

Sunday Message from Fr William for Pentecost Sunday 2024

The 'Other World' continued from 12.05.24

In my opening reflection on the 'other world' (2 July 2023) I wrote that the Bible is packed with glimpses into the 'other world', and that our task is to unpack it with the guidance of wise guides, gifted by the Spirit with the gifts of wisdom and understanding. I hope your experience of these reflections so far has lived up to that aspiration. Our principal guide has been and will continue to be Jesus Christ whose words are recorded in the Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in other New Testament documents, notably the Letter to the Hebrews. Other guides so far have included Jacques Maritain (23 July 2023), Pope Francis (2 July 2023), Hans Urs von Balthasar (20 August 2023), and in more recent reflections Karol Wojtyła, known to the world as Pope John Paul II.

That teaching of Karol Wojtyła, widely known as the *Theology of the Body*, is especially helpful in these reflections. His deep understanding of biblical teaching, and in particular of the words of Jesus, give us a wonderful insight into the 'other world', a wonderful insight into what it means to be a human being in the 'other world' as well as in this one. The resurrection of the body is an essential article of faith in the Christian tradition, and Karol Wojtyła unpacks from the words of scripture what this means for us both in this world and in the 'other world', especially in terms of our maleness and femaleness.

And, being the exceptional guide that he is, he shows us the way forward in this world to life in the 'other world'. In this world the human heart is a battle ground between the tendency to take-take-take, and the more fundamental orientation, the more fully human orientation, towards give-give-give. (See previous reflection 12 May 2024). The *Theology of the Body* gives us the tools, the weapons even, to win this battle over against this all-too-familiar tendency of take-take-take.

First, the *Theology of the Body* awakens us to the true meaning of our maleness and femaleness that speaks of self-giving, in marriage most obviously, but also in all the other forms of self-giving love which have nothing to do with sexual intimacy. Second, the *Theology of the Body* teaches us how to read with increasing clarity this meaning that has been written into our bodies, and trains us to live it in our lives in self-giving love. What we need to do, Karol Wojtyła says, is to watch over our hearts like a watchman watching over the spring of water that waters a village. Just as the watchman discards any murky water, but allows the pure clean water to flow, so we must watch over our hearts at every moment, rejecting any thoughts and impulses springing from the heart that smack of take-take-take, but allowing to flow those thoughts and impulses springing from the heart that are pure and self-giving. (*ToB* 48 – 12.11.80). If we do this consistently we gradually become masters of our own innermost impulses, and learn to read with increasingly clarity the self-giving meaning written into our bodies, and to live out in our daily lives this self-giving meaning in self-giving love. This is our training not only for the fullness of life in this world, but training for life in the resurrection of the body, for life in the 'other world'.
to be continued...

William

19th May 2024