

Homily – January 19th, 2025 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

We can spend a lot of time surmising about how the universe was created, about



how old the cosmos is, and about the sheer awesomeness of God’s creative love. To think of creation, from our little perspective, is mind-blowing and humbling at the same time. What I’m trying to spend more time with lately is “re-creation,” how God’s creative

power—which is nothing less than the power of love—is *still* at work in the world.

I don’t believe creation was a one-off event, done and over with on the seventh day, when God put up his feet and had a beer. Under God’s constant care, the world is still evolving. Like human parents—who never can stop being parents—God remains actively involve in the growth and evolution of everyone and everything that was created in the first place.

When we share our gifts, the gifts of wisdom, healing, knowledge, prophecy—to name a few from that second reading—we are participating in God’s Spirit, the very breath of God that brought all things into being in the very beginning. It’s the same Spirit still at work, still nudging us onward today. So, there is creation, but there is also ongoing recreation. There is always more than what meets the eye, always more coming down the pike, always a resurrection that follows every death.

The prophet Isaiah, in that first reading, was dealing with a people who had given up on believing in a future of hope. They had spent 50 years living in exile, away from their home country of Judah, away from their beloved Temple which was destroyed by the Babylonians. Many of the first returnees threw up their hands in despair and said to other returning exiles, “Don’t bother coming back. There’s nothing here but destruction and ruin.”

Isaiah disagreed with these nay-sayers. He believed in the recreative force of God still at work in their lives and in the life of the world. He told these discouraged people that God was hitting the re-start button in their lives. Their salvation, which was like a smoldering wick, would become a burning torch. They would be the envy of the world and would be known by a new name. To name someone with a new name meant a fresh start in life, a new beginning, a new identity and purpose. That was the premise behind people entering into religious life, in the past. They were given a new name, a religious name, signaling a new beginning in life. Isaiah goes on to say that God wants to marry you, you discouraged people, so that you can bear fruit, have progeny, so that life and hope can go on.

Jesus himself told us that he came to give us life, abundant life, eternal life, more and better life than we could ever dream of on our own. If he came to “give” us life, it refers to a life that we can’t provide ourselves with, try as we may. That’s why it’s given; it’s a gift. It bothers Jesus to see us struggling, just getting by—or even worse—losing hope and falling into despair. When we are just surviving, it’s an indication that we may very well believe that God created a beautiful world, but I’m just not convinced in God’s on-going, recreative power still at work.

Jesus' mother, Mary, notices at the wedding banquet that the wine has run out. There really was a wedding banquet, and there really was a good chance that the party would come to an end without more wine. Metaphorically, wine represents joy. The joy of people's lives was draining away, people were losing hope, discouragement was grabbing hold of them. Mary, like all good attentive mothers, notices every little, unspoken need in her child. She tells her son, ***"They have no wine.*** I notice the joy has drained out of their lives."

He responds by calling her "woman." ***"Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?"*** It's not a moment of amnesia where he forgot his mother's name. He calls his mother "woman," he calls the Samaritan woman at the well "woman," and he says to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Woman is a term of high praise in John's gospel. It's analogous to saying, "You who have the capacity to bring forth life" or "you who are attuned to the needs of people around you."

Mary is very much in tune with the human needs of everyone. Eve is the mother of creation, but Mary is the mother of the new creation. Jesus represents the Spirit or the spiritual dimension of life. This is a wedding. The human (Mary) and the spiritual (Jesus) are coming together, getting married you might say, for the purpose of bearing children. When the human and the spiritual come together, new and abundant life always comes forward from this union. Joy will be restored. The divine and the human are coming together so that you and I can have life in abundance. We were never meant to just get by; we were always meant to share

in God's glory. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last word issuing forth from the mouth of God. It's the same word: "Let there be life."

We have all experienced dry spells, the monotony of life, struggles of various kinds, and maybe hopelessness. The sign, or the "miracle" in this story only occurs when they got to the bottom of the barrel. Often, until I get to the bottom, I try to resolve everything using my own resources. When they run out, and they always do because they are so limited, it's only then that I really learn how to turn to God in prayer. Mary, doesn't presume like I do, to have all the answers. She notices the needs around her and, more importantly, she notices the one who can respond to those needs—her son, Jesus. ***"Do whatever he tells you."***

Jesus got a little carried away at the wedding feast making 600 litres of wine at the end of the party. Later on in the gospels, he'll get carried away with feeding the multitudes with just five loaves and two fish. Jesus never seems to make enough—he always makes too much. He gets carried away in your life and mine. Creation turns into re-creation and never seems to stop. All you have to do is provide the vessel, your little life, and a little bit of water. He'll look after what it gets transformed into.

He is the master. He takes the smoldering wick of our lives and turns it into a burning torch. He breathes hope into hopeless situations. He creates and recreates. He calls us by a new name and gives us a new purpose in life. He takes our little joy and turns it into too much joy.

Mary had a hint that something great was coming down the pike, some abundant life that would come as pure gift, and she was right.

~ Fr. Phil