

Baptism of the Lord – January 12/13, 2019 – Reflection On the Value of Life

"God created man in His image;

In the divine image He created him;

Male and female He created them.

God blessed them saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.'

And so it happened. God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good."

Genesis 1: 27-31

In the nurturing waters of the womb, the seed that is planted grows and develops: body from earthly mother and father; soul from heavenly Father and holy Mother Church. From the cleansing waters of the Baptismal font, new Christians are redeemed from the deadly power of sin and raised to the dignity of the children of God, with a birthright to inherit the Kingdom of God and life eternal.

This is the dignity of every human person: born or unborn, poor or rich, perfect or broken, young or old, native or alien, male or female, healthy or ill, wanted or inconvenient ... that we are all from God; that we are all made in the image and likeness of God; that God breathes life, His life, into each of us; and that human life on this earth is simply a

journey back to the Source of all life, back to the heart of the Father forever. This is the foundation of faith in God. It is the bedrock for morality and ethics. This truth is the lynchpin for the value of human life, the defense of human rights, and even for the cherishing and protection of the natural world. Because the spark of life in any human is from the ember of the creative fire of God's love, each of us, from the very first moment of existence, is a vessel of divinity. It belongs to God to give life ... not the state, not the court, not the despot, not the marauding army, not the law, not the whim of public opinion, not the scientist or the physician. To give life is God's choice, God's gift ... it is not my choice, not my gift, and not mine to take.

When a child first enters the world, parents look forward to the day when this helpless, yet beautiful, little creature can speak, can form words and share even the simplest of ideas. I think that Moms and Dads secretly hope that the first words will be of them, to them: Mama or Dadda. But whatever a toddler may first come out with, there's another word that, sadly, follows in short order ... "MINE!" Who hasn't seen little ones playing together with toys only to have one snatch something out of the other's hands while growling, "MINE!" From the beginning, we gifted beings were less aware of the gift and the Giver and more concerned with what was or should be "MINE!" Adam and Eve wanted the garden to be "MINE!", the fruit to be "MINE!", the power and the glory to be "MINE!" Cain wanted the favor to be "MINE!" The plantation masters wanted human workers to be subhuman slaves, property, "MINE!" The Nazis wanted the Jews and the Slavs and the Gypsies and the homosexuals and the Catholic Priests and Nuns and the mentally ill to be things, disposable, "MINE!" And, in our day, we all want MY rights, MY way, MY opinion, MY body, MY

choice. We're no different than Adam or Eve or Cain or the others ... we hold the cards, we make the rules, we decide what's right, what's necessary, what's progress, and we forget, we deny, that we are from God, that we live and breathe and move and have our being in Him, through Him, with Him. And when we forget that, when we deny that, all hell breaks loose: wars are fought, little lives are thrown away, elders are hidden and hurried along to make room, the poor are kept without, the alien is kept away, the different is despised, and the dignity is derided and denied ... all because too many spoiled, ignorant brats look at everything and everyone and cry "MINE!"

My sisters and brothers, God made us to be better than that ... to be good, to be very good, to be in His image, after His likeness. As a priestly people, a holy people, a chosen race called by God, we must raise our voices to speak for those who have no words. We must cast our votes for those who have no vote. We must stand up for those who cannot stand on their own. We must defend those who are defenseless. And, we must live these precious lives we've been given, this baptismal dignity we've been wrapped in, in Christ: Christ before me; Christ beside me; Christ to guide me; Christ to carry me; Christ my life; Christ my all; Christ "MINE!" forever. Amen.