

## God's Love and Our Love

By Bishop George Khodr

This world is a bunch of disappointments if you expect the love you give to be given back in return with “loves” (from others). God did not command in His Book that you seek to be loved by others. Your job is to love like His Son loved; till death. You are a sower who sows in hope, but the Lord does not say that you are sowing for yourself. He is the Harvest of the good that you give others. No one might pay your good work back, and you should not expect that. You are comforted with what you give and not with what you expect since your obedience (to God) might be returned with rejection (from others).

You give freely and you hope that the one given will return his thanks to God. You should not give others with the expectancy that they will give you back. You should give others for the sole reason that they would improve their relationship with God. You give others for their own salvation and that in turn increases your lot in salvation. As you give, you should hope for salvation for yourself and for the others you give to. And this comes to you from the gratuitousness of the Divine Gift that has descended on you and inspired you to love.

You know from what has been mentioned that you are in need of God alone since others can give you only from what they have; and what they have might only be the very little. When Jesus speaks of reciprocity in love, He means that your reward is in Heaven in the sense that it is He who takes what you think you have given to a human and as such the Lord sees Himself as the One who has taken.

If you are not always aware that what you need is God alone, you will drown in disappointment. The giving of those who give you is real only when they feel that when they give you, they are giving the Lord. You are not rich in yourself. You are rich in God and so you distribute His grace on others. He who gives you and does not reckon that in that he is giving God, or he does not consider that the money he gives you of is from God, he then enslaves you. No one has a thing to squander. One is entrusted with what God has given him. The human being seeks the bounty of the Lord, and when he obtains some of that, he shares it with other people. And he who offers others gifts should make them feel that he is God's steward in distributing His gifts and when people thank him for what he gives, he has to bring them to offer thanks to God. What you spend of money or mind or love is only a bridge between God and those whom He visits. The only feeling we have the right to have is to bring to the Lord those on whom we pour our love; He is to be thanked for what we grant people and that is due to His love for them and also for us.

If we do not remain grounded in our need for God, we cannot receive anything from Him. That is why our relationship with others is one version of our relationship with God. Yet our relationship with God can be tested in its authenticity and trueness only through our relationship with other people. They are God's face (presence) to us. If we accept them we would have accepted Him and if we reject them we would have rejected Him. That is why people who attend Church-services are not necessarily people of God. Of course every love, be it divine or human, requires to be expressed; and our love for God is expressed through our love for people. We encounter Him in people. They are the true altar of our worship for Him. That altar, as John Chrysostom says, is more significant than the altar on which we present the offerings (sacrifice). Love is *the* offering.

The love of people for each other may reflect God's love for Man. If you ascend on the path of your love for the Lord, you would be able to love people with a serenity that descends on you from above with a freedom from any sense of gain from the others. If your love for them becomes a reflection of God's love for His creatures, your love then would be unadulterated and free from any sense of utility or self-pleasure.

The love of people for one another, when it is from God, may be fused with emotions. It is not bad if you purify yourself. And the love you grant to others without expecting anything in return, is often inflamed with what is human; that is not wrong. When we love in a Godly way, our Godly love mixes with what is human; and that is not harmful. Godly love in us is not due to mere human motivation. The meeting of Divinity and humanity in us is one of the mysteries of this existence. We have to make it in the image of the meeting between the Divinity and humanity in Christ. The fusion between us and what is of the Deity in us, remains a mystery that we accept and receive but do not explain. I am certain that I can use the word "fusion" which denotes a meeting of what is human with what is human. That is how the Deity that is "humanized" in us meets with our humanity in its ascension to the Divine that dwells in us.

That is the Saints' experience which, though I see it from far, I try to interpret to myself and the reader in human language. I wish the Lord would grant all of us to receive that experience in our lives as much as the Lord's Grace wishes for us. The Lord gives a taste of that to those who truly try.

What came above is sufficient for us to understand the experience of the Saints. The Saints use the language of the mind only after they have gained the Vision (of God). The mind cannot fully understand and interpret the life of the Saints except in the areas that are in its scope.

In those who obtain the above Vision, sin does not necessarily obscure it unless they give themselves to it; then they return to being merely dust, and dust has no vision of anything. And such Vision (the above mentioned) is poured on

those who seek and strive on-goingly so that no trace of anything except God remains in their soul.

Such seeking as the above does not find its strength in alienation from others. You do not “see” God unless you “see” the brethren and come with them to the embrace of Christ so they can lean their head on His chest and listen to His heartbeat and listen to words that cannot be uttered. And when people are in His embrace, they bring their brethren with them to Him so that the Kingdom sets in, and thus we all rejoice in Him together. This is so because the Kingdom is not a meadow, it is the King who has come to give us the good news that God is love and we are called to recognize His love for us and appropriate it; as such others recognize the Lord when He comes towards them and gives them to taste His love; for in this, His bounty and love towards us are shown.