

The Gift of Being Human

Today, we are going to begin a discussion on the gift of being human...

Envision now the following images (these images are from my perspective, so please allow them to be transformed to the images in your life):

A mother holding her son for the first time

A son watching his daddy leave his mother...forever.

A brother seeing his little sister laying in the crib for the first time

A brother who struggles to regain a relationship with his sister

A son laying on the floor after being spanked by his step father

A son standing in church saying to his step father "I love you"

A little boy riding his bike with his sister in the back seat

A boy sitting on a bench at school who has no friends

A young man standing at the door ready to go on his first date

A young man sitting on his bed crying when his girlfriend says she just wants to be friends

A young man going fishing with his granddaddy

A young man sitting in the hospital after his granddaddy has open heart surgery

A man and a woman holding hands gazing into one another's eyes as they recite their vows

A man sitting stoically on the couch refusing to go to church with his wife

A young man sitting at a breakfast feast prepared by his grannie

A man bathing his grannie when she is near death

A dad walking with his son dressed as a blue crayon for Halloween

A dad walking away in anger over something his son did...

A son-in-law escorting his 70 year old father-in-law to the front to receive the Eucharist for the first time

A husband embracing his wife after her father dies...

A man standing in the middle of a crowd saying "I will never become Catholic"

A man kneeling and weeping in front of the "blessed sacrament" in a small room

These are just a few of the images in my life that I believe express my humanity and the humanity of those around me. Within these images we find much of what it is like to be human and to act human...

- Not everyone is going to like us or be nice to us and many times it is going to feel like life is doing just the same
 - It is not so much the actions of people and life that are important, but it is the reaction that we have that is important. **(Tell Ted evaluation story)** We need to look for the positive meaning in all situations in our life and we have control over doing this particular action.
 - Where in my life have I reacted appropriately or inappropriately? How can I work to always respond in a positive manner?
- We are going to make mistakes
 - It is important for us to recognize and learn from our mistakes and not dwell on them. **(Tell Ronnie Jr not forgiving Ron Sr. Story and how they were separated for years)**
 - Do I dwell on my mistakes or the mistakes of others? I am willing to forgive myself and forgive others?
- We are not in control...
 - So many things happen in our life that we do not like the timing or the outcome
 - We must ask God to give us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference
 - Where am I trying to be in control in my life? Why?
- While we are all different we all inherently deserve respect from one another
 - And sometimes keeping your self-respect means doing things that may be unpopular
 - Sometimes that unpopular is with your own self **(Tell Richard Archer Story)**
 - Where in our lives have we lost self-respect or failed to protect the respect of others by our action or lack of action?
- We are going to face difficult things in our life and it is important for us to face them head on.
 - We grow as we take on the tough things and the challenges in our life
 - Where have I been up to the challenge and where have I walked away? How can I gain greater resolve to meet the needs and challenges in my life?
- We are capable of adapting and changing to situations and so is everyone else. We can be flexible
 - We do not have to let our past determine our future.
 - We must respond to needed changes and not get in a rut
 - We must understand that there is more than one way to do things
 - **(Talk about my work and how I have adapted)**
 - Do I adapt to situations and people?

We have talked about our human condition, about our human action, but how does God feel about us?

- Before moving forward, let us take a few moments in small groups to discuss in our own terms how WE think God feels about us, how He views us, what he desires for us.
- Have a few people share their thoughts...

Okay...great input from everybody...now, let us take a closer look...

- God (who is love)
- God created (the earth, the heavens, the animals)

- God created us (He knew us before we were born)
- God created us out of love (His love IS perfect)
- God created us out of love in His own image (We are clay in His hands...he is the potter)
- God created us out of love in His own image as male and female (He provided us with the opportunity to produce life)
- God created us out of love in His own image as male and female and found it very good. (We are created and intended to be good!)

God the Creator

- So...God is the creator and it is easy to see how God is present in a variety of ways through life...does anyone want to share where they see God on a daily basis?
- A starting point for morality is once again this understanding that God is in control and that we are not. We were created by God, but we are not God. However, in many ways, it is easy for us to feel or act like we are **(Tell Junior Youth Group Story)**

Our place in Creation

- God put us in charge of creation and gave us free will!
- We are called to return God's Love and to serve him
- The best way we can do this is to value all that he has given us
- In what ways today, is the world not taking care of what God gave us?

Divine Image

- Because we are made in His image...we have the ability
 - To think
 - To choose
 - To love
 - To have relationships with God and others
- Bottom line....God made us out of love, for love, and to love
- When are times in your life where you have fully expressed the image of God in your own life?

We are made Male and Female

- There is a great line from the movie Jerry Maguire where the man looks at the woman and says "You complete me" ...this is what God intended for man and woman.
- This completion is made whole with God through the Sacrament of marriage
- Remember, a sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ, entrusted to the church, to give grace
- Therefore, marriage should have at its very center God
- I struggled with this concept for a while that it is important for me to put my family first and then God...
- The reality is that when I put God first, everything else flows from that...there is an elimination of self and an embrace of God's will for my marriage
- Marriage allows man and woman to equally share both physically and spiritually in the natural procreation and the education of children in a secure and nurturing environment consistent with God's plan.

- Marriage is one unique way by which we express our humanity and experience reality through emotions and feelings, passions and drives, and preferences and dislikes.

Creation is Good

- The reality is that what God has created, to include us, is good.
- Regardless of our sin, we are forever linked to the image of the Father.
- The proof of our goodness is found in John 3:16 because God so loved us that He gave His only Son so that we may have eternal life.

Human Dignity

John Paul II talked about human dignity when he visited his homeland of Poland in 1979 saying exactly the same thing as in John 3:16. Talk about the vertical but the utmost importance of the horizontal in the cross. Talk about how Jesus had his arms stretched out and we too are called to have our arms stretched out.

Sometimes we can undervalue the tremendous value that God places on our human dignity, our own value, our own esteem, by having Jesus die on the cross...

To understand that dignity is not something we have to earn but it is something that every single person has a right to regardless of their background or upbringing, regardless of their job or their possessions, their talents or productivity.

God loves us uniquely because He has created us and we are called to do the same for ALL of our brothers and sisters

Not even our own sinfulness can destroy our basic right to dignity

The bottom line is that everyone is someone.

Read Matthew 25:31 and then share my story on the Mount of the Beatitudes where Jesus is falling into my arms.

So as we have looked today at being human, we understand it is a gift from God that should be respected and shared and in doing so we begin to form our moral conscience from this benchmark.