

Sunday Message from Fr William for Second Sunday of Easter 2024

The 'Other World' continued from 17.03.24

Yes, we are created for uniqueness, in this and in the 'other world'. Each of us is a unique body with a unique set of features and a unique neural network, giving rise to a unique personal identity and a unique personal subjectivity. (Or, if you lean more towards the dualist anthropology, each of us has a unique body and is a unique soul.)

And we are created for freedom, in this and in the 'other world'. We are each created to live from our deepest desires and aspirations, the desires and aspirations that arise from the core of our being, from the core of our personal subjectivity. Sometimes we have conflicting desires: on the one hand – truth, justice, kindness, fidelity, honesty, forgiveness etc; on the other hand – greed, deceit, revenge, exploitation, lust, and worse. If Man is created 'good' and 'in the image and likeness of God' (Genesis 1) then the former desires and aspirations are deeper and more fundamental, even inalienable, to our personal subjectivity and agency, the latter more superficial and by contrast transient and dispensable. But while these latter desires and aspirations persist they constitute a restriction on our freedom to live by our deepest desires and aspirations. Karol Wojtyła calls this the 'constraint of the body' (TOB 32, 41). This is an intentional repudiation of a prevalent Manichean philosophy, based on body/soul dualism, that attributes good to the soul and evil to the body. (Manichaeism apart, body/soul dualism offers an alternative account of human freedom, eg with freedom attributed to the soul, the body being a neutral agent of the soul).

What I've tried to offer you in preceding reflections is an account of how the Spirit, breathed into Man, far from dissolving human uniqueness, and far from constraining human freedom, enhances both, in an ongoing work of creation. In the case of uniqueness, not only is the starting point a unique body with a unique neural network (or unique body and unique soul in the dualist account); but the Spirit is being breathed into each of us in a unique way in this ongoing work of creation (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). In the case of freedom, not only do our deepest desires and aspirations arise from our unique personal subjectivity, but it is the Spirit who is progressively creating this unique personal subjectivity and so ever increasing our personal freedom, over against the more superficial and transient desires and aspirations that constrain us.

So, yes, we are created for uniqueness, and we are created for freedom, in this, and in the 'other world'. But we are also created, as human beings, to find our fulfilment as human beings in *community* in the 'other world' and to progress towards fulfilment as human beings in this one. This is going to be the next focus of these reflections on the 'other world'.

Let me start by giving you just two examples of community in this world each of which, each in their own way, as well as leading towards personal fulfilment in this world, point to the ultimate community, what theologians call the eschatological community, of the 'other world'.

to be continued...

William

7th April 2024