



Reflection for October 13

All-Surrounding Love

By Sue D'Alessio



When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:34-40)

I have a vivid memory of an experience I had before I was two which has deeply influenced my understanding of God and my faith. In my mind's eye, I can see the blocks I was playing with as I sat in a corner of the main area in the trailer where we were living (we moved from there when I was around 21 months old). I'm not sure what may have instigated this experience, but I remember sitting on my knees in the dusk and suddenly I had a strong

sense of being surrounded by life greater than me, by an energy and expansive sense of the universe way beyond my tiny imagination. Of course, I didn't have words to explain it then. I just knew that I was not alone and that there was more to my world and my life than me and my family. I felt very small, comforted, and cocooned in that energy. I knew to the core of my soul, that I am not alone and that I am interconnected with each and every person, and with everything in the universe. I knew that we are not alone. Ever since, my sense of the world and my place in it has been sustained and inspired by that experience.

I believe that this life-giving, life-creating, life-sustaining Spirit is eternally and intimately present for each of us. You may not have had an experience like I had, yet that Spirit (experienced or not) surrounds us and holds us together in community. This all-surrounding love, I believe, is at the core of the answer Jesus gave to the questioning lawyer in the scripture above. Jesus knew that we are held in God's infinite love. He knew and taught that questions intended to divide or to test us, people gathering to hurt and judge others, anything that creates separation or that inhibits this great love, is not God's way. Jesus demonstrated and lived the assurance of God's infinite love for the people and world that God created. In response, we are called to live in love with God, with ourselves, and with each other. This three-fold love is a dynamic balance of how we are created to live – heart, soul, and mind, embodied in the ways we serve and care and comfort and hold one another, ourselves and our world, and as our way of loving God.

Creator God, Spirit of life and love, Guide our hearts, minds and souls to stay in love with you and to live our your love each day in the ways we care for and serve one another with your love. May we continue to listen to the hurts and hopes of our neighbors and to continually work for justice and

peace in our world. As we prepare to gather as the people of the Wisconsin Conference during our virtual Annual Conference Session, help us to listen and speak, and worship and make decisions with your love guiding us. Thank you for the gift of your sustaining, loving Spirit and for the opportunities we have to witness to your love in all the ways we live and love you, ourselves and our neighbors. We pray these prayers of our deepest hearts and souls in the name of the One who taught us how to live, Jesus our Christ. Amen.

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May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God’s grace and blessings, God’s challenge and healthy discomfort, God’s Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.

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