

The Four Gardens¹

Homily for Easter Saturday

In today's Gospel reading the Lord commissions the apostles to proclaim the Gospel to all of creation. This got me thinking that the proclamation of the resurrection is not meant just for human beings, but the whole of the created order is to be shaped and influenced by the resurrection of Jesus. This in turn brought to mind the interrelationship between human beings and creation as it is expressed in the Garden of Eden. For it is in that Garden that the Man names and orders all of creation:

19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.²

It was in that same Garden that we read two verses later:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh;²² and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.³

Gardens are key to the biblical story. The Garden of Eden represents the kind of relationship God intended for us to have with one another and creation. In a garden there is order, beauty and life. Order sets a garden apart from the wilderness. Its boundaries and design establish it as a specific place unlike any other. Second a garden has beauty – a diversity of flowers and plants, colours and sizes, and shapes that pleases the eyes. Finally, a garden has life. Plants grow and bear fruit, and animals find their territory, a pleasing place to live.

This is what God desired for us in the first garden. That our own lives would be ordered in harmonious relationships with him and with creation and each other. He wanted there to be an integration of our souls and bodies, man and woman, human kind with creation. Likewise the beauty of the Garden of Eden was to celebrate the beauty of these creatures made in the image of God where in turn we were to have unending life with God.

Tragically by his sin Adam rejected the gardener and order gave way to disorder, beauty to ugliness and life to death. We now find soul pitted against soul, men contending with women and creation at odds with humankind.

And so there was the necessity for a second garden, called Gethsemane where the Lord began the restoration of creation and our relationship to it. In Gethsemane he began to set right the effects of our rebellion.

¹ This homily is inspired by an essay written by Rev Paul D Scalia entitled: "Four Gardens" From That Nothing May be Lost (Page 175-176)

² [The Holy Bible](#) (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ge 2:19). (2006). Ignatius Press.

³ [The Holy Bible](#) (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ge 2:21–22). (2006). Ignatius Press.

He entered the Garden of Gethsemane to undo the rebellion of the Garden of Eden. In that Garden he took upon himself all the disorder, ugliness and death that sin had brought into the world. He who ordered the whole of the universe experienced the disorder of a mock trial and vacillating cowardice of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. He who is beauty itself was scourged and his body brutalized. Isaiah hundreds of years earlier anticipated this ugliness when he wrote:

***he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him. ⁴***

He who is life itself and as St. Peter declared in the Acts of the Apostle is “The Author of Life” died within three hours of being nailed to the Cross.

And it is in a third garden that the Lord is raised from the dead of thereby declares that in the Resurrected Saviour he is re-establishing order, beauty and life. How fitting that Mary Magdalene thought him to be the gardener for indeed he is.

For you see it is in the fourth garden of our souls he wants to enter by his grace and dwell here as the divine gardener. Jesus wants to establish within us the gifts of order, beauty and life that were intended from the beginning. Order to heal that division and discord within us that produces all the division and discord outside of us; beauty to rid us of the ugliness of sin and grant us the glory of His children, and life so that our hearts become lively and life-giving.

On Easter Day Mary Magdalene found him in a garden. He rose in a garden so that we can in turn find Him within us, establishing His new garden of grace so that in turn we can:

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.⁵

⁴ [*The Holy Bible*](#) (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Is 53:2). (2006). Ignatius Press.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible*](#) (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Mk 16:15). (2006). Ignatius Press.