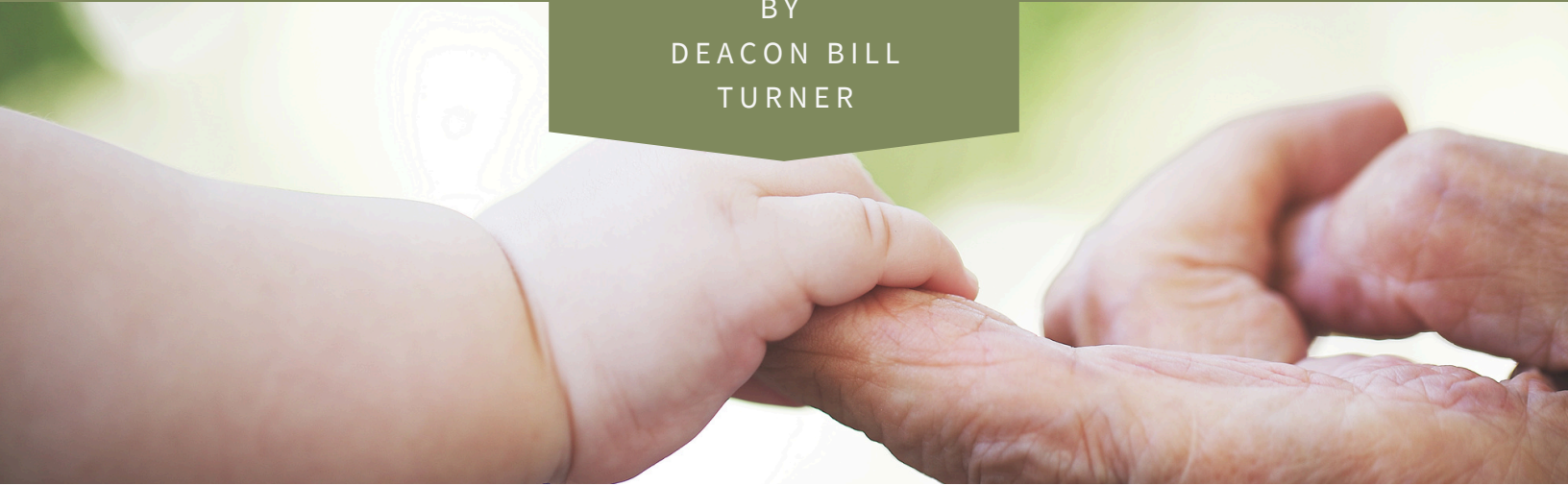


# *The Love of a Child*

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## *A Baby's Hug*

*We were the only family with children in the restaurant. I sat Erik in a highchair and noticed everyone was quietly sitting and talking. Suddenly, Erik squealed with glee and said "Hi." He pounded his fat baby hands on the highchair tray.*

*His eyes were crinkled in laughter, and his mouth was bared in a toothless grin as he wiggled and giggled with merriment.*

*I looked around and saw the source of his merriment. There was a man whose pants were baggy with the zipper at half-mast and his toes poked out of would-be shoes. His shirt was dirty, and his hair was uncombed and unwashed. His whiskers were too short to be called a beard and his nose was so varicose it looked like a road map. We were too far from him to smell, but I was sure he smelled. His hands waved and flapped on loose wrists. "Hi there baby. Hi there big boy, I see you, buster," the man said to Erik.*

*My husband and I exchanged looks as if to say what do we do? Erik continued to laugh and*

*answer. "Hi." Everyone in the restaurant noticed and looked at us and at the man. The old geezer was creating a nuisance with my beautiful baby.*

*Our meal came and the man began shouting from across the room. "Do you Patty cake? Do you know peekaboo? Hey, look, he knows peekaboo."*

*Nobody thought the old man was cute. He was obviously drunk. My husband and I were embarrassed. We ate in silence. All except for Erik, who was running through his repertoire for the admiring skid-row bum, who in turn reciprocated with his cute comments.*

*We finally got through the meal and headed for the door. My husband went to pay the check and told me to meet him in the parking lot. The old man sat poised between me and the door. "Lord, just let me out of here before he speaks to me or Erik," I prayed.*

*As I drew closer to the man, I turned my back to sidestep him and avoid any air he might be breathing. As I did, Erik leaned over, my arm reaching with both arms in a baby's "pick me up"*

position. Before I could stop him, Erik had propelled himself from my arms to the man.

Suddenly a very old, smelly man and a very young baby joined their love in kinship. Erik, in an act of total trust, love and submission, laid his tiny head upon the man's ragged shoulder. The man's eyes closed, and I saw tears hover beneath his lashes, his aged hands full of grime, pain and hard labor, cradled my baby's bottom and stroked his back. No two beings have ever loved so deeply for so short a time. I stood awestruck.

The old man rocked and cradled Erik in his arms, and his eyes opened and set squarely on mine. He said in a firm, commanding voice. "You take care of this baby." Somehow, I managed "I will." From a throat that contained a stone. He pried Erik from his chest, lovingly and longingly, as though he were in pain. I received my baby and the man said, "God bless you, ma'am, you've given me a great gift."

I said nothing more than a muttered thanks. With Erik in my arms, I ran for the car. My husband was wondering why I was crying, holding Erik till so tightly and while saying. "My God, my God, forgive me." I had just witnessed Christ's love shone through the innocence of a tiny child who saw no sin, who made no judgment, a child who saw a soul, and a mother who saw a suit of clothes.

I was a Christian who was blind, holding a child who was not. I felt it was God asking, "Are you willing to share your son for a moment?" When he shared his for all eternity. The ragged old man unwittingly had reminded me to enter the Kingdom of God, we must become his little children.

-author unknown.

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The young child in this story gives us an example of how God's love or charity is meant to be within us.

**Immersed in the world which demands so much of our time and effort it is very easy to complicate the simple truth of love.**

As we grow older, the innocence of a child's loving heart can become hardened with our negative life experiences. Our level of trust can change, and we can utilize our five senses to size up the people we interact with. We can become judgmental and begin to put God's children into mental columns of "love them or love them not". We can become fearful, standoff-ish, and withdraw our love to a select few.

There is hope. In John 15, Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in His love. This is my commandment. Love one another as I love you."

**We can learn to adapt to love like Jesus. We can act like the little child in the story and reach out to anyone and give our love away.**

Can we fill our hearts with the love of the Trinity? Can we fill our hearts with God's love to be overflowing? That is our pursuit with the communion of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not alone. As we usher in Pentecost may that same Holy Spirit help to fill our hearts with eternal love and break the barriers of fear.

**Let us ask God to help guide us to ACT in love even when it is uncomfortable. Let us open our hearts to the weary, the lost, and the lonely.**

May God help us to be ALERT, AWARE, and ACT in love according to His will. May God bless us all.