
WEEKLY NEWS

✠ Septuagesima Sunday ✠

On Sundays

Low Mass at 8 a.m. at The Lady Altar after which silence is kept in S John's Chapel for

Centering Prayer. At 10 o'clock we pray the **Rosary.**

Confessions are heard in Church from 10.30-10.50. **Terce** is recited at 10.30 followed by **Solemn or Sung Mass** at 11 and **Coffee Hour** just after Mass in the Parish Hall. When scheduled, the **Sunday Forum** is then held in the adjacent Yarnall Room.

Vespers is chanted in Latin at 3 p.m. in the church followed by the **Novena** to Our Lady of Clemency and **Benediction.**

Weekdays

Daily Mass is offered Monday through Friday at 12.10 p.m. (10 a.m. on Saturdays and holidays).

Vespers is recited in the Church at 5.30 p.m. Monday through Friday and at 3 p.m. on Saturdays followed by **Shrine Prayers** to Our Lady of Clemency. **Confessions** are heard regularly on Sundays at 10.30 a.m. or by appointment.

Service booklets for all services are published and available on the Usher's tables and at www.s-clements.org.

SUMMONED TO HOLINESS AND UNITY

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

This Sunday and the two that follow are referred to as *gesima* Sundays, a three-week period of preparation for Lent. *Septuagesima* is just another way of indicated Seventy Days as today is the Seventieth day from Easter. The countdown proceeds in Latin — *Sexagesima, Quinquagesima*. This pattern extends to the first Sunday in Lent, *Dominica I in Quadragesima*, after which the entire remaining season of Lent is referred to as *Quadragesima*.

In today's Divine Office we begin at the beginning with the first chapter of Genesis, its first 26 verses. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.* Our own creation concludes the first nocturn. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

This evening's Magnificat antiphon reminds us that we're one short chapter away from trouble, real trouble. *The Lord said unto Adam, Of the tree which is in the midst of the garden thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

We're quite familiar with the rest of the story. I quote an excellent summary in a new book by the bishop and monk Erik Varden (*Chastity, Reconciliation of the Senses*, Bloomsbury, London, 2023, page 39).

"Fallen Adam finds himself reduced to elemental nature. Where before he had stood in a wonderful tension, *of* the earth but straining towards heaven, he is subject now to the crushing downward pull of gravity. He is drawn towards the earth, towards death, towards the grave. *That* is the cause of his shame: to have lowered himself so far underneath the dignity that was

About today's Mass

Driven out from the earthly paradise where God had placed him, man is profoundly aware of his wretched state and implores divine mercy.

Suffering and death, the consequences of sin, weigh upon us. It is under the weight of our wretchedness that, taken in charge by the Church, we send up our cries for help to God. Great is man's distress. And it would be without remedy had not God, directly after the fall of our first parents, promised us a Saviour; it is to Him that the Church turns our eyes. With her we set out for Easter. At the same time that she makes us fully aware of our wretchedness she infuses into our souls all the strength of Christian hope founded on faith in Christ, our Redeemer.

But we must accept the conditions of our redemption. Salvation is a gratuitous gift, won for us by Christ, but only on the condition that, responding to the divine invitation, we are willing to set to work in our Father's vineyard.

— Dom Gaspar Lefebvre, O. S. B.

his first lot. Covering himself with matter, Adam strives to maintain decorum, yet more essentially he hides...In the account of Adam's fall that has formed western consciousness, the story seems to end here. This is where we customarily take leave of Adam, naked, ashamed, pathetically robed."

Cited by Varden, the Syriac midrash *The Cave of Treasures* suggests the story is not ended. Varden writes "The fall itself is mysteriously held by grace. This meaning is epically brought out when the time comes for Adam to be expelled from paradise. The Genesis account is stern, ringing with imprecations. Centuries of moralist preaching have accustomed us to think God angry, booting Adam out. The tradition of the *Cave* presents a different picture. Here, Adam is led to Eden's gate with consoling words. God grieves at the leave-taking, but urges Adam not to despair.

Adam, do not be distressed that you must, on account of the sentence, depart from Paradise. I will bring you back to your inheritance! See how I have loved you!

Seventy days hence, when Lent is ended, we revisit Genesis in the twelve prophecies chanted at the Easter Vigil celebrating the Paschal victory that is ours in Christ, "trampling down death by death and on those in the grave bestowing life." Meanwhile the church gradually ushers us into a holy season of prayer and praxis. This time is a gift from God, a time for us to rediscover just how he much he love us.

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Alton

