

Lent with Ruth Burrows and Sister Wendy Beckett



WEEK ONE: LIVING IN THE TRUTH OF GOD'S LOVE

The first reading at Mass on the first Sunday of Lent is from Genesis and is about creation and the sin of Adam and Eve.

In this passage from her book *Love Unknown*, the Carmelite nun Ruth Burrows reflects on the profound truths being communicated to us through the Genesis story...

Reflection Questions

- Do we consistently live in the truth that our faith affirms?
- Is our trust in God's love constant and consistent; do we ever yield to doubt in his loving care?
- Are there instances where we leave God aside and consult only ourselves as to what is for our good?
- In times of distress, darkness, turmoil, do we still perceive God's loving face or do we wail: "What have I done that God should do this to me? How can God do this?"

Would that we could but glimpse, even for a moment, the utter lavishness, the excess of God's love! As it is, the loving face of the Creator is replaced by an idol, a creature fashioned from human fears and suspicions, from limitations that make men and women mistrustful, envious and jealous of one another

The more I reflect, the more it seems to me that all sin ultimately derives from the falsehood that contorted and still contorts the true face of God. All our selfish choices derive from lack of trust in God's love and care for us. We simply cannot abandon ourselves in total trust because we are not looking at the true God but at an idol created by our fears, our sensuality and pride.

We exchange God's truth for a lie. We may not see this very clearly but, if we really, fully grasped "how much, how sweetly and how tenderly our Maker loveth us" (Julian of Norwich) we would drop our self-concern and anxious self-protectiveness.

Ruth Burrows, *Love Unknown*, 49-51.

Sister Wendy Beckett on Lent...

"I love Lent, knowing that all over the world people are taking Our Lord more seriously than is their usual. I think that's the point of penance, not to make us suffer, but to remind us of God."

Wendy Beckett and Robert Ellsberg, *Dearest Sister Wendy*, 251



No artist has entered more deeply into the horror of the expulsion from paradise than Masaccio. It is a refugee situation that he portrays: home and happiness swiftly turned into loss and misery. It is this position of exile, so painfully familiar to our own times, that we can well appreciate.

Adam and Eve pass through the thin strip of a gate as they exit Eden; from this point, their life must narrow from infinite space to the small compass of their daily labour. Adam is overwhelmed with shame and hides his face in the bitterness of remorse. Eve shields her breasts and her genitals, unable to bear this terrible exposure, and lifts her face in a rictus of anguish; one can almost hear the primal scream with which, slant-eyed and unbelieving, she enters into the barrenness of the real world.

They have in fact been born, passing from the security of a paradise womb into the struggle of becoming fully human, with work and suffering as daily bread.

Sister Wendy Beckett, *Sister Wendy's 1000 Masterpieces*, 298.

Masaccio, 'The Expulsion from Paradise'