

Love, the Desire of Our Being

by Fr. Stephen Sanchez, OCD

He is the fulfillment of all prophetic pronouncements of the Old Testament. St. Paul would say that Christ is the Incarnation of God's Faithfulness to us. He is the Eternal Covenant. Do we ever ask why the commitment?, what impelled God to this commitment?

We as a people are driven by the desire to simplify difficult ideas or concepts, unfortunately in our attempts to simplify, we also tend to rob the concept in question of its depth and meaning. We do the same thing with the Christian concept of love so that the profound commitment of this mystery may be reduced to sentimentalism--a caricature of the essence of genuine love. Do we ever take time to ponder the question of love? We allow the unbelieving dominant culture to reduce it to a national holiday with plump cupids and paper hearts. Granted that these are meant to be signs of something deeper but unfortunately no one takes the time to teach that there is a deeper meaning to the signs. The result being that there have been succeeding generations that assumed that the sign was understood until we come to a generation that not only does not understand the signs but questions their validity and begins to look for signs that are valuable or significant to them and we begin the process again.

The manger, the Cross, the Resurrection, Pentecost and the future Glorious Coming of Our Lord are all signs of God's committed love for us, but what they signify can also be taken for granted or assumed to be understood. As a Christian community we need to reflect more on the mystery of the Love of God for us if we are to witness to an unbelieving world the truth of the Gospel that we proclaim. Love is the motor that drives the missionary effort of the Church. The saints in glory found the fullness of their humanity in their ability to surrender themselves completely to the Love of Christ. It is through our own ability to fall in love with Christ that allows us to be taught by Him of what genuine love consists. Christianity is the school of love, rather, Christianity is meant to be the school of love. This is not to be understood as a school where the only concern is that I be loved but a school that teaches the I to go beyond itâ€™s own

concerns and to love the other as Christ loves. That is the essence of our spirituality, our self-fulfillment, and our perfection as individuals and as a believing community is to be found in our ability to love others as Christ loves.

In this love of God which man meets in Christ he experiences not only what true love is but also at the same time, and unanswerably, that he, sinner and egoist that he is, has no true love. He experiences both aspects in one: the creature's limited love and its guilty frigidity one must start from the beginning to re-learn what love really is. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone*, p. 51

The most certain sign, in my opinion, as to whether or not we are observing these two laws is whether we observe well the love of neighbor. We cannot know whether or not we love God, although there are strong indications for recognizing that we do love Him; but we can know whether we love our neighbor [1Jn4,20]. And be certain that the more advanced you see you are in love of your neighbor the more advanced you will be in the love of God, for the love of His Majesty has for us is so great that to repay us for our love of neighbor He will in a thousand ways increase the love we have for Him. I cannot doubt this. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Interior Castle*, 5th Dwelling Places, 3, 8

Since God is Love and we were re-generated at the baptismal font as Sons and Daughters of Love through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ and in the Grace of the Holy Spirit, we are regenerated by Love, in Love and for Love. In the natural world all living things seek and tend to their perfection, a seed to germinate, grow, blossom and give fruit, likewise in the supernatural life of the believer, there is a drive, a desire, a Holy Longing to reach-out to that very perfection of Love that is God. The Love of God gives of itself, it pours itself out without measure. As a member of this Body of Christ, this Body of Love, what do you do imitate the Love that dispels the darkness?

The dominant culture is very much like the Narcissus of mythology, captivated and awed by its own beauty, power, and ability to manipulate its surroundings. Our mission as Christians is to turn the face of Narcissus towards the One Creator who has committed Himself to our transformation in and through Christ.

Christian love is not the worlds last word about itself, it is Gods final word about Himself, and so about the world. In the Cross we see, above all, something foreign to the world, something which cuts clean across the worldly understanding: A Word which the world does not want to hear at any price. For the world wants to live and rise without dying; but Christs love wishes to die, in order that, through death, it may rise again beyond death in Gods form. Hans urs von Balthasar, Love Alone, p. 112

May the Spirit of the Love-of-God-made-Flesh for us dwell in your hearts and families and may that Spirit bring forth the Fruit of Redemption and Salvation for all those you love.