

# *Expressing God's Love*



Above is a photo of two small chokos which hopefully will grow and be enjoyable to eat. They do not always survive in our garden as there are some birds and caterpillars which, like us, want to eat them. Small chokos also need water and food in the soil if they are to flourish. This situation can in a little way image our acts of love which start small and can grow, even in difficult situations, if given care and support, but when they are ignored, may just wither or disappear.

This year in June, we Christians celebrate the feasts of Pentecost and Trinity. These feasts can lead us to focus particularly on God. I wonder how you might think of God? What image comes into your mind? Perhaps it might be a picture of a King, like King Charles III at his coronation, sitting on a grand chair wearing ornate clothes and a crown. But our God is a loving Trinitarian relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit which does not fit with the image of a king on a throne. Instead, I suggest a better image for God might be, a loving and costly relationship open to all.

As Christians who know something of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we believe our God is a God of love. Therefore, it seems logical that God

created us and our universe not for entertainment, but out of love, desiring to share the love continually moving between the persons of the Trinity. If this is so, God surely continues to love us today and is present within everyone and all creation, whether we know it, ignore it, or give thanks to God for it.

If we believe that God's love is present in ourselves and all others, then this belief must influence how we relate to and treat others. All people, as children of God, are our sisters and brothers, family members we are to love and care for. And nature, God's creation that surrounds us and sustains our lives, is also to be respected and cared for. This sounds easy, but there is a problem. Loving relationships, as we see in Jesus' life, and know from our own experience, give us not only peace and joy, but also pain and suffering.

Jesus showed us that living in and expressing God's love does not result in avoiding suffering. Instead, it is by working through pain and difficulties, that we are transfigured, and changed, enabling God's love to grow in us and others.

In 'The Universal Christ', p.71, Richard Rohr explains, "Love is constantly creating future possibilities for the good of all concerned—even, and especially, when things go wrong. Love allows and accommodates everything in human experience, both the good and the bad, and *nothing else can really do this.*"

At present, in the Hunter region and Mid-North Coast of NSW, we have just lived through a severe flood and are now trying to clean up and recover from it. This disaster has resulted in negative and positive experiences for all involved.

The negatives have included 5 people dead, homes rendered uninhabitable and needing repairing or rebuilding, belongings spoiled or destroyed, cattle lost and pasture ruined. Many people are now homeless. After being in evacuation centres, they are staying with friends, family or living in borrowed caravans. The future looks bleak for these people and they can feel overwhelmed by such a catastrophe.

Fortunately, even in drastic situations, positives appear. In response to the needs of others, love has led to caring actions being shown to neighbours, friends and strangers by individuals, and organisations such as the SES, Veteran Defence Volunteers and Churches. Fr. Jesse Poole has informed me that our

Anglican Church in Kempsey, “donated blankets, jackets, clothing, food parcels, sheets, pillows, towels, and provided spiritual care and support at the Evacuation Centre.” He also emailed that “many others have been involved in clean-ups down the streets, and helping their neighbours to get their cattle to safety.” Loving and costly relationships have reflected God’s presence in this disaster as people responded to the needs of others by volunteering their time, energy, expertise and even risking their own lives.

Our house has been ‘high and dry’, as they say, as we are on a hillside, but we have, in a very small way, also been affected by the flood. A woman and her young autistic son was stranded in Kempsey, cut off by flooded roads from driving home. They asked for accommodation for 1 night, and I agreed. This expanded to 5 days and nights. I found it rather stressful, yet was thankful that in some small way I could be a part of the much greater suffering of others caused by the flood, and share God’s love. At the end of this time the woman and her son were grateful and hugged me. I did not expect this, and was moved. (After 2 days and nights, my guests returned for 2 more nights!)

Our love for others is usually expressed in less dramatic ways, but I believe that whenever we lovingly share in the pain of others, its negative power over and in those suffering is lessened. As chokos that are cared for can grow and flourish, God’s love, when expressed and shared by us in serving others in need, is also able to grow in others, us and God’s loved world, in ways we cannot imagine.

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