

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

man’s spiritual condition, and, on the other, his sharing in the divine nature through sanctifying grace. Even after the fall, man is still in the “image” of God; through sin, however, he lost his “likeness” but this was restored through Christ’s redemption.

It is part of God’s design that human beings should have dominion over other created things (represented here by the animals). This dominion makes man God’s representative (everything really belongs to God) in the created world. Therefore, although man is going to be the lord of creation, he needs to recognize that God alone is the Creator; man has to respect and look after creation; he is responsible for it.

These words of Scripture show that “man is the only creature that God has loved for itself alone, because all others were created to be at the service of man. Here we can see, too, the basic equality of all human beings. For the Church, this equality, which has its roots in man’s very being, takes on the very special dimension of brotherhood through the Incarnation of the Son of God. [. . .] Therefore, discrimination of any type [. . .] is absolutely unacceptable” (John Paul II, Address, 7 July 1984).

1:27. The creation of man marks the completion of God’s plan. In presenting this final act of creation, the sacred writer offers us a summary of the things that go to make up the human being. As well as repeating that God created man in his image and likeness, he tells us that God created them man and woman, that is to

say, corporeal beings, endowed with sexuality, and designed to live in society. “Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 357).

“The fact that man ‘created as man and woman’ is the image of God means not only that each of them individually is like God, as a rational and free being. It also means that man and woman, created as a ‘unity of the two’ in their common humanity, are called to live in a communion of love, and in this way to mirror in the world the communion of love that is in God, through which the Three Persons love each other in the intimate mystery of the one divine life. This ‘unity of the two’, which is a sign of interpersonal communion, shows that the creation of man is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion (*‘communio’*). This likeness is a quality of the personal being of both man and woman, and is also a call and a task” (John Paul II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, 7).

The fact that the Bible and everyday language speak of God as masculine is a the result of cultural influences and the great care taken in the Bible to avoid any hint of polytheism (which could arise if the godhead were described as feminine,

piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae omnique reptili, quod movetur in terra».

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

opening the way to generations of gods, as in other religions). God transcends the body and sexuality; therefore, both man (masc.) and woman (fem.) equally reflect his image and likeness. In these words of Genesis, for the very first time in history, the fundamental equality in dignity of man and woman is proclaimed—in marked contrast with the low esteem in which women were held in the ancient world.

According to the traditional Jewish and Christian interpretation, this verse is alluding to marriage, as if God had already created the first man and the first woman as a married couple—forming that human community which is the basis of every society. In the second Genesis account of the creation of man and woman (cf. 2:18-24), this will emerge even more clearly.

1:28. God has already created animals, endowing them with fruitfulness (v. 22). He now addresses these two human beings personally: “he said to them . . .”; this indicates that the reproductive power of human beings (and therefore their sexuality) are values for which they must assume responsibility before God, as a way of co-operating in God’s plans. Thus, God, “wishing to associate them in a special way with his own creative work, blessed man and woman with the words: ‘Be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen 1:28). Without intending to underestimate the other ends of marriage, it must be said that true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it is directed to disposing the

spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day” (Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 50).

God also commands man to make the earth serve him. Here divine Revelation is teaching us that human work is to be regarded as a way by which man co-operates in the plan God had when he created the world: “By the work of his hands and with the aid of technical means man tills the earth to bring forth fruit and to make it a dwelling place fit for all mankind; he also consciously plays his part in the life of social groups; in so doing he is realizing the design, which God revealed at the beginning of time, to subdue the earth and perfect the work of creation, and at the same time he is improving his own person” (Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 57).

From this divine disposition we can see the importance a person’s work has in his or her personal life: “Your human vocation is a part—and an important part—of your divine vocation. That is the reason why you must strive for holiness, giving a particular character to your human personality, a style to your life; contributing at the same time to the sanctification of others, your fellow men; sanctifying your work and your environment: the profession or job that fills your day, your home and family and the country where you were born and which you love [. . .]. Work, all work, bears witness to the dignity of man, to his dominion over creation. It is an opportunity to develop one’s personality. It is a bond of

²⁷Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam; / ad imaginem Dei creavit illum; / masculum et femi-