



# Love must be lived

Some friends once confided in me before the birth of their second child that they worried that when she was born they would not be able to love her as much as they did their first child. They said, “We love Molly so much that we don’t see how we could ever love another child so completely.”

It wasn’t a question of not wanting another child — they were excited beyond words that she was on the way. They were afraid that somehow their store of love had already been given away, and they didn’t want to shortchange the baby soon to be born.

They knew that the most important gift they would give their children was their love, and so they asked themselves, “Is it possible to give yourself completely to every child? Is it possible to love in such a way and to such a degree that one’s

love never runs out, that one’s love is never exhausted?”

The day Emily was born, they forgot they had once fretted over their capacity to love. They did not love Molly any less because Emily was now part of the family, and in fact they realized right away that in the blink of an eye their capacity to give and receive love had expanded far beyond their hopes.

Seeing Molly’s boundless love for her new little sister, they also marveled as *her* capacity to love grew, too.

## Love breaks out

My friends knew that the most important gift they would give their children is their love because their love is the deepest expression of who they are. To love means not to give something but to give *myself*. And most importantly of all, to love means *to become myself completely*.

There is an intuition shared by all of us through which we know deep within that everything is about love, that everything is resolved in love. It is an intuition sometimes clouded and blurred by suffering, sadness, confusion, doubt, sin, selfishness and the condition of the world itself.

Ironically, even such clouds prove the intuition true. The very fact that my friends worried about not having enough love was a sign that they did!

It was love already within them that was breaking out to grow their family.

We know intuitively, from the tips of our toes to the tops of our heads, that ultimately everything is about love. We know intuitively, from the tips of our toes to the tops of our heads, that we were made for love and that nothing else will fulfill us or make us whole.

Love is not a commodity to be bought and sold or a concept to be hammered out in endless discussion. It is not an idea to be debated or a method to achieve a goal. To use St. Paul’s words, to talk of love without loving is to be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. To be love, it must be lived.

## Love bursting forth

During the Christmas season we give thanks that God’s love for us is so great that it burst forth on earth, in flesh and blood, in his Son, Jesus. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,” as the evangelist John wrote (3:16). But we must also recognize that we ourselves are expressions of God’s love, we are proofs that God is love! We were made by Love, for love.

God is no noisy gong or clanging cymbal, and he would not stop at anything to tell us, the ones he loves, how much he loves us. He wanted us to see with our eyes and hear with our ears

and touch his love with our hands, so he sent his Son in flesh and blood.

Not only that: his Son was born where even the least could come see him, because he was born as one of them. Shepherds heard the news and worshipped him long before kings and wise men.

Every once in a while, we might wonder: “I know God’s love is great, and I believe that he sent his Son among us as Savior. But does God have enough love left for *me*? Am I, too, the object of his favor?”

## Love’s origin

Prophets and angels made it very clear that the Savior has come for *us*. The one who created us and loves us into life at every moment sent his Son that our love might expand in him and so that we might know from the tips of our toes to the tops of our heads that we are loved by him.

In the 12th century, a French monk by the name of William of St. Thierry composed a prayer that captures the meaning of Christmas: “[O God], you first loved us so that we might love you — not because you needed our love, but because we could not be what you created us to be, except by loving you.”

If love had its origin in us, it would indeed be finite, and we would have reason to fear that there would not be enough to go around. But because all love has its origin in God, and because he shares his love with us completely, the only limit is set by our selfishness.

In 2012, may we see and hear and touch God’s love. May we love him in return, that we might be what he created us to be. Loving him, our love will expand beyond our deepest hopes.

In 2012, may all of Western Washington experience God’s love through their Catholic neighbors.

Merry Christmas!

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WILLIAM OF ST. THIERRY

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