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PAX

My Dear Family,

Praise be Jesus Christ! We live in extraordinary times as we confront the continued challenges of the pandemic around the world, the Diocese, and even our Parish. We have had to make many sacrifices, and so I want to express my sincerest gratitude to each of you for your prayers and for your continued support to all of our parish family. We know with prayer, and God's help, we will soon return to a more normal way of life.

The Bishop's Annual Appeal will officially begin this weekend September 12th and 13th. The appeal has been delayed from this past spring due to the pandemic. I want you to be aware of a significant change this year in the allocation of funds returning back to parishes as part of this appeal. Bishop Bradley has generously authorized a program that will assist us in meeting our parish expenses. After Parishes reach 50 percent of their goal, all gifts to the appeal beyond that will be returned directly to the parish; the Diocese has also slashed its own operating budget for this year in half. In a quote from Bishop Bradley, he states, *"This is a shared sacrifice we feel necessary to assist in securing financial stability for our parishes. We want every parish in our Diocese to remain vital centers of worship, faith formation and service to their local communities."*

Our parish goal for this year is \$46,191.00. I ask that you prayerfully consider your generous contribution toward this year's appeal goal. I know these are difficult times, and I am also aware many of you have already sacrificed much in donating to the boiler fund but I know God rewards us a hundredfold for our generosity.

When I was given the financial report after taking over St. Mary's, I was informed that our savings had been completely depleted. The 50% we would be get back from the Bishop's Annual Appeal could be a great way to start replenishing our savings for a rainy day.

Bishop Bradley will be sending out a letter soon explaining the appeal in more detail and the many helpful services it funds.

I am grateful for all you do for our parish and pray that God continues to bless you and your loved ones in these most challenging times.

In the love of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Fr. Jose Haro

Pastor

My dear St. Mary's family,

2020 has been a tumultuous time filled with increasingly polarized political parties, police violence, violent and nonviolent protests, and more all in the midst of a pandemic. Now more than ever it's important to ask questions like: What does it mean to be a Catholic in the world at this time? Practically speaking, what does it mean to be "in the world but not of the world?" How am I to pursue holiness in my day to day life?

Fr. José has gifted me the opportunity to write a weekly reflection in the bulletin concerning these questions. I hope these articles can be a space of peace and hope for you in a time that often feels chaotic and desolate. This week, I invite you to read this selection from Michael Himes' book "Doing the Truth in Love". May you rest in the knowledge that you are good and that you are deeply loved. I am holding you in prayer.

In Christ,

Aurelia Vaiana, St. Mary's Echo Apprentice

II. THE TEMPTATION TO DENY THE GOODNESS OF BEING CREATURE

I suggest that this story in Genesis 1 provides the context for understanding the story in Genesis 3, the story of the entry of evil into creation. What appears in chapter 3 is anxiety about the value of being a creature and rejection of the goodness of human beings. Recall the first temptation (Gen 3:5), "Eat this and you will be like God." Granted, Adam and Eve did not have the advantage of having read chapter 1. Had they, presumably they would have noticed that they are like God, that they had been created in the divine image and likeness. But enter the serpent who tells them, in effect, "You're not like God."

Being human is a wretched business: barely born when you start the pain of teething and learning to walk and talk, being subject to parents and teachers, going through the labor of study and learning, the awkwardness and embarrassment of adolescence, trying to discern a vocation, taking on the burdens of marriage and parenthood and making a living, worrying about the children and having them grow up and leave home, aging and losing friends, eyes getting weak and teeth falling out and hair disappearing, body getting frail and memory slipping away and, at long last, death. And this is supposed to be good! Being a creature is frightful. Be like God! Being God is good, and being a creature is not. The essence of the first temptation is to reject the goodness of creatureliness: be God or don't be at all! And, alas, we fall for that temptation.

According to Genesis 3, the root of evil in our world is the inability of our world to accept itself for what it is. Evil enters through the refusal of creatures to be creatures. Evil arises from the decision that, unless we are God, we are trash. There has been a good deal in the Christian tradition over the centuries about the last judgment. But since God is unchanging and eternal, I suspect that the last judgment will prove to be a repetition of the first judgement, which was, you recall, that God, having reviewed all creation, judged that it was very, very good. The refusal to accept and celebrate the goodness of being a creature is the rejection of the first judgement of God. The difference between the first judgment and the last is that, at the end of salvation history, we will finally accept and assent to the First Judgment. It is very, very good to be a creature, but we still find it immensely difficult to accept that goodness; being creatures makes us nervous.

We are nervous because we do not like being limited—in strength, in knowledge, in wisdom, in talent and, ultimately, in time—and we do not like being dependent. And however hard we try, however much we distract our attention and divert our minds, we cannot deny that finally we are not in control of our own lives. And we are frightened by that. All too often, we move in one of two directions. Either we try desperately to make ourselves independent, we take the serpent's suggestion and make a mad dash to be God, or we admit that we are not God and hate it. We deny the goodness of creatureliness and live lives of quiet desperation and sometimes of clamorous and destructive desperation. Coming to grips with the rightness of our own finite being, I suggest, lies at the very heart of what the Christian tradition means by salvation, reconciliation, and holiness.

From this perspective, the whole scriptural story is the revelation of the mystery hidden from all generations but now revealed (Col 1:26). What is that mystery, the great surprise of God's will? The mystery of God's purpose is that while ever since the entry of sin, we have been in a mad dash to become God, God has decided to become human. While we reject being limited, finite, creatures, i.e. being human, the one whose state was divine, in the words of the hymn which St. Paul quoted in Philippians, "did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a servant, becoming human as all other human beings" (Phil 2:6-7). No wonder Paul thought the mystery breathtaking!

The claim that being human is so deeply good, so astonishingly precious, that God has chosen to take on humanity, is the ultimate affirmation that God looks at creation and sees that it is very, very good.

God thinks being human is so good, God has chosen to be human, too. And who am I to dispute the divine taste?