
EVERY CHILD IS A GIFT TO THE WORLD



The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote that “Every time a child is born, God is saying that He still has hope in humankind.” To give life is to allow God to reiterate His hope in the world. This is Good news for the world! A child is not someone to be “made” but someone to be “welcomed”. The child is more than itself, it is God’s creative presence in the world, and this, too, is great news for the world! What follows is composed of excerpts from a booklet published by the Catholic Organisation for Life and the Family. The texts remind us about the beauty, the greatness and the dignity of all human life. In the early months of the new year, it is good to marvel at all the “new shoots of life” that are among us.

FASCINATING PROMISES

In this twenty-first century, life seems full of fascinating promises. We daily witness the frontiers of life being pushed further, by the scientific community. It is true that our lives have experienced phenomenal changes through countless scientific discoveries and technological innovation. Progress is so fast and varied that ethical reflection has a difficult time keeping pace. However, it is crucial that we be more and more aware of the stakes at issue, by these many scientific breakthroughs. It is only through societal choices firmly grounded in respect for life that we shall affirm the inviolability of its integrity at every stage of development. Human life is human life, and any attack on its integrity has repercussions on our own humanity.

A GIFT TO THE WORLD

Is it true for everyone that a child is a gift to the world? Nothing is less certain, when we consider the muted welcome which our society reserves to the child. Statistics speak volumes, when we consider child poverty. Beyond the beautiful speeches, where is the consensus capable of creating a favourable environment for children? The Canadian Council for Social Development affirms that when economic and social realities oblige most parents – whether single parents or couples – to be away from home from early in the morning until early evening, it is evident that families need a new support system. “Why have children today? For what tomorrow? For what future?” In these more than uncertain times, many young couples hesitate to launch into the adventure of raising a family. Still, there are some who choose to give life, who continue to trust in life. This is certainly because of their desire to share the wonderful and free gift which they themselves received, like the marathon runner who wants to pass the baton on to another runner who will in turn do the same. Life and love, the two greatest free gifts, are passed on to every succeeding generation in this way.

FRAGILE LIFE AND SURVIVAL

Life in a family where both parents must work to ensure some kind of survival, is fragile at best. Fragile, too, is newly-born life. Financial insecurity, lack of support, and isolation end up eroding our families, today. It seems that even by choosing a voluntarily simple lifestyle, couples have serious difficulty in reconciling care of the child and work needed to ensure a stable family atmosphere. But is it not true that it is at the heart of married love that couples create and build a very special place to welcome the child? That it is within the family that are learned the socialisation and education to love of those who will build tomorrow’s society? How then pick up the many challenges made by our contemporary cultural context regarding the value, meaning and

support of life, of every human life? What kind of collective support is there for couples who want children, today? How can we navigate through the rough waters of individual, collective, and political choices? Ethical choices and political decisions must be made and implemented in order to protect the family, the “sanctuary” where life develops. This life which the family shelters is a incomparable good, the most precious good given to us on earth. We all have a responsibility to love it, respect it, and care for it.

OF ONE FLESH

Because we belong to the one human family, we must state loud and clear that there is no price to human life, and that every human being has a dignity that must never be violated. We must also proclaim that every human being, created in the image of God, has a priceless dignity. By reflecting on and affirming the inherent value of all human life, we must realise that newborn life is a special manifestation of our past and our future. Are we not all of one flesh? It is the awareness of this intimate link between every new life and each of us that humanises us as a society. “Each child coming into the world is a gift to humankind, a miracle. How can we, as a society, truly welcome and cherish children? They are our hope, our future. Let us let them live!” This was the message of the 2002 March for Life, held in Ottawa, last spring.

MYSTERIOUS AND WONDERFUL ADVENTURE

It seems that God gave His children the mission of helping their parents grow! The child launches the couple on a limitless adventure of love. The child wonderfully and mysteriously leads them to the very heart of their love. In fact, loving a child is an act of life more than it is a feeling. True love often requires a great courage. Is it not true that giving life means dying somewhat to oneself? According to parents themselves, “It is important to realise that having children is a human experience full of uncommon intensity.” Mother Teresa had beautiful words, for this: “The Good News is that God loves the world through you... You are the Good News of God’s love... You are the love of God in action.” As a matter of fact, is there a more concrete way for God to show His love, in this world? Is there a better way of teaching the young to believe in the source of Love? “The year a child is born is truly a year of grace for its parents: God continues to love the world through their love for their child.” In is in this manner that God’s love extends from age to age, mainly through the parents!

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop’s Journal » (473) (29 January 2003)