

## **THE GIFT OF LOVE**

Rev. Bill Banuchi (December 2009)

This is the season for giving. There's no greater gift that can be given than the gift of love. But the sad truth is that too few people -even Christians- have any idea about what love is. You see, love is sacrificing for the needs of another.

*"For God so loved the world that he **gave** (sacrificed) His only begotten son..."(John 3:16)*

It's unconditional. Jesus didn't say, "I will come into your world, to be born in a stinking manger, then in the prime of my life I will hang on a cross if you will promise to repent some day." No, he simply came into our world and gave all *-unconditionally*. In other words, the love he demonstrated -the only true love there is- is totally unconditional. He sacrificed for our needs, even when we had no idea what our need was!

Our love for Jesus is a response to His love for us. We love Him because he "first" loved us. When we realize how totally unconditional His love is; when we realize that he already paid the price for our salvation without any idea of what our response would be, we can't help but to be overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude.

We choose to love Him, because He loved us first –unconditionally!

The Catholic theologian, St. Augustine spoke about "the order of loves." There is an order. God first loves us, then we respond to His love. He's the initiator; we're the responders, (1 John 4:19).

Since marriage is supposed to be a picture of the love of God in the earth, it would mean that the husband ***first*** loves the wife. Then she responds with love and respect for him. In this culture of political correctness and equality of the sexes, some might object to the notion that the husband must love His wife first. That just doesn't seem right or fair. Well, maybe it doesn't seem right according to the thinking of this world, but then again, maybe that's why today's marriages are dissolving at such a high rate, *even in the Church!* (Proverbs 14:12).

If God is the initiator of love causing us to respond with love toward Him, then it stands to reason that the husband must first love his wife. Then her love for Him will be a response to the love He initiates. Whether that seems fair or not, it's the law of relationships.

Just as the law of gravity doesn't change according to a person's opinion –if you walk off the end of your roof, you're going to fall whether you believe in gravity or not- it's a law. So it is with the law of relationships. Better to understand it, and work with it, than try to defy it.

This is not to excuse the wife from her responsibility to love and respect her husband. Two wrongs don't make a right. Despite the natural laws of relationships, her charge is to love and respect her husband –unconditionally. You see, it's the same for both. God is an equal opportunity God, after all.

It seems impossible doesn't it? It is. That's why we need God, for love is of God. (1 John 4:7)  
When we try it another way it doesn't work. The evidence is all around us.

So this season let's give the gift that God has given us. "Pay it forward" so-to-speak. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and died for her, so that she will sense and "feel" the unconditional love of God in her very own husband, and she will respond with the love and respect that every man yearns for.

This Christmas season, let us purpose in our hearts to give the gift that was given for us on a cross more than two thousand years ago, the gift of love. And in that our children will see God!