



The Joy of Lent!

The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Gen 3:6-7



Ash Wednesday is behind us and Lent is fully underway. Yeah! What a great season Lent is: a time when we can fully engage our bodies, minds and hearts as we grow in our Christian walk. I was pondering the sin of our first parents and why Lent is such a great time to confront the baggage that we carry around, and we all have baggage! If you had to carry a backpack and a couple of suitcases everywhere you went do you think it would get old? Yes it would, yet that's exactly what we do in a spiritual sense. The backpack and suitcases represent our sinful attachments.

Everyone has an attachment to their sins of choice. It could be anything from alcohol to heroine, adultery to pornography, gossip, foul language, anger, pride; you name it. Years ago, I liked being known for telling the dirtiest jokes, leveling the meanest insults and never walking away from a fight. That was some (but nowhere near all) of the baggage I carried around.

Each time we sin it's like we put more stuff into the suitcase. Without realizing it I used to pack as much ugly sin as I could into my suitcase. Vanity always puts a positive spin on bad behavior and because my buddies used to laugh at my jokes, I saw myself as a funny guy. But that's not how others saw me. Once, someone whom I cared for very much addressed my foul language and sense of humor just before we parted ways. Suddenly I realized that I was lugging around some very heavy baggage and it occurred to me that it had affected where I was at that point in my life. Is your baggage invisible to you but plainly visible to those around you? Mine was completely invisible to me.



But there is good news. Just because we haul around the luggage now doesn't mean that we are stuck with it for the rest of our lives. For me it was easy; I moved to the Bay Area, made new friends and reinvented myself. I haven't told a dirty joke in years and I don't insult or challenge other people's character or integrity. I like people and best of all I'm comfortable with who I've become. I think I now see myself as others see me because the baggage is mostly gone.



How do we empty the baggage? Each time we go to confession we take stuff out of the suitcases and lighten the load. The best news is that through the sacraments you can completely empty your sinful suitcases and toss away the empties or at least get smaller ones. It's possible: I've done it, and I know people who have done it. But, you first have to realize that you're carrying some sinful baggage. Making a good confession is what Lent is all about.



In the passage above from Genesis, when the serpent tempted the woman, she **“saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom.”** In that passage the woman saw the fruit as nourishment, beauty and wisdom from a source other than God. For that, she and the man got kicked out of paradise. Congratulations, she acquired her first baggage and we all get to carry it.

This brings me back to my opening sentence. In the garden, the woman engaged in that sinful act with her body, mind and heart and fell under the weight of temptation. In her wisdom, Holy Mother Church gives us a chance to engage our temptations every year during Lent. This is the time to face our temptations and have mastery over them. We all have our own favorite sins; some of us are defined by them. But I promise you, you can take a bad habit the size of Stanislaus County and beat it back to wallet size with regular confession. What better time to empty your bags than right now?



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March business meeting is on Tuesday, March 6th at 7:00pm. Second Friday Memorial Mass for the deceased Knights of this council is on Friday, March 9th at 5:45pm. Along with Fish Fry Fridays and Stations of the Cross, March will be a busy month. We should all resolve to make a good Lent, attend Stations and the Parish Mission, and give up something meaningful while doing something meaningful for our faith. If you invite someone to Fish Fry invite them to Stations of the Cross, you could change their world. And don't forget to make a good confession and get cleaned up spiritually

Pray that God give us the grace to seek have a good Lent. Pray for the men and women who serve in Law Enforcement and the Military. Pray that politicians have conversion of heart.