

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jul 4th 2013

I wish to reflect on the gospel passage, even though what follows will not seem to do that until I approach the end of what I have to say.

We have learned to distinguish between "nature" and "the supernatural" in dealing with God and with our status in his regard, and we treat our supernatural side as if it were some sort of retrofit that has changed who we actually are. I certainly do not think or believe that: God created us in his image and fully intended us, from the very beginning, to eventually live with him and to do so in somehow living his life, supernaturally: the Tree of Life is already right there in the Garden, already awaiting us right at the beginning of everything (Genesis 2:9) -- and we find it again at the end (Revelation 22:14).

I believe that in addressing the question of whether we have two separate sides to us or not, we are speaking of two different ways of considering our humanity, one of which is analytical (this nature / supernature dichotomy) and the other our lived reality. We distinguish analytically, for example, our brain waves, our temperature, and our blood type in order to understand certain aspects of our selves better, but in the reality of our lives the three simply function as aspects of who we are, seamlessly and without conflict.

In a similar manner, Jesus ties the natural and the supernatural tightly together here, joining the healing of the body and the forgiveness of sins, applying the power of his love to lift the whole person of the paralytic, body and soul. I John 4:20 takes a similar approach to calling us to live in a single universe, a "nature" that God is healing and turning into a New Creation, one in which there will be no thought of distinction between the natural and the supernatural.

Note that I do believe that we need to accept God, call him into our lives, in order for us to live the fullness of what he has planned for us, and as Christians we do that through Baptism and then Confirmation....

Our "salvation," our fulfillment in God, is and always has been a kind of lived history for us both as individuals and as a people, and taking this perspective on our humanity seriously would mean a real change in how we see ourselves --- and the Church --- before God.....

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