

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024

*The 'Other World' continued from 14.01.24*

Dear People of St Mary's, I'm offering you these reflections as reflections on heaven, eternal life, what Jesus refers to as the 'other world' (*Luke 20:35*). So, why this big digression into the creation of Man, and how in particular the Spirit is 'poured onto' him (*Joel 3*), 'breathed into' him (*Ezekiel 37*), how Man 'drinks in' the Spirit (*John 7*), how he is 'plunged into' the Spirit (*Acts 1*) and 'filled with' the Spirit (*Acts 2*)? It's because there is an essential continuity between what we are in this world and what we will be in the 'other world'. If we want to know what it means to be a human being in heaven, in eternal life, in the 'other world', and how we will be, what we will be like, how we will live in the 'other world', our starting point is to get some clarity on what it means to be a human being in this world.

At the end of each day, before you go to bed, take a moment and try to think over some of the decisions and actions you've taken during the course of the day. In each case see if you can dig down and determine the underlying motivation for a decision or an action you've taken. It's not easy. 'The heart is more devious than any other thing!' (*Jeremiah 17:9*). There will be lots of little decisions and actions every day that you can put under the microscope. But let's take an imaginary example, and a big one for the sake of illustration. Instead of your usual beach holiday you decide to spend a week working on the streets of Kolkata working alongside the Missionaries of Charity. Why? Dig down. See if you can analyse your motives. There are loads of possibilities. You love Christ and you see Him in the poor; your sense of compassion drives you to minister to the poor; you want to help make this a better world; you want to become a better person; you want a feeling of satisfaction; you want the experience/adventure of something different that takes you out of your comfort zone; you want to make a good impression on others; you want to enhance your CV.

I'd like to suggest to you that without the Spirit in us our decisions and actions are driven by instincts such as self-preservation, and self-propagation. You can probably identify one or other of these instincts in some of the motives I listed in the Kolkata example. Just to be clear, none of the eight motives I listed are actually bad. They're all good motives. And this is consistent with the repeated insistence in *Genesis 1* that the birds and the sea creatures and the cattle and the reptiles and all the wild beasts of the earth are good, with their instincts of self-preservation and self-propagation. And this includes Man, even before the Spirit is breathed into him for his transformation.

But, while all the eight suggested motives I listed in the Kolkata example are 'good', some of the motives are 'very good'. So, what is it that elevates Man from being 'good' to being very good? (*cf Genesis 1:31*). What is it that elevates his motivation from being good to 'very good'? What is it that takes him beyond instinct for survival+flourishing for self+family+species and elevates him to these higher motives? Certainly nothing from this world of evolution and survival of the fittest. It can only be something from beyond this world.

*to be continued...*

*William*

21 January 2024