

The Image of His Own Eternity

*26th Sunday of Ordinary Time
September 29-30, 2018*

In Roman Antiquity the Empire was dotted everywhere with images and statues representing the reigning emperor. These images were reminders to the people, not only of Rome's dominance, but that Roman Society was to live according to certain standards reflecting that the Emperor was the supreme ruler.

In the Bible there is a similar idea presented. Just as the Roman Emperor had his image erected throughout the Empire to represent his Lordship, so too with God. The very first thing that is said about the creation of human beings in Genesis 1 is that we are made in God's image. The Bible emphasizes this fundamental truth – God wants to reflect his Lordship through those who are made in his image – human beings. Here is the important thing to understand about the word “image”. After the story of the Fall in Genesis 3, there is only one other reference in the rest of the Old Testament where the word image is used with its original intention as found in Genesis 1.

for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity,

This is Wisdom 2:23. But sadly we repeatedly read in the Old Testament, not of man being made in God's image, but of man making images representative of himself and his own lust for power – that is to be like God. These misrepresentations, is what the Bible calls idolatry.

Idolatry means to discard God's image and replace it with our own. Everything we make in our image ultimately corrodes and fades away. When however we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ our eternal and incorruptible character is reclaimed, like in the language of Wisdom 2:23. Remember that verse?

for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity,

Our second reading for today warns us how when consumed by wealth there is a terrible distortion that takes place in our lives and such consumption is one of the worst forms of idolatry. The temporality and the lure of riches is expressed vividly in these words:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days.

When money is the ultimate end of human beings, expressed here with the language of “laying up treasure for the last days” not only does the money rot but even more so our souls become corrosive. When wealth comes to dominate the lives of the rich - the poor – referred to here as those “who mow their lawns and serve them” are neglected and ignored. An overarching care

for material goods results in a carelessness towards those people closest to them and in most need, who are God's image bearers.

Jesus picks up on this same theme in the Gospel. Here the judgment is directed against those whose mistreatment of children will result ultimately in their eternal separation from God. Not seeing the image of God in the young, but viewing them only as objects to be used to serve them, they will in the end so disfigure the image of God in themselves that Jesus terrifyingly says:

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³

He then goes on to further caution, that if our hand or eye causes us to sin we are to rid ourselves of these members so we can enter in kingdom of heaven and be saved from hell's unquenchable fire.

This is what we can take away from the teaching of James and Jesus. Our life is a very serious business. Either we are increasingly becoming God's image bearers, or conversely God's image is diminishing to that point where it might ultimately be erased entirely. Hell you see is that state where everything will reflect completely the image of fallen human beings. Heaven is that wonderful state where everything will reflect completely the glory and image of God.

On Wednesday last the 40 Days for Life Campaign began. Across the world during these 40 Days we are called to witness through prayer and fasting to the dignity and rights of the unborn. We live at a time where we have so normalized abortion that it is accepted as something that just is and we can so easily become indifferent or callous to how unborn children, bearing the image of God, are surgically removed from the womb and their most precious lives destroyed.

Even though this practise has become so common, the Catholic Church continues to witness to the evil of abortion. Listen to the association the Catechism makes with the language of image bearing and the unborn child.

Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God... Because it should be treated as a person from conception, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed like every other human being.¹

Let me tell you the story of one person whose realization the unborn being made in God's image changed his life. He died in 2011, at the age of 84. His name, Dr. Bernard Nathanson. He was one of the most vocal people advocating to legalize abortions in the 1960s in the States. Thousands of women, he claimed, would die in back-alley procedures if they were not granted the right to obtain an abortion, and he had to protect them. So, in 1969, the OB-GYN from New York City co-founded the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws. A year later, he

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (2nd Ed., p. 558). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

became the director of New York's Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health, the largest freestanding abortion facility in the world.

By 1974 he wrote an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* where he expressed his doubts that abortion was simply the removal of an "undifferentiated mass of cells." He further wrote, "I am deeply troubled by my own increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths."

As ultrasound technology emerged, Nathanson soon found it impossible to deny the humanity of the unborn child.

In 1979, he wrote *Aborting America*, which exposed what he called "the dishonest beginnings of the abortion movement." He even admitted to personally fabricating statistics about the number of women who died each year from illegal abortion — in order to convince the US Supreme Court that legal abortion would save lives.

In cooperation with the National Right to Life Committee in 1984, he narrated a documentary film titled *The Silent Scream*, which showed the abortion of a 12-week unborn baby via ultrasound.

A self-identified Jewish atheist, he then began a spiritual journey after befriending Father John McCloskey, a priest of Opus Dei. He later converted to Catholicism and was baptized by Cardinal John O'Connor, archbishop of New York, in St. Patrick's Cathedral Dec. 8, 1996.

What a date for the baptism of America's foremost abortionist: The Feast of the Immaculate Conception!

In his own 1998 memoir, *Hand of God*, Nathanson wrote: "I can't tell you how grateful I am to those who prayed for me all those years when I was publicly announcing my atheism and lack of faith. They stubbornly, lovingly prayed for me. I am convinced beyond a doubt that those prayers were heard."²

This testimony speaks to us of the importance of prayer, especially during the 40 Days for Life Campaign, where we are invited to intercession across from the Kensington Abortion Clinic. I will be gathering there every Friday afternoon with other Clergy from St. Peter's at 2 PM, from October 5th – November 2nd. I would invite you to join us.

As well, tomorrow at 2:30 PM join us on McLeod Trail below Glenmore for the annual Life Chain Witness. Here we gather with others who through creating a chain of people along McLeod Trail witness to the dignity of the unborn because

God created them for incorruption, and made them in the image of his own eternity,

² Taken from: <http://www.kofc.org/en/columbia/detail/converts-of-roe-wade.html>