

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany (22 January 2012)

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

Psalm 139:13-16

Dearly beloved, how many of you have a passion for making things? A passion that consumes your time, your attention to detail, and your striving for perfection? Whether your passion is sewing or knitting, stamping or scrapbooking, gardening or landscaping, woodworking or fixing up classic cars, you invest yourself into learning, practicing, and perfecting this passion.

The LORD of heaven and earth also has a passion. A passion for creating things, forming things, making things. In fact, Holy Scripture describes Him as our Potter.

A potter takes a formless lump of clay, puts it onto a rotating wheel, and then uses his hands and some shaping tools to form a bowl or cup or vase or some other object. After the form He desires is there, he then dies, finishes, and fires the object to complete it. What once was a formless lump of clay is now a beautiful vessel that is useful and precious to the potter. Against that backdrop, listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: **“But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand”** (Isaiah 64:8).

Instead of clay, God the Father scooped up the dust of the ground on day six of creation, formed man with His own hands, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That is how the Potter formed the first man.

But God’s creative work was not finished in Eden, for when God told Adam and Eve to **“be fruitful and multiply”** (Genesis 1:28), He set into motion the biological process by which procreation happens. Although God delegates the procreation of life to His children, He is still intimately involved in that process, as King David reminds us: **“For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them”** (Psalm 139:13-16).

Friends, do you want to know how fearfully and wonderfully you were made by God the Father? Whereas Adam was “formed” and Eve was “built” by God, so you were “knit together” by God. Your life was given to you by God at conception, when you were but a single cell. The moment God brought together your father’s 23 chromosomes and your mother’s 23 chromosomes, you became an unrepeatable human being complete with your own unique set of DNA. Your sex was there. The color of your eyes was there. The shape of your nose and ears was there. Your fingerprints were there. And countless other things that make you ... you! And soon that one cell encoded with your DNA divided into two, two into four, and so on for roughly five days, when at last that multi-celled little you was attached to your mother, where you continued your growth for the next nine months.

Approximately three weeks after conception, your little heart began beating on its own, pumping its own blood.

By month two, all your body systems were present, your central nervous system was functioning, and your brain waves were recordable.

By month three, your respiratory system began functioning and you were squinting, swallowing, waking and sleeping. And that’s just a sampling of the first three months of your life!

No wonder the Psalmist stands in awe as he ponders how the heavenly Potter forms each new human vessel. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he marvels how God formed his inward parts—his bones and organs and muscles and nerves. He marvels how God covered him—his skin and fingerprints and hair. What else is there to say but: **“I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”**

But there is another side to life in the womb that we must never forget. While it is true that everything you are biologically was already there at conception, it is also true that everything you are by nature was also there—namely, your Old Adam. **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,”** writes David, **“and in sin did my mother conceive me”** (Psalm 51:5). To say that you are a sinner from the moment of conception necessarily means that you are also a living person from conception. For you cannot be a sinner without also being a human being.

And yet, despite your inherited sinfulness, God still loves you. You can be sure of this because the very same hands that knit you together in your mother’s womb He voluntarily stretched out on the cross that He might bleed and die for you and your

salvation. What God created, He also redeemed. With His own precious blood. Once a broken vessel because of your sin, now, in Christ, you have been re-formed by the Potter's hands into the perfect image of your Lord and Savior. Which is to say, the author of your physical life now gives you spiritual life as well. No wonder we exclaim: **"I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well."**

Sadly, we live in a world that has turned God's good gift of life into a burden, a liability, an inconvenience. If a mother deems the life inside her womb is not worthy of her time and attention, her discomfort and hard work, then the law of our land allows her to end her child's life. Since the Roe v. Wade decision 39 years ago today, more than 54,000,000 living unborn babies have been aborted.

It may be legal, but it is *not* moral. Perhaps some of you men have encouraged the woman you got pregnant to abort that child. Perhaps some of you women have taken the life of an unborn child in your own womb. While those deeds were indeed sinful and selfish, know this: God forgives you! No sin is too big or too small for God's grace. The Father sent His own dear Son as a one-cell life in the womb of His mother to be born, grow up, and become the Man who would suffer and die for every sin ever committed. Thus, when you repent of your sins of thought, word, and deed, whatever those sins might be, your transgressions are removed from you **"as far as the east is from the west"** (Psalm 103:12). They are over, done, paid for, and forever buried in Christ's tomb, never to accuse you before God's throne.

If you know someone who has had an abortion and still struggles with the guilt and pain that lingers, reassure her that Christ has taken away that sin. And if you know someone who is even now pregnant and struggling to make ends meet, do everything in your power to care for her and her child. Look after her. Be there for her. If necessary, take her in and help provide for her and her child's health and well-being. If you can't do this alone, there are numerous local agencies who specialize in caring for and supporting mothers-to-be in need. Assure her that she is not alone. Assure her that you, and we as a church, and many others are here for her and her child, both before and after the birth.

We stand at a crossroads in our culture's history. What will we do? Will we remain silent on these issues or will we stand up and proclaim the truth in love to a culture that desperately needs that truth? Will we continue to elect leaders who advance these evils or will we work to elect men and women who will defend the rights of every human life, both born and unborn? Do not think God is not watching us. He

knows all and sees all. Therefore, let us heed His holy Word and **“defend the poor and fatherless”** and **“deliver the poor and needy”** (Psalm 82:3-4 NKJV).

Friends, when you were but poor and helpless in your sins, God intervened. He whose hands knitted you together in your mother’s womb sent His only-begotten Son to stretch out His hands to suffer and die and rise again to redeem you. In Holy Baptism, He washed away your sins, claimed you as His own, clothed you in Christ’s perfect righteousness, and gave you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, you have been marked and sealed as one “handmade and redeemed by the Triune God!” He has given you Himself. Sins forgiven. Life redeemed. Death conquered. All gifts from the Author of Life Himself!

If you remember that daily, you will have no problem valuing life, defending life, promoting life, and helping those in need, even as you daily thank and praise the heavenly Potter with words like these: **“I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.”**

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Jesus Christ unto life everlasting.

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