

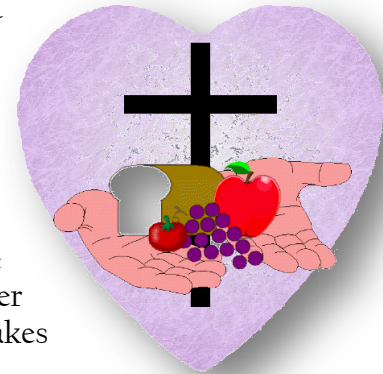
LOVE

I would like to start by pointing out that the word "Love" is misused these days, it is used for romantic adventures, physical desires, and lust, all of which are completely opposite to the meaning of true love because they project selfishness. What is love then?

"Love" is to be freed from selfishness and to moving towards sacrifice and laying one's self for others, with a heart filled with sweet sentiments towards one another.

God gives us the greatest example of love: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 16:3)

This is Christian love, which is the crown of all virtues. Christian love is the bond of perfection, which bonds the whole Church together and makes her one body. Additionally, True love does not wait for the needy to ask, but makes sacrifice and gives generously to everyone in need of help.

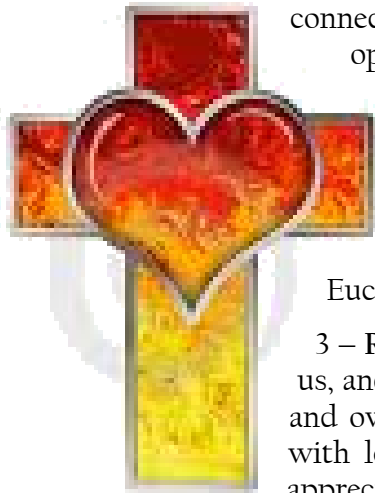


Whom should we love?

First: God, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind...*" (Luke 10:27)

Second: Neighbors "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Romans 9:13). A neighbor is any person God puts in my way, whether I know or not, anyone who comes into my life or I become close to them. .

How does love grow in one's heart?



1 – Through prayer, for prayer opens the fountains of divine love. As much as we connect with heaven and enjoy the bosom of the loving God, as much as the heart opens more and more and become filled with the divine love for everyone, without waiting for return. When we feel that love has become weak within us, we go back to prayer, and ask God enthusiastically to charge our hearts with love once more.

2 – Partaking of the sacraments, by attending liturgies with a meditative and devout heart and an understanding mind. When we partake of the Eucharist, we take the same power of love and sacrifice that Christ has.

3 – Reading the scriptures, so we know the mysteries of God, how much He loves us, and how He saved us from death. Thus, we discover that we are indebted to Him and owe Him our lives and everything we own. Therefore, the heart becomes filled with love toward God as an attempt to repay the great debt and to express our appreciation for his outstanding love toward us.

4 – Practicing love. Let's ask God to give us the opportunity to offer, even simple acts of love toward everyone, and ask Him to grow these acts over time. These acts of love, though they are insignificant in our eyes, they are greatly appreciated by God, and they have an impact on the hearts of others, such as a word of gratitude, a cup of cold water, visiting a patient, asking about those in trouble, aiding a friend, helping the needy, or words of encouragement, etc.

May the Lord fill our hearts with His love.

Amen.

Fr. Yohanna Nassef

fryohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL

<http://www.stmarychicago.com>