

Chaplain: Robert Baral

Patient: Cain, son of Adam & Eve, brother & murderer of Abel

Date of Visit: yesterday, several thousand years ago

Time of Visit: early evening

Length of Visit: several hours

Type of Visit: Referral from GOD via The ArchAngel Gabriel. Time travel by Dr Who.

Location of Ministry: The Land of Nod, east of The Garden of Eden, under a fig tree.

Title: "An Imaginary Pastoral Visit with Cain, Who Murdered His Brother

Abel: Your Best Friend is Who?"

**Diagnosis & Prognosis:** Unresolved spiritual, family & social issues related to murder. Critically poor earthy & eternal outlook in the absence of Faith, repentance & forgiveness.

**Peer group focus:** How boundless is GOD's Mercy?

**Introduction:**

I am off duty from my Chaplain duties and am enjoying a quiet coffee and donut at Dunkin Donuts. The Archangel Gabriel suddenly descends and sits down with me. He hands me a note, "Dear Chaplain Bob: Please see Cain re some unresolved family issues. Gabriel will accompany you to the time and location and return you to DD's via Dr. Who's wondrous time traveling phone booth. Thanks. - GOD. PS – Unlimited DD donuts & Indulgence of 1 year off Purgatory for every minute you spend with Cain if you take this assignment." Unlimited donuts? Naturally, I accept the offer!

**The Text and players:**

G - Gabriel The Archangel

C – Cain the murderer

B – Bob the Chaplain

G1 – Here we are, Bob!

B1 – Where is here?

G2 – This is the land of Nod, east of The Garden of Eden. We'll find Cain wandering around here somewhere. Look for the guy with "The Mark of The LORD" on his head.

B2 – There's a mean looking dude under that fig tree with a black leather jacket, chains and a motorcycle. Is that him?

G3 – Yep. That's Cain the murderer.

B3 – What's with the blue K-Mart shopper's sale strobe light on top of his head?

G4 – That's "The Mark of The LORD" that GOD put on Cain, so that nobody would knock him off like he did his brother. [Gabriel chuckles.] Any would-be killer of Cain would die laughing.

B4 – I didn't know they had motorcycle tuffs and Kmart's in the land of Nod!

G5 – Stop procrastinating and get in there, Chaplain Bob!

B6 – Not unless you come with me.

G6 – Oh, alright. Can I finish your Dunkin Donut?

B7 – Only if you promise this guy isn't going to knock me off like he did his brother.

G7 – [The Archangel Gabriel agrees. He takes my DD Latte French Vanilla coffee and double chocolate glazed DD donut. He finishes them off instantaneously.] We don't have Dunkin Donuts in Heaven. Just Crispy Cream and Starbucks.

B8 – I'll have to talk to The Lord about that after this is over. [We proceed to the fig tree. Echoes of JESUS knowing Nathaniel before He even saw him under the fig tree. <sup>1</sup>

G8 – Excuse me, Cain. It's The Archangel Gabriel again.

C1 – Yeah, wing boy, what do you want?

G9 – Don't cop an attitude with me, or I'll smite you. Here. GOD sent some new batteries for your ridiculous blue light special head light. [Gabriel hands Cain the new batteries.] Make sure they're installed right and the light is on. Or else!

C2 – Yeah, right. Who's the stiff? Are you an undertaker or something?

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<sup>1</sup> 1, NAB, JOHN 1:47-49, "JESUS saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, 'Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him.' Nathanael said to Him, 'How do you know me?' JESUS answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.' Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi, You are The Son of GOD; You are The King of Israel.'"

B9 – Hi Cain. My name is Chaplain Bob. I'd like to offer to visit with you for a little while, if that's okay.

C3 – Do I have a choice?

G10 – GOD says, “No, you don't.” And don't go beating up Chaplain Bob like you did the last 50 Chaplains! You know how expensive health care is today! [Gabriel turns to me and whispers under a wing.] Don't let his gruffness intimidate you. He's really a gentle guy. Look, he even has a pet goldfish! Oh my, there's the cherubim with the flaming sword that guards the entrance to The Garden of Eden. I need to catch up with him on Garden parties. I'll be back when you boys are done! [Gabriel smiles and flies off. Chucking to himself.]

B10 – [I note the dried up goldfish hanging around his neck with the fins all pulled out.] Right, thanks Gabriel. [I smile at Cain and offer my hand.] Nice goldfish!

C4 – Great. Another goody-two-shoes Puritan type Preacher, sent to make nice-nice. Do you know what I did to my brother Abel?

B11 – I think you had some family issues going on there, didn't you? Was it anything like what you did to your pet goldfish?

C5 – His name is Gill. Like in the movie, “What About Bob.”

B12 – You have movies here?

C6 – What, you think we're barbarians here just because we don't have Dunkin Donuts?

B13 – No, I'm sure you're all very civilized. But you were talking about your brother...

C7 - GOD favored my brother's sacrifice over mine. He was just a shepherd of sheep. I worked the land and actually got things done!

B14 – It sounds like you may have a little bit of anger over that.

C8 – Wise guy, huh? You want to look like Gill here? [Cain becomes pensive.] Okay, I feel maybe a little angry. Let me tell you about my brother Abel and I. I was the first born son to our parents, Adam and Eve, after they were expelled from The Garden of Eden. My name means “possession.”<sup>2</sup> Nice to be a possession to your Dad and Mom. So when I was born, Eve exclaimed, “I have produced a man with the help of The LORD!”<sup>3</sup> I became a “tiller of the soil,” a farmer.<sup>4</sup>

B15 – And your brother Abel?

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<sup>2</sup> 2, Strong's Data, 7014, QAYIN, meaning “possession.” 1) eldest son of Adam and Eve and the first murderer having murdered his brother Abel...

<sup>3</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:1.

<sup>4</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:2.

C9 – Our parents had a second son, my brother Abel. His name means “breath.”<sup>5</sup> Abel was a “keeper of flocks,” a shepherd.<sup>6</sup> I use to call him “sheep breath.”

B16 – So at first there’s just 2 sons, you and Abel.

C10 – Right. And one day we both brought offerings to The LORD. Mine was from “the fruit of the soil.” Abel’s was “one of the best firstlings of his flock.” GOD “looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on me and my offering He did not.”<sup>7</sup>

B17 – [I think, strange, that sounds very Biblical.] That must have been very painful for you, to have GOD accept Abel and his offering, but not accept you and your offering.

C11 – Yes. That hurt a lot. I became very resentful and crestfallen.<sup>8</sup>

B18 – You mean you became jealous and your face was down cast?

C12 – Yes. Jealous and downcast. Deep within me.

B19 – Why do you think you felt that way?

C13 – Well, Chaplain, in truth I think it’s because I have a bit of an anger problem.

B20 – A bit of an anger problem? You murdered your brother Abel...

C14 – I knew this would come up. GOD, the angels, everyone I meet always brings that up. Especially all you religion-type people! [In a high singsong mocking voice] That’s all I ever hear, “Cain murdered his brother Abel! Cain murdered his brother Abel! Nanananana! Nanananana!”

B21 – What drove you to that, Cain?

C15 – [Cain looks away. He becomes tearful. A long silence.] Okay, I became more than just a little angry. I became furious. A burning fire of heated vexation was kindled within me.

B22 – Against who or what?

C16 – I’ve had some time to think about this. I know I was angry at GOD because it didn’t seem fair that He did not look with favor on me and my sacrifice. But He did towards Abel. And that made me feel very angry at Abel. And now I’m so angry at myself for what I did to Abel. So angry that I...

B23 - [Suddenly this huge man is coming towards me. I have a sudden fear that maybe I’m going to eat dirt. A momentary fright comes over me. I cry out.] GOD help me!

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<sup>5</sup> 2, Strong Data, 1893, HABEL, meaning “breath.” 1) second son of Adam and Eve, murdered by his brother Cain.

<sup>6</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:1.

<sup>7</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:4-5.

<sup>8</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:5.

C17 – [Cain starts to sob uncontrollably. His whole body shakes with his crying. He falls into me and buries his head on my shoulder. His weight almost makes me collapse. I put my arms on his back. After a half hour or so, he steps back. He is able to speak. He puts his hands on my shoulders and looks me in the eye.] Thank you, Chaplain Bob. I've never been able to do that before. All the other Chaplains have just lectured at me, "You shall not murder!"<sup>9</sup> You murdered! You are going to Hell!"

B24 – Cain, thank you so much for sharing all this with me. It's good that you were able to cry at last for all of this. All those things are true, Cain. GOD says that we should not murder. You murdered your brother. And if your path doesn't change... So I am wondering if you see any way of finding another path?

C18 – I know I sinned. I didn't just kill<sup>10</sup> my brother Abel.<sup>11</sup> I murdered<sup>12</sup> him.<sup>13</sup> No, I don't want to go to Hell. I want another path. And I know GOD still cares about me.

B25 – How so?

C19 – Well, before I murdered Abel, GOD came and sat with me. He asked me why I was so resentful and downcast. He said to me, "If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master."<sup>14</sup> I sat there sulking. I let sin master me.

B26 – [Strange that I hear Cain speaking in Words of Scripture.] You feel GOD took the time to be with you because He cared about you. And now?

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<sup>9</sup> 3, NKJV, EXODUS 20:13.

<sup>10</sup> 2, Strong's Data, 5221, NACHAH. Strike, smite, hit, beat..., kill; attack and destroy, conquer, subjugate, ravage, chastise, send judgment upon, punish, destroy; inflict a blow, wound, slay, captured...

<sup>11</sup> The NKJV Text of EXODUS 20:13, "You shall not murder," is closest to The Hebrew Text. Less correct translations are The NAB of EXODUS 20:13, "You shall not kill" and The KJV of EXODUS 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill."

<sup>12</sup> 2, Strong's Data, 7523, RATSACH. Murder, slay..., premeditated, assassinate.

<sup>13</sup> 4, BHS, EXODUS 20:13, LO' TIRTSACH! Literally, "Not you murder!"

<sup>14</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:6-7.

C20 – He still cares about me. That’s what this mark is on my head – aside from GOD having a certain dry sense of humor! After I murdered Abel, GOD again came to me. He confronted me, “Where is your brother Abel?” What was I thinking? I was so hardhearted! I answered The LORD, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” [Cain’s voice trails off in tearfulness. He rings his hands. He looks down at the ground.] But GOD heard the innocent blood of my brother crying out to Him. So GOD punished me by cursing the soil to me and condemned me to become “a restless wanderer on the earth!”<sup>15</sup>

B27 – But you said GOD still cares about you. Is there a better path here for you, Cain?

C21 – When I complained that my punishment was too heavy for me to bear, and that I was to avoid His Presence, and that others might kill me, GOD said, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold!” So GOD put this mark on me, to warn anyone who might think of knocking me off. I’m still under GOD’s protection because He cares about me.<sup>16</sup> And there’s other things, too...

B28 – [I put my hand on his shoulder. He looks up at me.] As you say, GOD still cares about you, Cain.

C22 – So I’ve sinned terribly by murdering my brother Abel. It was a grave matter in breaking The Commandment to not murder. I did it with full knowledge that taking the life of my brother in cold blood was very wrong. And I planned it out and did it deliberately.<sup>17</sup> But I acknowledge it. I’ve paid a heavy price of penance for it. My heart is heavy for what I did. And I want to be forgiven by GOD and my parents, Adam and Eve. I want to be able to walk in GOD’s Presence again.

B29 – Go on...

C23 - And when I die, I want to go to Heaven – O LORD, “Better one day in Your Courts than a thousand elsewhere. Better the threshold of The House of my GOD than a home in the tents of the wicked!”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:9-12.

<sup>16</sup> 1, NAB, GENESIS 4:13-15.

<sup>17</sup> 5, CCC # 1857, p 507. “For a *sin* to be *Mortal*, three conditions must together be met: “Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.”

<sup>18</sup> 1, NAB, PSALM 84:11.

B30 – [I suddenly have an overwhelmingly strange feeling. It sounds like Cain is quoting The Catechism of The Catholic Church – the 3 components of Mortal Sin – a grave matter; done with full knowledge; done as a deliberate act. And he's quoting The Holy Bible – PSALM 84:11! I dismiss it. How could that be?] To recognize and confess that we've sinned out of remorse for what we've done is the foundation for approaching and receiving forgiveness, Cain.

C24 –How do you know that, Chaplain Bob?

B31 – Because it says so here in my New American Bible in I JOHN 1:8-9, "If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves, and The Truth is not in us...."

C25 – I know the rest of that! But "If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing!"<sup>19</sup> Why? Because "...GOD so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life!"<sup>20</sup>

B32 – [I am stunned. Cain is Biblically literate! I suddenly see a blue hat with gold letters on the handlebars of Cain's motorcycle. Looks strangely familiar – like a hat I saw on the head of a husband of a patient not long ago in the ICU at a local hospital.] Cain, how do you know These Words?

C26 – My Best Friend gave me the hat and The Bible. [He opens up a New American Bible and turns to I JOHN 1:8-9. He points to The Text. He then picks up the hat and shows me what's written on it.] See Chaplain Bob? My Best Friend gave me the certificate and the hat after I finished reading through The New American Bible and Catechism of The Catholic Church. [He hands me the hat and certificate.] It's bringing me closer to receiving GOD's forgiveness. I still have to go through RCIA<sup>21</sup> to enter The Catholic Church and receive The Sacraments. But that's where my Best Friend is helping me to get to.

B33 – [I pick up the hat and stare at it in amazement. It reads in bold gold letters, "I JOHN 1:8-9 – JESUS, I'd be lost without You!" The certificate is signed where it says "Instructor." I look at The Signature. I read it slowly out loud.] "JESUS CHRIST, Son of GOD, Lamb of GOD, Who takes away the sins of the world, Best Friend of Cain – the firstborn son of Adam and Eve." [I feel overcome.]

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<sup>19</sup> 1, NAB, I JOHN 1:8-9.

<sup>20</sup> 1, NAB, JOHN 3:16.

<sup>21</sup> Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. Authorized teaching program for adults to join The Catholic Church.

C27 – [Cain takes me under my arm and steadies me. He fans me with his I JOHN 1:8-9 hat.] Chaplain Bob, you look pale. Are you okay? Here. Have an Dunkin Donut.

B34 – [I regain my composure.] Huh? No, I better not. Just in case I'm not authorized. I need to check my Chaplain manual for the protocol first. [I refocus.] So, Cain, your Best Friend is JESUS CHRIST?

C28 – Well, yes, Chaplain Bob. He is The Word of GOD Incarnate.<sup>22</sup> He's working with me to make my burdens easier.<sup>23</sup> Don't you know Him?

B35 – Well, yes, I do. It's just that I'm suddenly not clear on GOD's Plan for why I'm here with you now.

C29 – Well that's easy. My Best Friend said we both needed some HOLY SPIRIT filled encouragement. Seems it was easier for The Archangel Gabriel to bring you here than to bring me to you. Something about the universe being shaped like a giant Dunkin Donut, which makes time travel possible. So my Best Friend's Mother – Her Name is Mary – said, 'Bring Chaplain Bob to Cain.' Sorry for being a little gruff with you when you first landed. I get a little antisocial sometimes... Would you like to pet my goldfish Gill?

G11 – [Amid the flap of wings, The Archangel Gabriel lands.] So you boys had a nice talk? There's a Dunkin Donuts just opened up outside The Garden of Eden. And you'll never guess who's the slob moping the floors and cleaning the tables, but That Old Serpent Lucifer! Here, I brought a dozen double chocolate glazed for you two from your Best Friend. [The visit ends as it began. Gabriel delivers me back to my own time and place. What a road trip!]

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<sup>22</sup> 1, NAB, JOHN 1:1&14, "In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with GOD, and The Word was GOD. And The Word became flesh and made His Dwelling among us, and we saw His Glory, The Glory as of The Father's only Son, full of Grace and Truth."

<sup>23</sup> 1, NAB, MATTHEW 11:28-30, JESUS says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I AM meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For My yoke is easy, and my burden light."



### **Self-Awareness:**

Humor aside, the subject of this imaginary pastoral visit is deadly serious: sin and forgiveness. I have a feeling of awe when I think of The Sovereignty and Providence of GOD and how feeble human words are in trying to understand it. It is not for man to sit in The Judgement Seat of GOD. GOD forbid I should be a stumbling block for anyone in finding GOD's Peace.

I am aware in thankfulness of how much JESUS CHRIST has forgiven me. In this imaginary pastoral scenario, I would have been suddenly aware that GOD's Grace extends in ways I do not fully understand over all mankind. I went into this case thinking Cain to be a Lost Cause and beyond the reach of GOD's forgiveness. Man can not limit Divine Mercy, except by his own hardhearted refusal to repent.

### **Theological Reflection:**

The Catechism of The Catholic Church teaches that sin is “an offense against reason, truth and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for GOD and neighbor... It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity.” Saint Augustine defines Sin as “an utterance, a deed or a desire contrary to The Eternal Law,” i.e. The Moral Law.<sup>24</sup> Sin is thus “an offense against GOD” when we withhold our Duty to GOD, neighbor or self. “Sin sets itself against GOD's Love for us and turns our hearts away from it...”<sup>25</sup>

Sins can be classed “...according to their objects, as can every human act; or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or according to The Commandments they violate. They can also be classed according to whether they concern GOD, neighbor, or oneself; they can be divided into spiritual and... [physical] sins, or again as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission...”<sup>26</sup>

Catholic Tradition also classifies Sin according to their gravity. Mortal Sin destroys Charity in men's hearts and right relationship with

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<sup>24</sup> 5, CCC, # 1849, p 505.

<sup>25</sup> 5, CCC, 3 1850, p 505.

<sup>26</sup> 5, CCC, # 1853, p 506.

GOD, Church, others and self by “a Grave violation of GOD’s Law.” Venial Sin does not destroy Charity in men’s hearts, or a right relationship with GOD, Church, others and self. But it inhibits and diminishes it. <sup>27</sup>

The cleansing away of Mortal Sin and its results “...necessitates a new initiative of GOD's Mercy and a conversion of heart” usually within The Sacrament of Reconciliation. GOD offers and invites man to respond by His Grace. The greatest danger of mortal sin is that it openly and willfully stands in opposition to The Love of GOD and/or The Love of neighbor. Examples of Mortal Sin that break The First Table <sup>28</sup> of The Ten Commandments would be “blasphemy or perjury.” Examples of Mortal Sin that break The Second Table <sup>29</sup> would be “homicide or adultery.” <sup>30 31</sup>

For a sin to be mortal, i.e. deadly to the soul in this life and in Eternity, 3 conditions must come together: 1.) The object of the sin is a “grave matter” – a breaking of The Moral Law <sup>32</sup> 2.) The sin is “committed with full knowledge” of the intellect that it is in violation GOD’s Law; 3.) The sin must be done with “deliberate consent” of the free will as a personal choice. <sup>33</sup>

### **Lessons in Ministry:**

Cain committed the mortal sin of murder by slaying his brother Abel in cold premeditated blood. It was a grave matter, committed with full knowledge and chosen with deliberate consent. Therefore Cain was cast out. But GOD did not stop caring for him. The point of this hypothetical “verbatim story” is that GOD’s forgiveness was not out of reach of Cain if there is appropriate remorse and confession, even though earthly and Eternal punishments, restitutions and consequences may remain.

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<sup>27</sup> 5, CCC, # 1855, p 507.

<sup>28</sup> 1, NAB, EXODUS 20:1-11. Those Commandments that state man’s duties to GOD.

<sup>29</sup> 1, NAB, EXODUS 20:12-17. Those Commandments that state man’s duties to his fellow man.

<sup>30</sup> 5, CCC, # 1856, p 507.

<sup>31</sup> 5, CCC, # 1856, p 507. The cleansing away of Venial Sin can be done, with GOD’s Grace, by The Free Will as in prayer. This is so because Venial Sins misuse the blessings of GOD, but do not destroy love of GOD and neighbor in men, such as “thoughtless chatter or immoderate laughter.”

<sup>32</sup> 1, NAB, EXODUS 20:1-17. The Ten Commandments.

<sup>33</sup> 5, CCC, #1857-1859, p 507-508.

The Lord tells us the only sin that is not forgivable is blasphemy against The HOLY SPIRIT. <sup>34</sup> "...There are no limits to The Mercy of GOD, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept His Mercy by repenting rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by The HOLY SPIRIT. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and Eternal Loss" in Hell. <sup>35</sup> In our hypothetical pastoral visit, Cain was still living out his earthly life. Though he was experiencing the consequences of his mortal sin, he was not then beyond the reach of GOD's Mercy.

Point 1: Never have so little regard for GOD's Mercy as to take away hope from people of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with GOD. Until the moment that the soul leaves the body, perhaps even in the twinkling of an eye, there is always the possibility of redemption at The Cross.

Point 2: Never cheapen the depth and nature of sin by sugarcoating it with blanket "cheap grace," a counterfeit of GOD's Grace. When people are in unrepentant mortal sin and their souls are in danger of Hell, it is the height of callous coldness – the exact opposite of true Love – to call that which is evil as good and that which is good as evil. In doing so, we become parties to the destruction of lives and souls and repudiate The Truth of The Cross.

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<sup>34</sup> 1, NAB, LUKE 12:8-10, "...Everyone who speaks a word against The Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against The Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." See also MATTHEW 12:30-32 & MARK 3:28-29.

<sup>35</sup> 5, CCC, # 1864, p 509.

## **References**

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