

Sunday Message from Fr William for Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024

The 'Other World' continued from 30.06.24

No apologies for such an extended focus on human maleness and femaleness in the foregoing reflections. Our sexuality is a massive part of who we are as human beings, both in this world, and even more so in the 'other world', as I hope these reflections have helped demonstrate. I've shared with you this extended focus human sexuality not only because it's a massive part of who we are, but also because it is constantly vulnerable to two perennial misperceptions:

Human sexuality is vulnerable to diminishment. Certain influences in this world have a tendency to narrow down our perception, and our experience, of our own maleness and femaleness to just one thing – to sexual intimacy. Sexual intimacy is a good and beautiful thing. But human sexuality, our maleness and femaleness, is, as I have set out to demonstrate in these foregoing reflections, also about vastly more than just sexual intimacy. And in the 'other world' it is in this 'vastly more' that we will live our human sexuality, the limitless ways of self-giving love.

Human sexuality is also vulnerable to the pervasive philosophy of Manichaeism that as a human race we just don't seem to be able to throw off. It just keeps coming back. Manichaeism is the view that anything to do with the material world, in particular the body, and most especially human sexuality, is essentially bad; conversely anything to do with the spirit is essentially good. Manichaeism maintains that our salvation consists in somehow transcending/jettisoning the body and everything associated with the body and attaining a purely spiritual existence. Although this is not the Christian view, Manichaean ways of thinking and speaking are still widespread even among Christians. Karol Wojtyła's *Theology of the Body*, referenced probably more than any other authority in these reflections with the exception of the Bible and the words of Christ, is, in addition to all the other things it is, the most powerful antidote to Manichaeism I've come across.

In the Christian view, the human body is not only good. It is 'very good'. (*Genesis 1:31*). The reason is that it's 'very good' is that it is created in the image and likeness of its Creator. And one particular way that it is created in the image and likeness of its Creator, the way singled out and highlighted in *Genesis 1*, is in the maleness and femaleness of the human body. (*Genesis 1:27*) This is not because the Creator is male or female, (though indeed He is male since the incarnation), but because self-giving love is the very nature of the Creator, and when this is written into the human body it takes the form of maleness and femaleness.

I wrote (23 June 2024) that since Christ, men and women have felt called to live consecrated celibacy as an *anticipation* of the 'other world'. And I wrote that the word *anticipation* needs to be understood correctly in this context. The initiative is not theirs, but Christ calling them to this, calling them to be an *anticipation* of the 'other world', calling them to be a witness to the *eschaton*, a witness to the 'other world' in which men and women, risen bodies, live their maleness and femaleness in the limitless ways of self-giving love of the 'other world'. *to be continued...*

William

7 July 2024