

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

5th – 11th February 2023

Saints this Week

8th February

St Josephine Bakhita, Virgin

St Josephine Bakhita (c.1868-1947) was born in Sudan, in the Darfur region, and was in her early life a slave. Settling in Italy, she was converted and entered the Canossian Daughters of Charity at Schio, near Vicenza. She was the community's portress, cook, and sacristan, and gained a reputation for holiness.

Collect

O GOD, who led Saint Josephine Bakhita from abject slavery to the dignity of being your daughter and a bride of Christ: grant us, we pray, that by her example we may show constant love for the Lord Jesus crucified, remaining steadfast in charity and prompt to show compassion. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

10th February

St Scholastica, Virgin

St Scholastica (ob. c.543) was the sister of St Benedict and followed the Benedictine Rule near Montecassino, as the first Benedictine nun. When her brother visited her in what proved to be her final illness, a sudden storm postponed his departure. Three days later, St Benedict saw her soul ascend to heaven as a dove.

Collect

AS WE celebrate anew the Memorial of the Virgin Saint Scholastica, we pray, O Lord, that, following her example, we may serve you with pure love and happily receive what comes from loving you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

11th February

Our Lady of Lourdes

Collect

GRANT us, O merciful God, protection in our weakness: that we, who keep the Memorial of the Immaculate Mother of God may, with the help of her intercession, rise up from our iniquities. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Week 5 (Year 1)

Collect for Week 5

KEEP your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Monday of Week 5 (1)

Reading

Genesis 1:1-19

In the beginning.....

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

6 And God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' **7** And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. **8** And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. **11** And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.' And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to

their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴ And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. ¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

Reflection

There is ancient precedent for reading Genesis at this time of year. The custom was to start on *Septuagesima* – whose date varies. This year *Septuagesima* was last Sunday but Week 5 of Ordinary Time is more or less the equivalent stage in the current *Novus Ordo* Calendar. The liturgical scholar, Gregory di Pippo, gives further explanation in an article in *New Liturgical Movement*:

'The first book, namely Genesis, instructs us in the first stages of penance, namely, in faith and fear, which are the essence of penance, since penance is conceived through them. It instructs us in the Faith in the same way as the Creed does, for what is said there, "of things visible and invisible", is also said here: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," which is to say, the empyreal heaven, and the things which are in it, which are invisible, and the earth, that is, all these visible things. Just as in the Creed the persons of the Father and the Son are mentioned, so also in Genesis "In the beginning" (that is, in the Son,) God (that is, the Father,) created heaven and earth. Afterwards, the person of the Holy Spirit is named, when it says "And the spirit of the Lord was borne over the waters", that is, the Holy Spirit, who created and rules over all things.'

We should need no reminding that the season ahead of us, leading up to Easter, is the time for learning and revising our faith. Just as catechumens take to heart the articles of the Creed as they prepare for Baptism, so we, more mature in the faith, revise the biblical foundations by the study of Genesis. The first chapter of Genesis similarly will begin the set of readings

at the Easter Vigil. Looking back to where things began is a way of starting all over again.

Tuesday of Week 5 (1)

Reading

Genesis 1:20 - 2:4

The Fifth and Sixth Day of Creation and the Sabbath

²⁰ And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.' ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.' And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' ²⁹ And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

Reflection

THOUGH the account of the Creation of the world in six days looks back to the very beginning of life, Genesis Chapter 1 is among the later sections of the Hebrew Scriptures to be written. The source seems to be the work of person or persons whom scholars refer to as 'P', the priestly editor of the *Torah*, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. This work of editing seems to have taken place in Babylon, during the Jewish Exile (586–538 BC). It is fashionable to point to Genesis as 'proving' that religion is anti-scientific and incredible. In fact, the purpose of the writer is to show not how the Divine hand fashioned his Creation but that all that exists is the work of God, God who is from the first interested in what is good. 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' (v. 31). As for the science, if you replace 'day' with 'era', some scientists will tell you that what is described is a plausible sequence for the emergence of life, the crowning glory of which is humankind. That said, we do find the notion of man having dominion over every living thing troublesome nowadays – given the exploitation and pollution of the environment. None could improve on the wisdom of the Priestly Editor of the Pentateuch but, back in the sixth century BC, it would be hard to foresee the extent of the human threat to the goodly world in which we are placed.

Wednesday of Week 5 (1)

Reading

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17

Another Account of Creation

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, **5** when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; **6** but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground— **7** then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. **8** And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. **9** And out of

the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.....¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Reflection

EARLIER this week, we had the first chapter of Genesis, the first of two accounts of Creation. It was probably the work of P, the Priestly Editor, who, during the sixth century exile of the Jewish people in Babylon, was at work editing the *Torah*, the books of the Law. The second account of Creation, which we have just read, comes from the second chapter in Genesis and is generally thought to be the work of the source J, written maybe four hundred years earlier (c.1000 BC). The source J gets its name from its use of *JHWH* as the name for God, a name which must not be spoken out loud. J is to be distinguished from the work of E, a source which calls God *Elohim*. *Elohim* is a plural word meaning 'gods' when it is followed by a plural verb but, despite its plural suffix, referring to the one 'God' when, as is mostly the case, it is followed by a singular verb. This 'honorific plural' in Hebrew is not so very different from the 'royal we' found in English, as used by very important people. All that by way of background: there will be opportunity later to notice some of the differences between J and E but, for now, we have the two accounts, the first – the later Creation story - by P and the second – the earlier Creation story - by J. What we notice about both of them is that man is the climax and crowning glory of the Creator's plan but that, whereas the first chapter of Genesis presents God as almighty and transcendent, in the second chapter God is immanent and approachable.

Thursday of Week 5 (1)

Reading

Genesis 2:18-25

It is not good that the man should be alone

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them

to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; ²² and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.’

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Reflection

THE SECOND story of creation gives us beasts and birds not as a stage in the gradual evolution of life but as a gift of companionship to man, who names them as they befriend him. The companionship proves less than fully satisfying and God decides to form woman. We found out in Genesis 1:27 that ‘...God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ That indicates not only that woman is no mere after-thought, as chapter 2 implies, but also that, from the start, as chapter 1 tells us, men and women have equal dignity and honour. Nonetheless, the story of Adam and Eve – as the pair in our story turn out to be – is not just a bit of primitive patriarchy, with Eve cast as the one who leads her husband astray. We need to look beyond that to the nuptial pairing of these two companions. They are formed of one flesh in order that, though apart, they grow truly to become one flesh. It is a story about the relationship which is at the heart of human existence, a relationship between the sexes and between God and those whom he created in his image. Human friendship takes different forms and, whether rightly or wrongly, human sexuality expresses itself in different ways, but the Creator’s blueprint is monogamous marriage, where husband and wife become one flesh and, usually in so doing, become with the Creator stewards of new life within the security of the family.

Friday 12th February

Reading

Genesis 3:1-8

The First Sin and Its Punishment

3 Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden"?' **2** And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3** but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' **4** But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. **7** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Reflection

ANCIENT Near Eastern myths attempt to answer some of the fundamental questions. Some are absolutely fundamental: Why are men and women attracted to one another? Why do we wear clothes? Why is childbirth painful? Why is work difficult? Why do we die? Some are less fundamental: why do snakes crawl rather than having legs? The story of Adam and Eve engages with all these questions. It has become a difficult story for two reasons. One is that it is viewed as so obviously unhistorical and unscientific as to call into question the truth and reliability of Scripture. The second is that, having come to be seen in some quarters as a story about female guile and weakness, it has become an embarrassment in an age of equality. But, when read carefully, the story does not support the misogynistic interpretation: Adam is no less guilty of disobedience than Eve and it is the serpent that is depicted as the enemy of God. The exaggeration of Eve's guilt goes back to Sirach 25:24 ('From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die'). It is as a result of the act of disobedience that Adam dominates his wife, naming her Eve, from

which flows the complexity of human family relationships and some of the distortions of an oppressive patriarchy.

Saturday of Week 5(1)

Reading

Genesis 3:9-24

God confronts Adam, Eve, and the Serpent

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' ¹⁰ And he said, 'I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' ¹¹ He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' ¹² The man said, 'The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.' ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all cattle,
and above all wild animals;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.'

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.'

¹⁷ And to Adam he said,

'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,

'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
¹⁹ In the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.'

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever'— ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Reflection

WE CANNOT be sure whether there are two trees in the midst of the garden or just one. Are the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil one and the same? Crucially, by tasting the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve lose their innocence. They discover not only right and wrong, but knowledge of their nakedness. They become separate from God by crossing the boundary that the Lord God has set in place. Though the story of Adam and Eve gives us the earliest answer to the fundamental questions people in the Jewish-Christian tradition have asked, the meaning of the story is not one on which Jews and Christians agree. The Jewish interpretation would stress that God, having punished the couple, nonetheless clothes them and removes their shame, and sets before them a programme for human society. Where humans violate their covenant with God, God finds a way of restoring the balance. The Christian interpretation emphasises 'the Fall', the sin of Adam and human estrangement from God, restored by the sacrifice of Christ, the New Adam.