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Retreat Reflection  
March 28, 2025

Today's Lenten invitation is to hear God's voice, turn from our idols and return to the one God who is love; to return to the realization that we are all brothers and sisters, kin with one another and all creation. When we forget this one God and our connection to everything that exists, evils like racism, sexism homophobia, greed, violence, lust for power and selfishness result. All of which we are experiencing today.

The Israelites forgot their connections to both God and others and Hosea, the prophet of God's unfailing, unconditional love, exhorts them to repent and embrace the God who is waiting to heal them and make them flourish. Throughout their history and ours, God keeps saying; I am ready for you to approach me. I am ready to be found if you seek me.

In the Gospel, we hear that the most important commandment: God is one and you shall love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself. This one love is at the core of Jesus' heart. The scribe affirms this understanding and adds that choosing to love is more important than any religious practice. Jesus finds a kindred spirit in the scribe.

Our love for each person must expand and engage the issues of today because everything is connected. We are being called to live the liberating mission of Jesus with an undivided heart, committing our whole selves to the work of love, to creating right relationships with everyone and everything that exists. Love thy neighbor, which also includes our common home, can only happen if we **are attentive to the presence of God within**, enabling us to love as we have been loved.

Since divine love is the source of everything that exists, this love is always present. God is constantly seeking to transform our lives by asking us to awaken to the divine presence around and within us. As John Philip Newell reminds us; God is not even a heartbeat away from us; God is the one who is always now, always here, whose love beckons us to be attentive. Our mission is to let divine love evolve through us and to be bearers of love by the quality of our presence to everyone and everything.

As we sang at Chapter, love that's freely given wants to freely be received. May we open our hearts today to receive this divine presence. We will find if we are attentive and awake that all ground is holy ground.