

10. Called to befriend



‘I will betroth you
to myself
in tenderness.’

Hosea 2:14



Matthew 11:28-30

I am not now calling you servants (see 13:16)
because the servant does not know what the master is doing.
I am calling you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything that I have heard from my Father' (John 15:15).

'I have said these things to you while I am still with you.
But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything,
and remind you of all that I have said to you' (John 14:25-26).

‘I have come to cast fire upon the earth
and how I wish it were blazing already’ (Luke 12:49)

Teilhard de Chardin 1934

‘Some day,
after harnessing space,
the winds,
the tides
and gravitation,

We shall harness for God
the energies of Love.

And then,
for the second time in the history of the world,
we shall have discovered fire.’

‘I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another’ (John 13:34).

‘Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God’s love was revealed among us in this way:

God sent his only Son into the world

so that we might live through him’ (1 John 4:7-12).

‘The One who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct ... love one another deeply from the heart’ (1 Peter 1:15, 22).

‘The whole law is summed up in a single commandment: You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Galatians 5:14).

‘The commandments are summed up in this word: Love your neighbour as yourself’ (Romans 13:9).

‘You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture: You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (James 2:8).

1. To be is to love

Since God is love and God is the source of all being,
love must be the very essence of what being is,
and so of what we are, for we participate in the being of God.

To love is to give oneself.

This is what God is

and creation is the result of

God's sharing God's own being and life.

To the extent that we are in touch with our own true being

we recognise ourselves as gift

and we are in communion with God the giver.

- Communion with God means a sharing of the creative love that cannot but reach out as a gift of the self to others.

See Jesus' Baptismal experience.
Overwhelmed with God's love
Jesus is impelled into mission.



‘God chose us for the praise of the glory of his grace – his free gift to us in the Beloved’ (Ephesians 1:6).

‘The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ (Romans 5:5).

To be, then, is to share in God's self-gift to another.

When the other accepts this gift and responds to it,
we experience well-being, a being-in-love.

When the one to whom we offer ourselves in love
does not accept us or fails to respond, we experience pain.

But there is no other way to be.

By virtue of being a creature the only way to be
is to give oneself in love to another.

1. To be is to love
2. Love as a sacrament

To experience my life as a gift
is to experience my total dependence on love.
This is why Jesus said: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the reign of heaven' (Matthew 5:3).

This is what it means to
'receive the kingdom of God as a child' (Mark 10:15),
and why Nicodemus, groping in the dark for the light
was told he had to be 'born again' (John 3:3).

To accept as true that I am totally dependent on love,
is to accept that that is also true for you,
and indeed for every person and for all of creation.

To know this is to be drawn into God's own love
for all that God has made.

Love, then, is a primary sacrament,
for it is being part of the divine grace that flows,
giving life to all.

In love we are at the very heart of religious experience.

1. To be is to love
2. Love as a sacrament
3. The necessarily incomplete nature of the love
we now experience

Since to be is to be-come, the joy of being [being-in-love] involves a hunger and a thirst and a longing for the fulness of being-in-love that is not yet our experience.

It means that our present experience of loving is a taste and a promise and an anticipation of this fulness.

Following the advice of Paul,
we give ourselves to
‘live through love in God’s presence’ (Ephesians 1:4)

While we ‘want love more than anything else’
(1 Corinthians 14:1), we know, as Saint Augustine knew:
‘You have made us for yourself, O God,
and our hearts are restless
till they rest in you’ (Confessions 1.1)

1. To be is to love
2. Love as a sacrament
3. The necessarily incomplete nature of the love
we now experience
4. Being-in-love is experienced as communion.

We belong. 'If you love one another,
you have carried out all your ob-ligations' (Romans 13:10).

1. To be is to love
2. Love as a sacrament
3. The necessarily incomplete nature of the love we now experience
4. Being-in-love is experienced as communion.
5. If we love, we can learn to like ('kind-ness').

Since we have one Abba (God)
in what ultimately matters we are 'alike', we are 'kin'.
Recognising this can bring us to 'like' each other more.

6. Loving is receiving.

To love is to recognise the other as being, like God, able
to 'create',
to en-liven (put life into) ,
to en-courage (put heart into),
to en-joy (put joy into).

7. Loving is giving.

To love is to recognise oneself as being, like God, able
to 'create',
to en-liven (put life into),
to en-courage (put heart into),
to en-joy (put joy into).

8. The joy and pain of love

The experience of not being-in-love shocks, hurts, wounds

The experience of being-in-love heals, frees, comforts,
brings peace and joy.

9. Sin that opposes love

The experience of being-in-love heals,
frees, comforts,
brings peace and joy.

: We seek to avoid the pain of love

: We seek to by-pass the surprise of love

: We seek to be in-dependent rather than inter-dependent

: We fail to, or choose not to, see, affirm and respond
to the likeness that we share

: We seek to control, to possess, and we substitute this counterfeit
for true love

10. Qualities of love

: Love is truthful [be-troth-al; trust],
pure [purge; fire],
faithful [fidelity; confide; abide].

: Love is zealous, because communion matters.

A true lover is committed to abide in love,
and passionately opposed to what might break the communion

: Jealousy is a distortion of zealous love.

It manifests itself in the attempt to possess.

: frustration is a breakdown of zealous love.

We decide that the commitment is useless;
we give up on someone, deciding that the other
is not worth the effort of loving.

: Love is compassionate, not dis-passionate, or list-less (lust-less).
Love that allows only for what is self-less, dispassionate, a-sexual
is 'heretical' love

Augustine: 'Love and do what you will'
(*'Dilige et quod vis fac'*, commentary on 1J ohn 7).

'Di-ligo' = 'love' in the sense of 'choose between.'

- We long to be ourselves for another. We long to be ourselves, and we know that this can only be in a love-relationship where the other person wants me to be myself, and to be myself for him/her. When this happens, we are nurtured, we come alive, we grow, we blossom.
- When we are not confident that this is happening, we develop strategies that dull the consequent ache. We try to be independent, so that we can avoid the hurt, the disappointments. We pull back from giving ourselves to others.
- The trouble with this is that these strategies work at the expense of love. Growth from the total dependence of a baby is not towards independence, but towards mutual, freely chosen, personal interdependence.





John Henry Newman

Dear Jesus,
help me spread your fragrance
everywhere I go.
Flood me with your
Spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my being
so utterly that all my life may be
only a radiance of yours.
Shine through me and be so in me
that everyone I come in contact with
may feel your presence in my soul.

I am a person who belongs to the world
and to my fellow creatures, especially other people.

Because we belong to others,
loving is the way we are meant to be:
being a willing gift to others that expresses and realises
a transcending of one's present self
and that creates the proper environment
which enables another to respond in love.

George Herbert:

"Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back, guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack from my first entrance in,
Drew near to me, sweetly questioning if I lacked anything.

'A guest', I answered, 'worthy to be here'. Love said, 'You shall be he'.

'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear, I cannot look on Thee'.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply, 'Who made the eyes, but I?'

'Truth, Lord, but I have marred them;

let my shame go where it doth deserve'.

'And know you not', says Love, 'who bore the blame?'

'My dear, then I shall serve'.

'You must sit down', says Love, 'and taste my meat'. So I did sit and eat"

John of the Cross

‘We are conscious that love is so valuable in the Beloved’s sight that we neither esteem nor make use of anything else but love, and so we employ all our strength in the pure love of God, desiring to serve God perfectly. We do this not merely because He desires it, but also because the love by which we are united to Him moves us to the love of God in and through all things. Like the bee that sucks honey from all the wild-flowers and will not use them for anything else, we easily extract the sweetness of love from all things that happen to us, that is, we love God in them.’

(Spiritual Canticle 27,8).

Luke 10:38-42

"Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Love of Self

‘If you want to become my follower,
deny your self and take up your cross daily and follow me.
For if you want to save your life you will lose it,
but if you lose your life because of me you will save it.
What does it profit you to gain the whole world,
but lose or forfeit your self?’(Luke 9:23-25).

Learning from the love others give us

We can grow in genuine self-love through all kinds of experiences, particularly painful ones, for it is pain that alerts us to the fact that something is not right in our relating.

However these painful experiences could just as easily lead us along the path of despair. We could just as easily attempt to live in distraction, running away from the pain. Such a response leads to self-destruction.

What makes it possible for us to face the pain and to learn to love ourselves is the love which others give us. That is why we are so grateful to those who have loved us through such experiences.

To gain self-knowledge we need to learn the art of being reflective. We need to cultivate the silent space needed to come to know our own heart. But self-knowledge is not gained by staring at ourselves in isolation. It can be attained only by seeing ourselves as we really are in the reflected light of the love which God and other people have for us. Those who truly love us see a truth which we need to see. Their love provides the proper environment where we can safely look at ourselves without being overwhelmed by our lack of self-esteem, or plunging into self-indulgence.

What we need to do is learn the art of loving:
the art of giving ourselves as a gift to others.
To do this we have to know that our real self
is worth offering.

We need to love ourselves.
To do this we need to respect ourselves
(Latin re-spicere = to look and look again!)

It is important to know myself now as I am now –
as I really am.

Not as I would like to be.

Not as others expect me to be.

Not as I want others to see me.

It is true that love involves a change in the self,
but this is an extension of the self
rather than a sacrifice of the self.

Genuine love is self-replenishing activity.
Indeed, it is even more;
it enlarges rather than diminishes the self;
it fills the self. It does not deplete it.