

# Understanding God and Creation

## The Nature of God

- **Ipsum Esse:** God as the source of all existence, where essence and existence coincide.
- **Actus Purus:** The totality of being, containing everything possible.
- **God's Incense and Theological Language:** The use of incense in Mass symbolizes theological language as a means of obscuring, preventing the grasping tendency of the ego. The language of theology is intended to help us approach God humbly, knowing we cannot fully comprehend Him.

## Why Would God Create?

- **Not out of need:** God has everything and needs nothing from creation.
- **Creation as Love:** God creates out of love, willing the good of creation without any self-interest.
- **Love as Willed Good:** Love is not a feeling but the will of good for another. This contrasts human love, which is often tainted by self-interest.
- **God's Glory:** The purpose of creation is to manifest God's loving nature and glory. Since God doesn't need the world, His relationship with it is purely loving and non-manipulative.

## The Creation Account in Genesis

### Non-Violent Creation

- **Creation by Speech:** God creates the world through speech, not violence. His act of creation is peaceful, unlike ancient myths where creation involved conquering chaos or enemies.
- **Tohu wa-bohu:** The Hebrew term for "primal chaos" or "watery chaos." It

symbolizes resistance to God, later seen in the flood, the Red Sea, and Jesus walking on water.

## **The Liturgical Nature of Creation**

- **Orderly Creation:** Creation unfolds in a liturgical procession, reflecting order. Like a liturgical procession, creation has a structure that culminates with humanity.
- **Humanity's Role:** Humans come last in the creation narrative, symbolizing our role as leaders of praise. Creation is not to be worshiped, but rather all elements of creation are meant to participate in a chorus of praise to God.
- **Not Domination:** Humanity's role is not domination over creation, but leadership in offering right praise.

## **Right Praise and Worship**

### **Right Praise Aligns the World**

- **Worship vs. False Worship:** When humanity offers right praise, the world is ordered as God intends. False worship, or idolatry, leads to chaos and degradation.
- **Adoration:** The term "adoration" comes from the Latin *ad ora* meaning "to the mouth." True adoration is being "mouth to mouth" with God, symbolizing intimate alignment with His will.
- **The Rose Window:** The image of the rose window in Gothic cathedrals symbolizes the rightly ordered soul, where all aspects of life revolve around Christ at the center.

### **False Worship and Its Consequences**

- **Worship of Creatures:** False worship—giving ultimate value to creatures rather than God—leads to disintegration and chaos. The harmony of life falls apart

when we place anything other than God at the center.

- **Disintegration:** When we place wealth, power, honor, or anything else as our highest value, our lives lose coherence, becoming like a shattered rose window, a cacophony instead of a symphony.

## **Biblical Patterns of Worship**

- **Israel's Struggles:** The Bible shows that Israel's downfall always stems from false worship. When right praise is restored, the world returns to harmony.
- **The Tower of Babel:** The story of Babel represents humanity's attempt to grasp at God, seeking power and unity for the wrong purposes. God scatters them, limiting the damage done by sin.

## **The Call of Abraham and the Nature of Faith**

### **Abraham as Father of Faith**

- **Hearing the Voice of God:** Abraham begins the rescue operation of humanity by responding to God's call. Faith in the Bible is not credulity but trustful acceptance of God's voice.
- **Conscience as the Voice of God:** The voice of conscience is the "aboriginal vicar of Christ in the soul," according to John Henry Newman. It represents the inner call to follow God's will.

### **The Akedah (The Binding of Isaac)**

- **The Ultimate Test of Faith:** God's command to sacrifice Isaac tests Abraham's faith. It asks the profound question: Do we love God, or do we love the benefits of God?
- **Job's Parallel:** The story of Job echoes the same theme, questioning whether we love God or merely His gifts.

## **The Law of the Gift and Spiritual Growth**

### **Giving Away Grace**

- **The Law of the Gift:** When we receive grace and give it away, it returns to us multiplied. Holding onto grace selfishly leads to losing it.
- **Faith and Abundance:** Trust in God leads to life and abundance, symbolized in God's promise to Abraham of countless descendants.

### **Breathing Life Into the World**

- **Two Types of People:** Those who "suck air out of a room" and those who "breathe life into a room." People of faith are those who bring life and grace into the world.

## **Conclusion: The Test of Love and Faith**

### **Loving God vs. Loving Benefits**

- **Abraham's Clarity:** The binding of Isaac is the ultimate test of whether Abraham loves God for who He is or only for the benefits God provides.
- **Christ as the Ultimate Example:** Jesus on the cross is the purest expression of loving God. Stripped of all benefits—honor, friends, dignity—Jesus remained faithful to the will of His Father.

### **Right Praise as the Key to Harmony**

- **The Core of Faith:** Right praise and worship lead to harmony, coherence, and life. False worship leads to chaos, desert, and disintegration.