

Creation and Re-Creation

By Rev. Christopher Collins, S.J.

June 27, 2021 — Thirteenth Sunday Ordinary Time

Wisdom 1.13-15; 2.23-24; 2 Corinthians 8.7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5.21-43

In the first reading for the liturgy today, we are reminded of the foundational truths of who God is, what God is like, and what flows from God as the source and Creator of reality. *The Book of Wisdom* proclaims, “God did not make death . . . for he fashioned all things that they might have being.” One way of approaching this proclamation is through the lens of the great question that people have long wrestled with when it comes to the problem of evil: If God is powerful and good, why is human existence plagued with suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent?

Certainly, this passage from *Wisdom* echoes the vision of God and creation put forth in the first chapters of *Genesis*: God creates, and creation is good. For the whole of our tradition, numerous figures asserted the truth that God creates, and what God creates is good. All that exists is willed by God and ordered toward the good, toward life, and toward flourishing.

Distortion of the good, division, suffering, and death enter later through the work of the Evil One, Satan. St Ignatius of Loyola calls Satan the Enemy of our true human nature. The Enemy is the one who distorts, who divides, and who lies in order to sow confusion and distrust of God—the God who creates out of love and for love, for the sake of more life and abundance. When we experience, on a daily basis and especially over time, these instances of confusion, suffering, and division, the understandable human responses are: “Where is God?”; “Why doesn’t He do something?”; “Is He incapable of helping?”; “Is He apathetic?” All of the talk prior to this about God being loving and caring, and only desiring the good for us, can even start to ring hollow. Is this just wishful thinking ungrounded in reality? What really is the truth about God and the truth about who we are in God’s eyes?

For You Have Rescued Me

The psalm for today perhaps gives us an additional perspective on these sorts of questions that naturally arise. “I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.” Not only will I believe the earlier assertions about God because they are the Word of God that comes to us through the scriptures, but—in case there remains doubt—I will also look at lived experience, at history. You *have* rescued me. For the Jewish and Christian people, the fundamental story from history is the rescuing that God did in the desert, choosing Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. He heard the cry of the poor and he answered—not only in word, but in deed. God acted in history in order to save and to restore His people. He wished to bring them back to freedom and dignity. He created them anew.

Indeed, He continually recreates us. This is the story of the transformation through the death and Resurrection of Christ and the fullness of redemption of which we have all partaken. This is the re-creation of Easter, which we remember and participate in every week on Sunday in the liturgy of the Eucharist. We hear the stories again of who we are, of where we have been, of how we have been lost, and how we have been saved—not just once and for all, but also again and again. We need to remember that God has saved us and will continue to save us. Occasionally, in the Psalms and in other parts of the Old Testament, the people even remind God: “You said you would save us, now save us again!”

In today's psalm, however, there is a real edge present. The psalmist and the people of God seem to insert themselves into this vision. "We *will* praise you. Because you *have* rescued us." Certainly, the stories are there for us and are always available in the scriptures. But life also happens, and it can get difficult at times to believe and to allow ourselves to be reminded. It is an act of the will to utter the words and to believe them. "You *have rescued* us and, because of that, we *will* praise you!" In making these proclamations, in confirming out loud these words, in the quiet of our hearts and out loud in the assembly of the faithful, we cooperate with the grace of God in his desire to strengthen and restore us in his own image and likeness, that we might be fully alive in Christ.

God's Gift and Humanity's Need

The gospel for this Sunday gives a much less grand and metaphysical portrayal of these realities, and yet, in some ways, it is a more poignant one. There are two stories woven together in one unfolding glimpse into the life, power, and compassion of Christ. While making his way around on an ordinary day, Jesus encounters two people whom he did not seek out, but who, nevertheless, came across his path.

First, Jairus pleads on behalf of his daughter for the healing that he knows Jesus can offer. Then, while on the way to the house, the woman who had suffered from hemorrhaging for years, in one of the most fragile and powerful moments recounted in the gospels, reaches out in desperation to, if nothing else, touch the hem of his garment, confident in his power to heal. There is a power in her as well, a confidence underneath her myriad reasons for giving up on the grace of God. She reaches out one more time. Recalling the confidence of the author of *The Book of Wisdom*, this woman knows on a visceral level that it is in the very nature of God to be the one who has "fashioned all things that they might have being." She knows that her longing for wholeness meets God's desire for the same for her. In opening up in her need, the power for life, healing, and grace that comprises the person of Jesus, fully human and fully divine, flows outward from him to bring her back to her full state of humanity.

This mutual exchange of what God has to give through Jesus and what humanity needs is spelled out more theologically, as it were, in the epistle. St Paul writes to the Corinthians, reminding them of the fundamental nature of the mystery of our salvation in Christ, that "though he is rich, he became poor for your sake." Jesus' power is not just the power to heal or strengthen from a distance, but ultimately it is the love that, by its very essence, is ordered toward being given away. It is not an exception, then, that Jesus shares what has been given him out of love, but this is rather the very essence of who he is and what God is like. His self-emptying love, the *kenosis* of which the opening hymn to the Philippians speaks, is essential to the very being of God, and we see that reality revealed in the person of Christ, who, "though he was in the form of God, does not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, but rather he emptied himself."

Our challenge is to respond and to live according to these truths. God is the one who is self-emptying love, as we see in Jesus. And since we are made in that image and likeness, so too are we to live like this. St Paul gets very concrete in clarifying this call. When it comes to our living with the poor, the obligation is on us to live according to what we have uncovered about God. "Your abundance should supply their needs," St. Paul says. As disciples of Jesus, it is incumbent upon us to keep our eyes, ears, and hearts open to the cry of the poor. For those who are lonely, hungry, hurting, and without shelter or the basic care that they need, the charge comes back to us to realize that their needs can and must be supplied by my abundance, by *our* abundance. And in responding in like manner, we have the opportunity to live a flourishing human life that participates in divine life. In our co-creation with God in our daily activities, let us, too, help to "fashion all things" that they may have being and thrive!

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For Further Reading

- *Pope Benedict XVI, Deus caritas est [##1-18](#)*
- *Pope Francis, Fratelli tutti, [## 87-113](#)*
- *Joseph Ratzinger, The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood, [pp. 45-84](#)*

In Short . . .

- *God creates, and all that is created is good.*
- *It is in God's being and essence to create and to "fashion all things that they might have being."*
- *It is in our true being and essence to affirm the goodness of God and the goodness God's creation through our words and deeds.*
- *But sometimes we forget. We must remind ourselves that God is good in this way, has saved us in the past, and is worthy of praise now.*
- *We can concretely allow ourselves to be re-created as God has created us when we share our abundance with the poor.*