

Man's Nature Is One and Divided

At a recent general audience, Pope John Paul II continued his reflections on the book of Genesis. Following is the text of that address.

Following the narrative of the Book of Genesis, we have seen that the "definitive" creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings. Their unity denotes above all the identity of human nature; the duality, on the other hand, manifests what, on the basis of this identity constitutes the masculinity and femininity of created man. This ontological dimension of unity and duality has, at the same time, an axiological meaning. From the text of Genesis 2:23 and from the whole context it is clearly seen that man was created as a particular value before God, but also as a particular value for the man himself: first, because he is "man"; second because the "woman" is for the man, and vice versa the "man" is for the woman.



While the first chapter of Genesis expresses this value in a purely theological form (and indirectly a metaphysical one), the second chapter on the other hand, reveals, so to speak, the first circle of the experience lived by man as value. This experience is already inscribed in the meaning of original solitude, and then in the whole narrative of the creation of man as male and female. The concise text of Gen. 2:23, which contains the words of the first man at the sight of the woman created, "taken out of him," can be considered the biblical prototype of the Canticle of Canticles. And if it is possible to read impressions and emotions through words so remote, one might also venture to say that the depth and force of this first and "original" emotion of the male-man in the presence of the humanity of the women, and at the same time in the presence of the femininity of the other human being, seems something unique and unrepeatable.

In this way the meaning of man's original unity, through masculinity and femininity, is expressed as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude and at the same time as an affirmation with regard to both human beings — of everything that constitutes "man" in solitude. In the Bible narrative, solitude is the way that leads to that unity which, following Vatican II, we can define as the communion of persons.

As we have already seen before, man, in his original solitude, acquires a personal consciousness in the process of "distinction" from all living beings and at the same time, in this solitude, opens up to a being akin to himself, defined in Genesis as "a helper fit for him". This opening is no less decisive for the person of man, in fact, it is perhaps even more decisive for the person of man, in fact, it is perhaps even more decisive than the "distinction" itself. Man's solitude, in the Yahwist narrative is presented to us not only as the first discovery of the characteristic transcendence peculiar to the person, but also as the discovery of an adequate relationship "to" the person, and therefore as an

opening and expectation of a "communion-of persons."

The term "community" could also be used here, if it were not generic and did not have so many meanings. "Communion" expresses more and with greater precision, since it indicates precisely that "help" which is derived, in a sense, from the very fact of existing as a person "beside" a person. In the Bible narrative this fact becomes — in itself — the existence of the person "for" the person, since man in his original solitude was, in a way, already in this relationship. That is confirmed, in a negative sense, precisely by his solitude.

Furthermore, the communion of persons could be formed only on the basis of a "double solitude" of man and of woman, that is, as their meeting in their "distinction" from the world of living beings (animalia), which gave them both the possibility of being and existing in a special reciprocity. The concept of "help" also expresses this reciprocity in existence, which no other living being could have ensured. Indispensable for this reciprocity was all that constituted the foundation of the solitude of each of them, and therefore also self-knowledge and self-determination, that is, subjectivity and consciousness of the meaning of one's own body.

The narrative of the creation of man, in the first chapter, affirms right from the beginning and directly that man was created in the image of God as male and female. The narrative of the second chapter, on the other hand, does not speak of the "image of God"; but it reveals in its own way, that the complete and definitive creation of "man" (subjected first to the experience of original solitude) is expressed in giving life to that "communio personarum" that man and woman form. In this way, the Yahwist narrative agrees with the content of the first narrative.

If, vice versa, we wish to draw also from the narrative of the Yahwist text the concept of "image of God" we can then deduce that Man became the "image and likeness" of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons, from the beginning. The function of the image is to reflect the one who is the model, to reproduce its own prototype. Man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, right "from the beginning" not only an image in which there is reflected the solitude of a person who rules the world, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.

In this way, the second narrative could also be a preparation for the understanding of the Trinitarian concept of the "image of God," even if the latter appears only in the first narrative. Obviously, that is not without significance also for theology of the body; in fact, it even constitutes, perhaps, the deepest theological aspect of all that can be said about man. In the mystery of creation — on the basis of the original and constituent "solitude" of his being — man was endowed with a deep unity between what is, humanly and through the body, male in him and what is, equally humanly and through the body, female in him. On all this right from the beginning, there descended the blessing of fertility, linked with human procreation.

In this way, we find ourselves almost at the very heart of the anthropological reality that has the name "body." The words of Genesis 2:23 speak of it directly and for the first time in the following terms: "flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones". The male-man utters these words, as if it were only at the sight of the woman that he was able to identify and call by name what makes them visibly similar to each other and at the same time what manifests humanity.

In the light of the preceding analysis of all the "bodies", with which man has come into contact, and which he has defined conceptually giving them their name ("animalia"), the expression "flesh of my flesh" takes on precisely this meaning: body reveals man. This concise formula already contains everything that human science could ever say about the structure of the body as organism, about its vitality, and its particular sexual physiology, etc. In this first expression of the male-man, "flesh of my flesh," there is also contained a reference to what makes that body truly human, and therefore to what determines man as a person, that is, as a being who, even in all his corporality, is "similar" to God.

We find ourselves, therefore, almost at the very core of the anthropological reality, the name of which is "body," the human body. However, as can easily be seen, this core is not only anthropological, but also essentially theological. The theology of the body, which, right from the beginning, is bound up with the creation of man in the image of God, becomes, in a way, also the theology of sex, or rather the theology of masculinity and femininity, which has its starting point here, in the Book of Genesis.

The original meaning of unity, to which the words of Genesis 2:24 bear witness, will have in the revelation of God an ample and distant perspective. This unity through the body (and the two will be one flesh) possesses a multiform dimension: an ethical dimension, as is confirmed by Christ's answer to the Pharisees in Mt. 19 and also a sacramental dimension, a strictly theological one, as is proved by St. Paul's words to the Ephesians, which refer also to the tradition of the prophets (Hosea, Isaiah, Ezekiel). And this is so because that unity which is realized through the body indicates, right from the beginning, not only the "body" but also the "incarnate" communion of persons — *communio personarum* — and calls for this communion right from the beginning.

Masculinity and femininity express the dual aspect of man's somatic constitution ("This at last is bone of bones and flesh of flesh.") and indicate, furthermore, through the same words of Gen. 2:23, the new consciousness of the sense of one's own body; a sense which, it can be said, consists in a mutual enrichment. Precisely this consciousness, through which humanity is formed again as the communion of persons, seems to be the layer which in the narrative of the creation of man (and in the revelation of the body-contained in it) is deeper than his very somatic structure as male and female. In any case, this structure is presented right from the beginning with a deep consciousness of human corporality and sexuality, and that establishes an inalienable norm for the understanding of man on the theological plane.

Insights in Liturgy

By Father Robert J. Kennedy

The Church's Year of Grace

Time is a gift from God. But time is also a problem. Time is joyous: in the words of singer John Denver, "it gives us children, makes us wine." But time can be a burden and meaningless: in the words of the rock group "Chicago," "does anybody really know what time it is? Does anybody really care?" We have too little time because our pace is so hectic; we have too much time with shorter working weeks, early retirement and unemployment. What and where

is time?

For the Christian, time is redeemed, all time is holy. Time and history are the place where God reveals himself; he is present to all the circumstances of our lives, as he has been with all his People throughout the ages. Therefore, all other measurements of time — the fiscal year, the school year, the calendar year, the seasons of nature, the times of planting and harvest — are transcended by the Christian act of redemption and superseded by it. The power of Christ's death and resurrection has touched all time and transformed it into an opportunity to enter

more fully the mystery of God.

Christian spiritual growth depends upon our taking this opportunity to deepen ourselves in the saving mysteries of Christ. We spend our time immersed in the incarnation-death-resurrection-glorification of Christ: growing in the knowledge and love of God by celebrating the wonderful things he has done for us through Jesus the Lord. Christian time is a time of growth in faith, being converted more fully to Christ and reconciled with the Father, committing ourselves more wholeheartedly to continue the work of Christ. Christian time is not for a few hours a week, but all the time, wherever we are, whatever we are doing.

The celebration of the liturgical year helps us to enter more deeply into the

whole mystery of Christ. The historical events by which Christ Jesus won our salvation through his death are not merely commemorations or sentimental journeys into the past. The popes of this century have consistently and rightly taught that, more than this, the celebration of the liturgical year exerts a special sacramental power and influence which strengthens Christian life. Thus to celebrate the mystery of Christ as it unfolds during the year is to find Christ present here and now in his saving power. It is a year of grace for the Church.

Despite the common opinion, the liturgical year does not begin with Advent. Rather we look to the celebration of the Easter Triduum as the beginning of our year in the Lord, for it celebrates the paschal

mystery by which our salvation is begun. It is the time of baptism by which we enter into the mystery of Christ and renew ourselves in his risen life. Since each Sunday celebrates this paschal mystery and the renewal of the baptismal covenant in Christ, Sunday is the heart of the liturgical year, it is the original feast day.

Once the "Great Sunday" of the Easter Season is celebrated in full with the feast of Pentecost, the Church settles into Ordinary Time, when there is the careful, reflective celebration of Christ's ministry. All of this turns us, not to the past, but toward the future, when all has been begun in Christ comes to fulfillment in the power of his Spirit. The Advent and Christmas Season inspire in us a joyful and spiritual expectation for Christ's

second coming at the end of time. As we reflect on Christ's manifestation in the flesh (Christmas), in the waters of the Jordan, and in the Marriage Feast at Cana we make straight the way of the Lord for his coming in glory. Celebrating Mary and the saints throughout the year acknowledges that this glory and Christ's victory are already at work in us.

Thus the Church's year of grace nourishes the true Christian spirit. Participation in the mysteries of Christ will give us deep roots and a firm foundation in that mystery, and we will grasp, with all God's People, what is "the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge." Then we will attain the fullness of God himself. (cf. Ephesians 3:18-19).

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