HOW TEMPTATION LEADS TO SIN:
The Inspired and Insightful Truth of Genesis Chapter 3

QUESTION: How does temptation 'work' in human beings?

ANSWER FROM GENESIS 3: Temptation works by doing the following:

1. Distorting what God has actually said to us ("Did God *really* tell you….?")
2. Making God sound more restrictive than God really is
3. Making obedience to God sound unreasonable and silly
4. Drawing us in to conversations, considerations and contexts that we know we should flee
5. We then convince ourselves that God is more restrictive than God is. IN effect, we start (in a subtle way) to make our own laws, and put them into God's mouth!
6. We become convinced that the temptation is actually more interested in our freedom, success and well-being than the overly-demanding God that we have concocted in our minds
7. We begin to believe the lie which says that we can sin and that there will be no consequences ("you certainly will not die!")
8. We begin to pass judgment on God! We go out of our appropriate relationship (obedience) and now we pass judgment on what God has told us
9. We end up belittling God
10. We set ourselves up as a god, thinking (wrongly) that we can make decisions, discern truth, and simply *live* without reference to the God who made us.
11. Temptation's 'word' has replaced God's WORD at the center of our being
12. In Genesis 3, the Tempter never actually TELLS her to sin… the Tempter causes confusion and suggests that there will never be consequences: and the human being chooses to ignore God.
13. At first, the object of the temptation appears to be GOOD (the tree was pleasing to the eye). ("When devils will the blackest sins put on, they do suggest at first with heavenly shows." William Shakespeare, *Othello).*

THE RESULTS OF SIN:
Shame. Hiding. Blame. Division. Separation from God, from each other, from world. We grasped for what is forbidden, and now we live with a longing that cannot be stilled.

As Fr. Alexander Di Lella, O.F.M. observed: "after the sly, slithering snake sows the seed of suspicion, he slinks into silence…"

SPIRITUAL HOMEWORK:

+ re-read Genesis 3.
+ How have YOU experienced the power of temptation to confuse you, cause you to doubt, and lead you to disobedience?
+ Have you allowed something or someone else to replace the Word of God at the center of your life? What has been the result of that decision?
+ how have you passed judgment on God or questioned God's motives and actions in your life?
+ have you ever been in a tempting conversation or context where you knew right away that you should leave that situation, but you continued? How did you give yourself permission to stay in that situation? What have you learned?
+ How do you continue to believe the 'lie' which suggests that there will be no consequences to your sins?

+ what has helped you to resist the power of temptation?
+ how has God helped you to live a more obedient life?
+ what happens when you make choices and decisions that are guided by God's wisdom?
+ what has been one of your powerful experiences of being forgiven by Christ, or by another person?