

## Melissa's Thought for the Month – June 2015

When you read this, we shall have passed the Day of Pentecost and celebrated once more the gift of the Spirit. I said I would hopefully offer you more of my thoughts on that subject.

When we wish to find out what St Paul has to say about it we cannot do better than read again the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. In the final verse he gives his selection of the three most valuable gifts faith, hope and love, the greatest of which is love.

As I have said before, I never learned Greek but I have picked up somewhere that they had three different words which are all translated as “love” in English. The three are eros, philia and agape.

At the centre of Piccadilly Circus in London is the statue of Eros with his bow and arrow. In English literature, he is more often called Cupid from the Latin rather than the Greek name. Clearly the love he represents is sexual love – the word erotic has the same connotation. The darts of Cupid give a similar impression. “Cupidity” on the other hand is more a general desire to own something (or someone).

Philia appears in Philanthropy as a general willingness to care for other people's needs. It is specifically the philanthropy which we use in connection with charitable giving. Unfortunately that has overtones of the “Lady Bountiful” idea. Those on the receiving end can have the feeling that there is an element of conscious superiority and condescension which can easily be relented. Who wants to feel they are being treated as inferior? We all have our human pride.

Human pride can be a good thing or a bad thing. It is good when it leads us to do our very best in every situation. It is bad when we congratulate ourselves. Probably it is at it's worst when it becomes spiritual pride. This is the most likely to be our besetting sin as Christians. I know it is the one with which I have battled all my life. Our only hope is if we recognise it and acknowledge our need for forgiveness; both by God and our neighbours.

The third and final word is agape.

This is used here by St Paul (I have checked by using my Grandmother's Testament and Lexicon combined with my own knowledge of the Greek alphabet!). It is only recently that I found out, from my BRF – Bible Reading Fellowship – daily readings, that there is a branch of the Christian Church which refers to the sacrament of Holy Communion as the Agape. This is what was meant – and intentionally so – by those who said “See how these Christians love one another!” It was not being ironic!

It might be so in the case of all of us at times, “Oh Lord, forgive and renew your agape within us and our Community”.

By the way, I never forget what I owe to so many Christian friends at Marshside Road. I nearly did forget though, to remind you that the Link could do with your contributions. Single paragraphs about your outings, holidays, friends etc would be enough!

**Melissa.**