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"Surplus Love"

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“Surplus Love”

“Surplus” has at least two commonly understood meanings. We can, for example, receive more food or other material supplies than we thought we would – an unlooked for benefit, or, we can possess some items that are no longer in demand – cheapened in value. The first meaning is the more positive of the two: we did not need, intend, or earn what we now have in abundance. If someone has a surplus of fruit from a tree in the back yard, he or she can store some and also give some away. The “market value” is not important; the profusion is.

God loves us more than we need and certainly more than we can earn or deserve. But the “surplus” might not be perceived. We might think that we are scarcely loved at all, even though we are surrounded by love. We do not so much need more love as we need to recognize and accept God’s love that is readily available: poured out, offered, and intended, to a degree that is beyond all our needs.

Not only does God love us more than we know, but some people have loved and do love us, though we have been and are at times oblivious to the quality and quantity of that love. Most of us have loved and do love others who do not know or appreciate our love for them. Children seldom know or appreciate the real love that underlies their parents’ or teachers’ day-to-day activities on their behalf. Love might not be lacking, but it is often unrecognized.

Most of us have expectations, and perhaps specific images, of how we want to be loved. Our limited concepts can prevent us from appreciating the words and deeds of others as the love that they intend. For instance, if I decide that my way of expressing love is the model for how I am to be loved, I can miss entirely the love that anyone with even a slightly different personality bears towards me. Love is universal, but it comes in a huge variety of expressions. Love is shown in deeds more than in words, and love is not limited to our feelings - either as givers or as receivers. We do not always accept love as it is intended; we are capable of misunderstanding, of misinterpreting, and of holding on to judgmental attitudes. We can miss entirely the “surplus” of love that is around us, both human and divine.

“Surplus love” cannot be stored up, as one might do with food, by putting some in a freezer. But “surplus love” can be brought into the present from the past, which we cannot do with material goods. Many of us have reflected on our lives and on our relationships with people,

and have discovered anew some of the love that was ours then, but neither recognized nor accepted at the time. We have learned through experience that love is far more than "getting what we want." As we have grown in loving generously, without counting the cost, and without expecting an equal return, we can look back and now see with clearer vision the many ways that family, teachers, friends, and co-workers treated us with real love. Time period by time period, person by person, place by place, we can bring to mind our past, to look for and very likely find some of the love that was directed toward us, and that we were not then able to receive.

Many of us make use of a prayer about "surplus love" on a daily basis. Supposing that God's love has been a constant presence in the day, we ask of Love to now reveal, inspire, or otherwise enable us, to notice and to receive some of the love that was intended for us at different moments during the day. We are often pleasantly surprised by the rather ordinary but frequent experiences of affirmation, inspiration, insight, and support that we are enabled to recognize as coming from God directly and through others.

"Surplus love" is priceless, and freely given.