

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, March 25, 2018

Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

by Debbie Shinskie



“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness... God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

It is such a profound mystery that we are created in God's image and likeness, whether we speak of a newly-conceived child who is only a few microscopic cells in size or a frail person who is terminally ill or an inmate on death row. Each person is created out of love by God in accord with God's desire that each would spend eternity in communion with God. The physical appearances of human life in this world and the actions of a human person throughout their life do not alter the facts about humanity's creation or about God's desire for them.

The words of the psalmist in today's reading could easily be said by those imprisoned today:

“All who see me mock me;
they curl their lips and jeer;
they shake their heads at me” (Ps. 22:8)

Those who are imprisoned are often looked upon by society as subhuman, yet God's image and likeness does not reside in the labels we often apply to human life, labels that speak more of our own limitations than the wideness of God's love. It is not unusual for us to assign the label guilt or innocence while we have no way of knowing what is truly in the heart of the one we label. To use the idea of innocence as our only basis for protecting human life is risky at best. Once we reach the age of reason, innocence is arbitrary. At this point where does one decide how innocent a life must be before it is afforded dignity and protection? All have sinned. All fall short and depend on the grace of God.

As humans live our lives in various stages of innocence and guilt, what remains constant are the facts that we were created in God's image and likeness and God desires eternal communion with us. Even in our most heinous sins, God does not give up on us. God waits patiently for us to return in repentance. Never does God lack hope for our conversions. And in our work to uphold the dignity of each human person and to protect all life, neither must we.

When God reviewed creation on each of the preceding days, God noted that it was “good,” but with the creation of humanity, God “found it very good” (Gen. 1:31). The consistent ethic of life that the Church teaches and lives is one that applies this to each human person from conception until death, affording each life a profound respect and working to protect each life.

May we prayerfully remember that the value of each human life is not determined by innocence or guilt, but rather by the inherent dignity of the human person who is created in the image and likeness of God.

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