

6.19.2022 Trinity 1 (1 John 4:7)

There's a picture of my grandpa hanging on my living room wall. I never had the opportunity to meet my dad's dad, he passed away before I was born, but I can still remember the first time I saw that particular picture, thinking to myself, that I look just like him. The family resemblance is remarkable, and I imagine we've all had a similar experience. There's probably a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle in your family with whom you share some, or perhaps many, of the same physical characteristics.

Many of us look a lot like our mom or dad, grandma or grandpa, but it doesn't stop there, does it. It's not only physical traits that are passed on from one generation to the next, personality traits are as well. As we grow older, we often find ourselves not only looking like our parents or grandparents, but acting like them. Whether it's falling asleep in the living room recliner or hearing ourselves speak the same words to our children that our parents spoke to us, very often the day comes when we realize that we truly are the children of our parents.

In many and various ways we resemble our parents and grandparents. They are the source of our physical characteristics, and they influence our personalities as well. Yet in the Epistle we read this morning, St. John reminds us not to be so short-sighted when we consider whose image we truly bear. John wrote, "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God...*" (1 John 4:7).

Love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God. These inspired words help us recognize the truth that God is the source of all love. ***Love is of God.*** Whatever love we have in us, whatever love flows from us, can be traced to God, for He is the Divine origin of all true love. In much the same way that you or I might look at one of our own particular physical traits and recognize a parent or grandparent as the source of that trait, when we consider our ability to love we must recognize love also has its Source, and that Source is God our Father.

In your life there may have been a time when people said you look a lot like your mother, or you look just like your father, but whether you look like

either of your parents or not, the truth that pertains to every Christian is this: Children of the God who is love resemble their Father, and therefore, are known by their love for one another. Jesus said, “*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35). God our Father, the source of all love, has passed on to His children His own distinct family trait: love. In the same way that families over many generations are often recognized by a particular, physical characteristic, the family of God is distinguished, even set apart from the rest of the world, because of the way we love. It is by our love for each other, for all people, and for God, that we are known to be children *born of God*, and authentic disciples of our Lord.

When we look at early Church history, we find examples of Christians, examples of children born of God sharing a type of love that the world had never seen. The Church Father, Tertullian, tells us that the Romans described the first Christians by proclaiming, “See how they love one another!” Justin Martyr, and early Christian apologist and philosopher, wrote these words about the Church, he said, “We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.”

Clement of Alexandria, an early Christian philosopher, wrote this description of a particular follower of Jesus, saying, “He impoverishes himself out of love, so that he is certain he may never overlook a brother in need, especially if he knows he can bear poverty better than his brother. He likewise considers the pain of another as his own pain. And if he suffers any hardship because of having given out of his own poverty, he does not complain.”

For two thousand years, Christians have fed the hungry, given a cool drink to the thirsty, taken in strangers, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25:35-36). Children *born of God*, have shown how much they resemble their Father by obediently following His Son, who told us to “*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven... ” (Matthew 5:44-45).

We resemble our Father when we love like Him, in a supernatural, sacrificial, and unconditional way that causes the world to declare: “See how they love one another!” As children of the One, True God, who is love (1 John 4:16), as people who belong to the family of God and bear His image, may we, by His grace live and love in such a way that the world marvels, and comes to know the perfect love of God our Father, through Christ our Savior, by the power of His Holy Spirit.