

Made in His Image

When I look at thy Heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. ~ Psalm 8:5-6

SCRIPTURE REVEALS that only we are created in the image and likeness of God. Human dignity resides in this special creation and is rooted in the image of God that has left its mark in each one of us. Man was created with an immortal soul and “left ... in the power of his own inclination” (Sir 15:14). Like the angels, we have been created for our own sake and endowed with freedom of choice. The image of God in us is represented by our capacity to know the mysteries of God and his creation. It is also reflected in our hearts which are drawn upward toward God and desire happiness with him.

However, the creation account tells another story that describes the sin of Adam and Eve. The tragic choice of our first parents destroyed our original friendship (justice) with God and our harmony shared among God’s creatures, and left us under the curse of death (see Gn 3:16-19, 23-24). These are the effects of original sin that marred God’s image in us but did not destroy it.

Human nature is wounded by sin but not totally corrupted. Nothing we can do can erase God’s image (see Gn 9:6). Why? First, if the image were erased, we would cease to be. While no other earthly creature was made in God’s image, all creatures reflect God’s goodness. To attempt to place a creature outside of creation is absurd. We are either God’s creatures or we are nothing — there is no third option. God is the fullness of being and he

holds all things, even the devil and all other fallen angels, in existence.

Second, the reason that sin did not thoroughly corrupt us lies in the relatively limited power of evil when compared to the omnipotence of God’s goodness and love. Evil cannot make or “un-make” anything; it can only weaken and corrupt a being that already exists and is held in existence by God. Therefore, even evil relies on God, and its scope of activity lies only within the misuse of human freedom. Evil is like a shadow. A shadow depends on the light of the sun and some object to stand in the path of light. God is the source of all light, and the object that attempts to block it is sin.

Although tainted and wounded by sin, the image of God is still present. God does not have to start over; he can still make us holy through the working of grace (see Eph 1:4), if we choose to cooperate with him. Freedom has been given to us by God so that we can change, convert, and become who we were created to be. Being holy

and becoming saints is exactly why God created us. In one sense, there is nothing extraordinary about becoming a saint; it is the most natural thing to do. Practicing the virtues and keeping the commandments are essential to bringing to perfection the image of God inside each one of us. Practicing virtue is a sign that we are on the right path toward holiness and perfection in God.

(CCC 225, 339, 343, 355-368, 400, 405, 1700-1709, 1730, 1877)

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