

Beauty

My daughter Julie, as a child, read the story of the *Beauty and the Beast* over and over again. Her mother gave her the video of the musical of this classic story. She must have watched it a hundred times. In this story a wicked witch curses a handsome prince and changes him into an ugly monster. The prince remains a repulsive, lonely, pitiful creature until a beautiful princess comes along, sees something special beneath his homeliness, kisses him, and **wow**, he is changed back into a handsome prince.

You may think I am just another bragging dad, but I now see my daughter as a beautiful princess, who searches for the good and promise in others even when it is deeply hidden. My Julie is what some rightfully call "*a good finder*".

The story of the *Beauty and the Beast* makes a fitting introduction to the words of Jesus in today's gospel. "My children," says Jesus, "I give you a new commandment: to love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The story of the Beauty and the Beast touches me, and maybe you, just a little. One place where we sometimes fail most to carry out Jesus' command to love one another is in our own families. And by failing to carry out Jesus' command, I mean failing to express our love to one another in a concrete way. I mean failing to show one another concrete signs of affection.

This raises an important question for you and for me. Why do we fail to carry out Jesus' command to love in our families? Sometimes it is because a family member treats us badly. Or we find a particular family member to be unpleasant and hard to deal with. Sometimes it is because some past conflict continues to haunt our relationships and we just can't let go of the insult.

I once read about a father who could not hug his own son-because he was gay. More often, however, the reason we fail to show affection to members of our own families is because we take them for granted. We are like the man who said, "My family knows that I love them. Why there's nothing I wouldn't do for them, and there's nothing they wouldn't do for me." "But that's the trouble," said a friend, "You end up doing nothing for each other." There is another reason Jesus stressed love so much. It's because love has the power to transform people. Love has the power to turn a beast into a prince. Love has the power to turn a beast into a saint. Keep this in mind, an important truth about people:

No one needs love more than someone who doesn't deserve it.

If we sit around and wait for people to become lovable before we love them, we will sit around for the rest of our lives. Maybe there is someone in your life who is only waiting a kiss from a loving princess. It is precisely in the process of loving others that we become lovable.

And so you will know that ...

YOU ARE LOVED,

DEACON DAN