

Rev. Mark J. Vyverman
Homily for Respect Life Sunday 27-B
October 2/3, 2021

One of the challenges I took on during my senior year of college seminary at St. Meinrad was to work as a volunteer aide for a special ed classroom. At the time that I accepted this position, I had very little experience working with children or adults with special needs. But I was interested in doing so because I had an uncle and two cousins that were special needs and I thought of them when I signed up as a volunteer. But when I did this, I didn't realize that this semester would teach me a lot about life in general.

The classroom that I helped out in was in a small southern Indiana town. In this classroom some were children, others were adults. Everyone in the classroom was severely mentally and physically challenged. This classroom certainly had its difficult moments. Sometimes the students were very disruptive and noisy. Some students had so many disabilities that it was a challenge to communicate with them. But for every difficulty, there were at least twice as many positive things that happened. Over this semester, I observed students who were not able to eat on their own when I met them, began to take a fork into their hands. Others started to recognize numbers and colors. I'm not sure how much I taught them that year, but I know that I learned much more from them than they ever could have learned from me.

Sometimes when I looked on the faces of these children and adults, I saw something else there, something besides a person who was struggling with the basic skills of life. I know at times I saw the face of a little angel there, someone who so desperately wanted to be loved, someone who wanted nothing more than for someone to care for them.

Today the Church celebrates Respect Life Sunday. We are reminded by today's Gospel how precious life is in every form. We see how people were bringing their little children to Jesus so that He could touch them. Jesus tells them: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

As we read and hear about the life of Jesus in the Gospels, we can see how many different lives Jesus had an impact on. Jesus loved and healed the sick, the blind, the dying. Jesus loved the little children. Jesus loved and forgave the sinner. Jesus welcomed the foreigner, servants, and the slaves, He loved the poor. Each one of these persons was special and much loved by Christ.

Jesus loved life to the fullest and He loved those that many others had difficulty trying to love. By His example, He reminds us to respect life in all its forms for every life is sacred, every life is precious in the eyes of God.