

Preface:

May the words I speak be only truth; let them express the love of God for all of us.

There are three verses in the Bible that I fervently believe should be taken literally. The first is “love your neighbor as yourself.” The next is “God is love.” And perhaps my favorite, from the Gospel of John: “God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

Note the common theme here: LOVE.

*Recently I explained to a friend why the message of God being LOVE is so important to me. My friend has dealt with a lot of unspeakable heartbreak in his life, and at his recent loss of his foster child, he messaged me with the cynical quip that “the man upstairs must have something out for me.”*

*He was kind of shocked when I told him that the image of some bearded guy in a big nightgown is not a realistic image of the God I know.*

*When I explained to him that God is LOVE, and love is all around us, he got quiet. Of course he asked “kind of like The Force in Star Wars?” I had to say yes to God being invisible and powerful, but I also had to tell him that God would not hide the droids he was looking for.*

God is love. Not a man upstairs with a long beard in a nightgown, not a George Burns-type character, not even Whoopi Goldberg. Love. Pure and simple. God. Is. Love.

But what about this trinity business? 3 persons, one God? But God is LOVE? How can we assign three “persons” to a conceptual and omnipresent element such as love?

Well, there are so many different ways that we can love. If you break it down, those types of love are shown to us explicitly in the relationship of the Trinity: the love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What types of love they are -- and more importantly how these loves relate to each other -- in the concept of the Trinity.

God the Father. Think about the love of a father; if not a father, of a parent. This love is protective, tender, intense, hopeful, and eternal. It's the love that wants only the greatest for us, even if it means making sacrifices for the sake of us: "God so loved us that He sent into the world His only Son that WE may have life." We often talk about what a beautiful and incomparable sacrifice that is. Those who have children know that the kind of love a parent has for a child is a love unique unto itself, and no one can replicate it. The "you won't understand this love until you have your own children." Wanting the best for them, encouraging the best in them, but ultimately having to watch them grow up and be themselves.

God the Son. Think about children. When a baby cries, what is the parent's first action to try to comfort them? They hold them. Touch. Corporeal love. Love that is literally tangible, in our own human form, that we can understand. Jesus came to Earth as a human - as a tangible being! - that we might understand the love of God in a way that we can touch and hold. Mary Magdalene loved Jesus tangibly by pouring expensive perfume on His feet and wiping them with her hair. The woman in the Gospel of Matthew who said to herself "if I only *touch* his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus who rubbed mud on the blind man's eyes -

*touched* his eyes! – and made him able to see. Jesus, the tangible emulation of the love that God the father has for us.

And then there's the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit; fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in us the FIRE of your love. The holy spirit came upon the apostles as tongues of fire, and the apostles were able to speak the languages of all of the persons from all over the world, allowing people to come together to hear the message of the Lord.

People come together in groups around fire. Think of how many times we use candles in church: candles on the altar, the Easter candle, the candles we light in prayer for ourselves and others. Novena candles you can find in the Hispanic section of the grocery store. My favorite moment of the church year is during the Great Vigil of Easter when the Pascal candle enters the dark church and suddenly the entire sanctuary is bathed in a light brighter than one would expect. Of course my love for everyone holding their lit candle while the Exsultet is chanted isn't too bad either. All of these candle experiences are expressions of LOVE.

There is beauty and love in gathering around fires also; I heard a story of a Cursillo retreat, and the first night was silent (as is always the practice). The power went out, and the leader of the retreat entered the common room to find that the candidates had built a fire, all without speaking. How beautiful a representation of the Holy Spirit at work, both literally in the fire and spiritually in the silent communication of starting it, and the LOVE that was involved in doing so.

And how do these all relate to each other? LOVE. God is love. Therefore, let us emulate God in loving one another, especially after this Pentecost; after all, Pentecost charges us to spread the message of God - LOVE - into the whole world.

Amen.