

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up -- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground --then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..... The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 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."

Genesis 2:4-10, 16-17

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

From the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, the understanding that God creates and more wonderfully recreates permeates our religious thought. We have a God who loving made all that is and it is His plan that what He created will one day be recreated new in His Kingdom.

I can already see some of you shifting in your seats to get more comfortable. It will be much easier to rest and ignore the rest of this homily, not because you don't believe what I am telling, but because it is so much a part of your thought that it hardly seem relevant.

But in our culture, in our day, this message could not be any more important. Traditionally, on Rogation Sunday the church would go out to beat the bounds, that is to say, the church would leave the building and walk the borders of the parish. Offering prayers for the bounty God has given us in this land. Blessing the crops and the livestock and praying for a bountiful harvest.

In other words the Church would recognize the intimate connection between the Loving God who created and the food they ate, the water they drank and the health they enjoyed.

Today we have the University of Minnesota agriculture department and the seed companies to thank. We offer our thanksgiving to those who selectively breed our cattle and the scientists and engineers who have produced methods for purifying and delivering clean water to our homes.

It is easy for us to feel removed from our agricultural roots and so it is easy for the culture to feel removed or even above the God who created all that is and that will be. We have eaten from the tree of knowledge and many have come to believe that we are gods. They worship our science and themselves.

Please make no mistake; human beings have made wonderful strides in understanding the Created Order. We have avoided the plagues and the famines that resulted from crop failures and we continue to learn more each day about what God has created.

But all that we learn is about what God has done and we do so because God created us with minds that can wonder, explore and conceive the answers that He placed in creation before time began.

In the Science of Biology there are two terms that may help us clear up our thinking concerning our role in the Created Order. The first term is Parasite. A parasite is an organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host.

The second term is symbiosis. When there is a symbiotic relationship between two living organisms they both benefit. Thus in a symbiotic relationship both organism need each other and over time neither could survive without the other. It is this relationship that many people believe we have with 'mother nature'.

In truth we speak of a covenant relationship with God. Covenant meaning that God enters into relationship with us without receiving any benefits. We are a parasite in biological terms, God does not need us to be God.

The idea that we are to care for the Created Order, use and not misuse the gifts that we have been given is very Christian. We have been given dominion by God to use what He created, we have not been given the right to destroy or misuse the gifts. However, if we begin to believe that we have a symbiotic relationship with God, that we are co-creators or that our actions allow what God created to continue, we are worshipping a false god.

We are either worshipping the Created Order, this is pantheism. Or we are worshipping a false god in the idea that god is in all things. This is called panentheism.

Pantheism is nature worship it is usually centered about the worship of the goddess or mother earth. This is the religion of many primitive people and as Christians we recognize that what they perceived in beauty of what God Created was what we understand to be Natural Law. (That God Created and in the Ordering of Creation we can see the beauty of the Creator)

Panentheism is the more dangerous practice for the human person. It is dangerous because it clouds the difference between the Creator and the creature. Further, if we find ourselves believing that god is in everything we lose the sense of ordering that naturally exists. (Let me give you an example.) If we believe that god exists equally in all that exists then a rock, a cocker spaniel and a human being all have the same right to exist and are equal because god is in all of them.

There is confusion in that there is no differentiation between the inanimate object and those that have life. There is no ordering of importance between plants and animals and finally all animals are the same so no animal has any responsibility to act in any way contrary its primitive animal instincts.

This is the road that leads us to believe that we are simply animals like all other animals so there is no higher power, no commandments to be followed and no responsibility for man to act differently.

This view is completely contrary to Christian Thought. We are not to be ordered by our animal passions, but by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. We have been given minds that not only are able to perceive the world around us, but to think and to reason. We have been given the ability to perceive God and to know Him and Love Him.

With this knowledge each year we gather to "beat the bounds", to recognize the importance of the Gifts of God, to use the knowledge He has given us to improve the crops and herds we have and also to give thanks for the harvest to come. We recognize all that God has given us and we recognize that He is God and we are the people of His pasture the sheep of His fold.

AMEN