

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Thirty-Thirty Sunday of the Year 2023

The 'Other World' continued from 05.11.23

Yes, each human being, even before the 'other world', yes already in this world, is a coming together of earth and heaven, a coming together of 'dust from the earth' (albeit in the complex biological form of *homo sapiens*) and the Spirit, breathed into him or her from beyond this world, breathed into him or her from the 'other world' (Genesis 2:7). In this world what we're looking at here is a process, an ongoing work of creation. It's also a work of co-operation, collaboration, even co-creation: Our capacity to be filled with the Spirit is increased by our openness to Him, by our desire for Him, by our explicit invitation to Him. 'Come Creator Spirit, come into our minds and hearts, fill us with yourself, and continue this work of creation!'

I mentioned already that the coming of the Spirit in this world is focussed on a particular historical event, the Day Pentecost (approx. AD 30), and focussed for each individual in the Sacrament of Confirmation. But I mentioned also that the outpouring of the Spirit into Man is not limited to these discrete moments, either in the history of humanity, or in the lives of individual human beings. In the historical books of the Old Testament, long before the Christian Pentecost of around AD 30, there are multiple texts that tell of the Spirit empowering individuals:

Moses – 'The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.' (Numbers 11)

Samson – 'The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan.' (Judges 13)

David – 'Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David from that day on.' (1 Samuel 16)

The Old Testament prophets too, Isaiah and Ezekiel, tell of their empowerment by the Spirit: in the case of Ezekiel, the Spirit entering into him. (Isaiah 59, Ezekiel 2).

But the New Testament presents the Christian Pentecost as an unprecedented intervention of the Spirit that transforms Man in an unprecedented way. Here's how Jesus himself speaks of it: 'And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.' (Luke 24:49). Then Pentecost itself – 'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2) – as the fulfilment of these prophetic words of Jesus.

This world takes us as far as we can go in terms of the ongoing work of Man's creation. Indeed the post-Pentecost era is presented in the New Testament as the final age of the world. (eg 1 John 2). We have, to the extent of our capacity, been 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:4), in the Sacrament of Confirmation, yes, our own personal Pentecost, also in manifold ways in each of the sacraments, and in the unlimited ways of the Spirit.

But however unprecedented the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, and however unprecedented the infusion of the Spirit into each individual in every subsequent generation, this is all in this world. In the 'other world' we encounter something utterly new: a 'new spiritualisation of the body'.

to be continued...



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