

Heaven and Hell

I listened to a pair of homilies posted by Fr. Andrew Dickinson, one on **hell** and one on **heaven**.

Now, I've thought about heaven and hell a lot, and I know they are spiritual rewards and sufferings more than material. I've heard the many cliché definitions, and I've tried to make sense of phrases like "one with God" and "total separation from God" and honestly they are no more useful than the words "heaven" and "hell". One can imagine this or that about them, but distilling it down to something the mind can grasp has traditionally been, for me at least, elusive.

Fr. Andrew's homilies gave me a couple of words, though, one for each, that I could use like peg hooks, to hang everything upon in a way my mind can wrangle with it all. I thought I'd share.

Heaven, the one homily asserts is "peace." The kind of peace we all long for: where we want the right things and we want them for the right reasons, and we want to feel them in the right way. It is the peace of perfect relationship with all that is. It is the state of being refined into the perfect manifestations of who we are and being accepted and appreciated unconditionally for it, and doing likewise for all else, which also is refined into the perfect manifestation of what it is. It is the peace of harmony.

Hell, the other homily asserts is "hate". The homily puts it "saturation with hate". I thought, after I had listened, "can it be that simple?" I thought about demons. It is their past time, among others, to foment hate. Hate destroys, and out of their envy of God and man, demons seek to destroy. Envy is the longing to deprive the other of something we desire which another possesses and we do not. Whether the envious one obtains it, or even could, is not important – someone who

envies only wants that the other should not have the it that is the subject of the longing. Envy requires hatred. It requires that the thing longed for be so consuming that depriving the other of it, even by destroying it, is deemed better than the other having it. And so Satan, in his envy of God, seeks to destroy what God has made.

But demons have a power to manipulate thoughts and feelings in humans. Deprived of any protection from God, they could fill a person, mind and soul, with hatred. They can inspire feelings associated with hatred, such as envy and anger and pride. They can taint thoughts with hatred, consuming even pleasant memories with negativity to the point of making them unpleasant. Freed from the restraints of God's hand, demons can pit human souls against one another with the bitterest, cruelest, most utterly hateful malice of which humans are capable, which is, as history has demonstrated, unfathomable. Demons could, if not held at bay, douse a human soul with hatred to the point that it is entirely and totally saturated with hate.

And this, where all beings and all things are saturated with hate and the malice that results, is hell.

In the Lord's Prayer, aka "the Our Father ...", there is this line "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom of God is, in the words of St. Paul, "righteousness and peace and joy". But what if one's desire is not the Kingdom of God, if it is in fact to reject the Kingdom of God? The absence of the Kingdom of God is none other than the utter absence of God. There is only one such place: hell.

Also in the Lord's Prayer, is the line, "Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." The Will of God is the Kingdom of God, Heaven, the Kingdom of Peace, throughout the universe. "Thy Will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven" is the petition to God that that which is in Heaven be made present here and now on Earth. One who refuses to pray for God's will

on Earth desires a Kingdom without Peace, and a total rejection of God and God's Will is a total rejection of that Kingdom. The only such place is hell, and those who refuse, desire hell on Earth – an Earth filled not with peace, but with hate.

As I thought about it, I could not help think of the brouhaha that has arisen through this past election cycle, and especially after Donald Trump was elected. Many people, on both "sides" are fomenting hate. Clinton supporters are calling names, burning effigies, destroying property, assaulting people. Trump supporters are calling names, gloating vindictively, ridiculing, and (intentionally or not) egging anti-Trump sentiment along. Clinton supporters are envious of Trump supporters, with all the hate that accompanies envy. Trump supporters are vengeful, with all the hatefulness that accompanies vengeance. I am deeply saddened by what is happening. The demons are ecstatic, in whatever way demons feel ecstasy. People are not looking toward peace at all. They are even planning how to act in hatefulness for years to come, acts that fall squarely in the realms of envy and vengeance. All that remains for the Deceiver and Prince of Lies, Satan, to do is fear-monger people into thinking their behavior is good and justified, and he is doing it quite effectively in the guise of "rights" and "policy" and "what-if's". But there is nothing good in hate. Hate is never just.

I'm not going to try to analyze it all and say this is why or that is why. I do not take sides in this battle of hate against hate. Both "sides" have offered their prayer: "My kingdom and not Thine come. My will and not Thine be done on Earth." God is Love. Rejecting God's Kingdom and God's Will for mankind results only in the antithesis of love: hate. And a world filled only with hate, saturated with hate, is hell.

Fox Fursuit

My DIY fox fursuit! All the parts are firsts!



Karmah Foxx – Part 6

Karmah Foxx

PART 6

An hour after Karmah was caged, two officers brought in a mountain gorilla Recombinant who was placed in the cage next to Karmah's. She greeted him when the officers left and he introduced himself as Ben Savage. They talked briefly about what might become of them and then were quiet. Another hour passed and a raccoon hybrid with an irascible disposition was caged next to Ben, but they managed to learn his name was Paul Pyrson and that he was a CPA. "I don't deal with the public," he told them, and sulked in the back of his cage, staring away from them through the corner into the empty darkness at the rear of the building.

About two and a half hours after Karmah was caged, the last two Recombinants the officers were seeking were brought in – a pair of tiger hybrids. They were separated into different cages deliberately far apart.

"I'm Darius Clawson," one replied when Karmah inquired about them. "and this is my wife, Talia. We were trying to get to Argentina – we heard they're offering sanctuary for Recombinants down there, but we couldn't go by commercial planes or ships, so we were looking for a private service. Nobody would take us. We were stuck."

Paul burst out in a chattering laugh. "They aren't offering sanctuary to Recombinants in Argentina! They call their Resettlement Facility 'the sanctuary'. They aren't offering sanctuary to Recombinants anywhere. I bet some human offered to help you and you paid handsomely for that information, huh?"

Darius's stunned silent stare at Paul answered for him.

"That's what I thought," Paul replied, and went back to sulking at the darkness.

Within another 30 minutes, they were temporarily blinded by the sudden intrusion of light into the gloomy building when the door was opened, and several officers walked in. All five Recombinants tensed, alert and on the defensive. Karmah's ears went forward, Darius and Talia lashed their tails, Ben huffed, and Paul snarled.

"What a zoo!" one of the officers said. "Let's round 'em up!"

One of the officers went to the front corner of the building and climbed up into a forklift. One by one he drove the cages with the Recombinants in them out of the building and loaded them on a flat-bed truck. Once they were all loaded, the cages were tied down under a tarp.

The drive to the airport was brief and miserable. The truck bed shook and jostled them, the wind whipping and snapping at any slack in the tarp, and the roar of the roadway droning at them. They all huddled in their cages as near the center of the bed as they could get and rode in silence.

At the airport, another forklift loaded the cages into the hold of a cargo plane along with pallets of shipping crates, all marked with the Recombinant Control logo.

About two hours later, the plane landed and the cages were removed to the tarmac. A Ryder van pulled up alongside them and Karmah and her companions were shackled and chained together at the collars. They were loaded into the back of the van and driven about 30 minutes in nearly complete darkness that not even Karmah's keen night vision could do much to penetrate.

The truck rumbled to a stop and they were unloaded in front of a warehouse surrounded by a chain-link fence topped with coils of barbed wire. Inside the fence dozens of mammal/human

hybrids, shackled and collared in groups of three, stood or sat in the shade. Many watched the newcomers being unloaded from the truck. Karmah and her companions were led to a gatehouse where they had to give their names, ages, and places of birth and then they were taken into the warehouse.

Inside, the building had been converted into a gigantic barracks, each Recombinant supplied with a mattress on the floor and a blanket. Karmah and the other new arrivals were passed off to a gray-headed Recombinant Control officer with a square jaw and a stiff disposition.

“Welcome to the Cape Canaveral Recombinant Resettlement Facility. Those of you with exceptional aptitude or applicable experience will be provided training in the event a risk scenario materializes during your migration to TER-1. Your stay here will not be long. How long depends on how quickly you can be trained. It’s all up to you.”

He then went on to explain the Facility’s rules and routine. Karmah, despite her confusion, fatigue, and hunger, paid attention to every word. Something that was said would serve her purposes, she was certain. No human who had dared run her a fox chase had taken her, and she wasn’t going to let it happen now.

END OF PART 6