



Dear Friends,

Ash Wednesday is coming this Wednesday. Please remember ashes will NOT be placed on the forehead this year. The order from Rome: sprinkle ashes on the top of the head of each person.

Continuing from last week's reflection on the Creed, this week we examine:

*...the Father Almighty
maker of heaven and earth
of all things visible and invisible.*

At this point the Creed begins to speak about each Person of the Trinity. Christian people only gradually came to know there were 3 Persons in the one God. The writings we call "Gospels" were written some 40 years after Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. In 70 AD the Romans stormed Jerusalem in response to a Jewish uprising and the Roman General rode his horse into the Holy of Holies and then had the Temple torn down. The followers of Jesus presumed this abomination was so blasphemous that it would trigger the return of Christ and the end of the world. But that didn't happen. Slowly they realized Jesus wasn't coming back any time soon and the first generation of Christians were dying off. So, they collected the sayings of Jesus and wrote the Gospels beginning with Mark.

By that time Christians were used to referring to God as the Father because that's what Jesus called him and taught us to do the same. Remember, Jesus taught us to pray with "Our Father." So to distinguish the First Person of the Trinity, the Creed calls him "the Father Almighty."

By calling the Father "the maker of heaven and earth" the authors of the Creed covered a couple of points. First, the Father is the Creator of all things. That means the Big Bang was God's idea. Science is fascinated by this event and wants to get to the moment it occurred and even get to the point *before* it happened. So far, no luck. Regardless of the findings of science, the Creed professes the belief that anything science may find was originally created by God and only by God.

The second point may be something we don't often think about: God created heaven. "Heaven and earth" refers to the sky and the planet, not the "heaven" we hope to get to. Today, we might rephrase this as "the entire universe." Still, we can also think of "heaven and earth" as proclaiming the existence of *a place* for humans to live after death. We are unique creatures comprised of body and soul. For us to be "human" we need a body. That's how we are created: body *and* soul. You can't have one without the other or you don't have a *human* being. So, if we are "going to heaven" as all of us hope, we will need a body as well as a soul. This idea alone suggests the physical body we have is holy, that is, different and to be respected as God's creation.

We read in Genesis that God created humans separate from all the rest of creation. In the first account (Gen. 1:26 ff) God creates *adamah* (that is “dirt creature” or “earthling”) in God’s image and likeness and pronounces these creatures “very good”! In the second creation story (Gen. 2:4 ff) after God molds the clay into a human form, he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living being.” Our bodies are specifically made by God and our life force is the very breath of God. Not only are we a special creation, we have divine life within us. Think about that for a while.

“...all things visible and invisible” basically means literally all things are made by God. Don’t go thinking “invisible” refers to ghosts, though it does include angels. We have enough “invisible” right here on earth. Remember, “virus” was only discovered in the first quarter of the 20th century. That century also gave us “black or dark matter.” Scientists have discovered that most of the universe is made of this black matter. The issue is...we can’t see it; it’s invisible. So are the genes that make up our bodies and atoms that make up all matter. “All things visible and invisible” simple tries to underscore that anything we can discover was made by God.

The last point: we are *part* of creation, made to live within and as one with it. This speaks to today’s issues of ecology and global warming. We are **part** of creation and how we interact with Nature determines how, or if, we will survive. In Genesis God gave all of Nature to Adam to care for and cultivate. We have inherited Nature with the same obligation to care for and cultivate.

Next time the Creed addresses who Jesus is.

Fr. Denis