

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year 2023

The 'Other World' continued

Yes, whenever (or almost whenever) the Son speaks of 'life', this is the life he's talking about: not biological life, but the life of the Trinity – Father, Son and Spirit – into which we are inserted, and in which we will participate. We're swept up into this trinitarian life by being grafted into the Son, becoming members of his body, and taken up with him in his return to the Father.

The Son, Jesus Christ, uses 'life' and 'eternal life' interchangeably to mean the life of the Trinity. Eternal life is to be understood not as an indication of its enduring quality, but meaning specifically and only the life of the Trinity. It is the only kind of eternal life, and we can only have eternal life by participation in theirs.

But what will it be like? The Son is constantly pointing to images in the natural world that help us to imagine what the 'other world' is like. It's like a seed that grows into a great tree and puts out its branches (Matthew 13:31). Who is this tree? He is. And who are the branches? We are. (John 15:5). The 'other world' is like a dragnet cast into the sea that drags in a haul of many fish (Matthew 13:47). He likens himself to a shepherd leading his sheep to eternal life (John 10:27). Some exegetes have even seen the parable of the Prodigal Son as being not just a story of repentance and reconciliation, but at its highest level an image of return to the Father, which is the essence of eternal life, and our participation in it.

Do not be surprised that the natural world is full of images that can help us understand what the 'other world' is like. Do not be surprised that the 'other world' is reflected in this one in so many ways. This is intentional. Father, Son and Spirit – they want us to know. They want us to understand. And so their dynamic life of Freedom and Love, of going forth and return, their life of infinite self-giving, is written into the work of creation almost everywhere you look, and look deeply. Remember those images of cell division, and star fission (Sunday message 20th August 2023), and in between this microscopic and this cosmic level the most beautiful image of all – the creation of a new human being, who starts as one with his mother in an organic oneness, only to become increasingly differentiated, increasingly established in his own autonomy, subjectivity and agency. Remember those images of alternation in music between dissonance and consonance, and every kind of alternation in human relationships between separation and coming together (Sunday message 3rd September 2023). Freedom, and Love. Yes, the natural world is full of reflections of the 'other world' and can help us to know and to understand. Be like Jesus and learn to read the natural world.

And now come with me on a voyage into space. Come and let us discover new images of the 'other world' in the vastness of this created order. Come with me and let's travel out to that binary star system (Sunday message 30th July 2023) and take a closer look.

to be continued...  Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year, 17 September 2023