin of our first parents, which darkened our understanding, weakened our will, and left us a strong inclination to evil.

Our "nature was corrupted" is what I have said of the body rebelling against the soul. Our "understanding darkened." Adam knew much more without study than the most intelligent men could learn now with constant application. Before his fall he saw things clearly and understood them well, but after his sin everything had to be learned by the slow process of study. Then the "will was weakened." Before he fell he could easily resist temptation, for his will was strong. You know we sin by the will, because unless we wish to do the evil we commit no sin; and if absolutely forced

by others to do wrong, we are free from the guilt as long as our will despises and protests against the action. If forced, for example, to break my neighbor's window, I have not to answer in my conscience for the unjust act, because my will did not consent. So, on every occasion on which we sin, it is the will that yields to the temptation. After Adam's sin his will became weak and less able to resist temptation; and as we are sharers in his misfortune, we find great difficulty at times in overcoming sinful inclinations. But no matter how violent the temptation or how prolonged and fierce the struggle against it, we can always be victorious if determined not to yield; for God gives us sufficient grace to resist every temptation; and if any one should excuse his fall by saying he could not help sinning, he would be guilty of falsehood.

"A strong inclination" to do wrong,—that is, unless always on our guard against it. Our Lord once cautioned His apostles (Matthew xxvi. 41) to watch and pray lest they fall into temptation; teaching us also by the same warning that, besides praying against our spiritual enemies, we must watch their manœuvres and be ever ready to repel their attacks.

47 Q. What is the sin called which we inherit from our first parents?

A. The sin which we inherit from our first parents is called original sin.

* 48 Q. Why is this sin called original?

A. This sin is called original because it comes down to us from our first parents, and we are brought into the world with its guilt on our souls.

* 49 Q. Does this corruption of our nature remain in us after original sin is forgiven?

A. This corruption of our nature and other punishments remain in us after original sin is forgiven.

It remains that we may merit by overcoming its temptations; and also that we may be kept humble by remembering our former sinful and unhappy state.

50 Q. Was any one ever preserved from original sin?

A. The Blessed Virgin Mary, through the merits of her divine Son, was preserved free from the guilt of original sin, and this privilege is called her Immaculate Conception.

The Blessed Virgin was to be the Mother of the Son of God. Now it would not be proper for the Mother of God to be even for one moment the servant of the devil, or under his power. If the Blessed Virgin had been in original sin, she would have been in the service of the devil. Whatever disgraces a mother disgraces also her son; so Our Lord would never permit His dear Mother to be subject to the devil, and consequently He, through His merits, saved her from original sin. She is the only one of the whole human race who enjoys this great privilege, and it is called her "Immaculate Conception," that is, she was conceived—brought into existence by her mother—without having any spot or stain of sin upon her soul, and hence without original sin.

Our Lord came into the world to crush the power which the devil had exercised over men from the fall of Adam. This He did by meriting grace for them and giving them this spiritual help to withstand the devil in all his attacks upon them. As the Blessed Mother was never under the devil's power, next to God she has the greatest strength against him, and she will help us to resist him if we seek her aid. The devil himself knows her power and fears her, and if he sees her coming to our assistance will quickly fly. Never fail, then, in time of temptation to call upon our Blessed Mother; she will hear and help you and pray to God for you.