

Dios es Amor

God is Love

Spanish, English and add to this Peruvian Quechua. These are your languages, Betsa. Today I would like to acknowledge yet another language, your first language. I dare say that your first language and the first language each of us experience is the language of LOVE.

One of the tools I use to help strengthen relationships in my counseling profession is a book entitled "The Five Love Languages" by Gary Chapman. I understand that this was the theme of the Holy Week Retreat here at Providence Heights. The five love languages name five different ways people show love or like love to be shown to them:

They are:

Words of Affirmation

Acts of Service

Physical Touch

Receiving Gifts

Quality Time

You took the survey and your top three love languages, I think, are best described in the words of children:

**Words of Affirmation:** "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."

### **Quality Time**

Upon seeing his neighbor crying, knowing his wife had died, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing I just helped him cry."

**Acts of Service:** Good morning. Do you need a hug? Actually I need pancakes.)

As wonderful as these five love languages are, they pale in comparison to our first language, love, expressed so well in 1 John: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, everyone who loves is begotten of God and knows God".... "Beloved, if God so loved us, we must also love one another.

And that is what you experienced in your family. You describe the impact love has had on you so well on the last page of your booklet. You state "Today I am

filled with joy and gratitude for my Father and Mother, who gave me life and loved me into the person I am today.” Your mother Plácida, and your father, Mario whom we remember here today. That bond of love is still yours today, in your relationship with your family; your brother, Enrique, your sisters, Lilian and Veronica, your sister-law, Nancy, your nieces Dalia, Adriana and Daniela and your nephew Rodrigo.

Love is yours also in the relationships you have formed in your life through friendships and in community. It was on the foundation of these experiences of love that you learned to love and came to know, and encounter a God who loves you.

Betsa, you are a unique love language of God as I believe each of us is. Gregory of Nyssa says it so beautifully: “The fact of being made in the image of God means that humanity, right from the moment of creation is endowed with royal character... God is love and the source of love; the divine Creator has drawn this feature on our faces too.” Like your parents, you have also allowed God to love you into the person you are today.

In your relationship with God through the years, you have allowed God’s likeness to be drawn on your face and in your heart. By your commitment today, you are embracing the invitation to move from image to likeness, to being the unique expression of God in our world, a love language of God.

In today’s Gospel of the Feeding of the Multitude from the Gospel of John, I see a wonderful portrayal of the how you are and want to be the “likeness” and unique expression of God’s love.

Jesus presents the challenge to the disciples. “Where can we get enough food for them to eat? The disciples try to talk sense to Jesus, even two hundred days wages wouldn’t be enough for this crowd. How can this be done and who will do it? Andrew points to the boy with the five barley loaves and two fish. The rest is history.

In light of this Gospel, I see you as the one who steps forward today. You are stepping forward today with the barley loaves of your love given freely to God, saying, “I will be your bread now, I will be your wine now,”

You are stepping forward now with the fish of your willingness to serve, saying “I am willing to be the sign of your love.”

How are you a unique love language of God? The love first experienced in your family and nurtured by friends and community and prayer, has been seasoned by your life, with its many joys and sorrows. You took on the challenge leaving family and friends coming to the United States, to a new culture and a new language. You have completed your studies in this new language. You have participated fully in the life of the community and you have cooperated in all that was asked of you in the incorporation process. These circumstances have further shaped you and contributed to who you are today and how you love.

Those who know you have experienced your soft-spoken gentle ways, your generosity of spirit, your love of God, and your commitment to community. Some of us and have been given a glimpse of your desires and dreams for a new future for religious life. This is how you love and are love.

We know what the impact the boy of today's Gospel had on the events of that day. The impact of your life as a unique expression of God's love has yet to unfold.

Today through your commitment you are expressing your willingness to collaborate in the encounter of love; to making the Providence of God more visible in our world. We are here to affirm and support you in your commitment.

Today you are answering God's call to love, to be love, allowing God to draw ever deeper the divine likeness on your face and in your heart through your commitment of perpetual vows.

Love is what it is all about. In closing, I would like to offer these words of Fr Pedro Arrupe a Spanish Jesuit priest who served as the 28<sup>th</sup> Superior General of the Society of Jesus. It is entitled "Fall in Love"

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than  
falling in Love  
in a quite absolute, final way.

What you are in love with,  
what seizes your imagination,  
will affect everything.

It will decide  
what will get you out of bed in the morning,  
what you do with your evenings,

how you spend your weekends,  
what you read, whom you know,  
what breaks your heart,  
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in Love,  
stay in love,  
and it will decide everything.