

Holiness is Perfected Love
By Elizabeth Pringle

We giggle and we wriggle when we think that we will all be saints one day, but it's serious business, folks. If you're going to heaven, you had better be a saint before you get there, or you won't get in. Down here, we're sinners, up there we're saints. Somehow, some way, between the two places, something powerful will have to take place in our lives for us to exchange the one condition for the other, don't you think? So, what is that, and how does it begin? We must exchange our natural lives for supernatural lives and receive the new birth through Christ and get started on our journey up to heaven, instead of down to hell. We are baptized in water, and in the Holy Spirit, we receive the sacraments, we learn what we can about God, his ways, his Church, his Word and ourselves. Then what? Ah ha! Good question! Then, my beautiful friends, the real work begins, the work of walking and living in holy love.

Holy love, what's that you ask? It is the love of Jesus, it is the way our Father and Mother love, it is sacrificial love. Ouch! Sounds painful? Like everything, it starts that way but it becomes as natural as breathing. How can ordinary people do it? We learn in our ordinary, everyday lives, by uplifting, encouraging and assisting those around us. That's how we do it! We take our minds off ourselves and we stop trying to be 'good'. When we're in that mode, we have nothing on our mind but ourselves. Instead, we start to think of all the ways we can improve the lives of those around us. We're not trying to fix them, oh no, that won't work, but we think of ways to make their day better, their lives happier. That's it! That's all it is. If we're honest we know when we are not being pleasing and we come up with a million excuses as to why it's the other person's fault, right? Or, we say, if they will, we will? But, here's the thing, we have to love them anyway, no matter how hard it is, no matter how hurt we are, no matter how much our flesh resists, and it will. And that's the point. We beat it down with love. Every time we hurt each other, God is watching but not with anger, with much sadness.

There is much talk of the second coming of Jesus, you've heard that. Well, he's coming for a family that will love him and each other. He's not up for bashing heads! Think about it. He loves peace, joy, laughter, kindness and real people. That's what he will be looking for, that's heaven on earth. To love others we have to give up 'our way', our 'rights', our 'know-all', our everything! We have to check our uppity attitudes and let others lead, talk, and, yes, even fail without pointing fingers, and learn to start all over again with good demeanor, helping without taking charge, facing facts and pouring oil on troubled waters. It's a learning curve for everybody. When we can do it without screaming, pouting or stomping we are learning to die to our own desires and putting those of others ahead of our own. Can we always do it? Absolutely not! It takes a lifetime, but it is a great goal because every time we succeed, every little victory, we are a step closer to heaven. The perfecting of love is patient endurance with a smile!

Let's face it, love is a challenge. We all have trouble getting along with others, right? We hate arguing and being out of sorts with each other; broken relationships are agony; we don't know how to get back from there. We're hard wired to get along but instead we grate on each other. We all hurt. Period. Everybody. Even those who don't look like they do, they do! Only one thing that will heal us. Holy love! And lots of it. We bury our pain where we think it can't be seen. Some 'smart alec' comes along with healing in their wings and words of truth to set us free and we haughtily grab our fig leaves and batten down. We do that because we are afraid, and we're afraid because we have been unloved and that robs us of security. Fear is the opposite of love. To be full of fear is to be empty of love and love is the one thing without which we cannot live. We need to learn to fill one another with the right stuff, a word of encouragement, a word of hope, a word of love delivered with sincerity. That love will get all of us into heaven.

Walking in holy love is a learning curve so we can begin anywhere, right now, even today. God says that with him all things are possible. All the people in our lives, all of them, were sent to us with a purpose. They are there to teach us to love. So that we can be holy. So that we can become saints. So that we can go to heaven.