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10TH APOSTOLIC VISIT IN ITALY: SANTA MARIA DI LEUCA AND BRINDISI, 14-15 JUNE

ANGELUS: 15 JUNE

Brindisi, like Mary a 'port of salvation'

At noon on Sunday, 15 June, on the St Apollinaris Wharf where he had celebrated Holy Mass, Pope Benedict XVI introduced the recitation of the Angelus with the faithful of Brindisi with comments on the ancient symbolism of the Port of Brindisi, the Christian message of cooperation and peace among all peoples, the humanitarian mission of the UN and Mary's role as the "Port of Salvation". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's Reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Before concluding this celebration, I express my gratitude to all those who prepared it with such care and enlivened it with music and song. I thank those who organized my Visit and who are making their contribution to ensuring its success: I am thinking of the various local Authorities, the police, the volunteers and you, the inhabitants of Brindisi. I invite you all, as on every Sunday, to join me in the prayer of the Angelus.

The place where we are — the port — is charged with a eloquent symbolic significance. Every port speaks of welcome, of shelter, of safety; it speaks of a longed-for haven after what may have been a long and difficult navigation. It also speaks of departures, of plans and aspirations, of the future. The port of Brindisi in particular has a primary role in communications between the Mediterranean Sea and the East, and for this reason it is also host to a United Nations Base that performs an important function in humanitarian terms.

Thus, from this most evocative place, not far from the town called the "good morning" (Calimera) of Italy,

I would like to renew the Christian message of cooperation and peace among all peoples, especially among those around this sea coast, the ancient cradle of civilization, and those of the Near and Middle East.

Moreover, I am pleased to do this with the words I used two months ago in my Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York: "The action of the international community and its institutions, provided that it respects the principles undergirding the international order, should never be interpreted as an unwarranted imposition or a limitation of sovereignty."

"On the contrary, it is indifference or failure to intervene that do the real damage. What is needed is a deeper search for ways of pre-empting and managing conflicts by exploring every possible diplomatic avenue, and giving attention and encouragement to even the faintest sign of dialogue or desire for reconciliation" (Address, 18 April; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 23 April 2008, p. 12).

From this corner of Europe which juts into the Mediterranean between East and West, let us turn once again to Mary,

Pope Benedict XVI completes his 10th Apostolic Journey in Italy, visiting the extreme Southeast Shrine of St Mary de finibus terrae, and the end of the ancient Appian Way in Brindisi. The Holy Father focused on bringing the Gospel to the ends of the earth. See the Angelus this page and pages 5-9 for coverage.



the Mother who "shows us the way" — *Odegitria* —, giving us Jesus, the Way of peace. Let us invoke her in spirit with all the titles by which she is venerated in the Shrines of Apulia and especially here, from this ancient port, let us pray to her as the "Port of salvation" for every person and for the whole of humanity.

May her maternal protection always defend this city of yours, the Region, Italy, Europe and the whole world from the storms that threaten the faith and true values; may she enable the young generations to put out into the deep without fear, to face the journey of life with Christian hope. Mary, Port of Salvation, pray for us!

Presidential and Papal Visit, 13 June

A singular protocol marks the Friday, 13 June meeting of United States President George W. Bush with the Holy Father, who in this way reciprocated the cordial welcome he received in the United States and at the White House. At their 30-minute private meeting on the upper level of the Tower of St John they treated international issues: relations between the U.S.A. and Europe, the Middle East and the commitment for peace in the Holy Land, globalization, the world food crisis, international trade and the application of the Millennium Development Goals. After a brief stroll through the Vatican Gardens the First Lady, Mrs Laura Bush, Mary Ann Glendon, U.S. ambassador to the Holy See and the presidential entourage met them at an outdoor Marian shrine for the Sistine choir's performance of two motets.



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St Columban

This Irish Abbot shaped monastic culture of the Middle Ages and nourished Europe's Christian roots.

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AN INTERDISCIPLINARY LOOK AT EVOLUTION

'The spiritual soul cannot derive from matter'

Fiorenzo Facchini

If the capacity to project and to symbolize can be considered an extra-biological phenomenon, and if it represents a transcendence over the capacities of other living beings, one might ask what is the nature of that transcendence, what is there in man that can explain it?

There can be no empirical answer to a question of this kind. Some look for an explanation in the development of the brain, but cerebral activity cannot be considered as synonymous with the subjectivity of the human being, with his self-awareness and his ego, even if both need the brain in order to function.

Man's cognitive activity is of an abstract nature, not ascribable to empirical knowledge, even if it arises from this. Ideas, thoughts and emotions cannot be reduced to mere electric activity of the brain, which works alongside them, but does not create them.

Apart from his cognitive activity, consideration must be given to man's self-determination and liberty, which render his choices independent of purely material motives, as well as his capacity for altruistic behaviour, and the freedom to choose, which may involve and require sacrifice. These expressions transcend the biological sphere and denote an element of a non-physical order.

Before us is the question of human spirituality, an essentially philosophical question which would be reductive to ignore.

"Man", observes Blaise Pascal, "is no more than a thinking reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed... All our dignity lies in thought" (*Pensées*, 347) and further, "all flesh together could not produce a tiny thought: that is impossible, since they belong to different orders" (*Pensées*, 793).

Man thinks, and knows that he thinks, and through him the whole universe is thought of. With man, thought enters into the evolution of life, notes Yves Coppens (2007), and matter becomes thinking matter. And Gustave Martelet remarks (2003), "The universe is a thought, or at least a thinkable, universality, but it needs man to think it".

If there is a spiritual activity, and therefore a soul, beyond the natural physical causes which determine bio-psyche physical human characteristics, then one must admit a higher order for the soul.

John Paul II, addressing the Pontifical Academy of Science on 22 October 1996, observed that for man, there is not only a cultural discontinuity, but also an ontological one. In his Address the Pope recognized evolution as a scientific theory, and no longer as a hypothesis, as it had been referred to in the Encyclical *Humani Generis* of Pius XII (1950): "Today... new knowledge has led to the recognition of more than one hypothesis in the theory of evolution. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favour of this theory" (*Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, 22 October 1996, *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition [ORE], 30 October 1996, p. 7).

He affirmed: "With man, then, we find ourselves in the presence of an ontological difference, an ontological leap". He then asked: "However, does not the posing of such ontological discontinuity run counter to that physical continuity which seems to be the main thread of research into evolution in the field of physics and chemistry?" (*ibid.*).

With respect to this question he pointed out that a distinction must be made

between the two different orders of knowledge, scientific on the one hand, and philosophical-theological on the other. "The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life, and correlated them with the time line. The moment of transition to the spiritual cannot be the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being."

"But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again, of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection, while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator's plans" (*ibid.*).

The spirit cannot come from matter

These considerations represent a great expansion and at the same time a clarification in epistemological terms. The Magisterium does not wish to propose new arguments in favour of evolution. Respect for different research methods of research, the authority of its sustainers and its intrinsic coherence help us instead to give proper attention to questions that can arise.

The Pope's reference to the specific nature of man is consistent with the Bible teaching: man is made "in the image and likeness of God" and therein lies the essential difference from animals. "Man resembles God in his totality", states Gerhard von Rad (1993), "the resemblance does not regard only the spirit of man, but also the body".

This specific spiritual nature entails an ontological difference with respect to animals. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin ob-

served: "The secret of man does not lie in the successive stages of his embryonic life, ontogenetic or phylogenetic: it lies in the spiritual nature of the soul. Now this soul is beyond science, whose essential role is to analyse things in their elements, and in their antecedent materials. The soul can only be discovered by our own intimate awareness and by philosophical

reflection" (*The Future of Man*, p. 81).

The human being, strong in spirit, transcends other inhuman realities, but he also claims a transcendental origin, because the spirit cannot derive from matter. Consequently, the particular concurrence of God is required in the formation of the human being, even while the natural causes that lead to his emergence still pertain.

Something similar occurs in human procreation with the awakening of the soul which requires the intervention of God, since the soul is not transmitted through the parents' chromosomes.

In speaking of hominization, we can consider that, when the biological conditions necessary to support a being capable of thought were reached, then God the Creator freely willed him, and man existed. We cannot know how that came about any more than we can imagine how the intervention of God comes about in the spiritual awakening of every human being.

So, does man in fact derive from the ape? No, we should rather say that, at a certain moment, in a non-human hominid, the spark of intelligence was struck by the will of God, and man existed as a person, as a subject capable of thinking and deciding freely. "We do



A 16,000 year old paleolithic ideogram of a black bull at Lascaux, France.

not derive from beasts, but we rise up from them", said Antonio Fogazzaro. With man, the hominid is raised to a superior level by virtue of that which in him transcends the purely animal dimension.

The appearance of man cannot be seen either as a chance event, or as a strictly necessary one, since it depends on the will of God, in whatever way it may have occurred in the natural order. Recourse to a superior intervention does not represent an undue intrusion into the realm of science, — as in the case of the id — but is required to explain the presence of the spirit in man, which has no place in the realms of empirical science, and cannot be studied with its methods.

Rather it can be considered as the integration of perspectives, coming from a different field of investigation, like those of a religious or philosophical order.

God's will: the final intervention

Joseph Ratzinger, in 1968 noted that God willed man in a specific and more direct way than he had willed the things of the natural world; as a being that would know him and be capable of turning to him. For this reason, the moment of anthropogenesis cannot be fixed by palaeontology. The qualitative difference between the human being and the animals means that there are no intermediate stages before the appearance of the fully human psyche.

The same question was raised by Jacques Maritain (1977). In order to envisage the process of hominization and crossing the threshold of the human he presents the hypothesis of "super-developed animals, or pre-men", having a sensitive soul, but without intellect.

These might have generated the first beings furnished with a human soul, directly and freely willed by God, from the moment of fetal life. This hypothesis would be "useful and fruitful in the hands of palaeontologists, even though on the scientific level it can only appear likely, and cannot undergo verification".

Transcendence would be given to the

soul "thanks to the ultimate intervention of God the Creator, through his purely free choice, which transcends all the possibilities of matter" even if this occurred at the end of a natural evolutionary process.

No gradual development from animal to man can be admitted, but only a preparation which might also have extended to the psyche; although it must be acknowledged that a psyche higher than that of anthropoids was present in australopithecines, hominids who preceded man, but were still incapable of abstraction and reflection, elements which characterize man.

From this perspective the appearance of man cannot be seen as a necessary event, essential to the evolutionary process. That process could have stopped at a pre-human level, even if we might ask in that case what significance it would have had. Nor can it be seen as a purely fortuitous event, because crossing the threshold of the human requires the will of God the Creator, which is not just that of the First Cause which maintains in existence the whole of Creation.

As Maritain points out, man appeared as a result of God's free choice, even if this came about, according to his will, when certain evolutionary conditions had been reached.

John Paul II had observed on another occasion: "It can therefore be said that, from the viewpoint of the doctrine of the faith, there are no difficulties in explaining the origin of man, in regard to the body, by means of the theory of evolution... it is possible that the human body, following the order impressed by the Creator on the energies of life, could have been gradually prepared in the forms of antecedent living beings. The human soul, however, on which man's humanity definitively depends, cannot emerge from matter, since it is of a spiritual nature" (General Audience, 16 April 1986, *ORE*, 21 April, p. 2).

(For further reading see: *Le sfide dell'evoluzione. In armonia tra scienza e fede*, Milan, Jaca Books, 2008.)