

Flowers Teach

June 23, 2012

If flowers speak (cf. EC 255), then they can also teach: the value of time, the justice of God, the harmony of grace and nature.

For instance, if God exists and he is not unjust by making a soul's whole eternity depend upon its choices made during one brief life, even lasting 90 years, then it stands to reason both that every moment of that life counts, and that in every moment (even if not always with the same force) God is appealing to us to join him for eternity. That is why it makes sense that he should be talking through the flowers and through every other gift of his creation, because what soul alive can truthfully say that it has nothing and nobody to love? Even the most rabid "atheist" has, say, his dog or his cigarettes. And Who designed dogs and tobacco plants, and kept them reproducing down to our own day?

So just before he dies the "atheist" may still claim that he at least was never spoken to by God, but in the instant after he dies he will grasp in a flash that for every moment of his waking life God has been appealing to him through some creature or other around him. "Am I now unjust," God might ask him, "if I condemn you for every remaining moment of my life, when for every moment of your life you have been refusing me? Have what you have chosen. Depart from me into . . ." (Mt. XXV, 41).

Conversely, take a soul that has profited by every moment of its life to love the great and good God behind all the good things it has enjoyed, and that has even recognized the permission of his Providence behind all the bad things it has not enjoyed. Then who needs to be recognized, or famous, who needs to appear in the media, or to fill drawers of vacation photographs, in order to give meaning to his life? Small

wonder that in past ages talented souls could bury their talents in a cloister or monastery in order to devote them wholly to the loving of God. For indeed every moment of our time is of measureless value, because upon every moment hangs for good or ill a measureless eternity.

Moreover, that flowers speak can help us to make sense of another well-known problem: how can non-Catholic souls be condemned for not having the Catholic faith when Catholic missionaries never reached them? Whatever mystery is here may at least partly be solved, humanly speaking, if one recalls that it is the selfsame God who creates flowers and instituted the Catholic Church. Thus if God's Providence never allowed for Catholic truth to reach the ears of a given soul, nevertheless that soul will not be able to plead that it knew nothing of the true God, and it can be judged on what it did know, for instance the beauty of cloudscapes, of sunrises and sunsets. Did it, beholding them, say with the pagan Job (Job XIX, 25), "I know that my Redeemer liveth," or did it say, "Well, yes, that's nice, but now let me visit my neighbour's wife"?

In fact a number of complaints that men have today against their Creator arise even with Catholics, because many Catholics are, like everybody else today, more or less cut off from Nature by their urban or suburban lives, and their "spirituality" becomes correspondingly artificial. "Woe to anybody who has never loved an animal," somebody has said. Children are close to God. Watch how naturally children love animals.

Great and good God, grant us to see you where you are, deep down everything and everybody, at every moment.

Kyrie eleison.