

Deacon Craig's Homily First Sunday of Lent

Jesus Undoes Adam's Sin

St Paul's Letter to the Romans is **unique**. His other Letters were written in response to **specific** struggles being faced by local Christian communities.

But he had a **different goal** with his Letter to the Romans. He was hoping to begin soon a **new series of missionary journeys** that would bring him **west** - all the way to **Spain** in fact.

For those journeys, he would need a **base of operations**, and Rome was the **perfect choice**. It was the **capital** of a vast empire. To conquer that world for Christ, there was no better **headquarters**.

The Christians in Rome had **heard** of Paul but had never **met** him. So, he sent this Letter to **prepare the ground** for his upcoming visit. He wanted the Romans to know his views **firsthand**, not through indirect sources.

In the passage we just heard, Paul goes to the very **core** of the whole Gospel, summing up **all of human history** in a few sentences.

God created the human family in perfect **harmony**, peace, and prosperity.

But Adam, the leader of that family, sinned. This original sin **ruptured** that harmony and created a world **infected by sin** and **fraught** with conflict, evil, and suffering.

Jesus Christ was **God's response**. Helpless to help ourselves, we needed a **savior**, someone to reverse Adam's rebellion and reestablish a **right relationship** between God and man.

Jesus Christ **was and is** that Savior. Adam **disobeyed** God when he ran into the devil in the Garden of Eden, and all of Adam's descendants have suffered the **painful consequences since then**.

Jesus **obeyed** God the Father when he ran into the devil in the Garden of **Gethsemane** and on the cross at Calvary, and all of his spiritual descendent have received from him the **restoration of righteousness** - a good and holy relationship with God.

During the **Civil War**, it was permitted for one man to **take the place** of another in the army. It just so happened that a **farmer** named **Blake** was **drafted**.

He was grief-stricken, not because he was a **coward**, but because he had a **wife and children** to take care of.

The day before he was to report to camp, a **young neighbor** named **Charles Durham** came to Blake's farm.

"Farmer Blake," he said, "**I will go instead of you.**"

The offer **was accepted, and Farmer Blake accepted his offer.**

The **entire village** turned out to **bid farewell** to the courageous and generous young man as he went off to war.

In the **very first battle** in which young Durham was in, he **shot and killed.**

When Farmer Blake **heard the terrible news, that his friend was shot dead**, he **saddled** his horse, **rushed** to the battlefield, **found** the young man's body, and **brought it back** to the little churchyard where Blake lived.

He found a **large stone** up on a hill and he **carved an inscription** on it. It wasn't **beautiful**, but it was **sincere**.

Farmer Blake placed it above the fresh **mound** of dirt in the churchyard. It was not an **elaborate** inscription, but it said much. It simply read: with just the young man's initials, Quote, "*C.D. He died for me.*"

Above the **cross of Christ** and over his grave, **each one of us** must **carve** the words: **Jesus Christ, "He died for me."**

Jesus **took upon himself the suffering and evil** unleashed by Adam's sin and perpetuated by our own sins.

His perfect, loving **obedience** to the Father up to death on the cross **reversed Adam's rebellion** and **freed** us from the power of the devil.

He has lit in our hearts the **flame of certain hope** that will lead us to **eternal life**.

Lent is a time when God wants us to **think deeply about** these important truths.

Jesus has **already saved us**. He already died for us, rebuilding the **bridge** between mankind and God that Adam and Eve had shattered.

But we are still on our **journey** to and through that bridge.

And the same devil that tempted Adam in the **Garden of Eden** and Jesus in the desert, is intent on **leading us off the right path**, so that we don't find and cross that correct bridge of our journeys. Many times, because of **weakness** or just plain **selfishness**, we give into the devil's temptations. Sometimes we give in so **frequently** and so **easily** that we become **enslaved** to sinful habits.

Lent is a time the Church gives us to make a fresh start. God led Israel out of **slavery in Egypt** and sustained them through their **desert journey** until they reached the Promised Land.

Their journey was **hard**, but God was **faithful** and always there for them.

Our journey to a more mature and fruitful **following** of Christ is hard too, but God is **faithful with us** as well.

Today when he comes to renew **his commitment to us** in Holy Communion, let's **thank** him for coming to save us; for giving his life for us!

And let's ask him from the depths of our hearts to show us **the next step we should take** in our journey.

He may tell us that we need to come to him in **with humble contrite hearts**. He may tell us to renew our prayer lives with Him and to keep our eyes focused always on Him!

Whatever he asks of us, He only asks us because of His great love and mercy for **us**.

Out of love for **him**, let's say yes.

