

## HOMILY 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY of LENT February 22, 2026

How many of you remember Flip Wilson? He was a comedian and actor best known for his television appearances during the late 1960's and 1970's. He played a fictional character named Geraldine Jones. He played a flirty character in drag, and one of his most well known phrases was "the devil made me do it." This was her excuse for her bad behavior. We do this sometimes too. I sometimes hear people saying the devil is really tempting me as though he is totally to blame for our bad behavior. We use other excuses as well, such as "everyone does it" or "it is just part of our culture," or "it is just a bad habit" or "it is just the way I was raised." These things do affect us, and we need to be aware of them, but we are always responsible for our choices.

In the first reading, we hear about Adam and Eve. They were living in the Garden of Eden. God was living with them and loving them in the Garden and provided everything they needed to live and do well and be happy. They only had one rule, one limitation. They were not to eat of the tree of life in the middle of the Garden. They wanted the one thing that they could not have. The devil told them a lie about the fruit. They had every reason to trust God and no reason to trust the devil. They believed the lie. The fruit looked good and pleasing to the eye so they ate it.

We are bombarded by all kinds of lies in the media that may look good but we have to recognize the lies. We have a multi-billion dollar industry that gets paid to convince you that you need things that you really do not even want. We sometimes believe that these things are going to make us happy, and they may momentarily, but that happiness fades pretty quickly. It is not necessarily that the things are bad. All of God's creation is good; it just becomes a problem when we have a disordered attachment to them. It is a problem when our collection becomes more important than the people in our lives and our responsibilities. If stuff is our goal in life, we will never have enough.

We are also constantly bombarded by misinformation in the media. If it seems to be too good to be true it probably is not true. Frequently there is an element of truth to what is being reported, but it is a lie. I particularly like it when the media says something like "this is a medical secret that your doctor

does not know about.” Really? It is all over the news and social media but my doctor does not know about it? And with AI, just because you see a video of someone saying something, it does not mean they said it. It may look like that individual and sound like that individual, but it may be AI. Someone told me the other day that they saw a video of the new Pope saying that he was doing away with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I know that is not true. You probably know that is not true. But how many people believe the lie? Sometimes we just need to use our common sense and what we know about how things work to judge truth. Don’t fall for the temptation to just believe the lie.

I think we can also be affected by government leaders, the rich and famous and celebrities. I think we need to be very careful about who we take as role models. There is a lot of bad behavior out there. We are affected by the sin of others. If we see enough bad behavior, it may start to seem ok. Because of our negativity bias, it is the negativity that gets our attention and the negativity that gets reported. Do not fall for the temptation. There is a lot of good behavior in our world. You may need to look for it because it is not always reported. I look at the people I personally encounter every day. I see people going out of their way to help one another all of the time. I believe that people are basically good and doing the best they can. All of that goodness is all around us. We need to look for it.

And sometimes things look pretty at first glance, but are they worth the cost? Adam and Eve thought the fruit looked good but it definitely was not worth the cost. They had to leave the Garden of Eden. When I see something in the store that I like, the first thing I do is look at the price tag. Is it worth the cost? How do addictions get started to drugs, alcohol, junk food, pornography, gambling, sex. It looks good at first glance. No one says “I think I am going to start the road to an addiction today.” Be aware of the temptation and identify when it is not worth the cost.

There are a lot of temptations in our lives. Some of them are subtle. We need to become aware of them. Know that you are always responsible for your choices. Choose to do good and avoid evil.