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God - The Grumpy Old Man?

By: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



As I crossed the great divide of puberty, I formed a vivid image of God. He was a grumpy old man with a frown on his face. Every time anyone tried to have a little fun, he'd shout "Thou shalt not!"

But to really *live* and not just *exist*, you had to do the daring, "sinful" things. What the Bible calls "sin" is where the action is.

This is what I was taught in the movies I watched and the books I read. It's what I heard in the locker room and in the checkout line, from men and women, young and old. Everybody appeared to accept this as an unquestioned matter of fact.

Behind this widespread perception lay a very successful propaganda campaign unparalleled in the history of humanity. In fact it goes back to the very beginnings of humanity. To the Garden.

Think of it for a minute. The triune God, completely sufficient in Himself and needing nothing, decides to create paradise out of chaos in an act of sheer generosity. He creates creatures of all shapes and sizes, and sets, as caretakers of them all, a couple created in God's own image and likeness, with intellect and will, freedom and responsibility. Their assigned activity is to love one another intimately, to walk daily with God in the cool of the evening, and simply enjoy Paradise. Any duties? Sort of. They had to tend the garden, which was virtually maintenance-free since neither thorn nor thistle, drought nor Japanese beetle had as yet arrived on the scene. And there was one more thing—to avoid eating the fruit of a particular tree, since it would kill them. But how hard was that, given all the other luscious fruit available in the garden?



Then appears a slithering reptile who had given them absolutely nothing. But now he has the nerve to give them advice. "Did God say you'd die if you ate this fruit? Nonsense! He only said that because eating this fruit would make you his equal, and he

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can't bear that. You see, he created you to enslave you. He wants to keep you under his foot. He's keeping the best for himself. You listen to him and you'll be missing out on *real* life. You'll be dorks forever."



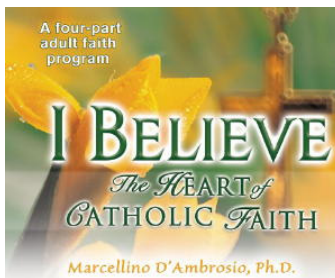
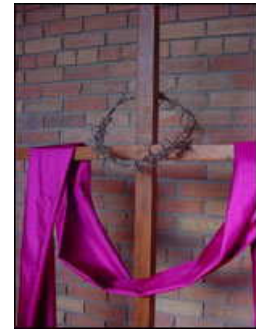
Thus began the deceptive advertising campaign that lasts till this day, the glamorization of death. For that truly is what sin is about, and that's why God says "thou shall not." He is not a crabby prude, but a loving Father. He knows us better than we know ourselves and loves us better than we love ourselves. So he does what every parent does. "Don't touch the stove, you'll get burnt." "Don't play at the top of the stairs—you'll fall and break your neck."

Our first parents believed the liar instead of the Father. They fell and broke their relationship with God and shattered the innocent intimacy they had with one another. Their family fragmented as soon as it started with Cain killing Abel. Thorns and thistles appeared, Paradise was lost, and death came into the world.

Lent begins with the memory of how the first head of the human family buckled under the pressure of the lies. But more importantly, we remember how the new Adam went another round with the deceiver and vanquished him through the power of the Word of God.

Our task during these forty days is to examine our lives in light of God's Word and see where we've allowed darkness to creep in, where we've taken the bait of the diabolical fisher of men. It's time to use the sword of the spirit to cut through his web of deception, to free ourselves from the net that holds us as prey.

That is why Lent is called a joyful season of freedom. The purple color of repentance is also the color of royalty—it's the time to recognize our true identity and claim our true birthright as free sons and daughters of a loving Father who happens to be the King of the Universe.



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