

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 15th 2017

Memorial of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Today is the feast day of St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan friar, Doctor, and a contemporary and friend of St. Thomas Aquinas. Bonaventure was born in 1221 and became General of the Franciscan Order at age 35. A focus on the theology of creation is a highlight of his teachings. His focus on the created universe flows from his understanding of the very nature of the Trinity; creation imitates and emerges from the love that is the essence of Trinity – we comfortably say, God IS love.

It is commonplace to think of creation as merely a setting of our lives as human persons and relatively unimportant in the long run. Bonaventure disagrees and sees the whole of creation as emanating from the profound love at the core of the Trinity's relationships: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All, big and small of the created universe flows out of the Love of God and all is "Good" as Genesis tells us. All is good because it has the fingerprints of God all over it; it is brought about by the love of God.

Creation draws us into the love of God by being from God. We know and are attracted to creation because we find God there: in his vast and amazing love for all things. Creation then is a parallel to our Scriptures in pointing us towards God.

The first part of today's reading describes what might be called the perfect dwelling place. It is contained in the words of Jacob to his sons. He asks to be buried with his fathers in a place that opens out onto the field of Ephron the Hittite where the Jewish patriarchs and their wives are buried.

I imagine it to be a place where God's beauty and love can be discovered almost immediately. Think about one of those places or situations we've seen that just grab our attention when we come upon them. I have a place that I pass along the road in southern Wisconsin. Driving north on Interstate 43 there is a spot where one is greeted by the hilly terrain that opens up. It is loaded with magnificent trees and open valleys that bespeak wonders, joy and magnificence – attributes we associate with the Creator of it all. Clearly it is not difficult to find God there.

What are those places for us? The Grand Canyon is breathtaking, lakes and waters are peaceful, mountains are magnificent, and farmlands are teeming with life, etc. What or where are they for us? Can we discover there the hand of God etching and creating right in front of us in the constant act of loving and creating?

Today's gospel has that powerful passage, "Are not two sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted".

How often have we felt as though God's got way bigger things to do than to take care of us? Fortunately God sees it from a different perspective. We are a part of that loving creation that God accomplishes not just at one time in history, but at each moment of our lives. What God knows, God loves; and God, the creator knows all that is created.

The message in the gospel today is if God knows when a sparrow falls or when a hair of our head is counted it shows the unimaginable knowledge and caring we receive from God.

Loving God, teach me your way of caring day in and day out for me. Let me be aware of the love you show us in what you continually create; for what you have created speaks to us of your vast love expressed everywhere in your creation. Thank you for that love which comes from the community we know as the Triune God. Be with us as we are invited to share that love among others.

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