

## Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

### **Living as a Redeemed People in a Broken World**

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Hello everybody. My name is Scott. And today I want to talk to you about brokenness, and specifically about broken relationships. But maybe not relationships in the way that you might be thinking about them. Before we do that, let's start in prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. "To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth, that is not living, but existing." A quote from Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. Lord Jesus, You gave to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati a zeal for understanding the reconciliation that You've offered to our world, an understanding of the brokenness of our lives, and the people around us, and the world that we live in, but an understanding of what You've done about it. And we pray that we might be inspired by him, and by his life, and by what You've done for us. I pray that You would be with all of the people listening to this video and this recording. Please be in my words. Let me not say anything that's outside of Your will. And we pray all these things through Christ our Lord. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, I want to start by acknowledging that we have a problem. In our world, there is a pretty profound divide. And there's lots of divides we could talk about. You can talk about political divides, you can talk about divides between people, and families, and our friends, and coworkers, and the media. There's all sorts of conflict and brokenness in relationships that you could probably think of. But, to understand what I mean by that, and what the church means when she talks about our brokenness, I want to go back to the beginning, and one of the things that Jesus loved to do in his teaching and in his preaching was to go back to the beginning. So, if you were to open up your bible to the very first pages, the first lines, what Genesis says as it commences is: "In the beginning, God." "In the beginning, God." Now, that sentence is going to continue and show the things that God did and created, and eventually he'll create human beings, and plants, and animals, and dinosaurs, and everything else. But before all of that, it says "In the beginning, God." Before there was anything, before there was us, before there were animals, there is God.

Well, who is God? Well, the God that we believe in as Catholics, and that we profess, is a God that is so real and so substantial that the very word that God speaks is actually another person. We call It the second person of the trinity. We

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call Jesus sometimes the Word of God, right. Because he was proceeds from the Father. And just as the words that I speak aren't totally separate from who I am, so God the Son is not separate from God the Father. They're united. God the Father, who loves God the Son, God the Son who receives that love, gives it back to God the Father. And we believe that the love between them is so real and so substantial that it too is another person, the Holy Spirit. And so, at its heart, God is relationship, he is communion, he's a community of persons, which is sort of what it means when we're told that we are created in the image and likeness of God. We're made for relationship; we're created out of the relationship that is God for the sake of relationship. Loving one another, pouring ourselves out, receiving love, giving it back, this is who God is, this is who we are called to be. So God is relationship, and that is what we're made for.

Now, at the very beginning, again, if you go back to Genesis, if you were to read the creation story, there are 4 initial relationships that we read that mankind was supposed to be a part of. They were supposed to be a part fundamental to his life. And *the Catechism of the Catholic Church* actually talks about this. Those 4 relationships that we were made to live within are, number 1, humans were created to be in a relationship with God, a relationship that was good, and sensible. And it made sense. I mean, I don't know about you guys, but so many days – I try to pray every day – but there's so many days that I'm doing my prayer, and I'm trying to do my thing, and I just really wish I could hear a voice back. Just something saying “Yes, God, I can hear you. I got it. Cool. You're good.” But we don't hear those things. Or maybe you guys do, but I don't. I don't hear a tangible voice back, I don't get a phone call on my phone from God saying “Yeah, it's me. I hear you. I got you. I'll take care of you.” I mean, I believe it. I believe that God is there. I believe that he hears my prayers. But it's hard. There's a veil over us. But in the beginning that wasn't so. We could see God clearly. It made sense. That relationship didn't have to be questioned. So we were made for a relationship, a good relationship between ourselves and our God. That's number one.

Now, number 2, human beings were meant to be in a relationship with ourselves. We were meant to be holy. Remember, Genesis says we're created in the image and likeness of God, and that meant if Adam... Adam and Eve didn't have mirrors, but if they had a mirror and they looked in that mirror they would have liked what they saw, because they'd recognize “Yeah, I'm good. I'm holy. I am in the image and likeness of the God who I also know.” But how many days do you wake up and you look in the mirror and you're like “Man, I just don't know if I like what I see. I struggle with these things, I wrestle with that stuff, I was a jerk to this person.” We do stuff that we know we're not supposed to do. We fall to sin. It's

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called concupiscence, and it means that we're drawn to things that are not good for us. But in the beginning that wasn't so. We understood ourselves, we did what was good for our lives, we were holy.

Number 3, we believe that human beings were meant to be in a relationship with one another. Adam and Eve were meant to be in a life-giving relationship. I love the story of Adam and Eve because I was really terrible during like high school and college and stuff at dating. I have a wife now, praise be to God, but I was a terrible dater. And I loved the idea that Adam and Eve were just created in a marriage with each other, and they didn't have to worry about all the games and stuff that goes into that. But it was a good relationship, and they were called to give themselves to one another, and it made sense. There wasn't war, there wasn't strife, there wasn't fighting, there wasn't bickering. Humans and their relationships with one another were good.

And then lastly, number 4, human beings were called to be in relationship with the rest of creation. With the world of nature. Adam in Genesis is called to go out and name all the animals. And in every ancient society, naming something implied a relationship with it. Adam is called to be God's representative on earth to the world of nature, to the whole of creation. He's meant to be a steward. All 4 of these relationships were created to be in a harmony with one another. The Catechism actually speaks about them as harmonies, and a priest friend of mine actually calls them "The 4 harmonies". Because that makes sense. And if you know anything about music, when one part of a 4-part harmony is off, the whole thing is off. The whole thing just doesn't sound quite right. Now, there's a hierarchy to these 4 relationships, right. It's because we are in relationship with God that we're able to have all those others. Because God is God, and we are united in relationship with Him, I can be holy, and I can be in relationship with the people around me, and I can understand my role in the created world.

Well, a professor of mine during college once said "Every great story has got to have a great problem." Every great story has got to have a great problem. And the great story of our salvation, the epic of the bible, begins pretty early on with a pretty big problem. And it is the fact of what we call "Original Sin", which is sometimes called the \*Brrr\* the fall, right. We took a nosedive. Human beings were meant for these relationships, this harmonious reality, but then we fell. And that Original Sin, you know, it's really not about the fruit; it's about the fact, and the Catechism is clear on this, the Catechism says "Man let his trust in his creator die in his heart." He let his trust in his creator die in his heart. God said "Adam, Eve, I love you guys. I want you to have everything you need. I want you to have

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happiness, and joy, and live this fruitful life. Just trust me on this one thing. Don't do this. Trust me, it's for your own good." And what Adam and Eve could not do was trust God. They break trust. They listen to the voice of the serpent, they eat the fruit, they do what he asked them not to do.

And as soon as that trust is broken, that first relationship, human beings and God, as soon as that is now damaged – it's not obliterated, but it's damaged – there's a lack of trust now. As soon as that happens, you can watch the other 3 relationships begin to unravel. And all of a sudden Adam and Eve, remember, they recognized that they're naked, which means there's something internally, there's something about myself that I'm kind of ashamed of. I'm not comfortable anymore. And Adam and Eve realized "Oh, I'm kind of uncomfortable with myself." So they cover up because, simultaneous while there's something in themselves and they're ashamed of, they also don't trust the other person. They cover up. St. John Paul II talked about this in his theology of the body. But there's this sort of simultaneous, like, "I'm ashamed, I need to cover up because I don't trust the other person to look at me in the way that they ought to look at me. I realize I can look at the other in a way that's selfish, and that is not good for that person. If I can look at them in a way that's actually not okay, they can probably do the same to me, so I don't trust them." So the interpersonal relationship, that's breaking down as well.

And you remember the story, God comes and he finds Adam and Eve, he comes into the garden and he says "Where are you? Where are you?" They've hidden from him. They hid from themselves, from each other, and now they're hiding from God. He says "Where are you?" And he finds them, and he says "What have you done?" And as soon as he asks that, they begin to play the blame game. Remember, Adam was like "Well, the woman made me do it." And she's like "the serpent made me do it", and then they ultimately blame God. "It's the woman who you gave me. It's your fault." Really. And the blame game gets passed around. Interpersonally, things are really a mess. And then finally, God gives the punishments for these Original Sins, or this Original Sin, and the punishment that he gives to Adam – and that's going to be the key that's actually drawn out through the rest of the bible, even in the New Testament, it's called the Sin of Adam. Even though Eve was the first one to eat the fruit, it's Adam's sin, because Adam was called to be the steward and the safeguard of all of these things.

His punishment is now that the earth will oppose him. Creation itself is going to turn against him, and he's going to... He was always called to work; he was always called to be a gardener. The Catholic Church has this wonderfully rich tradition that's always suggested that work is profoundly good. Adam was called to

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do work; he was called to be a gardener. But now the work is going to be hard and laborious, and the ground will oppose him, and there will be thorns, and needles, and thistles, and blisters, and blood, and sweat, and everything else. Creation is going to turn against him. And imagine a world where we don't always trust God. Where we're ashamed of ourselves. We look in the mirror and we don't like what we see. We make choices that are bad for us. We fight and blame and distrust the people around us. And the created world just seems hard and unforgiving, and dangerous. I don't know about you guys, but I feel like you turn on the news and there's almost like there's a new natural disaster that's worse than all of the other natural disasters prior. It seems like creation itself is flipping out. Creation seems dangerous and threatening.

So a world where we don't trust God, we make bad decisions, we fight with the people around us, and the created world kind of freaks us out. Does that sound like the world we live in? Yeah, it sounds like it, but it's not the world we live in. It's not the world we live in. And I'm stealing this line from a priest friend who really helped to form me on this idea, but he said once that we don't live in a broken world, we live in a broken but redeemed world. We live in a broken but redeemed world. Guys, this is the key to all of Christianity. We don't live in a world that's broken. And I know, I listen to a lot of news, I read stuff on social media, and listen to talk radio, and it seems like the world is utterly chaotic, evil reigns. But as Catholics and as Christians, we believe that Jesus, God, became human, He took on flesh so as to reconcile the broken relationship between human beings and God. He came to fix the first and most fundamental relationship. And if Jesus is God, and He came to reconcile human beings back to God, then that actually means, according to the Christian narrative, I can be the person I'm supposed to be. I can be holy. I can make the choices and decisions that are right, that God wants me to have. I can live in communion with the people around us, around me. I can love my wife and my children, and be in communion with the people I work with and I see on the street. And I can actually live in the natural world that God gave us as a steward. I can look at the world and say "Yeah, this is Good. I understand my place in it."

The key to all of Catholicism, the key to all of Christianity, is that our senses are actually deceiving us. We live in a world that looks utterly broken, that seems like evil is running totally rampant, that evil has won. We live in a world, quite frankly, where we don't always know, or we don't think we know, whether good or evil is going to win in the end. Do you ever see that? Do you ever feel that way? That you walk through life, and you listen to stuff on the news, and you pay attention to what's going on around you, and you wonder "Wow, is evil going to win in the

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end, or is good going to win?” And as Christians, we don’t actually have to ask that question. Jesus has defeated evil. He has trampled down death by death. The world just doesn’t always feel like it. Really, we have a faith that teaches us our senses are deceiving us. This is a key to a lot of St. Paul’s letters in the New Testament, trying to get his readers and his listeners to see the world is not as it seems. The world seems like Satan is in control, that evil reigns, that chaos is everywhere, but the reality is that Jesus has conquered all of that. The only power Satan has left is to lie to us. The power he has is to whisper in our ears and tell us that the world is totally broken, and is a disaster, and evil might still pull it off. And oftentimes we believe him.

I know this great analogy that I heard once from Scott Hahn, but I think another bible scholar before him came up with. And it’s an analogy that comes from World War 2. And if you’re familiar with World War 2, you might remember there’s this very critical moment in World War 2 between D-Day, which was the day that the war was actually won, and V-E Day, which was when everybody was kind of finally liberated, and everything was... you know, the beginning of the end. And between D-Day, when the war was declared to be won by the allied forces, the Nazis were defeated, and V-E Day, the time that people were finally emancipated from things like concentration camps and everything else, there was a lot of chaos in between. And when the Nazis were running the concentration camps in Germany and Poland and the rest, when they heard that the war was won, that they had lost, that the Nazis were going down, what did they do? Well, they didn’t just go to everyone in the concentration camps and say “Well, tough break. You know, I guess we lost. You guys are free to go.” No, they tried to bring as much destruction and chaos and death as possible. Why? Because they knew that they had lost. They knew it was over and that their destruction was imminent.

That’s where we live. We live in-between the D-Day of the resurrection and the V-E Day of Christ coming again. We live in the middle, where the war is won, the final victory is sure, it’s done, it’s finished, but we haven’t seen the full fruit of that, or the veil has not yet been lifted from our eyes. Our senses, brothers and sisters, are deceiving us. Christ has conquered the world. Sin is forgiven. The power of Satan has been stripped, other than the fact that he can whisper in our ear and lie to us, and tell us that evil is still in control.

This is a hard thing to live out, because really we’re being asked to believe that our senses are wrong. But here’s the way this actually works, and if you’re a Catholic you should actually get this. There’s another place where all the time you acknowledge that your senses are deceiving you. Every time you go to mass, every

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time you look up to the altar and you see a man in the vestments holding up what looks for all the world to be a piece of bread, and holding up what looks for all the world to be a cup of wine. And it smells like wine, it looks like wine, it tastes like wine, that looks, and smells, and tastes, and feels like bread, and you're being asked to suspend your senses, to cease to believe that that's actually bread and wine, to actually believe that it's taken on something new. It is now the God who created the heavens and the earth, it's the God of the universe. Your senses are lying to you. When you go out in the world, try to keep that in mind. If you have the guts - And it does take guts; faith is a gutsy thing - to believe to go to mass and say "Yeah, I believe that thing that looks like bread is actually the God of the universe, and I will receive Him into me."

If you can believe that, then you can go out into the world, you can look at the evil that is everywhere, the chaos that reigns, and the seeming victory of sin, and you can say "No, no, no, Christ is my victor. Those relationships in my life, my own brokenness, my relationship with God, everything in the world has been reconciled back to Christ." And our challenge is to look at the brokenness of the world, to look at the brokenness in ourselves, to look at the brokenness of creation, to acknowledge that Christ has died for those things, to look at the crucifix, to see him hanging there, and to say "Amen. I believe. I believe that Christ is greater than what my eyes can see." And if we can get to that point, then I think we can give a hope to our broken world that the world has never known before. Thank you all so much. I appreciate you being here today.