

# Reflection on Valentine's Day

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The often dreary February days are interrupted by a special date – Valentine's Day! This day is enshrined in our culture as a bright spot, centering on love. It provides a welcome respite in the midst of a bleak winter landscape. Couples reflect on the love they enjoy by exchanging romantic gifts and arranging a special date! Many exchange Valentine Cards as a way to affirm special friendships. It is a day to celebrate the important people in our lives and to affirm the gift of love shared in those meaningful relationships.



Valentine's Day has a particular poignancy for me. My mother died on February 14th, 2012. I miss her! She demonstrated love by serving her family and her Church. Her life has helped me understand the power of serving others as a means of expressing care and love.

Valentine's Day is a time when we reflect on love. In that vein, I offer two vignettes on love that changed my life -

My Seattle Parish hosted a Friday Lunch for over 100 people each week – street people, the homeless, seniors on fixed incomes, etc. These folks became a family through the years. After a wonderful home-style meal was prepared each week, the team would pray for our “guests” before they were welcomed into the dining area. One day, the godly head of this ministry prayed, “Lord, there are some of the folks we’ll be serving today that I don’t like...” Instantly, my bowed head snapped up and my eyes opened in shock! What she said next changed my life! “Lord,” she humbly asked, “would You love them through me?” That simple, yet profound prayer taught me a key to loving in difficult situations. Jesus wants to love others **THROUGH** us. We cannot do this on our own. Yielded vessels allow God’s love to manifest through us!



The second life lesson on love came to me through God’s Word. 1 John 4:19 states, “We love because He first loved us.” Interestingly, there is no object in this sentence. Some translators write, “We love others...” or “We love Him (God)...” because He first loved us. However, I believe the best rendering of this passage from the original Greek text is “We have the capacity to love because He first loved us!”

When we experience the love of God in a direct and personal way, it transforms our lives! **AND** it frees us to love God, ourselves, and others!

St. Catherine of Sienna, the gifted 14th C. spiritual guide and mentor was approached by a novitiate that was overwhelmed by the love of God. This woman had lived a very ungodly, self-serving lifestyle but Jesus in His mercy met her and transformed her life through His grace and forgiveness. She asked Catherine, “How can I ever express appropriate gratitude to my Saviour Jesus for what He’s done for me?” Catherine’s response was, “Love and serve those who do not deserve your love just as you do not deserve God’s love.”

As Jesus transformed the lives of the leaders in the Early Church and ordinary folk through the centuries, He is the same today. We are invited to turn to Him day by day and discover the profound, life-changing love He has for us **PERSONALLY!** This will ground us in His grace and mercy and give us the capacity to love those around us passionately, even those difficult to love! Try it!!