

This Sunday's Gospel passage brings together a number of teachings Jesus gave his disciples and the apostles, all of them to do with how Christians (particularly officeholders) should conduct themselves in the Church. Jesus especially urges us to avoid any kind of pride: "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do'" (Lk 17:10). The apostles realize that Jesus is making heavy demands, but Christ teaches that nothing is impossible if we have faith in God: "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you" (Lk 17:6).

Indeed, from the very beginning, Christians living as authentic disciples of the Lord Jesus have been distinguished in their way of life. A work from as early as AD 130, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, makes this clear: "[Christians] dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners ... They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all ... They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers ... yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. To sum up all in one word – what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world" (Ch 5-6).

As we begin the month of October, the month of the Holy Rosary, as well as "Respect Life Month", let us be distinguished as Catholic Christians by our uncompromising conviction – known by reason and revealed by God – that human life is a precious gift from God and that it "must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception" (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 51).

"God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Gn 1:31).

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