

Re-constituting Creation Sixth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, February 15, 2017
8:15 AM **Gn 8:6-13, 20-22;** Mk 8:22-26 (The ark in a way symbolizes all institutions dedicated to rebuilding and remaking what is torn down and disintegrating.)

“When the Lord smelled the sweet odor, he said to himself: ‘Never again will I doom the earth because of man since the desires of man’s heart are evil from the start; nor will I ever again strike down all living beings, as I have done.’”

How are the desires of man’s heart evil? How did that ever happen? **If God is the Creator of everything and fashioned humanity in his own image and likeness, how did it come about that people started desiring what was evil?** That actually is a question, a perplexing question, in the history of our faith, our religious tradition.

Now growing up Catholic we have been very much influenced by the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas had a very different take on humanity. He believed that people naturally desired what was good; in fact **people only desired what was good, according to St. Thomas.** It may not be truly good or it may not be good for very long, but people can only desire what is good. In general the Fathers of our Church have always accentuated the good, that people desire goodness, blessings, prosperity, well-being; and those are all things they should desire. **So where does this come from, this idea that “the desires of the man’s heart are evil from the start”?**

Well, if you look at the Book of Genesis, you will see that **God is always trying to create order and goodness out of what is actually disorder and chaos.** First of all there is chaos in regard to light and dark, in regard to earth and wind, and sea and mountain and all that, and God tries to put order into things. This is from the Book of Genesis; **we have to go back to Genesis to understand what is happening.** Progressively we see that in spite of all the order God put into creation, in spite of the goodness of creation, and in spite of the goodness of even Adam,

who is made in the image and likeness of God, **disorder begins to prevail**. First of all there is the utter distrust that **Eve and Adam** have for God in the first place, preferring their own experience and their wisdom to God's wisdom, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is another way to saying eating from the tree of experience. I'll decide what is good for me, and I'll decide what is bad for me. Well, that's where all things go wrong; it's a **lack of trust in God**. Then of course Cain becomes jealous of his brother and slays him, and then proceed all kinds of evil.

Now **the story of Noah** itself is a story of **the desire of God to re-constitute creation**, to remake it, to start all over again, and that's the idea of the ark. **The ark in a way symbolizes all institutions dedicated to rebuilding and remaking what is torn down and disintegrating**. It is very relevant for us today because our society in many ways is disintegrating, rising tides of violence in our cities, in our world, among the **young in particular, who see nothing of value, nothing to believe in, nothing to hope in**. That's where violence comes from. And we need **to be like Noah, building some kind of an ark to shelter and preserve for some future generation what can be salvaged**.

So although God did create humanity with goodness in mind, **it is very possible that humanity turns against God** and against everything good, and that seems to have prevailed **in the past at times, and it is perhaps prevailing now**. We can be sure of one thing, whatever happens it won't be the first time, so **we have to learn from history**. And we have to get inspiration from God's own desires for our own salvation and goodness. If we read the story of Noah in that context, we will see that God is always bringing about, even in Noah's day, a new possibility, a new era, in spite of the evil in people's hearts.