

2nd Sunday (C)

19th January 2025

'Nicaea II: God the Creator / Creation of Humanity' (CCC 279–384)

Is 62: *as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you*

Ps 95: ... *His wonders among all the peoples*

1Cor 12: *a variety of gifts ...*

Jn 2: 1–11: *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."*

This moving account of Our Lord's 1st miracle, at the Cana wedding, is the 3rd 'epiphany' that the Church presents to us in succession at the start of the year: *Epiphany, Baptism, Cana*. That Cana miracle manifests the divine unity of Jesus with the Creator God, given His evident power over the created order, transforming matter by His simple intention. ... No wonder "*His disciples believed in Him.*"

We began last Sunday a journey through our beliefs expressed in the *Nicene Creed*, as this 'Holy Year 2025' marks the 17th centenary of the Council of Nicaea that gave to the Church for posterity the text of that inspired Creed. We consider this Sunday the next article of the Creed: [*I believe in God*] ... *Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible*. It's a huge subject, but an important one, since much of the critique in people's minds, I think, when they have objections to faith in God, is that they do *not* think of the universe as created by God at all. But our

belief in God as Creator is perfectly rational and makes sense of the universe we see. For at least two reasons:

1. Because the fact that there *is* something, rather than nothing, needs explaining. We do see a universe around us; we do find that things exist. This can't just have come about of its own accord: the multiplicity of the atoms of the universe, the matter they make up: these do not explain themselves.
2. Because we see that the matter existent in the universe follows scientific laws, and, again, those laws cannot have come out of nowhere: laws do not create themselves; laws require a lawgiver, a Mind who has established them.

So, this Mind is the One whom we know as God. He is not matter at all: He is pure and Almighty Spirit. He it is who has created all things out of nothing, by the will of His Mind. He is the lawgiver, who establishes how this universe of matter is to behave; what laws will govern it. And, by His Almighty power, He can foresee exactly how the playing out of those laws will give rise to the development of the universe over many billions of years. God's plan, from the 1st moment of Creation, which scientifically we often call the 'Big Bang,' God's physical

laws have by His intention, led gently towards the earth's existence and life on earth. God is Creator of all things in the sense that His universe, His laws, all follow His Providence: they follow His unfailling, unfolding plan.

When we listen the account of Creation in the book of *Genesis*, we hear the truth that the one God intended there to be something that was *not* Him, that He created separate to Him, which could share in His happiness. In the 6 'days' of Creation, we hear of gradually increasing complexity: the light; then the sun, moon and stars; the land, sea and air; and then the plants, and animals arising; finally, as the crowning moment of Creation, the special creation of mankind. What we read in *Genesis* is not a myth that is outdated and just plain wrong, but an account that presents much truth: that God is Creator, that there is an *order* in the way things come to be, and that man is the pinnacle of creation. The writer of *Genesis* doesn't have pretensions of writing a science text-book. It doesn't matter that he uses a scheme of 6 days for creation; that in fact it took 13.7 billion years from the first 'light' at the

Big Bang to the appearance of Man is not a problem. What *Genesis* teaches us is that it is all the work of the One Creator God. He is the Mind behind it all. He is not *part* of Creation; He is not *absent* from Creation: instead Creation is His loving work. And as we study the universe in science, we see that Creation has a *unity* to it which points strongly towards its Maker.

We are reminded in the Creed that God is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, "the heavens and the earth." Material creation (the 'matter,' the visible part, atoms and molecules our bodies) is but one part of creation; the other part, the invisible, is the spiritual part of Creation, namely the angels — including the fallen angels, the devils — and our own souls too, our human spirit, which is invisible and immortal but also created. We inhabit a special place in the world by being both matter and spirit. Why did God make a particular creature that is both body and soul, unlike all the animals who are just material, and unlike the angels, who are pure spirit? Clearly, man is *very* special to God. As one of the psalms

points out, “*What is man that You should keep him in mind, mortal man that You care for him? ... yet You have made him little less than a god!*” We need to look more closely at “what is man that God cares for him.”

The invisible, the spiritual, is the greater, the more perfect, part of creation, i.e., the angels — those beings who are spirit and not matter at all — and man who uniquely straddles the boundary between matter and spirit, being both. *Genesis* describes humanity as the pinnacle of creation, the crowning glory: unique to man are the special words of God: “*let us make man in our own image — in the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them.*” The *Catechism* says, concerning this text:

“Man occupies a unique place in creation: (i) he is ‘in the image of God’; (ii) in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; (iii) he is created ‘male and female’; (iv) God established him in His friendship.” (CCC 355)

This makes man utterly above the animal world: because of his soul, his spiritual nature. Man is not just some clever, super-evolved monkey. Man is a *spiritual and material* being, who has a moral life, an artistic/creative life, an

immortal life. Our bodies are related to the rest of material creation, to the stars, earth, plants and animals: our physical selves are built up from the same building blocks, the same carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen etc. as the rest of the universe; we share in our bodies much of the same DNA as even the simplest animals, let alone sharing 98% with a chimpanzee. But our total nature as human beings we do not share at all with the animals, nor with the angels either. We are not animals, and we are not angels — we are human beings, matter and spirit, body and soul. That we are *physically* related to the animals does not confer on them the sort of ‘animal rights’ that some would campaign for. We should respect all of God’s creation, care for it as responsible stewards, not abuse an animal as each one is a lovely part of God’s creation; but at the same time, we are committing no offence if we kill them for food, or harness them without cruelty to help us do our work. We have to take great care to distinguish true human rights from respect for animal creation, or else the two get confused. Have you noticed how modern society

is equally likely to propose animal rights, as to diminish human rights? — think of how many times you have heard to spurious (and false) argument for euthanasia, that “we wouldn’t even let a dog suffer like that; we would put it down.” Maybe so, but then a dog is not a spiritual creature with an immortal soul. Whilst the body of man has evolved over billions of years from lower life forms, our soul has not: each and every human soul is created by God anew; each human soul is unique and created at the moment of conception. There is no other biological point at which a human being comes into existence. That is why we respect and defend the life of the unborn child, always, from the very start, from the moment of conception.

What about ‘male and female’? Is this just an evolutionary accident that happened further down the tree of life? No — not at all. This also is directly willed by God. God wrote into the fabric of His creation that at a certain point, plants and animals would start reproducing by sexual means, their males and females distinguished. They are different, but complementary: they are designed

to go together, and to take on some different roles that are not interchangeable, such as fatherhood and motherhood. This lies at the root of what we believe is the unchangeable truth about marriage between a man and a woman; and also underpins our clear Catholic teaching about the maleness of the priesthood in representing Christ in specific priestly actions such as the Mass. Jesus is God incarnate, born in the likeness of a man, from a woman, Mary. In fact, we could say that the sexual division of higher life into male and female was intended by God precisely so that God could enter His world: the Son of God taking flesh from a human woman. Man and woman are completely equal in dignity, equally called to the life of holiness, but are not simply interchangeable: that would not respect the nature of humanity as God has created us. Man and woman bring different but equally important gifts to life, and to marriage, and to the Church. Into this unique creature, man, which God has made, is to be born His only Son: we shall address next time the Creed’s rich articles and teaching about *God the Son*, our beloved Saviour.