

***Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 21, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #4***

“The image of God in man makes him superior to other earthly creatures. Saint Augustine says, ‘Man’s excellence consists in the fact that God made him to His own image by giving him an intellectual soul which raises him above the beasts of the field.’” (Msgr. Paul J. Glenn, A Tour of the Summa, p. 78)

In describing the creation of man (Adam) in the book of Genesis, the sacred author recounts God saying: *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* (Genesis 1:26). With these few words, we are introduced into the theology of God. Man is created in the image of the Trinity. The Trinity, as you recall, consists of a perfect union of three Divine Persons (Father, Son and Spirit) comprising one Holy God. Therefore, man must also be a union. And, since each action of the Divine Persons reveal to us some aspect of the Trinity, man’s actions must also reveal this unity found within his soul. For Adam and Eve, to a greater degree than you or I, it is the union of intellect and will which most resemble the Trinity found present within each of us. To both understand this union of intellect and will of our first parents and how this union has subsequently been affected in each of us, we need to properly define what we mean when we speak of human intellect and will.

Adam and Eve were created in a state of perfect innocence possessing a perfect human intellect. When we speak of a perfect human intellect, we are stating their intellect was not dimmed by the effect of sin. They were able to see and think about God to a much greater level than we can know. Secondly, their intellect held sway over their desires, their wills.

Man’s desires are found within his will. Basically, the will is a desire for a perceived good. The will yearns for happiness and what it perceives can assist it in attaining happiness. Adam and Eve, guided by their intellects, were able to perceive happiness and goodness in created things. They were able to distinguish between things which are good. This allowed them to choose greater goods over lesser goods.

The word “Paradise” can be translated to mean Garden. In the Garden, Adam and Eve resided in a place of paradise. Unhampered by sin in their state of perfect innocence, their union of soul and body found within themselves, their interactions with all creation and their relationship with God is unparalleled. God had created a place suitable for them. He had also provided them with every faculty needed. And yet, as we are well aware, they still managed to disobey him in their misguided quest for happiness. We can now read the Bible as both a revelation of God’s desire to repair the damage caused by sin and a revelation of who He is — our sole, greatest Good. The Supreme Good most worthy of all of mankind’s desires.