



# Ethically Speaking...

Newsletter of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute  
at Assumption University

Spring 2020

## Ethically Speaking...

provides news and information  
from the Canadian Catholic  
Bioethics Institute at  
Assumption University.



## Contact Us:

We welcome comments and  
feedback, please contact us  
at:

The Canadian Catholic  
Bioethics Institute  
Assumption University  
400 Huron Church Road,  
2nd Floor  
Windsor, ON N9B 3P4

Phone:  
519.973.7033 Ext. "0"

Email:  
CCBI-A@assumptionu.ca

## The Ethics of Love: Agape in Motion

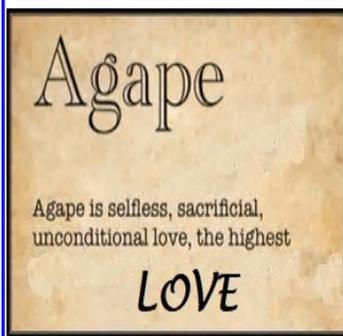
Maria Giannotti BEd, MA, MSc

Recently Christians around the world celebrated Easter in a different way. The current pandemic changed how we normally participate in the season. The disruption, however disconcerting, may be a gift in disguise. Amidst the chaos of Covid-19, we are being shown time and again the meaning of Agape- sacrificial love- and the true meaning of Easter.

Love appears to be a universal concept and the quest for love is inherent in all humans. (Stickley, & Freshwater, 2002) Just as lack of food, water, and rest have detrimental effects on us, so too does the lack of love. It is fundamental to our growth and development throughout our lives. (Heller, 2016).

Love however is not a skill to be taught, but rather something to be expressed or experienced (Emakpor & Nyback 2010). These experiences of love and affection shape who we are and contribute not only to our human development, but to our very transformation. This transformative nature of love can uncover new aspects of human existence and disclose unexpected possibilities (Stickley, & Freshwater, 2002 as cited in Emakpor & Nyback 2010).

In the article *Love; A Relevant Concept in Nursing and Caring Science* Agape is described as the power that drives us away from self-absorption and towards a genuine desire to promote not only our good but the good of others as well (Pembroke, 2006 as cited in Emakpor & Nyback 2010). Furthermore, it involves the profound recognition of the worth and goodness in all people (Brady 2003).



Quite simply it is a self-sacrificing love for humanity. It also implies identifying with one's neighbours and fulfilling their needs (Williams 1968, Fitzgerald, 1998 as cited in Emakpor & Nyback 2010).

In these last few months, we have seen Agape in motion and the transformative nature of love. The current pandemic has clearly demonstrated our human capacity for love, particularly by those who provide us essential services or engage in charitable acts of kindness – our health care providers, our farmers, truckers, grocery store clerks, migrant workers, civil servants—everyone and anyone who in one way or another allow us to continue to have the necessities of life, so that we may stay home and be safe. This type of unconditional and self-sacrificing love makes it possible to carry out the loving care we see daily in our community during this pandemic.

This love has inspired and united us, in ways that we would have never expected. Stories of health care workers risking their own lives, risking their families' well-being to serve you and me; volunteers and civil servants who each day go to work so that you and I can be safe; those who sit with our dying loved ones and providing comfort when cure is no longer possible; scientists and politicians working continuously to bring an end to this pandemic.

So many stories to tell; some we know of and others we will never know. But all of them have a common thread, these men and women, are all motivated by a desire to care

for others, to give unconditional love. In the midst of what seems like a hopeless situation, we find hope, compassion, and love of neighbour.

We are living in the midst of culture shift and a changing world view. Hopefully out of the ashes of this pandemic we will come to see what is truly important. In the words of Tina Turner, what's love got to do with it?

*Everything.*



## References

- Brady, B.V. (2003). *Christian Love: How Christians through the Ages Have Understood Love*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, p.268.
- Emakpor, C. & Nyback, H. (2010). *Love; A Relevant Concept in Nursing and Caring Science* Vaasa: Novia University of Applied Sciences, 2010.
- Fitzgerald, L. (1998). Is it possible for caring to be an expression of human agape in the 21st century? *International Journal for Human Caring* (3), 32–39.
- Heller, S. (2016). *Maternal Deprivation: The Effects of the Fundamental Absence of Love*  
<https://pro.psychcentral.com/maternal-deprivation-the-effects-of-the-fundamental-absence-of-love/>
- Pembroke, N. (2006). Marcelian charm in nursing practice: the unity of agape and eros as the foundation of an ethic of care. *Nursing Philosophy*, 7 (1), 266–274.
- Stickley, T. & Freshwater, D. (2002). The art of loving and the therapeutic relationship. *Nursing Inquiry*, 9 (4), 250–256.

# Resurrection 2020

Rev. Leo Walsh, CSB, STL, STD

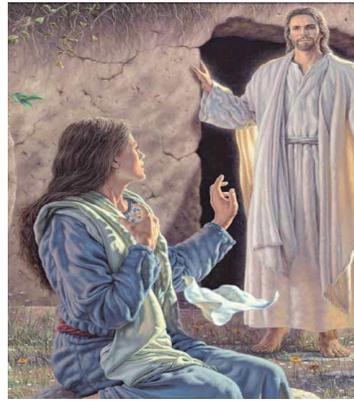
---

The Risen Lord as a tease. How else can you interpret his first words to Mary Magdalene? "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" But teasing with a purpose – to let us see that Mary had no preset ideas. She wasn't at all expecting a risen Lord. And after she answers, he says, "Mary."

Can you begin to imagine what that greeting meant to her? Often the celebrant says Mary's response deadpan. But I think that it would be a drawn-out question. "Ra-bb-uni-?" and then a shouted, "Rabbuni!!!"

What is her relationship with the Lord prior to his death? Maybe the best popular attempt to deal with this is in "Jesus Christ, Superstar", where Mary sings, "I don't know how to love him." I don't mean that Lloyd Webber got it right, but at least there is an attempt to deal with a unique relationship.

From the Gospels, we know that she loved him deeply. She wouldn't have known him as Son of God, but as someone special, someone unique, in the eyes of God. And when she comes to the tomb, as we've said, she has no expectation whatsoever that he may be risen, be alive, after she saw him die.



Again, can you imagine what his being alive meant to her? Mary's love is woman love, and she flings her arms around him and holds him fast.

The Lord, the very Son of God, is sinless, and in his very sinlessness He saved us. But he is a man and as a man loves as a man, just as Mary loves as woman.

When we read the Gospels and Epistles we constantly come to the overarching lesson – the need to love. But love is presented as generic, as men and women loving in the same way. But that's not true. Men and women love differently. Actions demanded by love may be the same or similar, but the reality of love is different for both sexes, and of equal value.

What this all means for men and women who are attracted to those of the same gender we'll leave aside for further consideration.

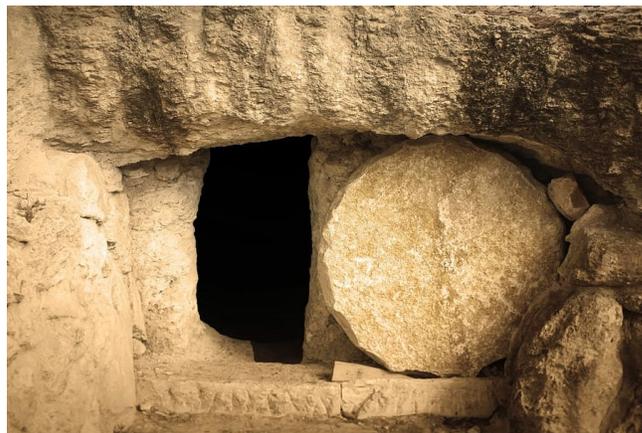
I recently read a post by a young Catholic, female, and it beautifully expresses her love of Jesus. But that's what it is precisely, the love cry of a young female for a male person, God and man. As a male, I feel and express love of the Saviour in quite different terms, male to male, just as Mary's love of Jesus is very different from Peter's.

There's more to this, though. Not only is my love for Jesus different than that of a woman; it's different from that of any other man's, even though we share masculinity.

We have, among many, many devotions to the Lord, other people's written experience of their love of Jesus. When they are published, it is with the expectation that people will relate to them. If we don't, maybe some of us feel guilty. We shouldn't – the devotions are just not us.

It is sad that some mired-in-the-past Catholic groups try to impose liturgical celebrations and ways of praying on others, excoriating them if their practice is different. Quite apart from this being used as a controlling tool, a "one size fits all" law is deeply flawed as applied to free human beings. Strict "universalism" is mental and emotional abuse, whether the perpetrators are aware of this or not.

So, it's you and me Lord, not in any exclusive sense (you relate to everyone, one on one), but in the sense that there is in our particular relationship elements both exclusively male and totally yours and mine which follow their own law.



Alleluia!



### Ethically Speaking

provides news, articles and information from the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute at Assumption University in Windsor, Ontario. We welcome comments and feedback. Should you have suggestions for future articles or inserts, please contact us at : [CCBI-A@assumptionu.ca](mailto:CCBI-A@assumptionu.ca)

#### CCBI-A Staff:

**Rev. Leo Walsh**, CSB, STL, STD

**Maria Giannotti**, BEd, MA, MS Bioethics

Executive Director VP Academics

Editor & Ethics Consultant