

May 10, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I write this, I have just returned from Saturday evening Mass, and tomorrow is Mother's Day. As if it had been planned, the gospel was about love.

Jesus tells us in John 15:9-17:

*"As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love."*

*"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete."*

*"This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."*

Our Holy Father St. Francis speaks about the love of the Lord in terms of a spouse, a sibling, a mother...

*"We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in Heaven (Mt 12:50); mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to Him through a holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example." (cf. Mt 5:16). (The Letter to the Faithful)*

The ancient Greeks had four words for the different kinds of Love:

**Agápe** is the kind of love or charity that we show to our brothers and sisters. It is also the love of God for us and the love that we give to God. **Eros** is the passionate or intimate love that we find in marriage. **Philia** is the affectionate regard or friendship that we find between equals. Aristotle explained it as loyalty to friends, family and community. It requires virtue, equality and familiarity. **Storge** is love and affection, especially between parents and children. It is used as a description of love within a family where sometimes we put up with those who might annoy us because we love them.\*

Most of us have experienced at least three of these types of love, and perhaps all four, in our lives. But, where do we stand in our love for one another and for the Order? How well do we love our families and our fraternities?

As Secular Franciscans, we are asked to love our brothers and sisters with a special kind of love that embraces everyone, whether or not we "get along" with them. We are asked as Catholics and as Franciscans to reach out, not just to those whom we like, but to everyone. We are challenged to reach beyond the confines of the fraternity to serve those who are most in need. We must also reach out within our fraternities and families to heal wounds and to seek and offer forgiveness.

In the case of those of us who are servant leaders, we carry out a "fraternal service [by holding ourselves] available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity." We are to help our brothers and sisters realize their vocation and make each fraternity a true community." (*quote and paraphrase of Article 31, General Constitutions*)

In short, we serve out of love--the kind of love that would be defined as **Agápe, Philia** and even **Storge**. We give of ourselves willingly. Many of our servant leaders give hours and hours of their time to the Order for the well-being of the brothers and sisters. We don't ask anything in return, and

when it is time to step away from our leadership positions, we do so with humility and love and the promise to help those who take up the task after us.

We hope that those of you who are serving your fraternities serve with the love asked of us by Jesus and St. Francis. If your fraternity is coming to the time of elections, please pray and discern if God is calling you to servant leadership. Without your help, our fraternities cannot go on. Love one another enough to give up a part of your lives for your brothers and sisters!

Please keep your local councils and your Region Council in your prayers.

May God bless you always,  
Diane

Diane F. Menditto, OFS  
Minister, Our Lady of the Angels Region

\*See: [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_words\\_for\\_love](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_words_for_love)