

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 2, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Sermon #16)

“Aristotle wrote, ‘What is last in execution is first in intention.’ God always works with his end in view; so we discern his goal in the last thing he made, which is us.” (Scott Hahn, A Father Who Keeps His Promises, p. 45)

I made reference, last weekend, of God creating man on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-31). In his book, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, Dr. Scott Hahn reminds us that the Sabbath would therefore become mankind’s first full day. Let us take a moment to ponder what this purposeful action by God means for you and me today.

We must begin by reminding ourselves that creation is a gift from God. I refer to it as a gift for God did not need to create. He is total and complete within Himself. Creation does not subtract anything nor add anything to His glory or power. All creation was precisely and systematically spoken into existence for the purpose of being given to mankind. To understand the purpose of creation being given to mankind, one needs to remember on what day mankind is fully able to interact with creation — the seventh day.

I mentioned at some of last Sunday’s Masses, that I have heard people say, “the world is my cathedral, and I can pray to God anywhere I choose.” Those who hold this idea may or may not realize the truth in their statement. God did give all of creation to mankind on the Sabbath, so that mankind could give God the praise and honor His dignity requires from such a tremendous gift. This is the importance of Genesis chapter 2. Mankind, through Adam and Eve, are placed in a sacred place — Eden. While in Eden, they are asked to cultivate and care for all created things (Genesis 2:15). Dr. Hahn further recounts that the Hebrew words used in Genesis for “cultivate” and “keep,” are also only found together in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) when referring exclusively to duties carried out by those in the temple of Jerusalem. God’s intention, in the beginning, was for Adam and Eve, His children, to care for the gift of creation in much the same way as a priest cares for his flock. And, this covenant intention did not cease the moment Adam and Eve failed. It stills continues and is present at this moment right before your eyes.

I realize this concept may be new to you, but allow me to offer you some parallels for your consideration. The Garden of Eden is a sacred sanctuary where God is present. Our parish church also contains a hallowed sanctuary where God is present. Adam and Eve in Eden are able talk and interact with God. We are currently doing the same in this church. Adam and Eve, as God’s first children stand before Him, naked without shame. We, God’s children are able to do the same after our baptism through His gift of Sanctifying Grace. They are given food to care for their human needs. We are given food, the Eucharist, to feed our spiritual needs. The main difference between Adam, Eve, and us occurs after their fall. They, like us, fell into sin. However, after their fall, they were ushered out of Eden. As they were leaving, God would make clothes to protect them from the harsh reality of life. He would also allow instruct them that now, away from His presence, they would have to struggle, work with sweat on their brow. We, on the other hand, are not barred from his presence after our own falls. We have been given a second chance, or as many as needed, by His Son. We can return into His company simply by going to the Sacrament of Confession. Although, as we leave today, we will have to go out into the harsh world and earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, God still provides us a greater covering than any clothes would offer. We have been covered and protected by the Blood of His Son shed once for us and presented again to us each and every time we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Yes, God’s intention was for mankind to honor and praise Him in and through all activity in a constructed hallowed sanctuary. Today, we take our turn doing just that. I only pray we have the courage to remain constant despite whatever may happen as we exit those doors.