



Easter Devotional Activity (6A)

Week of 17 May 2020

The Wheel of Love

Scripture:

[Jesus said:] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever... I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you... They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." (John 14:15-21)

"One of the scribes [asked Jesus]; 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:28-31)

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Reflection:

Jesus reassures the disciples that he will not leave them orphaned. Jesus will not desert us – he will not leave us alone. What profound reassurance for us all, particularly in times of uncertainty. We belong to Christ, the one who loves us in life, in death, and in life beyond death. As Easter people, we bear witness to Christ's love for us and for the world in the way we love one another. Christ's commandment is that we love as Christ has shown us love. To love God means we love others. The two are inseparable.

This week's devotional activity invites us to reflect upon the Wheel of Love.

In the sixth century, a Christian monk named Dorotheos of Gaza spoke of the interconnection between our love for God and our love for others as if it were a wheel or a compass.¹ Imagine – or draw – a large circle. "Let us suppose that this circle is the world, and that God himself is the center," he writes. "The straight line drawn from the circumference to the center are the lives of human beings... Let us assume for the sake of the analogy that to move toward God, then, human beings move from the circumference along the various radii of the circle to the center. But at the same time, the closer they are to God, the closer they become to one another; and the closer they are to one another, the closer they become to God."

As we move toward God, we move toward other people. As we come to love God more deeply, we love others more deeply. And, of course, the opposite is also true. And as we move away from people, we also move away from God. When we neglect the needs and concerns of others, we move away from the very heart of God.

¹ *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church*, by Roberta C. Bondi.

My Wheel of Love as Practice for Prayer

This activity can be used as a devotional activity throughout the week, with each day's focus on a specific group as listed below. For personal devotion, you may consider journaling your responses to each day's reflection. For families with children, the questions are intended to prompt conversation and can be adapted to your own situation. This activity can also be completed in a single session, if desired.

Print out the "Wheel of Love" provided, or make your own: *on a blank sheet of paper, trace around an inverted bowl, vase, or large-mouth jar.* For each group listed, you may wish to use a different colored marker.

- This outer circle represents the world.
- At the very center of the circle, place a large dot, and label it "God."
- Draw a spoke in the wheel (*ruler optional*) - starting at the center (God) and extending beyond the outer circle - and label it "me."

Family

Draw a spoke in your Wheel of Love for each member of your family, and label each one. Reflect upon your relationship to each person. Consider the many ways that love between you is expressed (in words and actions). In what ways is loving each other easy? How does _____ help me understand more about God's love? In what ways is loving sometimes difficult? Are there ways I need to act or speak that are more loving? Consider for each person: What gift of love can I offer to _____ today?

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for those in your family, and for the many ways that love is shared among you. In situations that need healing or resolution, ask God to help you love more deeply, understand more fully, and forgive more readily. Lift up any other request to God for your family based on your reflection / discussion. Share words of blessing for family.

Friends

Draw a spoke in your Wheel of Love for friends that are closest to you (*this may include your beloved pets – God has given us creatures as gifts of love!*), and label each one. Reflect on your relationship with each friend who is a spoke in your Wheel of Love and consider these questions: How is love expressed between the two of us? How does my relationship with _____ draw me closer to God? Is there anything in our relationship that needs to be healed or resolved so that God's love may draw us closer? What can I do for or say to _____ as a gift of love to them?

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for your friends. Thank God for bringing them into your life. and for the many ways that love is shared between you. Lift up any needs for healing or wisdom. Offer words of blessing for friends.

People in my life who are ill or who need of extra love

Draw a spoke in your Wheel of Love for people in your life who are ill, those who are struggling or grieving, or lonely, or who need extra love and support. These may be people you don't know as well, though you are aware of a circumstance in their life that need prayer and healing – like a neighbor, co-worker, teacher, cashier at your local market, the parent of a friend, etc. Consider their situation, and reflect on the question: Given what I know, is there some way that I can show love or support to _____? (*The answer may be a prayer... or sending a card or text with words of encouragement... or sending cookies or a meal... or helping the person to find help for their need*) How does reaching out to _____ help me better understand God's love?

Offer a prayer for the people in your life who are ill or who are in need of extra love or support. Ask God to enable you to respond to their need in some way. Give thanks to God for the resources you have.

People who are “on the margins” of life

Draw a spoke in your Wheel of Love for people who are on the margins of life, those who are vulnerable, those whose well-being is in danger or often overlooked. *Just a few examples: refugees, immigrants, homeless, children living in poverty, victims of abuse, those struggling with mental illness, etc.* Consider what you know about their situation, and reflect on the question: How can I be offer a gift of love and support to _____? Commit to learning more about the issues and struggles of these people on the margins.

Offer a prayer for people who are living on the margins. Ask God to enable you to see them through the eyes of love, with the same compassion that Christ has for any who is suffering or in need. Ask God to help you respond in a meaningful way to their needs and to help alleviate their suffering, whether through prayer, financial support, or active service.

Myself

Draw in a few smaller, concentric circles inside the larger circle. Consider what these circles could represent in your spiritual relationship with God. In other words, what are the spiritual practices or life experiences that draw you closer to God? Place your finger at the outer circle on the spoke with your own name. Trace that line slowly from the outer circle inward toward God. As you get closer to the center of the wheel, you become closer with the other “spokes” in your wheel. How is God calling me to shape my life so that I can love God and others more deeply?

Offer this (or other prayer):

Loving Christ, I give thanks for your love that never leaves me. Teach me to love you above all things. Teach me to love you in all things. Teach me to love as you love and to forgive as you forgive. May I seek your face in the face of every person I meet. In my desire to love you, may my love for others deepen. In my desire to love others, may I love you more fully. Draw us all, your children, closer to the center of your love. Amen.

The Wheel of Love

