

Homily for February 13th 2019
Wednesday of 5th week of Ordinary Time

This week we are reading texts from the opening chapters of Genesis. These are passages that have deep truths to teach us about what it means to be human in relation to God, the world in which we live and one another.

There are three dimensions of what it means to be human in today's reading I want to highlight.

- Human Vocation
- Human Permission
- Human Prohibition.

In our text for this morning we hear of our human vocation when Genesis declares

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

In verse 16 is expressed the human permission God gives to us:

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;

And in verse 17 the human prohibition:

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."¹

1. Vocation.

We read in Genesis 2:7:

then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

According to Catholic theology, Adam was not only created with natural or biological life, but was infused with the supernatural life of grace and holiness as is captured by the God breathing into him the breath of life.

To till and to keep the garden.... Same language used of the priest in relation to the Temple.

Now with this in mind think back to Genesis 1.

Creations comes forth from God as a kind of liturgical procession one after another. Find purpose in worshipping the creator. Flower is giving praise to God, water is not consciously aware of what it is doing, fulfilling its purpose, giving worship to God.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ge 2:15–17). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Who comes at the end of procession? Human beings made in the image of God. They lead creation in right praise. To be the high priest of leading all of creation in the right praise of God. This is at the heart of the human vocation according to Genesis.

2. Discuss Human Permission that is given.

May eat freely: Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, ²

Psalm 104 is a psalm that expresses our praise in response to God's generous permission.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,³*

All forms of human flourishing is foreshadowed in the play of Adam and Eve in the field of the Lord.

JOHN OF DAMASCUS who lived in 8th century said of the tree of life:

For God says, "Of every tree of paradise you shall eat," meaning, I think, by means of all created things you will be drawn up to me, their Creator, and from them reap the one fruit which is myself, who am the true life. Let all things be fruitful life to you, and make participation in me to be the substance of your own existence, for thus you shall be immortal⁴

3. Human Prohibition:

We are not to define the world apart from God, not to take the place of God. Our lives can only be rightly ordered when we understand our vocation and God's generous permission. When we neglect these and try to give life meaning apart from God we experience a spiritual death because life becomes confused and distorted by human sin.

Human sin results in using the created universe in ways that separate us from God, like Jesus teaches in today's gospel. Think of the sinful attitudes and actions coming forth from the human heart:

Fornication, theft, murder, ²² adultery, avarice are all ways of relating to the created order in ways that distort how we interact with God's good creation, and his generous permission.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ge 2:9). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ps 104:1). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁴ Louth, A., & Conti, M. (2001). [*Genesis 1–11*](#) (p. 61). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly are all interior attitudes that separate the soul from God and confuse our sense of vocation in the world.

May we keep before us this day of vocation and God generous permission so we can live purposefully from a heart that is set on God and so order our thoughts and actions to be drawn up to God and so share in His life.