

## **Challenge: Accept the Authentic Love that God Has For us and Pass it on**

God's love for us is infinite, unyielding, and relentless. We could never run from His love, nor hide from it, nor ever do enough to earn it. It is perfect and more wonderful than we can even fathom. How about our love for our fellow man though? How does our love for each other compare?

One thing that I have noticed recently is that every family has rifts. Every family has some tense relationships, some people that try as we might, we find it difficult to love, to forgive their shortfalls, to love authentically. I believe that the reason why is two-fold. First of all, we did not choose our family. God puts families together for His own purposes and those are often hidden from the people involved. Also, because family relationship is a deeper bond, we tend to have expectations of each other and when those expectations are not met, it develops deep wounds

Advent is a time that we like to turn towards happy things. We like to give to the poor, and make preparations for our loved ones, and enjoy the season basking in the joy of the fact that we are authentically loved by our Saviour. When God sent His son into the world, and the Holy Family was formed, we all gained a family that is unlike our own. We gained a perfect family and so we like to put out our nativities and then we do everything we can to make our earthy families feel as perfect as the Holy Family. Often, though, we find it hard to forgive others when they deviate from that perfect view that we had of our wonderful Christmas, the perfect Christmas that we worked so hard for so long to create.

Now, there is absolutely nothing wrong with giving to the poor and setting out the nativity and working hard to give your loved ones a beautiful day. In fact, it is virtuous to do all of those things. There is nothing that we can do on this earth, however, to recreate the perfectly authentic love that God has for us. We are imperfect beings and to try to project the desire for perfection onto one another is not only wrong, but doomed to failure. God loves us as a whole person, knowing our virtues and forgiving our vices. We have to strive to do the same for others.

2020 is unlike other years. In a normal year we would have to meet with family and sort of grin and bear it and make nice with people that drive us crazy because we are all family and we are all summoned to dinner, but what about this year? This year it is so easy to, well, not see those people who drive us crazy, whether they are family members or members of the community, or even coworkers for those of us working remotely. This year we have the opportunity, through the pandemic, to just skip that part. We have an excuse to distance ourselves.

**The challenge this week is to not skip that part. Take some time to picture a person who you find challenging to love and ask God to show you how He loves them.** Ask for patience and understanding and most importantly the ability to forgive that person the wrongs they have done to you; to see that person, and love the whole person as God loves us all. **Then reach out.** You may have to do it electronically this year because of social distancing, or via a porch drop off, or even through the mail and that is ok. Just find a way to reach out to those who you are tempted to leave out of your social circle, even if only in a very small way.

Now, there may be some deeply rooted pain in your family and you may not be ready to reach out to certain members, and that is ok. God will put someone in your heart, related to you or not, that He is thinking of and that He wants you to reach out to, to share the authentic love that God has gifted us all.

### **Children's Challenge:**

This week, when a sibling (or two) is driving you crazy, take a moment to acknowledge their good qualities either in your head or out loud, and ask God to show you how much He loves that person and how much He loves you. Then forgive them.

## **Prayer for the Week:**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

(Prayer of Saint Francis)

## **Readings:**

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:34-40

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:34-35

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30-31

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. I John 4:7-12

**Songs of the Week:** Breath of Heaven, A Strange Way to Save the World, Amazing Love

**Video Lectures:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8X-wqHZclU> Sr Bethany Madonna (35:34 min)

Laugh out loud funny talk about God's love for us all.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52k\\_XWY6fEA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52k_XWY6fEA) Sr Miriam James Heiland (1hr)

\*You may note that the topic Sr's talk today forgiveness, during the course of the talk though she continually comes back to the awesomely authentic love that God has for all of his children. **Sr Miriam addresses mature themes during the course of this talk that may not be suitable for children.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuC8d9ttjqA> Katie Prejean McGrady (35 min)

Speaking to youth about God's unfailing Love

Please consider checking out Brother Francis Days of Advent program on Formed for your children to enjoy throughout Advent. You may obtain a membership through FFI.

(<https://famfi.ca/>) FFI has outstanding resources for the whole family.

## **Love in Action**

St Mother Theresa is famous for her ability to love. Let's take some time this week to look at her life and admire her ability to see the beauty in each soul and to love without reserve.

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/faith-and-character/faith-and-character/mother-teresa-of-calcutta-the-light-of-love.html>

"Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you." - Mother Teresa.

## **Object Lesson for the Little Ones –Love Never Runs Out, No Matter How Much You Give Away**

[https://waldothec clown.com/object\\_lesson\\_shaving\\_cream.htm](https://waldothec clown.com/object_lesson_shaving_cream.htm)

### **Lesson Aim:**

To teach that love never runs out, no matter how much of it you give away.

### **Supplies You Will Need:**

- (1) A can of shaving cream
- (2) A glass about the same size as the can of shaving cream
- (3) A plate to put under the glass
- (4) A table to put everything on

### **Advance Set-Up:**

Check the table top & floor where you are going to be presenting this object lesson. It can get a little messy, so make sure that the table top & floor will not be harmed, should a little bit of stray cream come their way. Cover one or both, if necessary, with something nice looking (you don't want to be too obvious that you are expecting mess).

### **What You Are Going to Do:**

Standing in front of your group, you are going to talk about how great this new shaving cream is that you found. To show how creamy & fluffy it is, you decide to empty the can in front of them (you can't learn about cream that you can't see). To prevent mess, you will put the contents of the can into the glass. This plan should work fine, because the glass is the same size as the can & so should hold it all. So as you talk about how great the shaving cream is, you will proceed to empty the can into the glass, catching all of the contents.

### **What You Are Going to Say:**

Shaving cream. It's a wonderful thing. So fluffy & creamy. Shaving cream makes getting up in the morning & scraping the hairs growing out of your face an enjoyable experience. But not all shaving creams are the same. Today you want to share with your group the brand you use. Hold up the can. This is the good stuff. Show your group what you are talking about. Take out the glass (the same size as the can). To show how fluffy & creamy your shaving cream is, you will empty the contents into the glass. The can & the glass are the same size--the glass should hold all of the cream. Put the glass on the plate & begin filling it up. Since the glass is the proper size, you don't need to keep an eye on it. As you fill the glass, don't look down. Let the shaving cream fill & overflow the glass. When you finish emptying the can, look down & react with surprise. The cream just kept coming. All of that cream from a small container. Why, that reminds you of the other thing you wanted to talk about: love.

### **Key Ideas You Want to Get Across:**

Love is like shaving cream. If it stays inside of us, it can't do its job. It needs to be set free. When we let love flow outward to others, it will grow & expand. And God makes sure that our supply of love never runs out.



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