

LOVE'S DIVINE TRUTH  
By Fr. Tim Seigel

*"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen (I John 4:10)."*<sup>1</sup>

Can love be commanded of us? Does the possibility of being a liar compel me to love my brother or sister, or my neighbor? Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical, GOD IS LOVE calls love a feeling that is either there or not there; he says love cannot be produced by the will.<sup>2</sup>

Maybe the only real choice is for me not to love or to refuse to love (or be loved). The love of my brother or sister, the love of my neighbor, my God is always a possibility for me. I am loved by them, they have shared their love for me, but I can refuse it. In that case, love truly is a gift; one I can refuse. The only real freedom I have, then, is to receive love, and therefore give it because love is a gift, and gifts are always received and shared, or I can refuse it and by doing so refuse to give it away.

Pope Benedict XVI goes on to say that, *"Saint John's words should rather be interpreted to mean that love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God."*<sup>3</sup> Love is a path. I cannot will the path to be there or not to be there in the same way I cannot will I-39 to dissect Northern Illinois between the east and the west. It is there and I am either on the path of love with my eyes wide open, or in my blindness I can refuse to travel; refuse the journey.

In this regard, blindness is my choice. In love, I can either open my eyes to see my brother or sister, my neighbor, my fellow traveler on the path of love, my God as well; or I can stay at home in the blindness of my will.

Father, as I look at my life, the people I have met, known and loved; as I think about all who have loved me, I know I have not always loved perfectly, but I know I hate no one. I believe I am on the path of love. My vision is not perfect; I do not always see clearly the opportunities to love. But I choose this walk, I choose this path. I ask for your guidance, your light to show me the way I must travel. May I always travel in the truth of your love.

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<sup>1</sup> Revised New American Bible

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, God is Love, pg 19

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg 20