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Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

THE WHOLE LAW

By Julie Mussché

Today's Gospel

*When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together, and one of them,
a scholar of the law, tested him by asking,
"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"*

He said to him,

*"You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your mind.*

This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

MATTHEW 22:34-40

Reflection

Borrowing from an oldie, what's this "crazy little thing called love?" What was your first encounter with being loved? For me, it was my grandmother holding me for hours when I was about three. I was struggling to breath with asthma and she would rock me and intermittently pound me on my back to help clear the congestion in my chest. I remember the rocking and the loving care and comfort that must have been exhausting. Your invitation: reflect on your first memory of being loved and linger with it for a while. What are the feelings that rise up for you? Where is God in that remembering?

The Gospel reading today reminds us of the "Great Commandment" having foundations in both Judaism and Christianity. All the laws, all the rules, the very foundations of belief roll up into these commandments. What is the point of integration of the teaching and related action in our lived experience? How do we know we have been loved or loved another? What does it mean to love God?

Paul shares in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Looking at the experiences of love we carry, it is relatively easy to translate acts and conditions of love in our human relationships. How do we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind? It does not seem to mean worship.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his classic work *God in Search of Man*, presents that God pursues humankind and needs us as partners to be God's presence in the world. We know that "God is love and those that abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." (1 John 4:15) It would seem that to love God requires investment in being God's agents or ambassadors of love in the world. Paul gives us a road map for being and doing that love. "What's love got to do with it?" (with recognition of Tina Turner) Well, just about everything.



Wooden sculptures
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- How do your memories of being loved energize your desire to be God's agent of love in the world?
- When and how do you feel loved by God?

- What do you do to show your love for God?

For Prayer

*I love you, Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

PSALM 18:1-2

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