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## Gift of Tears

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## Gift of Tears

When my father was in his eighties, I noticed how easily he would be moved to tears – not crying, or displaying emotion, just a glistening in his eyes and a bit of watering whenever we spoke about something that was especially meaningful. The subjects that seemed to touch him most were either about our relationship with God or with each other – definitely personal.

Men rarely think of tears as being anything other than a source of embarrassment, and many women as well, whether in the presence of family members or some other person or persons. Uncomfortable as we might be with them, tears are very often a gift, wrapped so plainly that we can easily dismiss them as somehow inappropriate.

My earliest experiences with tears as “gift” came during a spiritual retreat. I found my eyes sometimes damp during a particularly significant experience of prayer. Since there was no one else but God to see my eyes watering, I did not have much of a struggle with embarrassment, and I learned to appreciate the overflow of positive feelings elicited by the perceived closeness of God. Since that time, I have heard many people either describe similar experiences, or, while talking about God or another personally relevant subject, come to tears.

Why “gift” of tears? We do not cause tears when we pray or converse with someone about matters that pertain to our ideals and deepest desires. Tears are a witness to us that our experience is real, not imaginary; that our thoughts and feelings are linked together in a revelatory union. Faith and love are spiritual gifts; tears are a physical manifestation when we are in touch with the holy ground inside that cannot be manipulated, and where we are uniquely at home within ourselves.

Most of us do not normally experience a handshake, a touch, a hug, or a kiss from God. But many of us sense a closeness that is beyond words, deeply satisfying, memorably real. Sometimes these experiences are conscious experiences of our relationship with God, and at other times they occur in our communion with one another. We have many loves in our lives, and are loved by many different people in ways that often we do not recognize or appreciate. On those occasions when we become aware, with heart-knowledge, that we love someone or are loved, the truth might set off some tears. No harm! God is love.

When we are aware that someone else sees our tears, or we theirs, we might become embarrassed. Upon reflection, the embarrassment is not about doing something wrong, but from a belief that deeply personal thoughts and feelings should not be so readily apparent. If we recall some private experiences of tears, and of their kindly revelations to us about love in relationship with God or other persons, we will likely be more accepting of our need, or of others' for a handkerchief or tissue.

When tears reveal the presence and action of God in us, they surely are a gift.