

Homily for February 9th 2017

Today we read in Genesis 2 a passage that unfolds for us the Bible's understanding of what it means to be human in a most amazing way. God says that it is not good for the Man to be alone.

Now I want to think about this saying in two ways. God does not want Man to be lost in the universe and so he gives him the ability to name the creation. Secondly God does not want the Man to be lost in relation to his own sexuality and so he creates sexual complementarity.

Let me now look at each of these in turn. What do I mean by saying God does not want man to be lost in the Universe? Think about times when you have been lost. When this happens we have nothing to orientate ourselves.

I remember this happening once when I was cross country skiing in Kananaskis Country. I am a bad map reader at the best of times, and those maps in K Country are a challenge, especially when I did not have my glasses. I completely misread that map and was disorientated. What should have been a 2 kilometre ski back to my van ended up being 8 kilometres!

When we are lost it is unnerving at best, and can at worst, be terrifying. So much of modern philosophy, called "Existentialism" celebrates this "lostness". Books like Jean Paul Satre's "Nothingness" and "Nausea" convey this idea that we have been set lose in the universe with nothing to ground us, so life is meaningless and leaves us wanting to throw up.

This is where Genesis 2 provides such a different understanding. We read in the text:

whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

In Genesis 1 God calls creation into being. When God speaks the Universe is made. Because human beings are made in the image of God, while we cannot call creation into being, we have been entrusted with calling creation into meaning. By naming, that is cataloguing the creatures, the Man is given this profound work of understanding the creation in which he is placed.

This speaks to us of the gift that has been given to us by God in the area of the sciences, history, philosophy, medicine, the arts, to make sense of the world in which we live. The arts, humanities and sciences help to orientate our lives so that rather than feeling lost in the universe we can locate ourselves as we bring creation into meaning.

Secondly God does not want man to be lost in relation to his own sexuality. God has made Man for community because just as God is a Community as the Blessed Trinity, so too as those made in God's image, Man is made for community. Just as Man's naming of creation brings it into meaning and order, so too the ordering of Man's sexuality finds meaning only in relation to the woman of whom we read:

Then the Man said:

**“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man**

Now here is the thing I want you to take away from this passage.

In the Hebrew there are two words for Man, “Adam” and “Is”. In Genesis 2 the word used for man all the way up to verse 23 is the word “Adam”. When the Man falls asleep he is “Adam”, but upon waking when he the man says “Is”.

So we can read this as: “she shall be called “issa” because she was taken out of “is”.

The very sounds of these two words bring to the ear that “is” and “issa” not only complement each other but also complete each other. Prior to the creation of the woman we read of “Adam”. After the creation of the woman we read of “Is” and “Issa”.

This has such significant implications that we cannot unpack today. What I want to leave you with is an understanding that the very language of Genesis chapter 2 underscores what the Church has always taught, that apart from understanding the complementarity of the sexes we will be lost in the ordering of our sexuality. This is something that we see happening with unprecedented agreement among so many today. Maleness, (is) and femaleness (issa) are no longer taken as gifts given to us by God. Rather gender and sexual orientation can be redefined in whatever way people choose. How contrary this is to the vision of Genesis.

For God does not want us to be alone. For that reason he gave us the gift of naming the creation into meaning and naming the way man and woman compliment each other so that sexuality can be ordered and so reflect our being image bearers of the Triune God.