**Let There Be Life**

Saint Cletus Respect Life Ministry Newsletter 4, December 2022

“**If you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace truth—the truth revealed by God.” ---Saint John Paul II**I

1. **From the teaching of the Church**

 Every person has a fundamental right to be born. Every person has a fundamental right to live until natural death. There was a time not long ago when this was a given for most people in most societies. Without this right, there are no other rights. If you are denied the right to be born, or the right to live after birth because of a defect or disability, or due to capital punishment, or euthanasia or because someone has deemed your life no longer meaningful or productive, then all the other rights a society might afford one are of no value. To many of us, this still seems so self-evident as to not be open to debate. Of course, it is debated and denied by many today.

 As we draw near to Christmas, let’s look at the absolute value of human life in terms of a most important event in human history, the Incarnation. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1.14). Genesis told us that every one of us is in God’s image: “in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them, . . . and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1. 27, 31b). How can there be any justification for one who believes in this God of Creation to destroy or terminate what God has made in his own image?

 For the Christian, God has made another statement, the most profound statement ever made, that human life, every person created in the womb, is of the utmost value. “Behold, the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son, whom they shall call Immanuel, a name which means ‘God-is-with-us” (Matthew 23-24). If God created us, and then became incarnate in Jesus Christ by being conceived in Mary, was born in Judea in the city of David to save us from the doom of sinfulness and to show us the way to eternal life in relationship with God, then doesn’t this say something incredible about the dignity, value, and sacredness of every human being in the womb and at any stage of natural life? If “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him. . .may have eternal life” (John 3.16), then hasn’t God made the most powerful proclamation about the sacredness and purpose of every person ever created. If God himself would take on humanity in Jesus Christ through conception in Mary to demonstrate so boldly and beautifully how much He loved every man and woman who had been or ever would be conceived, then how can anyone be so arrogant, self-centered, or callous as to think we have the right to deny life to anyone at any stage of it?

 St. Athanasius, in his Christian masterpiece On the Incarnation ( ch 1, #1, c. 318), wrote, “You must understand why it is that the Word of the Father, so great and so high, has been made manifest in bodily form. He has not assumed a body as proper to His own nature, far from it, for as the Word He is without body. He has been manifested in a human body for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of the Father, for the salvation of men and women.” If God created us in His own image and likeness, and then found humanity the proper vehicle to enter in order to redeem us from our endless transgressions, then humanity in the whole, and humanity as visible in every person ever conceived, must be something of eternal value. How can we ever presume that it is acceptable to destroy that which is of eternal value? Every person is called to reflect the divine image to the world. Every person is asked to manifest in his or her life that call to salvation. To take away the life of an unborn child, a disabled, sick, or elderly person, a person in prison, or any person, is to shout “No!” to God, to his creation, and to his revelation and offer of salvation. Every Christmas we celebrate anew the “Yes!” of God to every person He created, to the people He so loves, to the people He wants eternal relationship with, and to the people for whom Jesus came into the world. When Mary conceived, a new day dawned in which the dignity, sacredness, and eternal value of every person was once again most profoundly spoken by God.

(*Deacon Frank and Mary Olmsted)*

**A Christmas Reflection**

*As we approach Christmas, we thought reprinting A Christmas Eve Commentary from national news anchor Harry Reasoner would be a nice follow up to the above teaching. Reasoner offered this reflection on the ABC Evening News on Christmas Eve 1973.*

 Christmas is such a unique idea that most non-Christians accept it, and I think sometimes envy it. If Christmas is the anniversary of the appearance of the Lord of the universe in the form of a helpless baby, it’s quite a day. It’s a startling idea, and the theologians, who sometimes love logic more than they love God, find it uncomfortable. But if God did do it, he had tremendous insight.

 People are afraid of God and standing in his very bright light. But everyone has seen babies and likes them. So, if God wanted to be loved as well as feared, he moved correctly here. For the experience of birth and familyhood is our most intimate and precious experience.

 So, it comes beyond logic. It’s what a bishop I used to know called a kind of divine insanity. It is either all falsehood, or it is the truest thing in the world. It is the story of the great innocence of God, the baby. God in the power of man. And it is such a dramatic shot toward the heart, that if it is not true, for Christians nothing is true.

 So, even if you did not get your shopping done, and you were swamped with the commercialism and frenzy, be at peace. And even if you are the deacon having to arrange the extra seating for the Christmas Christians that you won’t see again until Easter, be at peace. The story stands.

 It’s all right that so many Christians are touched only once a year by this incomparable story. Because some final quiet Christmas morning, the touch will take.

*It’s hard to imagine any national news anchor giving a Christmas Eve reflection like this today, and that’s too bad. We have been touched by “this incomparable story” of the Incarnation, of “God-among-us,” and of what that says about the beauty and sacredness of every human being. Now we have to be that newscaster bringing the good news to the world of the Incarnation and the beauty of every human life with the hope that the “touch” of the full meaning of the Christmas story will take in the lives of those we touch. “So great, indeed, were the goodness and love of God shown through the Incarnation”(St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation, ch. 3, #12).*

***From everyone in the St. Cletus Respect Life Ministry, have a blessed and happy Christmas.***