



LOVE: THE UNQUENCHABLE THIRST THE INSATIABLE HUNGER

by Sister Mary Francis

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Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ.

“We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God, each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

Pope Benedict XVI Homily on Sunday, April 24, 2005

Love’s journey passes through the heart of every person and will one day come full circle. The dignity that is ours as human beings springs from our common family of origin – from God, Who is Love.

At the moment of conception, God instills within His new child, an ” internal homing device” which is activated by Love, thrives on Love, leads to Love and is fulfilled by Love. Thus there is in every person this innate longing to be more intimately bonded with the Lord. It is a longing, a thirst, a hunger for Love, a reflection of the longing, thirst and hunger that God has for us.

We begin our Lenten journey today. Time will move us swiftly through these forty days to the ultimate celebration of our faith, Jesus’ triumph over sin and death. Let us take this opportunity today to ponder on Him who cried out from the Cross, “I THIRST!” (Jn 19: 28) and reflect on how we might quench His thirst.

“If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” Jn 4:10

“Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture says: ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’ ” Jn 7:37-38

Living water flows, rushes onwards with powerful surgings toward the open sea. We are called to be caught up in this stream of love, God’s love, to be imbued with Love, rooted deeply in Love, so as to be an unimpeded aqueduct, as it were, of God’s love to the world. This was St. Margaret Mary’s vocation. Jesus revealed to her: “My divine Heart is so passionately fond of the human race, and of you in particular, that it cannot keep back the pent-up flames of its burning charity any longer. They must burst out through you and reveal my Heart to the world, so as to enrich humankind with my precious treasures.”

Three centuries after St. Margaret Mary, another mystic and French Visitation nun, Mother Louise Margaret de la Touche recounts her experience:

“I feel in myself a passionate desire to make God loved. I seem to have in my breast surging waves



which want to find an outlet and escape; waves at the same time burning like fire and refreshing like limpid water; waves of love, active, and enlivening which are poured into me, not for myself, but for others. God has made of my soul a profound reservoir of love into which he is always pouring more. This love is not mine, it does not come from me, it is the very love of God. It comes from the heart of Jesus; it descends on me, but it is not in order to remain there. My heart is only a place of passage for this divine love; an earthly station where it stops when passing. But no, it does not stop there, it is ever passing. Wave follows wave and pushes it on. And this infinite Love which is ever moving forward, where does it go? Towards what abyss does it rush? It goes from the abyss of divine mercy from which it issues, to the abysses of human misery! Between these two abysses there is a deep gulf, a frightful void. It is the nothingness of evil. Over this gulf a bridge is thrown: the living Christ and Savior. Thus, it is by Christ that infinite love reaches the world. By Christ, yes, but especially by his heart.”

God’s love flows unimpeded through the ages, in the lives of every human being who ever lived or will live in this world. God’s love is a gift – waiting, expecting, hoping to be received, yet God respects our free will and awaits our free response. Are we willing to be living water to quench the thirst of those who long for God, who may not even know why their hearts feel empty? Are we willing to be nourishment for those who hunger for the Bread of Life? Are we willing to sign on the dotted line: SEND ME! Mary was willing to sign on the dotted line when she uttered her fiat to the Divine Will. She didn’t understand exactly how her life would unfold. It was as if God had handed her a sealed envelope, asking her, without opening it, to embrace its contents. Surely we do well to imitate her faith as we, too, share in the redemption of the world.

Our life is God’s work as long as we don’t get in the way. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a shining witness to what God can do if we are supple in his hands. When she heard the call to leave her congregation to begin a life of total dedication to the poorest of the poor, she struggled at first to respond to this new endeavor. Once she gave her unconditional consent, the Lord brought his love and healing to millions of people through the humble ministry of her and the thousands of women who follow in her footsteps.

We must have confidence in the ways of God, even though we may not understand them. Even John the Baptist was baffled when he saw Jesus before him: “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” John learned submission and humbly took his rightful place: “He must increase and I must decrease.” (Jn 3:30)

A living relationship with Christ is decisive if we are to keep the flood gates open. We need to be interconnected, branch to vine, if the sap of new life is to course freely through us into every heart. This is called prayer. A simple lifting up of our hearts to God in praise of creation, a sigh of gratitude for the gift of life, a loving gaze in adoration of our Eucharistic Lord, a plea for those in need unites our hearts to His. Frequenting the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist restores and



vivifies our relationship with the Lord and with one another. Taking Sacred Scripture in hand everyday, one listens to the voice of the Lord and comes to know Him more intimately.

“To give disposes us to receive,” says Saint Augustine. St. Francis of Assisi says the same: “It is in giving that we receive.” Our love-ability is augmented with every outpouring. How often have we experienced that when we were in a position to be of service to someone, we received more than we gave. The light of love pervades the deepest darkness and invites us to wait for the Dawn. Love inspires us to forgive from the heart, even if this forgiveness is an oft-repeated and wearisome task. A heartfelt forgiveness holds no grudge nor does it seek revenge, rather it calls down a blessing on those who have hurt us. Forgiveness frees love to heal the wounded and the wound inflicted. To lose oneself is a choice to make more room for Jesus, to allow Him to make of us a transparency of selfless love. Love wins for us the “freedom of the children of God” when we are no longer afraid to die to ourselves. We can act without control, without manipulation and maneuvering of people and events to achieve what we want for love is free-standing, sure of God and confides every person and situation to the truth. Fear of rejection and abandonment lose their grip because we have been seized by Love Who promises to be with us to the end of time. Clear-sighted love enables us to know what is of more value at the moment, freeing us to be who we really are.

“I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing I shall not be put to shame.”
Isaiah 50:5-7

“Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love.” (St. John of the Cross) There is no greater compliment than to acknowledge the existence of another person. There are people who have been denied this compliment and the hurt runs gut-deep. It has been said that “hurt people hurt people.” This may be the case if a person grows up in a family where the members are disjointed and there is little affection expressed. As a consequence, the person may seem cold, aloof, distant. There is no one who will not respond to sincere love. Love will gently strike a resonating chord in the other’s heart and come alive. If we really know a person, we cannot help but love them. However, only God knows the whole truth of a person. We do well to excuse the shortcomings of others on the basis that we don’t have the bigger picture. Here the “golden rule” applies “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.” (Mt. 7:12) The absence of love presupposes that we may have to suffer the lack of being on the receiving end for a while, but bringing love to a loveless situation is our recompense. All we can do, at any given moment, is to respond in as loving a way as possible. We will love if we experience love and the more fully we experience it, the more fully we will love.

“We have come to know and to believe in God’s love for us.” (1 Jn 4:16) It is a love which exists independently of our feelings. We must live according to our faith in God’s love for us.



“Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and gives us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world – this is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical.” Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* January 25, 2006 Pope Benedict XVI

May every Christian take in hand our Holy Father’s first encyclical which will enlighten, strengthen and give courage to all!

As our Lenten journey unfolds, may the love of God wash over us as “wave follows wave and pushes it on” until every human being’s hunger and thirst for God is consummated.