

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

*The 'Other World' continued from 14.07.24*

How will we apprehend/perceive/experience the vast reality of the 'other world' that lies beyond the powers of our bodily senses? Christian tradition speaks of the 'beatific vision' as the final goal and final bliss of human life in the 'other world'. (CCC 163) And it's true, at least according to Christian tradition, that we shall see the eternal Son in his risen and glorified humanity. This is only possible since the Incarnation. In becoming Man, the Son, Second Person of the Trinity, became visible, tangible, a man like us that we can experience with all our bodily senses. He remains so through the resurrection and into the 'other world'. Peter, James and John seem to have had a foretaste of this beatitude on the Mountain of Transfiguration. His face shone like the sun. 'Lord, it is wonderful for us to be here.' (*Matthew 17*).

But the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, remains ever invisible. The only meaning that can be given to the idea of 'seeing' the Father is the one given by Jesus himself: 'To have seen me is to have seen the Father.' (*John 14*). Why? Because Jesus is the visible image of the invisible Father. (see *Sunday Message 20 August 2023 for more on this and multiple scripture references, and the Colossians reference should be 1:15, not 2:9*). Moreover, to limit our experience of Father or Son or Spirit to just one of the five bodily senses seems intuitively inadequate, even if that sense of seeing does undergo a 'new spiritualisation' in the 'other world'. The Biblical account of the 'other world', taken as a whole, and mediated to you through these reflections, presents a world that engages the whole bodily being of the risen body – all our senses, all our heart and mind and strength, and our maleness and femaleness too.

The answer seems to lie again in the writings of K Wojtyła. The new spiritualisation of the body will be brought about by 'God's self-communication in his divinity to the whole of man's psychosomatic subjectivity'. (09.12.81 *ToB 67*). I've tried to relay to you the consistent biblical teaching of how the Spirit is given to us, breathed into us, poured into us, infused into us; that we are 'filled' with the Spirit as on the Day of Pentecost. Of the three persons, it is the Spirit, surely, that fills our whole bodily being, the whole of man's 'psychosomatic subjectivity'. St John of the Cross seems to have had a premonition of this. 'Sometimes the unction of the Spirit overflows into the body and all the sensory substance. All the members and bones and marrow rejoice, not in so slight a fashion as is customary, but with the feeling of great delight and glory, even in the outermost joints of the hands and feet.' (*Living Flame of Love 2:20*).

Vision turns out to be the ideal metaphor for this infusion of the Spirit: light pouring into the eye from an object gives the visual experience of the object; the Spirit pouring into the human body from Father and Son gives a whole-body experience of Father and Son. In the mechanism seeing, the eye is the receptor. When it comes to the Spirit, the whole interconnected human body, and not just the eye, has become one whole psychosomatic receptor: The beatific vision can mean a visual experience of the Son's glorified humanity, enhanced by a new spiritualisation of the senses; but it can also mean by extension, and in addition, a whole-body experience of Father, Son and Spirit.

*to be continued...*

 21 July 2024