

- *The relationship of love and service*

It is God's presence, the reality of total love, that embraces each of you, all of humanity, all that is. You are blessed in those moments when you are drawn to a reality of an overpowering presence of love in all aspects of your lives.

As we have so often tried to clarify for you, the primary objective of human life is really the growth of your capacity to be loving, and the exercising of that capacity is in some kind of outreach, some kind of service to others, some kind of embrace that you offer to all that exists, all that surrounds you. We would like, therefore, to bring your thoughts and attention more closely to the relationship between love and service, for it is in service that love is fully expressed and given life.

The nature of that service differs for all people. The service can be in concrete terms, but it can thrive also within acts of spirit. All service begins with love, for love is the central component, if you will, of everything that exists. We don't say that everything that exists expresses love, but everything that exists exists because of love. It all begins with love, and it can only be sustained in love. When all else in life falls away, it is love that remains.

One of you refers to your communications with your father, and even though not all that he expresses is intelligible to you, all that is said, nevertheless, comes from the wellspring of love, and it is that love that is often referred to. When people are transitioning from one life-form to another, the one trait that is always present is love. That's what every human being brings with them to our life. They bring the love they have received from others, and they bring their current abilities to be loving, for always with no beginning and no end, there is really only love. That is the source that generates and energizes what is permanent, what resides at the deepest level.

When you experience the lives of those whose actions seem totally counter to the objectives of being loving, the issue of love is still present. There may be a feeling of its absence, or there may be confidence that somewhere there is love, but whether a fear of its absence or a vague belief in its presence, love is constantly at the root of who you are.

When you think of service to others, the most meaningful guideline for that service is measured solely from how it expresses an intention whose basis is love. You can pray for others, and you pray with love. One can devote one's life to concrete ways of helping others. At its deepest level, it is love. You cannot feel compassion in the absence of love.

Love, as we have so often affirmed, is not just a romantic expression but rather an awareness of the total unity that is felt between human beings, between human and nonhuman existence. It is how you embrace the earth. It is how you treasure the air you breathe. It is how you interact with other human beings. It is how you find commitment to others that exceeds the commitment to self. We don't say the commitment to others

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instead of self, for you are a part of God as well, and the love that we urge you to find ways of expressing to others must also find its expression towards self.

Others are, of course, sacred. That you understand, but it is easy to forget in your own self-awareness that you are equally sacred. Service is service to self as well as service to others. We are not implying that there is great virtue to selfishness as you associate that term to mean. There is a difference between being selfish and loving self. There is a difference between feigning interest in others and being deeply committed to others.

Service means connection. It means unity. True service means a recognition that all are one. If you recognize that all are one, the sheer recognition is an exercise of love. You don't love others because they are other. You don't love others because you feel sorry for them, placing them in some kind of inferior position. Loving others, in the true sense, is embracing others because they are part of you, and you are part of them.

Service thrives through the exercise of love. One could say that without love, there is no real service. The expression of that love, that spiritual oneness, will always be different from one moment to another, from one individual to another, from one occasion to another, but however it is brought into life, it is a reflection of love that is inside.

We say that your lives and the pathways that you pursue are all directed toward becoming more loving. You could translate that, change some words, and speak the same truth. You are becoming more loving through your service. You are becoming more loving as you reach out and embrace. That reaching out may be simply being open and listening.

One of the most profound ways of expressing love for others is simply listening and not being judgmental, rather being open. You do not have to agree with what others say, but you must find ways of listening and accepting that what is being expressed in an environment of openness is at the very least a window into the core of the other. Just listening. Just being open. Just caring, not necessarily appearing like you are caring, but caring.

Caring is service. Caring is an outreach of a loving heart. All caring begins with love. You cannot be truly caring of another if you are quick to dismiss another of their value. Even when you are confronted by those who may do you harm emotionally, physically, or any other way, you can find grounds for caring, being willing to embrace the fact that they are on their own paths with their own twists and turns, detours, obstructions, wrong turns. They are on their paths, and they at the very least need to feel that they are heard, not agreed with but heard.

That openness is a service to others. You are not giving anyone anything other than an open heart to truly see who they are. They may not immediately recognize the gift of your listening, but the fact that you are open to all others through love has its own positive spiritual impact. You don't offer love to others with the expectation that such will be acknowledged or responded to or returned. You serve, you offer love, because that is what your spirit does, and it does so through an open heart. If you close the heart, if you

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are judgmental, if you are quick to dismiss, that obstructs the loving energy that is within you from being of service to the spirit of another.

You reflect God through this service of others. That reflection can only come from the wellspring of love. The characteristics of love have no true boundaries. There is no beginning point, and if it comes from within, there is no end point because there is no judgment that says that an act of love should be stopped. You reach out through an open heart, through the heart's vision. The vision of the heart is never closed and never stopped.

There are many whose vision is limited and to others may seem without vision, but there is nevertheless a level of heart vision that belongs to all. It is easy for you to dismiss the presence of those whom you feel have no heart vision. The truth is you are not aware of their heart vision. You are not aware of their reaching out. You don't know the journey they are truly on. What you see is a manifestation of that pathway, but there is no true understanding of its shape, of its encumbrances, of its trials, its limitations, the dangers along the way. You cannot see with full clarity the pathway of another, just as you are unable to clearly see your own pathway. Because your vision is limited, it is essential that you believe at your deepest level that there is always a part of all other people that you can reach with loving openness. You cannot come into deep conflict with someone with whom you are engaged as you reach out and try to serve them in a meaningful way, for the need to reach out comes from that heart vision of love, and it does not stop.

All service is love just as all lives have at their very center a kernel of the total love that is God. Be patient with yourselves as you come to love yourselves. Toss out judgment. There is no benefit to judgment. There is no benefit to guilt. There is no benefit to shame. There is no room for anything other than forgiveness of self and acceptance of self and your resulting heart vision of accepting others, for all are equal. All paths have equal value even though they are so different in their shapes. Recognizing that service to others, finding ways of bringing comfort, dignity, respect, and value to others is what love truly provides.

It is that love that is central to your lives as they begin and are permanently thriving in human lives even as those human characteristics become transformed to spirit life. We could say then, figuratively, in the beginning there was love, and in the end there is always love. We don't say in the beginning love starts. We say in the beginning there was love. Love existed always, and love will flourish always, and when the human condition is unable to express that love, it is still at the very core of who each person is.

Recognize the reality of that love. Find ways of manifesting the love that you contain so that you may reach outward, so that you may become loving, and in that state of being loving, you are serving others as the presence of God. It is through you that God speaks, through your actions, through your openness, through your service. Embrace all with the love that resides always within each of you. That love that is present is the God that is present. Be open as you serve as God's loving heart.

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Amen.