



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8th March, 2007



READINGS: GENESIS: 1:24 - 31, GALATIANS: 5: 13 26, MATTHEW: 22: 34 40

The summit of God's creation was the creation of the human beings, male and female. God created them in His own image and likeness. We read in Gen. 1: vs27, that

“God created them in his image, in the divine image he created them, male and female he created them.

God was very pleased with this creation that he even blessed them;

“God blessed them saying to them, be fertile and multiply fill the earth and subdue it”, vs. 28.

The blessing the human beings receive from God empowers them to transmit life, the life that God has given them. The human beings have to respect and value this life in order for them to appreciate it and transmit it with the conviction that it is coming from God and that it is meant for all people.

We need to know and appreciate the fact that we are special and have value because we are created in the image and likeness of God. God loved and still loves what he created because it's a reflection of what He is, whether man or woman.

In the Gospel God invites us to love Him.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind” vs37.

God does not only urge us to love Him alone but also goes further to tell us:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”

So we see from this that love is a chain reaction, we love God and at the same time we love our neighbor. Love has to be transmitted from God to one's neighbor for it to be complete.

Like in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10: 25 37), we might ask the question, who is my neighbor? In reply to this question the scholar of the law in the gospel (i.e., the one who had asked the question to Jesus.), says that the neighbor is the one who treated the victim with mercy. Hearing this Jesus urged him to go and do the same, to treat others with compassion and love. In other words Jesus is saying that our neighbor is the person or persons around us. This is also reflected in Mt.12: 46 50, when Jesus shows who

his mother, sister and brother are.

“And stretching out his hands towards his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly father is my brother and sister”

Mt.12: 49.

And the will of the Father is to love God and to love my neighbor as I love myself. If I love myself I will always make sure that I do good thing to myself and to want the best for myself. And so since we say that we love God we must always want the best for others to fulfill the love thy neighbor, as I love myself. We have to do good to everybody. This is an act of love, to treat all people well and with equal respect.

Today as we commemorate the International Women's Day whose theme is **“Ending Impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls”**, we reflect and realize that the women and girls too are created in the image and likeness of God. As such they are to be treated as God's dignified creation. They are to be respected and valued at all times. Like any other, they are also neighbors to be loved. They are God's children and so have to be cared for in the way God cares for them. God loves them and so in turn He expects us to love them as well. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. We recall the words of Jesus who said that whoever does the will of His father is, brother sister and mother.

However, what is happening in the world today leaves much to be desired. In our country Zambia, a day hardly passes without hearing on the news or reading in the daily papers that a young girl has been defiled, abused or that a woman has been

gang raped or battered by her husband, boyfriend or employer. We know the stories too well. Stories that make our bodies shiver with disgust.

The questions I ask myself and which I pose to you are:

- ♦ What has gone wrong with our society?
- ♦ Is the world civilisation going backwards, back to the animal world?
- ♦ Is our law so blind that these things should continue going on?
- ♦ What has gone wrong with the morality of our generation?

As I try pondering on these questions some thoughts come to mind. Such things are happening maybe because:

1. We, as human beings, have stopped fearing the Lord and as result we have little regard for His creation, human beings included. God is not respected with reverence and love. Do we seek God with a sincere heart?
2. The family support systems have gone to the dogs. In the olden days, members of the extended family were respected a lot. Let me hasten to say hear that the extended family not only meant our relatives but all members of our community. And because of this people

respected and took care of each other. For instance one could leave one's children with neighbors for days on end with the feeling and knowledge that the children would be safe and they would be taken care of very well by the neighbors. Today who dares leave his or her children with neighbors anyhow? In some cases the children are not even safe in their own homes.

3. The women and girls are made to work like donkeys. They do all the hard work in homes and the community. Without them most homes and communities will come to a halt. Are we surely being fair to them and God by treating them with cruelty?

We conclude with the words of exultation from the second reading. Paul writing to the Galatians says in chapter 5 vs. 13.

“As for you brothers you were called to be free. But do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires control you. Instead let love make you serve one another.”

Paul wants us to follow the Spirit that produces love, joy, peace, patience kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. And may Mary our Mother intercede for all the women and girl in the world.

Men and women, boys and girls, let us remain obedient to God by loving each other as neighbors just as we love ourselves.

Happy Women's Day.



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