

True beauty is that which reflects God's glory.¹ All of God's creation: heavens, earth, water, dry land, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, sea and land creatures and man, were created to reflect His glory, and were thus found by Him to be "very good," namely perfect and beautiful.² Furthermore, God uniquely created man in His image, "with wisdom and righteousness so that he could apprehend God and reflect God".³ Thus, although the beauty of God's glory is manifest in nature,⁴ it is most deeply present in man.⁵ In the fall, man was corrupted by sin, lost the image of God and thus became ugly.⁶ God though continued to lovingly care for His special creature, continuing to create, clothe and sustain each individual person.⁷ Most importantly, God promised a Savior,⁸ and in His perfect time, He sent His sinless and perfectly beautiful Son⁹ to take on human flesh,¹⁰ mask Himself in ugliness,¹¹ die an ugly death on the Cross and rise again. In so doing, He made it possible for man to regain His image, and again become beautiful, reflecting His glory.¹² As we sing each year on Lent 5, the beginning of the Passiontide portion of the season, namely the final two weeks during which we intensely focus on Jesus' suffering and crucifixion:

My song is love unknown
My Savior's love to me
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?¹³

Although in this life, man continues to be burdened by the ugliness of sin, God's redeemed are beautiful in His eyes.¹⁴ Furthermore, God still acknowledges those not-yet-redeemed, as well as those once redeemed and now again lost, as His work.¹⁵ His ultimate desire is the washing away of the accumulated filth and the restoration of the true beauty in all of His human creatures that He intended on day 6 of creation.¹⁶

As noted above, God continues to create and nurture new life. He does so through the one flesh union of one man and one woman, the beautiful icon, or image, of the one flesh union of Jesus, the Bridegroom and the Church, His bride.¹⁷ It is through His creative Word that God blessed Adam and Eve, and later Noah and his sons (and by extension, his descendants) with the beautiful gift of procreation.¹⁸ Note that God lovingly cares even for babies in the womb; the very word for womb in the Old Testament Hebrew is derived from the word for compassion! When Jesus came to earth to suffer with and for mankind, He too began His course in His mother's womb,¹⁹ and even as an early first-trimester baby, beautifully blessed not only His mother, but two of His relatives, one of whom was also in his mother's womb.²⁰ Jesus died and rose for babies in the womb, from single-cell embryo to term.

Jesus declared childhood beautiful.²¹ He died and rose for children.

Jesus declared beautiful those with disabilities and other chronic health issues.²² Indeed, they are indispensable to His Church!²³ It is important to remember that all are born sinful and unclean, and are unable to free themselves from this condition. This surely is *the* most consequential disability of all, bar none! Jesus died and rose for those with disabilities.

Jesus declared beautiful those who bear heavy burdens.²⁴ He died and rose for them.

Finally, Jesus declared the elderly beautiful.²⁵ He nurtures them,²⁶ and uses them to His glory.²⁷ Jesus died and rose for the elderly.

Jesus died and rose for all! We do not kill our fellow human beings who are judicially innocent, at any time between fertilization and the time God Himself calls them home, because He has made them in His image and declared them beautiful.²⁸ Having first been sacrificially loved by God, we are called to love Him in return by sacrificially loving them, helping and supporting them in their physical needs.²⁹ For those who are not yet redeemed, or perhaps who once were but are now again lost, we pray for restored beauty,³⁰ and with God, rejoice when one repents and receives His gift of beauty restored.³¹

The unborn are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. Families are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. Children are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. Those with disabilities and chronic health issues are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. Those who are bearing heavy burdens are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. Those who are elderly are beautiful to God and beautiful to us. All human life is beautiful to God and beautiful to us! You are beautiful to God and beautiful to us! We are thankful that you have taken the time to read this, and invite you to join us in proclaiming the beauty of life in our community and beyond, in word and in love.

Notes:

1. Psalm 50:2; 1 Peter 3:3-4
2. Genesis 1:31
3. Genesis 1:26-27; Ap II 18
4. Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-20
5. Psalm 8
6. Romans 3:9-18, 23
7. Genesis 3:21; Psalm 100:3, 139:13-16, 145:15-16, 146:7-8; Matthew 5:45b, 6:25-34; SC Creed 1st Article and Lord's Prayer 4th Petition; FC Ep I and SD I
8. Genesis 3:15
9. Hebrews 1:3a, 4:15
10. John 1:14
11. Isaiah 52:14-53:3
12. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10
13. LSB 430.1
14. Song of Solomon 1:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 10:22; Revelation 7:14
15. FC Ep I 4
16. 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Peter 3:21
17. Genesis 2:23-24; Exodus 20:14 (Deuteronomy 5:18); Ephesians 5:22-23; Revelation 19:6-9; SC I 6th Commandment
18. Genesis 1:28, 9:1; Psalm 127:3; John 1:1-3; James 1:17-18
19. Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:30-35
20. Luke 1:39-55
21. Matthew 19:13-15 (Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17); Mark 9:36-37
22. See for example Matthew 9:2 (Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20); John 9:3; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
23. 1 Corinthians 12:22-26

24. Psalm 146:8-9; Matthew 11:28-30
25. Leviticus 19:32; Job 12:12, 32:7; Proverbs 16:31, 20:29; Philemon v.9
26. Ruth 4:15; Isaiah 46:4
27. See for example Genesis 21:1-7; Exodus 7:6-7; Psalm 71:18, 92:14-15; Luke 2:36-38
28. Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13 (Deuteronomy 5:17)
29. Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43-48; John 3:16; Galatians 5:13-14; 1 John 4:19 and others;
SC | 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th Commandments
30. 1 Timothy 2:4
31. Luke 15:1-32