1st Sunday in Advent A + 30 Nov 2025 + "Created"

On this 1st Sunday in Adent, we begin our 4 week walk through the story of our salvation. This week, we start at the beginning: creation. I have long thought it is sad that, in general, Americans are really poor on history. Our ancestors made an unthinkable gamble to leave their home country behind, most likely they would never see their relatives again, to start in a new country from nothing, clearing the land, all for the chance of a better life. I know almost nothing about my ancestors, including why they came here in the first place.

My experience is probably similar to yours. Our ancestors left Christendom—left Germany, for the new world, and brought their faith with them. It was a source of stability and comfort in a very hard life. They assumed that this life of faith would continue as it always had. And for many decades, it did. But after WW2, things began to change. As I said last weekend, Christendom crumbled along with the European cities that were decimated by the war. There was a great desire to move on, to leave the old world and its wars behind. The West made incredible advances in science and technology and in the standard of living. But in the process of trying to make this world better, mankind often forgot his soul. And yet we are still haunted by the big questions: who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

In the old world, stories were passed down to answer these questions. We often call these stories "myths," because they weren't really historical, in the modern sense. But the Christian story—our story—is different. Our story starts in the book of Genesis in the Bible, which is not an easy book to describe. Some say it is a "myth," but for most people, "myth" means something like "fable," like a made-up fanciful tale. But Genesis is the Word of God. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps a better term for Genesis is "inspired poetry." It is true, but written in a poetic, rather than scientific, sort of way. It is not so much meant to answer "how"—the questions of science; but rather "why" and "who"—deeper questions that science cannot answer. So what does the book of Genesis reveal?

First, Genesis reveals that there is a God, who created the world out of nothing. But He didn't have to. The only reasonable explanation for why there is something, rather than nothing, is because God must have wanted it to be. In fact, Catholics believe that creation is a manifestation, it is proof of God's love. How so? Because again, God doesn't need creation. He is perfectly God, all by Himself. Creation is therefore a disinterested gift; meaning, it is an act of love. And because creation was made by God, and God is all-good, creation must also be good. Genesis makes it very clear that creation is good. But Genesis also makes clear that only human beings are *very good*; we are the crown of God's creation. We stand above creation, called by God to have *dominion* over all other creatures (1:26). But because we too are creatures, we are not to domineer over creation, but to be stewards of it, because creation doesn't belong to us. It belongs to God. That is a very important point.

Next, Genesis says, *then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.* Two notes here: God says "Let *us*," inferring that God is a communion of persons—a reality that will only be fully grasped in the doctrine of the Trinity. And next, of all creatures, only man *and* woman are said to be made in God's own *image and likeness*. This means that mankind--both male and female--is a representation of God on earth. They are *distinct, but equal* in infinite dignity. "Likeness" here is not so much in how we look, but in what makes us different than other creatures: the capacity for reason and free will. God holds humans in so high esteem, that He even gave us the freedom to choose to obey or to disobey Him!

Genesis goes on to explain why God made us male and female, and not just one specie. In the next verse we read, *God blessed (the man and woman) and God said to them: be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it* (1:28). In Chapter 2 of Genesis, which is another perspective on creation, the author says that God recognized that *it is not good for the man to be alone,* so God made *a helper suited to him*, and *that is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh* (2:18, 24). If we put this all together, we can say that because God is a communion of persons, mankind, made in God's image and likeness, is also made to be in communion with each other. And an especially "blessed" form of that communion is "one-flesh union," is marriage. God designed men and women uniquely, and He designed marriage, for communion—that is, for overcoming aloneness, and for fruitfulness—for new human life.

One more point from creation. God didn't just create the world for man. God didn't just create man and woman for each other. God created us, above all, to be in Communion with Him. Remember, as we said before, creation doesn't need to be. That includes us. The only reasonable explanation for why we are here is because God willed us, which is another way of saying God loved us, into being. Each of us. The fullness of His love isn't completely revealed until the coming of Christ, but hints of it are all around us in beauty of creation. Genesis reveals that God taught Adam and Eve how to thrive in His creation, but they were also free to choose their own way, even the way of death. As we will see next week, tragically, Eve and Adam we seduced by created things over their Creator; which is what we call idolatry; and idolatry has been humanity's downfall ever since.

So to sum up this little reflection on creation, I'd like to borrow from a homily of the late Pope Benedict XVI. He said, *It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.* Even in the dark days of December, look for the beauty of creation all around us, and remember that all of this is just a tiny image, of the overwhelming beauty and goodness of God. And remember that when He was fashioning a universe of some 46 billion lightyears in size, He was thinking of you.