

January 4, 2024

Daily Reflections



THOSE WHO LIVE IN LOVE, LIVE IN GOD

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

The Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the Devil. No one who is begotten by God commits sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. In this way, the children of God and the children of the Devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.

1 JOHN 3:8-10

Reflection

The First Epistle of John is familiar as the letter which provides some of the most profound and emphatic teaching on the nature of love in communities of faith. John links life as a follower of Jesus to an intimate walk with God in 'righteousness' and 'love.' These form the foundation for personal fidelity to the God who is love, since a loving soul is naturally moved to abide in

righteousness with others. In our contemporary lives, love is often linked first with emotional connection and feelings of the heart. For John, emotion is intrinsically merged with a life lived righteously in communion with others. As we grow in charity for the poor, the stranger, and our neighbors, we not only experience love as our ground and inspiration, we literally become love in the world for others.

As the Epistle teaches, living in love cannot be separated from our evolving connection to God and to Christ: **Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is** (3:2). The essence of Christ's presence among us is made manifest in our loving relationship to one another. That relationship is the concrete measure of how love is lived: **Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God** (4:7). In our lives as 'Church,' we can become preoccupied with the integrity of our beliefs, our ritual forms and practices, and our moral virtues in daily life. John's Epistle exhorts us to keep the godliness of our love forever in the forefront, since it is the core reality and measure of our fidelity to what Jesus has incarnated in our world. Our 'doing' and our 'being' are made complete and truly holy by the love which suffuses our living day by day.

On a personal note, some 50 years ago, in the midst of a life-altering discovery (or re-discovery!) of my walk with God, I realized that simply 'knowing' the 'truths' of scripture, and Church, and faith community, would not suffice to nourish my soul through all the emerging realities of my life. By grace, I came across a single sentence in 1 Jn 4:16 (edited for inclusivity): **God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them.** Those 16 words became my grounding for all the ensuing years—all the explorations, all the discoveries, and all the inspirations of my life in the Church and in Christian community. Love is the 'truth' of God, and the all-encompassing power and joy of a life made full in the living.



St. Michael's Abbey
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

- What does it mean to you to say "God is Love?"

- How do you concretely experience love in your life as God's gift to you?
 - In what way(s) do you most hope to grow in 'love' as the principal value in your life and relationships?
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