



For St. Thérèse, it's all about trust. But what is trust? That's what we're going to ponder this week, using Sacred Scripture and its giants of trust. (By the way, I'm going to be using the words "trust" and "faith" pretty much interchangeably because in Thérèse's teaching, they're more or less the same.) Next week, we're going to start learning about St. Thérèse and her spiritual doctrine, which builds on this week's scriptural foundation.

## **DAY 1**

### Eve of Darkness

We begin in the beginning with Eve and the fall of humanity, the Eve who reveals the opposite of trust, the Eve who caused the time of darkness.

Now, Eve's first mistake was that she listened to a liar — the Father of Lies. And what did he tell her? Of course, he told her a lie:

[The serpent] said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:1-5). 5

"You will not die." The serpent boldly contradicts God's Word. For God had told Adam and Eve that if they ate from the forbidden tree they would die (see Gen 2:17). So, Satan, the Father of Lies, makes God look like a liar. And he goes on to make God look jealous, selfish, and conniving: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God ..." In short, Satan casts doubt on God's goodness, making him look evil and untrustworthy.

We know the rest of the story. Eve disobeys God and leads Adam along the same path. But the key here is to notice how it all began: It began with a lie, a lie about God's Word, a lie that cast doubt on God's goodness and trustworthiness.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, commenting on the first sin of Adam and Eve, gets to the heart of it all: Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

So, according to the Catechism, it's all about trust. More precisely, it's all about our lack of trust. To one degree or another, as sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, we all have a trust problem. We tend to distrust God. In other words, just as Adam and Eve hid from God when they heard him walking in the garden after their sin, so we, too, tend to hide from God, especially when our sins weigh heavily upon us. This is one of the effects of original sin, one of its "tragic consequences."

And so, what the Catechism says about Adam and Eve, to one degree or another, applies to us all: "They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image ... ."

And what has become distorted about our image of God? His goodness. We tend to doubt God's goodness. And when we don't fully believe that God is good, then we don't fully trust in him — and that's a problem. Why? Because, again, as the

Catechism teaches, all sin involves a lack of trust in God's goodness.

To help heal our trust issues with God, on the initial day of this retreat, let's turn our attention to one of the great apostles of mercy for our time, a kindred soul to St. Thérèse: St. Maria Faustina Kowalska. Let's "visit" this humble nun and listen to her advice, as one of her own religious sisters once did:

On the initial day of the retreat, I was visited by one of the sisters who had come to make her perpetual vows. She confided to me that she had no trust in God and became discouraged at every little thing. I answered her, "It is well that you have told me this, Sister; I will pray for you." And I spoke a few words to her about how much distrust hurts the Lord Jesus, especially distrust on the part of a chosen soul. She told me that, beginning with her perpetual vows, she would practice trust. Now I know that even [some] souls that are chosen and well advanced in the religious life or the spiritual life do not have the courage to entrust themselves completely to God. And this is so because few souls know the unfathomable mercy of God and His great goodness.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fire of mercy.

Help me better to know the great and unsurpassable goodness of God.

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Jesus; "Why did Adam sin? It was because he shifted his gaze from the divine attraction, and as Eve showed him the fruit to let him eat of it, he looked at the fruit. Then his sight took pleasure in looking at it, and his hearing took delight in hearing Eve's words—that if he ate the fruit he would become like God—and his palate took delight in eating it. Indeed, taste was the first act of his ruin. On the other hand, had he been displeased by seeing the fruit, annoyed and bothered by hearing Eve's words, and disgusted by eating it, Adam would not have sinned. On the contrary, he would have performed the first heroic act of his life, by resisting and correcting Eve for what she had done, and he would have retained the everlasting crown of fidelity to the One to Whom he owed so much, and who had every right to rule over him. O how careful one must be with the different tastes that arise in the soul. If they are purely divine tastes, one must give them life; but if they are human tastes, or passions, one must put them to death; otherwise, one runs the risk of falling into the current of evil.