

Greetings to you today we celebrate the YMCA/ YWCA World Week of Prayer. The overarching theme for the week is, "Leaving no one behind." This morning we will be looking at the specific theme, "All are equal in the image of God." We will be looking at the biblical text which tells us that we have been made in the image and likeness of God and therefore we are very important in God's sight.

In the passage read to us we see the account of the creation of human beings after the creation of nature. God says, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So we see that God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them. He also blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Three fundamental truths about human beings arise from this text, namely that God made (and makes) them in his own image, that he made them (and makes) them male and female giving them the task of reproducing, and that he gave (and gives) them dominion over the earth and its creatures. So we see that right from the beginning God's design was both male and female. Both of them shared in the divine image and both were given the authority to rule over the earth. There is no distinction here among the sexes that either of them were more like God or that either sex is more responsible for earth than the other. Their resemblance to God and the stewardship of the earth were from the beginning equally shared, since both sexes were equally created by God to be like God.

Genesis 1 clearly affirms the fundamental equality of the sexes. Whatever is essentially human in both male and female reflects the divine image which is equally borne by male and female characteristics. So both men and women are equally called to rule over the earth and co-operate with the Creator in the development of its resources for the common good.

In the second chapter of Genesis we see the complimentary nature of male and female. God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone and therefore creates a helper as his partner. The idea that is expressed through the term "helper" is that the one whom God was going to create had to be a companion, a helper and one who would be a partner yet different. Eve would complement Adam.

When we look at the biblical picture of the creation account of man and woman we notice the equality and complimentary nature of the sexes. However, this has been distorted by the entry of sin into the human realm. From that time onwards till today women have been exploited and have been subjugated by men. One of the key issues that we face in our own country is that of female foeticide. The sex ratio in Delhi is 868 females for every 1000 males and in Haryana has about 879 females for every 1000 males. So there seems to be a conscious effort to do away with the girl child. Female Foeticide seems to be practised quite frequently in Delhi and the NCR. This is because of a deep rooted prejudice against the girl child. It is in this kind of a context that the theological understanding of the creation of human beings in God's image is important. Men and women are both equal in the sight of God and have a complimentary role to play supporting each other and being wise stewards of creation.

Life is important in the sight of God and he is the one who has the authority to give or take life. Both nature by itself and God through his life revelation and scripture affirm life. We too are called to affirm life as all of us are equal and made in the image of God.