The Fall of Adam - O FELIX CULPA

My dear brethren,

What we celebrate
During the Easter Vigil, the most beautiful hymn is sung to announce the Feast of Easter which is called the Exsultet – it is the Church’s expression of joyful praise in the Holy Ghost to God the Father for the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and it captures the heart of the feast we celebrate.

- We all rejoice because our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.
- We celebrate the victory of our Lord over sin and death.
- The Exsultet, in a very profound way, expresses the thanksgiving of the Church and the entire creation to God for the gift of his Only Son as our Saviour.
- We also celebrate the mystery of our redemption.

But what does “O Felix Culpa” mean?

There is one line in the Exultet that might be cause for confusion:

"O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

No sin is happy or necessary in itself, but we the sin of Adam happy and necessary because it expresses what many theologians teach: that, if Adam had not sinned, then Jesus would not have become incarnate. Like all sins, God permits them because, from them He draws a greater good.

Indeed, the Apostle St. Paul teaches: And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good: to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. (Rom. 8: 28).

The Fall of Adam

The sin of Adam and Eve was an untold catastrophe:
- It was an act of disobedience which cost the whole human race the loss of God’s friendship (Cf. Rom. 3:23).
- It destroyed the praeternatural gifts in Adam (knowledge, integretity, impassibility and immortality).
- And it made us slaves to sin,

But out of this catastrophe, God demonstrated his unconditional love when, in order to ransom slaves that we were, he sent his only begotten Son to die for us. This is the happiness that was derived from this most dreadful offence against God.

Indeed, these two events are the principal events of the history of the universe:
our enslavement and our redemption,
our sin and our justification,
our fall from grace and our salvation and dignity as children of God.

**The Story of Redemption Prefigured**
In the lives of the Chosen People, the People of Israel, we see this foreshadowed in various forms. We easily recall
- the misery of their enslavement in Egypt and the glory of their deliverance (how many times?!);
- their suffering on the journey through the desert and the joy of coming to the Promised Land.

We recall this played out in the life of Joseph, the son of Jacob.
- His jealous brothers thought that they were punishing him by selling him as slave to the Ishmaelites, who sold him to a high Egyptian official. But it was this same Joseph that God used to save the children of Israel from starvation.
- The wife of his master tried in vain to seduce him and then lied against him and he was jailed. But God turned this unmerited suffering to its good and Joseph was, not only released from jail, but promoted.

**The Story of Redemption Realised In the Apostles**
We read in the New Testament about the conversion and call of individual followers of Jesus.
- In the Gospel of Luke, we read about the call of the first four disciples and how **Simon**, overwhelmed by the presence Jesus the Christ and the attendant miraculous catch of fish, declared, “Depart from me, Lord, I am a sinner” (Luke 5: 9).
  - This was the same Simon, who, in his weakness denied his Lord three times.
  - But it was also he that the Risen Christ made strong and judged him faithful; so faithful that he gave him the authority to be shepherd over the one flock of Christ.
- **Saul of Tarsus** in his misguided zeal for the faith of his ancestors fiercely persecuted (the Body of) Christ. But it was the same man, “the foremost of sinners” (Cf. 1 Tim 1: 16) that Christ made the foremost Apostle of the Gentiles and one of the foremost defenders of the faith he once strove to annihilate.

**The Story of Redemption Realised In Us?**
All through history we read again and again about great sinners whom the Omnipotent God turned into great saints. And this, dearest brothers and sisters in Christ, is a true source of consolation for all of us and was made possible by the feast we celebrated last Sunday.

For no matter how deep we have sunk in iniquity, no matter how far we have wandered from the home of our loving Father, we can hope in the Risen Lord who will wash our sins away with his blood and give us a higher dignity by his resurrection from the dead …if we turn to Him.

Adam’s sin was turned to good by his repentance; let us permit Our Lord to do the same for us by our turning to Him.

We rejoice with the Blessed Virgin Mary that this is possible, and we beg her help in turning to her beloved Son.
“Regina caeli, laetare, Alleluia!
Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia!

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