

## **“Let all that you do, be done in love” (1 Cor. 16:14)**

**(Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan)**

### **What is love?**

Let us see what love is and how to achieve it in our lives. Real love is the concern for the welfare of others even at the cost of our own welfare. It is the shifting from self-centeredness to the centeredness on others.

### **The qualities of real love**

Real love is whole-hearted sacrificial and unconditional. Only in God do we find this kind of love. God the heavenly Father gave His only-begotten Son to save mankind from sin. This is whole-hearted love. The whole life of our Lord was whole-hearted love. He said that the son of man came not to be served but to serve” (St. Mk. 10:45). Our Lord gave more than what was asked or desired. When the children were brought to our Lord, for blessing, He took them in His arms one by one and blessed them showing His personal love. When the criminal on the cross prayed to remember him when our Lord would come in glory, He promised that he would be with Him that day itself in paradise. Peter was not only forgiven, but also he was honored by giving the charge to tend the lambs and sheep.

Our Lord’s whole life was sacrificial also. He laid down His life as a sacrifice for the salvation of mankind.

Our Lord’s life was also full of unconditional love. He healed the paralytic who was a sinner, unconditionally. On a later occasion our Lord asked him not to sin again (St. Jn. 5:14). Our Lord forgave the woman who was caught in her sin (St. Jn. 8:11) without any condition. The criminal on the cross was forgiven and paradise was promised without any condition. Peter was given the charge to tend the lambs and sheep unconditionally though he had denied our Lord thrice. In the parable of the prodigal son, we find the father accepting the son unconditionally when he came back wasting all the money.

Our Lord wants us to love one another as He has loved us. “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you” (St. Jn. 15:12). This love means whole hearted sacrificial and unconditional love.

### **The Importance of love**

The primary importance of love makes love obligatory to do everything in love. That is the reason why St. Paul asks us to do everything in love. We all crave for and work for wealth, health, wisdom and happiness. But many of us don't give proper importance to love which renders value to wealth, health, wisdom and happiness. They are necessary. But they are not enough without love. They are not enough to give us perfect joy and progress. Wealth is necessary and it enables us to buy all that are needed for our biological existence. Health is needed to work. Wisdom is necessary to understand the right way to live. Happiness is what makes life enjoyable. In the presence of love, wealth, health, wisdom and happiness will be effective. In the absence of love, these will vanish in the long run. Hence we have to be filled with love and we must do everything prompted by love and leading to love.

The primary importance of love can be explained by comparing it with the importance of digit 1 in a number. It is digit 1 that gives value to all the zeros following it. In its absence, all the zeros will have no value at all.

If love is present, all wealth, health, wisdom and happiness will have value. On the other hand, if love is absent, all these will lose their value. What does it profit if a person gains the whole world but does not have love?

### **Our duty to love God to the maximum**

All that we have are the blessings of God:

“Since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.” (Acts 17:25)

It is in God that we are able to do anything:

“For in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28)

Apart from God we cannot do anything:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (St. Jn. 15:5)

Hence we must be thankful to God for everything:

“What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me?” (Ps. 116:12) the psalmist says.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (St. Mk. 12:30) says our Lord.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31) says St. Paul.

### **Our duty to love all human beings without exception**

We are dependent on human beings for numerous things. Hence we should love them.

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (St. Mk. 12:31) says the Lord.

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (St. Matt. 5:44-45)

### **How to grow in love?**

On the last day of judgment, our Lord will say “Truly I say to you, whatever you did to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (St. Math. 25:40) So we have to remind ourselves that we are loving God himself whenever we love human beings.

The resurrected Lord asked thrice whether Peter loved the Lord and then asked him thrice to tend the sheep. This means that we have to express our love to the Lord through loving others (St. Jn. 21:15-17)

Another way to grow in love human beings is to visualize them as fellow-beings exactly like ourselves in every way. Then we can love them as we love ourselves.

It is also to be noted that we cannot concentrate on others and love them when we are in unbearable suffering. We should know that God has the power to bring good out of sufferings. Then we will be enabled to overcome sufferings and grow in love.

It is mere natural justice that we should be thankful to God for all His blessings and love all human beings as His children. In fact we owe to God for all that we have and all that we are.

At the same time, there are lots of things for which we have to be thankful to God. The psalmist says “What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me?” (Ps. 116:12). This thankfulness should produce whole-hearted love for God and His children.

All that hurts us and others can be overcome by love. Crimes, rivalry, competition, jealousy, pride, hatred, divorce, suicide etc. can be overcome by love. Love removes all that hinder progress. Selfishness, self-centeredness and sloth hinder our progress. They also can be overcome by love.

#### **How can we express real love?**

We can express our love mainly through four ways

- 1) By helping the needy even when we are in unbearable suffering. Our Lord was consoling His mother when He was suffering unbearable pain on the cross.
- 2) By forgiving those who hurt us in the worst way. Our Lord forgave those who were crucifying Him, praying for them (St. Jn. 23:34).
- 3) By respecting those in the lowest condition as if they are better than ourselves (Phil 2:3). Our Lord washed the feet of His disciples like a slave (St. Jn. 13:12) as if they were better than Himself.
- 4) By obeying the elders doing the things we don't like. Our Lord obeyed the heavenly Father unto death, a death on the cross (Phil 2:8).

Just imagine what an amount of love and respect people will have towards us when we show real love. Also imagine the joy we will have if we have a loving heart and practice love.

### **The final result of love**

The final result of love will be heaven. On the day of the final judgment, our Lord will say as follows to those in love. "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (St. Matt. 25:35-36) This shows that when we love human beings we are loving God Himself.

We must love all human beings without exception and do everything in love. Let us thus become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect and enjoy heavenly bliss.

Let us also help all others to grow in love. Let our motto be, to win the love of others, by loving them in all circumstances.