

# Love One Another as I Have Loved You

When we would go out to eat and the server seemed distracted, inattentive, rushed, and sometimes even incompetent, my husband, Jim, would consciously leave a larger than expected tip. When I questioned his decision, he told me that he sensed that she was having a hard day and could use some unexpected kindness. I have to admit that at the time I was more perplexed—and even angry—at his generosity. Twenty one years after his death I remember occasions like this fondly and have a better understanding of his tendency to see and affirm people.

As a recovering alcoholic, he recognized that his drinking had often covered his own anger and hurt and caused deep pain for family, friends, and coworkers. In the safety of his 12-step groups he began to reach out and receive support and acceptance from others who saw his goodness and potential despite the mess he had made of his life. As he began to heal and work the 12 steps he began to focus on the good in others—and in himself.

A familiar AA maxim is that “Hurt people hurt people.” Jim had lived that and so he could sense when people’s negative behavior came from hurt places inside them. And as he had been given grace and healing in recovery, he freely gave that to others.

I think that may be part of what Jesus is asking us when he tells us to love others as he has loved us. That kind of love is accepting, kind, gentle, and sees past the rough exterior to fragile one inside. It is sacrificial and forgiving and constant. It never fails.

One of my favorite saints is Peter whose love of Jesus consumed his whole being. “Don’t just wash my feet, wash all of me...I’ll die with you,” he protests. Yet when faced with that possibility, the scared child took over. “I don’t know the man!” he told the servant—not once but three times. Days after the crucifixion and resurrection, he was out fishing and Jesus was preparing breakfast on the beach. Peter recognized him on the shore and plunged into the water and ran toward him. “Do you love me?” Jesus asked Peter three times. And Peter responded each time “You know I love you.” Jesus then entrusted him with care of his church—“Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” Reconciliation had taken place. And the same Peter who denied Jesus proclaimed him to thousands on Pentecost. That’s the power of love.

Our wounded world is in dire need of this kind of love. We have become divided, angry, fearful of others and protective of

what we claim as “ours.” We wear masks and rarely act as the brothers and sisters of our loving God that we are called to be. But God still looks at us the way Jesus looked at Peter. “I still love you,” God whispers in our spirits. “Don’t be afraid. Let me love you and share that love with others.” Masks come off, we are cradled in God’s love and from that place of safety we can reach out.

How is God entrusting us to heal the world? It’s a huge job but starts with small doable steps.

We can smile and say “Hi” to the person we usually might pass by. We may be surprised to see ourselves in her eyes and that encounter may bless both of our days.

Let’s say we’re in line at the grocery store. We waited our turn and didn’t push ahead. The man behind us had just a few items. We let him go ahead of us. We didn’t have to but somehow we felt God nudging us to do so and we responded and remembered how grateful we felt when someone did that for us.

We may have dressed differently, may have come from different backgrounds, may have been of different ages and races but at that moment we recognized that we were the same.

Though most of us hate to admit it sometimes we feel uneasy or even fearful around people who may not look, speak or act like us. We know we don’t want to be that way. In fact we may pride ourselves on being open compassionate and fair though we recognize at times that we are not. We could

try to push those feelings to the back of our minds and turn up the volume of our music. Or we could risk opening our hearts to learn more about those our fears have turned into monsters. We could try checking the internet and learning about their countries’ history, religions and cultures. What’s daily life like? What are their fears and struggles? What are their dreams for their children? We could ask God to show us how they are like us and to provide us with opportunities to get to know them on a personal basis. God answers these kinds of prayers. After all each person is God’s handiwork, flesh of God’s imagining. That makes us all brothers and sisters and just like any loving parent God wants his children to love and play well together.

Then let us strive to love one another as God has loved us. I’m guessing that would put a broad smile on God’s face and a twinkle in God’s eyes.

— Angela Anno

*Love one another  
as I have loved you.*



*“When we perform the corporal works of mercy – specifically welcoming the stranger in the form migrants and refugees – we are welcoming Christ in them, and helping to restore their full dignity as humans.”*

— Pope Francis