

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Thirtieth Sunday of the Year 2023

The 'Other World' continued

Did you have a chance to go back to Genesis 2 and see how human beings are created? What makes human beings fundamentally and qualitatively different from the other animals is not more advanced evolution in this world, but something from beyond this world, a bolt from the 'other world'.

'Yahweh God fashioned man of dust from the earth...' (*Genesis 2:7a*).

So far so good. Man is fashioned from the dust of the earth, just like the other animals. (As an aside, this is not intended as a scientific nor even a historical account of Man's creation. Genesis 1-11 are what Karol Wojtyła calls Man's 'theological pre-history'.)

But then Yahweh God does something that is not said of any of the other animals: **'Then he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.'** (*Genesis 2:7b*).

Genesis 2 is talking about the Spirit, the 'breath of life', coming from the 'other world', coming from there into this world, and pouring into, being 'breathed' into the created world, into this particular aspect of creation, into this particular creature – Man.

Notice that Genesis 2 calls the Spirit 'the breath of life'. Recall from earlier in these reflections on the 'other world' that whenever Jesus talks about 'life' he is talking not about the biological life that is of this world, but of the eternal life that is the 'other world', the world that is the life of Father, Son and Spirit. So too here in Genesis 2 the 'breath of life' is not talking about the biological life that Man has in common with the other animals, but about the life of the 'other world', the life of the Spirit.

The verse concludes: **'...and the man became a living being'** (*Genesis 2:7c*). It's true that the other animals can be said to be 'living beings'. But here's the qualitative and fundamental difference. For the other animals 'living being' means the biological life of this world. Human beings are also 'living beings' in this same biological sense. But the context in Genesis 2 makes it clear that in the case of Man, 'living being' now takes on a new meaning. In the case of human beings, 'living being' means living with the life of the Spirit.

This is the anthropology of Genesis 2. This, according to Genesis 2, is what makes human beings distinct from the other animals, distinct not by degree but fundamentally and qualitatively. The creation of Man is a coming together in the human being between the material of this world, and the Spirit from the 'other world'.

This raises three further questions:

1. Genesis 2 gives an objective account of what it means to be a human being in the coming together of biological organism and the Spirit, but what about his subjective experiences as a human being? Is the anthropology complete without this?
2. The experience of freedom, that essential dynamic of the 'other world': How do biology and Spirit each contribute to, or even diminish the experience of freedom?
3. Is this account of Man valid just for this world, just for the 'other world', or for both?

to be continued

Wilson

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