

God is the God of Relationships

Nearly ten years ago, my husband and I had a beautiful baby boy. He was with us, in the womb, for forty weeks when the Lord called him home just before his birth. At our son's funeral there were hundreds of people. Family, friends, and colleagues all came out to love and support us through what is one of the biggest trials a person can bare. During the Mass, it was I who gave what usually is understood to be a eulogy. But how do you eulogize an infant that never was able to gasp a breath of air? How do you rejoice in a life that wasn't fully lived? It was a little confusing for some, but not for us who are believers. Instead of focusing on his little life, I was lead to tell them that I believed that God asked our son to go home for a reason. I am still not quite sure what that reason was, though I have an idea. What I am sure of is that our son would have been the type of man that my husband is; loving, generous, kind, and funny. He would be completely devoted to his family and would do almost anything for them. Since our son was not able to live in the physical, the way that we do here on earth, I asked all present to do something special. I asked that they not buy flowers, plant trees, or make donations in our son's name. Instead I asked that for one day they love completely as he would have done. For one day in their lives, just love. For example, if there was someone they had not spoken to because they were upset with them, I asked them to go home and make a phone call. They needed to reach out, be the better person, and forgive others. If they couldn't do it for themselves, then do it for my son. If there were things they never let go of and they were burdened by them, I asked them to surrender them to God. Once again, if they couldn't do it for themselves, then do it for my son. If they were challenged to take a negative attitude during a tense situation, to be mean and nasty for what ever reason, I challenged them to love instead. Do it, I asked, for my son.

Many people went home to call family members and mend broken relationships. Others wrote about the message to friends in distant places. Some remembered my words when they encountered a moment of stress and chose to be patient, kind and loving for our son. There were even people who remembered to persevere when challenged with a trial and they did it not once but over and over again for our son. Stories came back to us all over the nation of how the words the Lord shared through me encouraged people to discern and love, rather than be hurtful, prideful, and cruel. Sometime later I shared this with family members that were unable to be present for the funeral. As I told them what I asked people to do, they responded with amazement. First, that I should dare ask such a thing. Second, that I should believe that such at thing was possible. "Oh, that would be too hard." they said. "Why would you ask that?" They stated that it would be impossible for anyone to accomplish what I had asked them for. Love for a day? No way. I was shocked. Most of these people were baptized believers, but they didn't get it. I knew that anyone can accomplish any feat if they trusted God to get them through it. Even if they just believed a little bit, the Lord would honor their faith and grant them enough grace to get through their task. Those who could not believe were unable to do so because they took all the faith that they had to do the task, misplaced it and put it into believing that it was not possible at all.

I began to wonder if I had listened properly. I doubted this call to love that I had made. I prayed and the Lord explained it to me this way. God tells two men, living in the same place, to get in their car and go to point A. Point A is only ten miles away. The first man believes he can do the job; he gets in his car and drives out of obedience to point A. The Lord gives him a blessing. The second man refuses to believe that it is possible that he can drive to point A. Instead, he gets in his car and drives to point B. Do you know that point B is just ten miles away from where he lived too? It took the same time, the same distance, the same amount of faith, the same amount of energy and the same amount of "gas" to travel from where they lived to their individual destinations. One man used his faith, believed he could be obedient to God, and accomplished his goal. The other man used his faith not to believe that he could be obedient to

God and could not accomplish his goal. Same amount of faith used in two ways; one negative, one positive.

I began to wonder if there was difference between those who attended the funeral and the family I shared with. Some at the funeral were believers, while others were not. Maybe if those family members had a personal relationship with God, things might be different. Or maybe if they just believed God has a vested interest in their daily lives things might be different. I am certain and we know God is the artificer, the beginning of all things. He even calls himself the Alpha and the Omega (Rev.1:8, 21:6, 22:13). He begins our faith relationship with Him by bestowing upon us a kernel of faith to believe. God also gives us the faith to believe that we can love others too. If this is true should that not apply to all our relationships too? How can you love completely with out knowing God, who is all love? And how can you love others if you don't know how God loves you?

To believe that God can love in and through you takes a denial of self. To allow God to love through you completely every day takes a true, complete death of self. St. Louis de Montfort put it this way in his book *True Devotion to Mary* (Ch.2, 81). He said, "*If we do not die to ourselves, and if our holiest devotions do not incline us to this necessary and useful death, we shall bring forth no fruit worth anything, and our devotions will be useless. All our good works will be stained by self-love and our own will; and this will cause God to hold in abomination the greatest sacrifices we can make, and the best actions we can do; so that at our death we shall find our hands empty of virtues and of merits, and we shall not have one spark of pure love, which is only communicated to souls dead to themselves, souls whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God.*"(Col.3:3) If we have not been emptied out and filled with God, then our relationships are equally tainted with self. From spouses, to our parenting and even driving down the street our relationships with other drivers is formed and filled by God's love. We cannot truly love while still in the self. Even more, we can't know love until we realize that love is not an emotion; love is a person. It is not a verb, it is a noun. God is love. (I John 4:16)

If we want to believe that we can love in our relationships completely, then our first primary relationship is our relationship with God. It is the relationship before all others. In fact, we must recognize God before all others. It starts with a simple belief that there is a creator God. This is confirmed in Hebrews 11:6. If you listen to this week's pod cast, you will find this is confirmed for you. From Adam to Abraham, God blessed all those who believed in him. Even today, he does the same. This is because God wanted a family. He wanted to be in full communion with man. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church # 51 it is stated like this. "*It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature.*"

If you look at every covenant, every promise God ever made, the basis of each and every one started with the belief that there was a Creator God. God even goes one step further for us. When man did not listen to his prophets, he sent his own Son to tell us of His great love for us. If you think about it, Jesus is a personal invitation to a divine relationship with God the Father in and through the Holy Spirit. Going back to I John 4:15-19 we see that it says: "*If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love toward ourselves. God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him. Love will come to perfection in us when we can face the day of Judgment without fear; because even in this world we have become as he is. In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because fear is to expect punishment and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love. We are to love then, because he loved us first.*"