

# Deepening Circle

Lent, 2025

God's Radical LOVE . . .

*O Love* Elaine Hagenberg

O love, O love, O love  
that will not let me go;

O love, I rest my weary soul in Thee.  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thy ocean depths its flow  
may richer, fuller be.

O joy that seeks me through the pain,  
I cannot close my heart to thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain...  
that morn shall tearless be.  
That morn shall tearless be.

O love, O love, O love  
that will not let me go;  
O love, I rest my weary soul in Thee.  
I give Thee back the life I owe;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
And in Thy ocean depths its flow  
shall richer, fuller be.  
That morn shall tearless be.

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## Transformative Practices:

Pray daily for the grace to  
deeply 'know' God's irrational  
love for you--in your  
WHOLENESS.

Especially in times when you  
sense your own imperfection, let  
LOVE permeate that place. Go  
there with Jesus' active love.

For examen, notice the large and  
small signs of LOVE that happen  
in your daily life.

Practice loving as God does,  
loving others (and yourself) in  
imperfection!

## JESUS' ASTOUNDING NEW INSIGHT

In Mark's gospel, Jesus goes down into the opaque baptismal waters and comes up out of them with an astounding new insight. For him it feels as if the birth canal of the heavens has been torn open, and God's own Spirit is born into his very person, so that he, Jesus, becomes the Spirit's new dwelling place.

At this moment, Jesus becomes conscious that his connection to the Holy One is so deep, so personal, so intimate that it must be described as that of father to son. And not just son, but beloved son, in whom the Father is extremely pleased, totally delighted. The roots of the Hebrew word for "beloved" mean "to dote upon," "to pant after." So God's love is permeated with irrational excess! And there are no conditions attached to it. This love is not based on what human persons do, but simply because we are. It is freely given, without any reservation whatsoever.

Mark continues his account with the statement that the Spirit which had just entered Jesus "immediately drove him out into the wilderness" (Mk. 1:12). The Spirit knows that Jesus must have the space and time to ponder the meaning and implications of his mysterious experience. Mark's description of what happened in the wilderness is simple and direct: "And he was ... tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him" (Mk. 1:13).

Is the implication here that in the silence of the wilderness, Jesus realizes even more fully than before that the Father's love for and delight in him embraces all that is wild, dark, and primitive in him ("the wild beasts"), as well as all that is tame, light, and civilized (the ministering "angels")? Alone with his own core/Self in this remote place, Jesus becomes even more deeply convinced that becoming conscious of God's all-inclusive and unconditional love is the foundational "metanoia".

Jesus realized that the more radical "metanoia" was for each person to live in the consciousness of the Holy One's presence and all-inclusive love. The "metanoia" which Jesus experienced and about which he taught entails a profound realization that **one's wholeness (darkness & light) is completely acceptable to the Holy One**, that one is a cherished offspring of the ultimate, unfathomable, mysterious Beloved.

Manuel Costa, *A Path to Life's Fullness* (adapted)

We've failed to communicate **the unique nature of divine love**. Divine love is infinite, but the notion of infinity cannot be conceived by the human mind. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux shares, "There is a science about which [God] knows nothing—addition!" What she was trying to say was that once we dive into infinity, which is God, any notion of adding, subtracting, meriting, losing, being worthy, is all a waste of time. God's love is infinite, a concept the human mind cannot form.

The divine notion of perfection isn't the exclusion of imperfection, but the inclusion of imperfection. That's divine love. Human love thinks we have to exclude imperfection to love ourselves or another person. But we're old enough to know there's no perfect people around. They don't exist. We've all learned to keep hidden our little secret or shadow self. But divine love includes imperfection, which is what makes it divine love.

Richard Rohr, "God's Love Includes Imperfection"