



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the first reading, we hear about the Fall of Man. Before today's reading, Genesis tells us about how Eve chooses to eat the forbidden fruit, and gave some to her husband (who was silently with her the whole time). They recognize their nakedness. This symbolizes the loss of original grace that God gave them, and instead of loving each other freely they now objectify and use the other. They must now cover themselves to protect from being objectified and used. Then they hide from God.

This is where today's Scripture comes in, as God calls out to them: "Where are you?" It's not that God is cluelessly wondering where they are. He's not playing "hide and seek." Rather, He used to walk with them in the cool of the evening, and now, instead of being there, freely walking with God, they hide themselves from Him. The question, "Where are you?" is an invitation for them to examine their consciences and repent before the Lord. Instead, what happened? They avoid the issue, continuing to think they can hide the truth from God, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

Isn't this the way we so often are? When we think we are doing pretty well with our spiritual lives, we walk with God, but when we knowingly sin, we feel like God is far from us, that we need to hide ourselves in shame. The truth is that God has not moved His relative position to us, it is only we who have moved. God's love for us does not end, but it is only our perception and reception of His love that have changed. If we could but surrender ourselves over to God, giving Him the whole messy business of our sin, instead of trying to justify or hide it, He would immediately forgive us and restore us!

I've shared this before, but I still find it so powerful – Mary, in the Annunciation – did not hide herself from God. Instead, she cried out, "Behold!" ... 'See me.' The Lord longs to have a deep and intimate relationship with us. Intimacy means "into-me-see" – that we allow God to see into our mess, our brokenness, our sin, trusting that He does still love us. And He does. If instead of running from God when we sin, we ran to Him, to His Heart of love, He would draw us so close!

St. Thérèse of Lisieux put it this way:

"I find perfection very easy to practise, because I have realised that all we have to do is take Jesus by the heart. Consider a child who has upset his mother by losing his temper or disobeying her. If he goes and hides in a corner with a sullen look on his face and cries because he is afraid of being punished, his mother will certainly not pardon his fault. But if he comes to her and holds out his arms to her and smiles at her and says, 'Give me a hug, I'll never do it again', how can his mother resist taking him fondly and pressing him to her heart, forgetting his childish wickedness? Yet she knows perfectly well that her dear child will do it again as soon as the occasion arises, but that makes no difference; if he takes her by the heart again, he will never be punished."

May we always remember to take Jesus by the Heart – not running from Him, not hiding from Him, but running to Him – allowing Him to behold our hearts and forgive our childish wickedness.