

# Love: A Cross and Resurrection

*By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

To love and to be loved is the dilemma of human beings. Every one of us wants to be loved, and no one does not want to be loved and to be the object of another's love.

To be loved means to exist and to be secure. It grants a spiritual and emotional energy and, moreover, helps release our potential. The human being was created to be loved and to love. God, who is love, created "the beloved" and called them human beings.

What is more problematic, however, is that those who cannot love remain unconvinced that there is someone who loves them. But to be loved means to love others first and foremost. If we are unable to love, then love shown to us will spoil and destroy us. In that case, love becomes an exploitation of those who love us, since we now cling to them or use them insofar as they fulfill our desires. We stop feeling for others and become egocentric, which in turn blinds us to seeing any other thing but ourselves.

Following this path, we will kill ourselves by dwelling in deadly individualism. The human person cannot live without sharing and conversing with others, through giving, sacrifice, integration, interaction, and the like. All these aspects need "the other" or "the neighbor." The deadly individualism in the consumer West can push people to replace friends with pets, so when we do not find the person who can love us, we look for this love in any substitute. In that case, this substitute remains helpless to fulfill our genuine need. While it may fill some space within us or compensate for a few things, eventually we will feel the need to start looking around again for another substitute.

Living in love can scare people these days. We are still eager to enjoy love, to have it to ourselves, and not to offer it to others, which makes it so much harder to love, which in turn scares us and pushes us to run away. Love has a price: to love means that we are ready to be crucified and to stay crucified. Love hurts because we offer everything for its sake, but we do not always receive. Loving the other confronts us with our weaknesses and our vices that control our lives, which in turn can kill our talents, take away our joy and limit our potential. On the other hand, love can give us life and joy and bring all our positive potentials to fulfillment.

If we lock ourselves in our individualism and in isolation from others—thinking that this will give us peace and help us avoid other people’s nuisances—we will not grow. We will lose connectivity with others in what Christianity calls sin and psychotherapy calls mental illness. Locking ourselves in individualism makes us dwell in envy, pessimism, frustration, fear, despair, depression and longing for possibilities we do not know how to reach. If this is the case, therefore, we can be like a stone with rough edges at a riverside. This stone remains rough unless the water moves and smooths it by crashing it into other stones.

Through the process of loving others the right way, we discover our weaknesses, differences and vices, especially those hidden ones deep in ourselves. Being isolated and living alone gives us a false peace, since the vices and passions stay hidden in us, making us think that we are liberated from them. Living and interacting with others whom we love makes these passions come to the surface and equips us to confront them and overcome them. Only then will we be free.

Lovingly interacting with others acts as the river that will erode the sharp edges of the stones. Little by little, these stones will become smooth and beautifully shaped. Their surfaces become places to draw the best art; the stones will sit in the finest displays and become sources of wonder. In the same manner, love will break our hardheartedness, heal us from our passions and liberate us from our selfishness and sins. This is the path of love. The more we love others, the more we are liberated.

Jean-Paul Sartre, the atheist philosopher, once said, “The other is my hell.” Gabriel Marcel, the Christian philosopher, responded by saying: “The other is my paradise.” Our patristic tradition explains hell by using the imagery of people tied back-to-back in a way that it is impossible for them to see the faces of each other. Hell is the inability to see the face of the other person and, therefore, losing the ability to love and be loved.

Let us break the bondage of isolation, selfishness and fear of meeting others as they are. Be liberated; sacrifice and give. Above all, be open to experience how much more blessed it is to give than to receive. Let us taste the joy of living in love, which, in turn, will make us forget about its price and grant us holiness and purity that will turn to endless joy and gladness unachievable before. Love and love alone grants us maturity and equanimity that cannot be found or achieved in any other way.

We get strength from and with others whom we love to continue our path, bear our cross and attain the resurrection. Isn’t that what our Lord who loved us to the end did? The true God descended willingly to the depth of hades out of love for His

creation and out of His will to save. This same God, whom we know in the gospels, condescended for us, was lifted up when He was hanged on the Cross and, through that, lifted up the whole world with Him, enlightening it through His Resurrection.

*Originally published in 2016.*