

An American military doctor and a nurse arrived at a missionary orphanage in Vietnam after it had been bombed. The doctor spoke very little Vietnamese, and the nurse only a little French.

Assessing the situation, they determined that one of the injured, an eight-year-old girl, would not survive without a transfusion. They explained the situation as best as they could to the other children, and after a long silence, one little boy stepped forward.

He was prepped, and the transfusion began. After a little while, he let out a stifled sob.

The nurse asked him if he was in any pain. And he said no.

But after a while, his sobbing became outright crying. The nurse couldn't understand what was wrong, because he wasn't in any pain.

Finally, a Vietnamese nurse arrived, and spoke with the little boy. He responded to her with visible distress. And she in turn reassured him in, speaking in Vietnamese. After her explanation, he calmed down, and a look of relief came across his face.

The Vietnamese nurse turned to the American nurse and explained that the boy thought he was going to die as a result of the transfusion. He misunderstood and thought that he had to give all of his blood so that the girl could live.

When he was asked, why he was willing to do that, he replied, "Because she's my friend."

Saint Paul writes in today's Epistle, "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"

Baptism brings us into the life of the Trinity. And today, three members of a family will be baptized. By being baptized, we receive the supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. And Saint Paul reminds us in another place that the greatest of these is Love.

God's Love is nothing like what we expect – because oftentimes our expectations of love are based on human experiences of love which fall very short of God's supernatural Love.

God's Love can be said to have four qualities. The first is that it is indiscriminate. God loves everyone. When we rely on our human faculties, we tend to pick-and-choose whom we love. Yet God's Love is poured out in a superabundance on both the good and the bad. The difference is in how the individual responds to God's Love.

The second characteristic is that God's Love is gratuitous. That is, God loves expecting nothing in return. Human love tends to expect to be loved back. And if we don't receive love in return, we tend to move on. God loves regardless of whether His love is returned or not. Yet for us as Christians, we should respond to God's Love with love in return.

The third characteristic is that God's Love is not self-conscious. That is, we would be a bit ill-at-ease to walk up to a stranger and say, "I love you." Yet, again, as Christians we should show

love without concern for how we look to others. Christianity is counter-cultural, and has been for 2,000 years. Who cares what others may think?

The final characteristic of God's Love is that it is given in freedom. You can't coerce or force God to love or not to love you any more or any less. The moment you try to contain or constrain love, you've lost it.

That is the Love that Jesus Christ poured out in his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. That is the Love that God has poured out on humanity in the Readings we just heard from Genesis to the Gospel. That is the love modeled by the young boy in the story from the Vietnam War.

And Saint Paul also reminds his readers, and us as well that "[we] too must think of [ourselves] as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus"

Today, in Baptism, our candidates will die to their old self and receive new life in Jesus Christ. They will die with Him and rise with Him. They will die to an old way of living, an old way of loving, an old way of being ... and be reborn with the supernatural graces of Baptism ... graces poured out on all of us who are called to live in the heart of the Trinity.

Are we aware that we have been baptized into Christ's death? Are we ready to die to sin and live for God? Let us resolve to do just that today, and every day.

When we renew our Baptismal Promises, let us open ourselves to allow God's grace to pour into us in a new way ... into our lives, and our hearts, and our minds ... let us die to any old ways that may still be lingering around, and embrace the life of Christ more fully.

And so, after forty days of Lent, let us all be born anew in the graces of the Risen Savior – the Easter graces, poured out on all of us in Christ Jesus our Lord.