

. . . every scribe . . . instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old. Matt. 13:53

Attendance at weekday Masses is usually slim . . . a few old faithful sustaining their spirits from day to day – unless you are a member of a religious order – yet even there I would expect numbers have declined. And yet Scripture readings of significant worth are read each day – exposed mostly to the open air. And time is lost. Lost in the sense that important things are revealed that few people in our complex societies ever get exposed to and thereby reevaluate not only their lives, but the very universe in which we live.

The weekday Masses at this time of the year are presenting excerpts from the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of Mark. And they are so arranged that a contrast is displayed – from one image or concept of God to another – almost as an evolving thing.

Yesterday's (Saturday's) first reading was that well known narrative about the creation and fall of Adam and Eve (indeed: of the human race). I remember being taught to admire the God of that story – which I am hesitant to do now. Eve and Adam disobeyed God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – although God gave them the capacity to do so. And so they did. And then come the consequences: pain in childbirth, blood, sweat and toil: (*Cursed be the ground because of you. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth . . . By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat . . . For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.*). Sounds like opening lecture of a commandant of the Siberian archipelago introducing new inmates to their future confinement. And further "consequences" are narrated as Genesis continues – intended to a great degree to get one to "straighten up and fly right."

Now there is much more than that ominous tone to interpret from this classic Book of Genesis, like divine interventions to redirect humanity in a promising way. But the Church, in its layout of these weekday readings, seems to want to stress the contrast between the law-driven, often ominous nature of Old Testament narratives – to remind us of how the New Testament is really *new*.

For what do we hear in Saturday's Gospel reading in contrast to the first reading about Adam and Eve? We find a great crowd that has nothing to eat and Jesus says: *My heart is moved with pity for the crowd . . . if I send them away hungry . . . they will collapse on the way and some have come a great distance.* His disciples reason with him: *Where can anyone get enough bread (or vaccinations?) to satisfy them in this deserted place? We can only find seven loaves . . . a few fish . . . impossible.*

Yet Jesus creates out of our limited imaginations enough sustenance to satisfy everyone . . . with lots left over! In other words, the Jesus of our New Testament, being made of flesh and blood, has a heart – brings a truly divine heartfelt, gracious presence into this world - - that should reanimate all of us now and always. The Gospel narrative casts a new light on the divine. It humanizes the divine while also demonstrating how a human being can be compassionately divine.

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