

**Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – June 10, 2018**  
**Reverend Robert W. Marshall, Jr., Pastor**

When I was assigned to the Cathedral parish and moved to midtown last year, I felt comfortable that at least I knew my way around the parish. I am, after all, a native Memphian and I have lived in this city for most of my life. Over the years, I have eaten at many restaurants in midtown and Cooper-Young. I went to school at nearby Christian Brothers University. I have visited the homes of friends who lived in the area. And, of course, I have been to the Cathedral many times – including eighteen years ago today when I came to be ordained to the priesthood. Yet for all of my knowledge of the city, I quickly learned that I had not visited every neighborhood, nor travelled every street. And, at times, even if I had been to the area before, my sense of direction was off because I discovered that the building that was etched in my memory had been torn down and replaced five or ten or thirty years ago. In short, I have learned to consult a map even if I think I know where something is. Though I am in the heart of my hometown, it is still possible to get lost here.

In our first reading from the Book of Genesis, the Lord God asks Adam, “Where are you?” It is not that God lost Adam, of course, but as Adam explains, he was trying to hide from God. He and Eve had eaten from the tree of which God had forbidden them to eat. They knew they had done wrong. They knew they had sinned, so they tried to hide from the Lord God lest he find out. It didn’t work. God always knew both the location and the hearts of our first parents. He knew that they had disobeyed his clear command and he called out to them. And one sin invariably leads to another. Instead of coming clean, confessing their sin, and admitting that their desire to be as powerful as God had led them to disobey his command, Adam tries to shift the blame to Eve and Eve tries to shift the blame to the serpent. Yes, all three had been involved in the sin, but there wasn’t one sinner and two innocent victims. The serpent, the devil, enticed them into sin, but both Adam and Eve had a choice. The great comedian Flip Wilson’s character Geraldine was fond of pleading, “The devil made me do it,” but the reality is that no one makes us sin but our own selfish desires. We don’t accidentally get lost in sin – we arrogantly lose ourselves when we ignore God’s instructions, when we primarily consult our own desires and not the road map of the Lord.

It is this sense of being lost, of not knowing which end is up, not knowing what is good and what is evil that Jesus is speaking about in our gospel today. The scribes thought that Jesus was possessed by the prince of demons, by

Beelzebul himself. How lost, how misguided must you be to confuse the eternal Son of God with the devil himself? Yet that is what the scribes did, that is what all of us, all of the descendants of Adam do when we turn away from the commandments of the Lord and make ourselves God. We lose our moral compass, not knowing what is north and what is south, what is good and what is evil. Yes, evil can be very attractive. Evil can placate our desires. It can bring us pleasure. It can make us feel powerful or important or wanted. Evil can temporarily satisfy our sensual needs.

In our second reading today, St. Paul tells the Church in Corinth that our earthly dwelling is but a tent, a temporary structure that can easily be blown away. By contrast, our relationship with God is a building not made with human hands, a building that is eternal. Evil can make our tent more comfortable, more secure, more desirable. By cooperating with evil, we might construct for ourselves a tent of gold, covered in diamonds, carpeted in the finest of silk. Yes, evil can often bring us the most comfortable of tents, but evil cannot contribute even the smallest brick to our true dwelling, to the eternal building that God promises to us. Our tent is no more than a temporary dwelling, it can never make us truly happy. It will never endure. Only God can satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts. Only God can bring us eternal happiness.

As descendants of Adam, we can easily get ourselves lost. We can foolishly mistake a really great tent for the eternal building of heaven. If we are not careful, we can become so self-centered, so self-absorbed that we mistake the Spirit of the living God for the prince of darkness. That is the power that evil can hold in our lives if we turn away from our covenant relationship with God. The good news of Jesus Christ is that the new covenant in Christ's blood is always stronger than darkness and sin, always more powerful than the prince of demons. Each Sunday, each day we are called back here to the table of the Lord, to a privileged encounter with the living God. We are fed for the journey, nourished and strengthened for the road that is laid before us. In word and sacrament, we are given the road map to heaven, the directions to our eternal building. We can go it alone, searching for every short-cut, pitching our tent wherever it seems comfortable and getting ourselves lost in the process, or we can keep our eyes fixed on the Lord, walking with him step-by-step, as we strive to do his will.