

Sunday Message from Fr William for Corpus et Sanguinis Christi 2024

*The 'Other World' continued from 26.05.24*

Did you ever read *Perelandra* by C.S. Lewis? It's the story of the struggle between Good and Evil, set on a paradise planet called *Perelandra*. The story opens with the most beautiful portrayal of life on this paradise planet: one man and one woman, living in perfect harmony with each other and with the natural world around them. One inhabitant of planet Earth, a man called Weston, travels out to *Perelandra* bent on injecting evil into this paradise planet. A second Earthling, Ransom, makes his own voyage to *Perelandra*, hot on the heels of Weston, to try to stop him, and prevent the fall of this young paradise planet. Apart from the usual battle between Good and Evil, the beautiful portrayal of life on this imaginary planet can awaken in us a longing for such a paradise. And that's good. I hope it does for you if you get a chance to read it.

The *Theology of the Body* does something similar, except this is not fiction. It's reality. Although it begins with the paradise that is Eden (*Genesis 1,2,3*), and draws out the full joy and beauty and innocence of Eden, the primary focus it is not the paradise we may have come from, but the paradise we are heading for. Like *Perelandra*, the description of life in Eden can awaken in us a longing for such a paradise, but the paradise we are heading for, the paradise we are being created for, surpasses the paradise of Eden. Karol Wojtyła is insistent, for example, that the ongoing spiritualisation of Man that I've been writing about in these reflections does not culminate in a return to the innocence of Eden, but in the attainment of a new and unprecedented innocence, and a new and unprecedented experience of our maleness and femaleness.

Our time in this world can be seen as the struggle between Good and Evil, with the human 'heart' as the battle ground. In this account human beings are fundamentally good, orientated towards self-giving love, and have the potential to read this self-giving orientation in the maleness/femaleness of their bodies. But something gets into their heart that shouldn't be there. Karol Wojtyła calls it 'concupiscence'. It gets into the human heart and constrains it to choose and to act in ways that are contrary to its nature: to take-take-take instead of give-give-give. In this world and throughout our time in this world the concupiscence in our hearts is day by day being conquered by the constant and ongoing power of Christ's redemption.

The alternative account of our time in this world is not so much about the struggle between Good and Evil, as the ongoing spiritualisation of the human body, which is already 'good' even before the gift of spiritualisation. Our ongoing spiritualisation then gradually elevates Man from the instincts of self-preservation and self-propagation, which are merely 'good', and elevates us to increasingly become 'spiritual Man' the spiritual body, which increasingly 'reads' in its maleness and femaleness the law of self-giving love, and increasingly lives by it.

You can see where this is going – increasing freedom in this world and increasing love: Increasing freedom either from 'concupiscence' or biological instincts; and so an increasing capacity for self-giving love. We are being created for the paradise that is the 'other world'.  
...to be continued...

*William*

2nd June 2024