

IS YOUR SIN REALLY SO ORIGINAL?

St Augustine once reported that in his youth, he found it much more fun eating apples he'd pinched from a neighbour's orchard than eating the apples that came from the trees in his parents' property.

He's pretty-much picking up a most common human experience. We love the thrill of going beyond convention, beyond normal boundaries and experiencing the danger of possibly being caught and hoping we'll be skilful enough to evade detection and capture!

Pushing back the boundaries is a fundamental human urge, and the living of the gospel urges us on in this direction.

Because of our original sin, (we're all tarred with the same brush so none of us is exempt), we've often preferred to push the boundaries for adventure's sake, for ego's sake.

The spirit of rebellion, the urge for independence from authority is often our driving energy and we prefer this kind of adventure to the adventure which enhances life, which heals, which nourishes and which surprises with delight.

We seem to prefer the adventure that replaces our own feelings of inadequacy with a sense of power and freedom from anything or anyone who would tie us down.

Our adventure takes many forms. It could be a simple sleight of hand when receiving too much change at the checkout. It could be a sexual misdemeanour that we manage to justify to ourselves. It could be a failure to report income to the tax office. It could be the occasional sniff of cocaine at a trendy neighbourhood party or the failure to pay a traffic fine.

We love the thrill of acting beyond the rules.

When we're done however, all that is left is the walk of shame we must take as we return to our normal lives, work and relationships.

How marvellous it would be and how marvellous it is when we cross boundaries, bend the rules, stir the inertia of the world around us in the cause of justice, for the sake of others, in the spirit of real love.

So many of the nominees for the various Australia Day Awards spoke to us of this sense of courageous, selfless adventure.

They are no less adventurous than the furtive sinner, caught up in her or his own pleasures, but there is a profound difference.

Their hearts become free and transparent.

The self-centred adventurer develops a heart that is hidden and trapped.

The lives of loving adventurers become a gift to many.

The self-centred adventurer becomes a gift to nobody.

Lent is on the way this week. Each of us has the capacity for wonderful adventure.

Will we develop our talents this Lent in the pursuit of love or in the search for endless pleasure which feeds on itself and ends in ultimate frustration and defeat?

Rather than having our not-so-original sin driving us on, we could display something of original grace.

Original grace costs a bit in terms of sacrifice, openness to change, and a preparedness to create change for love's sake.

Sin on the other hand, at the end of the day has only death as its wages.

"Turn away from sin and believe in the gospel" we'll hear this week on Ash Wednesday.

Have a wonderful adventurous Lent each one of you.

Father Kevin