

Homily for World Day of the Sick Saturday, 2/12/11

The first reading, from the book of Genesis, tells the sad story of sin. Both Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden. Their lives outside of the Garden are burdened with drudgery, toil, and anguish. To this day, there is an acute perception that bodily infirmities and physical frailty is a consequence of our sinful nature. Even in the time of Christ, the works of the Lord Jesus to heal sickness and cast out evil were seen as synonymous.

Whether or not the life of Adam and Eve would have been much different without sin, we will never know. What is clear from this story and our own experience, sin – their sin and ours -- made life more difficult because humanity had walked away from God, the creator. In the account from Genesis, God is the one who goes looking for Adam and Eve because they had stopped looking for him. They hid from God. This rupture, this alienation from God, pained the human condition and wounded human nature, from Adam and Eve until now.

From the moment of creation, humanity has always been weak and frail. Only God's nearness saves us and soothes us in our feeble fate. Since Adam and Eve, we were made for God. He is always our strength and our refuge. Hiding from the Lord of life makes us even more the victim of our frailty and folly.

The saving grace in this sorry saga of sin is seen in the moment of sin. God at that very moment goes looking for his children. In the instance of that painful rupture God calls out to us, "Where are you?" In the gospel today, the Lord Jesus comes as the Good Shepherd to feed his flock. From His sacred heart come the tender words, "My heart is moved with pity." The Lord Jesus is our assurance of how earnest is God's desire to find us, feed us, heal us, and save us.

As the first sin and all sin wounded the human person, both body and soul, so Jesus nourishes us and nurtures us both body and soul. He wishes to restore us to complete health, both body and soul. Jesus offered himself – body and blood, soul and divinity – so that he could rescue both our bodies as well as our souls.

Under the appearance of bread and wine, the Lord Jesus gives us his body and blood to revive our drooping spirits and restore our frail flesh. His holy oil anoints our aching bodies while he also soothes our sin-sick souls.

The Lord eagerly searches for each one of us, "Where are you?" He knows our pain and he feels our anguish. Come to him. Call to him, "Here I am, Lord. Come, show us your face and we shall be saved."