**Easter Vigil (3) – Fall and Restoration (Part 6): Recapitulation**

*In the name of the Father ...*

The spiritual journey to this Easter Vigil began before the start of Lent proper, in the season of Septuagesima, the liturgy returning to creation, the garden of Eden and Adam's fall.

During the course of that journey, we have speculated on the nature of Adam's fall, that constituted the physical and spiritual head of mankind – that is on the natural and supernatural levels – he sinned against both of those prerogatives. Adam, who was *a type of him who was to come*,¹ failed in that type. Constituted a source of life, Adam failed to communicate life.

Referring to the Edenic nuptials - *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*² - St Paul writes: *This mystery is a profound one, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church.*³ The relationship of Christ and the Church is not only of salvation, but also redemption. St Paul exhorts: *Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her.*⁴ Eve having sinned by tasting the forbidden fruit, Adam could still have made intercession for her.

On Sinai, in that echo of the fall when the people *sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*, that episode of idols and immorality, ... *Moses said to the people: You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses returned to the Lord and said: Alas this people have sinned a great sin ... but if you will [not] forgive their sin, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou has written.*⁵ Like St Paul who *wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren*,⁶ Moses sought to make the ultimate sacrifice for those to whom he had been joined by God. For the ultimate act of a priest in making intercession, is to offer himself as a victim.

Adam failed to communicate life, he failed to make intercession for his wife, but rather joined her in sin, seeking perhaps to cling to life against Our Lords teaching: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*⁷

The primary role of the priest being to communicate life – supernatural life – it is often portrayed in nuptial terms. This is so in St Paul's reference to a man and his wife as a type of Christ and the Church. This is so also in St John's gospel, in those parallel episodes of Cana, recalled on Holy

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¹ Rom 5:14
² Gen 2:24
³ Eph 5:31-2
⁴ Eph 5:25
⁵ Ex 32:30-32
⁶ Rom 9:3
⁷ Mt 16:24-25
Thursday, and the Crucifixion commemorated yesterday, Good Friday. For the wedding on the sixth day is both a commentary on the fall – the unnamed bridal couple hidden in the background – and the restoration. For as St Paul writes: *Be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit,*⁸ and as St Peter preached at Pentecost: *These men are not drunk ... but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,*⁹ the wine in its failure is a symbol of mortal sin, the loss of *charity*, the death which God warned. Further, in its mysterious production, it is a sign, and ultimately an instrument, for the restoration of *charity*, of the spirit, of life. And this in fulfilment of the ancients' belief that the spirit – life – was carried by blood. For God in conceding to Noah man's acquired taste for flesh, warned: *Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, this is, its blood.*¹⁰

The Johannine episode corresponding to Cana, the Crucifixion, is also on the sixth day with the same bridal couple present. It is in the context of the pouring out of the blood of him of whom John writes: *In him there was life ...,*¹¹ in the context of the supreme sacrifice of the priest, it is here that we find the *traditio spiritus*, the giving of the spirit, the spirit of adoption as sons of God, the spirit which gives life: *Et inclinato capite, tradidit spiritum*¹² – and bowing his head, he gave forth the spirit. It is here we find the true supernatural fulfilment of that injunction laid on the first Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply: *Woman, behold your son.*¹³

The communication of life, the *traditio spiritus*, happens in the context of blood - the instrument of life - being poured out. Indeed, the blood which is the seed of eternal life was spilled first at the circumcision, a mark not of election but of Adam's sin, his failure to communicate even natural life.

This night then, following on the great works of redemption, those great nuptial – priestly – acts of Cana and the Crucifixion recalled on Thursday and Friday, is about new life, a new creation, a resurrection from sin, and especially the sin contracted by all mankind on account of Adam's sin, so that carnal descent – so precious to the Jews - profits nothing. Thus St Paul writes that ... *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but a new creation ... faith working through charity ... keeping the commandments of God.*¹⁴

God permitted Adam's fall for the greater glory of his Son, that he might also have the glory of being the universal redeemer. So Our Lord speaking to the disciples going to Emmaus on the day of his

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⁸ Eph 5:18  
⁹ Acts 2:15-17  
¹⁰ Gen 9:3-4  
¹¹ Jn 1:4  
¹² Jn 19:30  
¹³ Jn 19:26  
¹⁴ Gal 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19
resurrection said: *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and so enter into his glory?*

But supernatural life, spiritual rebirth, always was necessary. God put Adam in the garden to till and keep, foreshadowing the work of the priests. Already in Eden there was gold, onyx and bdellium foreshadowing the tabernacle, the priesthood and the manna – the bread from heaven. Already in Eden, foreshadowing baptism which is the entrance to receiving that bread from heaven – the fruit of the tree of life, there was flowing water, a river which divided into four parts signifying universal sanctification, recalled in tonight's blessing of the baptismal water, as is the spirit of God moving over the face of the waters even prior to Eden, so that these waters become an instrument for conferral of the spirit, i.e., a source of life, a new creation of faith working by charity.

So it is that Christ - *in whom there was life* - appears as the high priest in a restoration and fulfilment, as the source of supernatural life, of the spirit. And as the supreme high priest he could only be a source of life – of supernatural life - and never of corruption. As a model for those who - continuing his work - would be his instruments, his priests, he was supremely celibate. And the conferral of life – supernatural life - was consummated in his own perfect self sacrifice.

And rising from that perfect self-sacrifice into glory, he recapitulates mankind, restores a headship foreshadowed but lost in the first Adam. For Mary Magdalene, keeping vigil in the garden, in her supposition, actually identifies him correctly, as the one God put in the garden to till and to keep it, that place of gold, onyx and bdellium, that place of flowing water branching out to sanctify all the earth: believed mistaken, she identifies him for the source of life – supernatural life - which he is: believed mistaken, she identifies him as the gardener.  

*In the name of the Father ...*

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15 Lk 24:26
16 Jn 20:15