

5th Wednesday | 2021
Memorial for St. Scholastica, Virgin

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17

At the time when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens while as yet there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, but a stream was welling up out of the earth and was watering all the surface of the ground the LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed.

Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.

The LORD God gave man this order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die."

Psalms 104:1-2a, 27-28, 29bc-30

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

*O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
You are clothed with majesty and glory,*

robed in light as with a cloak.

*All creatures look to you
to give them food in due time.
When you give it to them, they gather it;
when you open your hand, they are
filled with good things.*

*If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are
created,
and you renew the face of the earth.*

Mark 7:14-23

Jesus summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand.

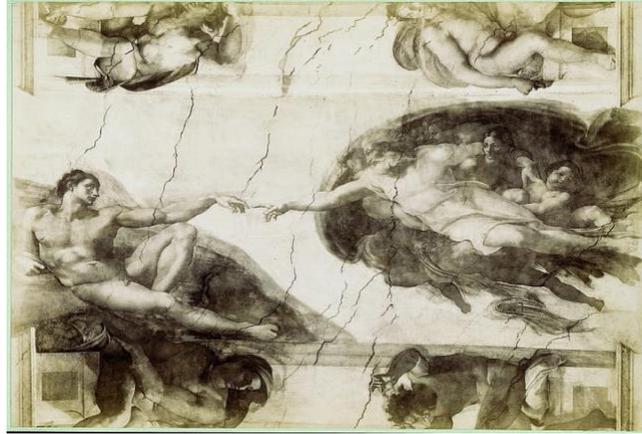
Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile."

When he got home away from the crowd his disciples questioned him about the parable.

He said to them, "Are even you likewise without understanding?"

Do you not realize that everything that goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart but the stomach and passes out into the latrine?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

"But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles him. From within the man, from his heart, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."



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Today, we celebrate the memorial for St Scholasticaⁱ, the twin sister of St. Benedict. She founded a religious community for women near Monte Cassino at Plombariola, five miles from where her brother governed a monastery.

The twins visited each other once a year in a farmhouse because Scholastica was not permitted inside the monastery. They spent these times discussing spiritual matters.

According to the *Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great*, the brother and sister spent their last day together in prayer and conversation. Scholastica sensed her death was close at hand and she begged Benedict to stay with her until the next day.

He refused her request because he did not want to spend a night outside the monastery, thus breaking his own Rule.

Scholastica asked God to let her brother remain and a severe thunderstorm broke out, preventing Benedict and his monks from returning to the abbey. Benedict cried out, "God forgive you, Sister. What have you done?" Scholastica replied, "I asked a favor of you and you refused. I asked it of God and he granted it."

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Brother and sister parted the next morning after their long discussion. Three days later, Benedict was praying in his monastery and saw the soul of his sister rising heavenward in the form of a white dove.

Such love. Such love for each other and such love for God. And who among us doubts Providence's hand in granting St. Scholastica's dying consolation?

St. Scholastica and St. Benedict lived their lives embracing Christ's Paschal Mystery, where through the cross, death was destroyed by new life. What a beautiful vision St. Benedict had of his holy sister assuming her eternal destiny as an ascending dove.

Her destiny is our destiny. Our destiny is embedded in our very creation. The Holy Word in Genesis today brings us right to who we are and for what we were created.

the LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

Who are we? We are of the clay. Every atom and molecule of our body comes from the earth. Yet we are also of the divine. Our creator breathes his very Spirit into our nostrils. We are made for the now. We are made for the forever.

The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.

Is there any doubt whose garden this is? Is there any doubt who is the source of all creation, of all that is animate and inanimate? It is a privileged role that he gave Adam and all humankind to care for His creation.

Pope Francis recently exhorted us to care for our common home in [*Laudato Si*](#), quoting St. Francis of Assisi: *“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.”*ⁱⁱⁱ



This place, this garden where Adam was placed, for which Adam was created to care for, is named Eden. We call it Paradise.

But yet, the following verses create a sense of foreboding.

*The LORD God gave man this order:
“You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die.”

How can this go wrong? Through God’s breathing his very spirit into our being we were created in the divine image of God. The hallmark of that is being created with free will, the freedom to love or reject, to receive or to seize.

We know the story that follows. Thursday’s Genesis reading speaks of Eve. Friday’s reading speaks of the great temptation, the climax of our story.

But, I misspeak. That is not the climax of our story. Our story continues on to Calvary, where Jesus Christ ascended the cross and through his sacrifice, all creation was made anew.

The story continues as we join our daily sacrifice to Jesus' for the love of God and neighbor.

You see the story of the Bible is one of love. Love creates and love serves. Where there is love, there is life. We are created for it. And through Jesus' ultimate love on the cross, we are destined for the paradise of Eden.

May we pray for God's grace to sustain our faith as we conform our free will to the love of God.



ⁱ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-scholastica>

ⁱⁱ [This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CCBY-NC](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html