

Reflection Gail Addis

Jan. 8, 2025

1 John 4:11-18

Mark 6: 45-52 Wednesday after Epiphany

As we move toward the end of the Christmas season on January 12th with the Baptism of the Lord, we are being instructed by John on the primacy of love. The Holy One is in our midst. We pray to be open and recognize how the sacred is among us in the ordinariness of our lives and in one another.

John addresses each of us today when he says: Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. That means everyone and not just those we like and have known for a long time who agree with us. Loving is a call to be open to find Christ present in this person or situation right before us.

You remember the Charlie Brown cartoon: "I love mankind; it's people I can't stand." Or Garfield who says, "some days I just don't feel like peopling."

We all feel like that on occasion. You've had a difficult encounter with someone and you want to walk away, and instead you choose to stay in relationship and try to work things out. That's possible because the spirit of love, God's own Spirit **within you**, is **acting through you** enabling you to love as you have been loved.

On our own we would probably want to take the easy way out. We are able to love because God has first loved us and lives within us inviting us to change our minds and hearts and walk in the way of love. We are challenged to live the paradox of Jesus' logic: give your life away and you will find it.

Aren't we called to consciously **name and claim** how we have experienced God's love, and then, in our concrete relationships, try to share what we have received?

If we have experienced God's mercy then we are to be merciful. If we have experienced God's tenderness, we called to be tender with one another. If we have experienced God's acceptance as we are with all our limitations, then we are to accept others as they are.

We are to share, in practical ways, in our everyday situations with those right in front of us, the love we have experienced and received.

It's not easy, since we want to be in control, be right, look good, like we've got it together and certainly not feel vulnerable or insecure.

Loving is messy and takes work to create right relationships. If we hang in there and try to pass on the love we have received, then the love that lives within us will gradually transform us even more into the image and likeness of the One we love and follow.

Jesus has shown us what love looks like. In the feeding of the five thousand, he didn't ask who was worthy of his care or if they liked him or what he could get from them in return. They had a need, they were there in front of him, and he responded with compassion and generosity.

It's the same love he will give the disciples being tossed about on the sea. He sees their fear and need and calms the storm. **Jesus always responded to people at the point of their need, not his own. That's what love looks like!**

Perhaps the disciples were astounded, not only at being rescued, but at the boundless love and compassion of Jesus who loved others as he had been loved by his God.

May the way we love one another and the whole earth community and be just as astonishing.