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## God Is Love - by Jacqueline Sabol, PhD

Such a simple verse. God is love. Yet I think it will take an eternity to probe the depths of its meaning.

I have long had an interest in the stories of people with near death experiences (NDE). These experiences offer us a peak behind the spiritual veil of death. So incredible. And now, also so scientific. I have read or listened to so many NDEs over the years and also read books and looked at scientific studies. It's fair to say I am familiar with 1000s NDEs.

There are common characteristics. One moment in the body. The next moment... not...floating above the earthly casing for our souls. The body remains. The soul continues on. But from this perspective, people have accurately described things they could not have known; people and conversations in different rooms; distant objects they could not have known about, etc. Blind people who have never seen, can see and described everything in detail. This is evidence that is unexplainable unless the person's essence was somewhere besides within the body.

As I was listening to a few more of these NDE stories, the same thing that has always penetrated my being, did once again... God is love. The love of God is the thing that people with NDEs describe most vividly. I watched a man describe an NDE from 50 years ago as if it just happened yesterday with his voice breaking and weeping like a baby. As soon as people see Jesus, they feel the complete reality and weight of HIS love. The reality of the statement that *God is love* penetrates every single space of their spiritual soul. In that love, they are fully and completely known while experiencing being fully and completely loved. Nothing is hidden. And yet there is still complete and penetrating love.

My mother had a near death experience when I was about 3 or 4 years old. She was in excruciating pain and then, all of the sudden, she wasn't. But she didn't experience a *lack* of life. She experienced *more* life! She was in that incredible light of God (God is light. In Him there is no darkness at all) and she felt that love of God wash through her soul. She didn't want to 'come back.' Then she heard me crying and she knew she was meant to come back to raise me and my sister. Thank you, God, for bringing my wonderful Godly, loving mother back to life! She has another trait that people who have had positive NDEs experience... no fear of death. Because she loves God and has seen Him on the other side.

This love of God is what causes human beings to be emotionally secure and healthy. When parents look like Jesus, their children have no question as to the love of their parents, and they are securely and healthily attached to their parents. The world is a warm and secure place. These children develop the ability to regulate emotions appropriately and handle conflict well. These parents can set limits or correct without a sense of injustice; without breaking the bond of love. As a neuropsychologist, Attachment Theory was a major shift in understanding people and why some do well in relationships and life while others struggle greatly at one or both.

The word that best and most accurately describes the very essence and nature of who God is, is love. We hear the verse so frequently that I think we can become kind of blind to the infinite depth of this statement.

Perfect love casts out fear. Love is sacrifice. Love is a cross.  
*1 Jn 4:8 whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

The more we know God, the more we look like Him, which is love. In any way we look selfish or judgmental or critical, we look like someone besides God; maybe like his enemy. When we accuse and find fault instead of being charitable, we do not look like God.

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8*

Love always looks like something. We

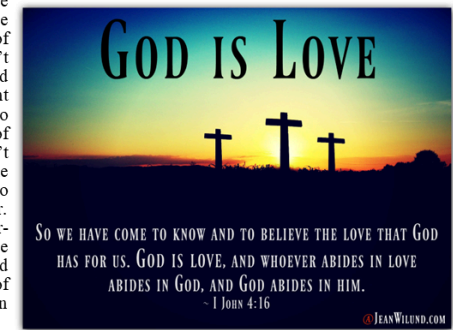
know love when we see it. I admire the people who beam with the love of God. If people can't see the love of God shining in your being, we are not their yet. I don't think I am there frequently enough. But I want to be and I strive to be. We get that way when we spend time with Him, just like the people with the NDEs. We let His love penetrate us and know us. We shine like Moses who had to cover his face when he came from the tent after spending time with the Lord. Only our shining does not have to fade as his did.

*Love covers a multitude of sins.* God, who is love, sent His only Son, who shed His Blood out of love for God and man, to cover our sins. The Blood of Jesus is a symbol of His love. It is a symbol of how far love is willing to go. It gives everything. Even when the other person doesn't deserve it. *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8*

Love is the most powerful force in the universe. Love heals. Love casts out. Love delivers. Love gives. Love sacrifices. Yet it doesn't mean that love accepts everything as good or tolerates things that are clearly unhealthy. I think one of the most difficult things in life is to leave relationships where we love, but then realize something cannot work; not in God's plan. A difficult thing to navigate since truly 'love is blind.'

Love looks like something. Jesus' love looked like torture and being physically nailed to and hung on a cross. We have to discern what our love is supposed to look like... towards our spouses and family, towards our friends, towards our community, towards the poor... and towards our enemies. *"even the pagans love those who love them. I call you to love your enemies and to pray for them."* As we spend time

near Jesus and His love absorbs into us and changes us, it prepares us, not for the NDE, but for the ADE (my acronym for 'Actual Death Experience'). This is the one we don't come back from, but still, where His love penetrates us and we wait to hear those six precious words... *Well done, good and faithful servant.*



## Reflections on 'The Greater Things' September—October 2024

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Please call before coming.

The purpose of this newsletter is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to provide teaching, news, and calendar of events, which help to foster Holy Spirit-filled Renewal throughout the Diocese of Erie.

This newsletter may be copied to put in churches or shared with others.

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**P-RAISE  
A-DORATION  
T-HANKS  
H-ONOR**

**WEDNESDAY**  
9 - 11 - 24  
7 - 9 PM

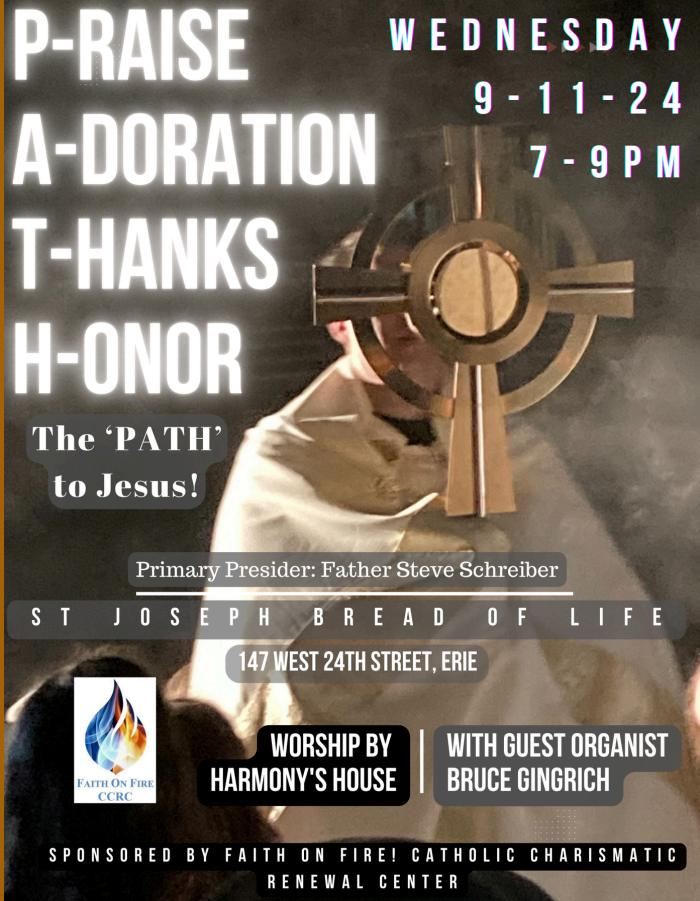
**The 'PATH' to Jesus!**

Primary Presider: Father Steve Schreiber

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WORSHIP BY HARMONY'S HOUSE | WITH GUEST ORGANIST BRUCE GINGRICH

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Rev David Baetzold, OFM  
October 19th - OLP



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