

Sunday Message from Fr William for Seventh Sunday of Easter 2024

The 'Other World' continued from 05.05.24

The first two chapters of Genesis describe a paradise on earth. The Garden of Eden is an expression of the Creator's fatherly providence. Everything necessary for the life, the flourishing and the delight of his creatures is provided by his fatherly providence. Everything is gift. The man and the woman, created in his own image and likeness, live from his fatherly providence. They live from the abundance of his gifts.

They in turn give themselves to each other in an ongoing life of self-giving love. Why? Because they have been created in the image and likeness of their Creator. It is written into their bodies that they have been created for self-giving love. It is written into their bodies as maleness and femaleness. Notice that there are no scriptures, no theology books, no manuals on morality to tell them how to live, to tell them about self-giving love. They don't need them. It's written into their bodies. They see this with perfect clarity. They experience it with perfect sensitivity. They understand it to the depths of their hearts. And they live it to the full. This is the '*spousal meaning*' of the body that Karol Wojtyła writes about in *The Theology of the Body*. (see 28 April 2024).

But in Genesis 3 the story takes an unexpected turn. Though the Creator had provided everything possible for their life, their flourishing, their delight, the man and the woman stretch out their hands to take something that is not being given by the Creator. From that moment they have decided not to live from the Creator's fatherly providence, or at least not exclusively as before from his fatherly providence. A new principle has come into operation, and it's the exact opposite of living from gifts: taking things which have not been given. We can well imagine that from then on an element of 'taking' crept into their hitherto relationship of mutual self-giving, the exact opposite of how we are supposed to live, the exact opposite of the Creator's design.

I think you'll agree that our experience of this world reflects the second situation, not the first. We might wish that we lived in the Garden of Eden. We might wish that we lived entirely from the Father's fatherly providence. We might wish that all our human relationships were ones purely of self-giving love. In other words, we might wish that everything was gift, that the whole world operated on the 'principle of the gift' as Karol Wojtyła calls it. The reality is that, although the 'principle of the gift' is very much in operation in this world, it's also mixed in with a lot of taking as well, taking in our human relationships, which can include trying to win people to ourselves, taking from the natural world, taking things that have not been offered by the Creator. Taking the fruit from the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden, when this was not something that the Creator was giving, epitomises this human tendency.

The fact that this human tendency to take-take-take, instead of give-give-give, is so evident in this world, in ourselves, means one of two things. Either we are not reading with clarity the true meaning of the maleness/femaleness of our body, may not even have been remotely aware that our maleness and femaleness carried such a meaning. Or we are beginning to know how to read this meaning in our bodies, but for some reason we are choosing not to live it... *to be continued...*

Wilson

12th May 2024