

One of the rewards of being a full time student is that you become wise enough to take time out occasionally. Now this is not necessarily something I am good at or do often enough but I am getting better at it and depending how you use that time it has its own rewards. This reflection is about one of these precious times when I actually think it was meant to be so.

After a busy week studying the Cebuano language here in Davao City I thought I owed myself a break so I treated myself to a picture show. Well most films leave me tired but entertained somewhat and every now and then one will move me to such an extent that it actually dominates my thoughts for a week or so. One such film was “The Twin Towers” which had the brilliant actor, Nickolas Gage, portrayed as the commanding officer to a small yet young group of men who put their lives on the line to save their fellow human beings purely because it was the right thing to do. At the time they did not see themselves as heroes and certainly did not go in thinking they were going to certain death though I suspect they knew the dangers well enough. Anyway, the story was based on the true accounts of people who went through this horrible ordeal and it did make me aware of deep emotional feeling within me which even had me a little puzzled. The acting was brilliant but somehow it was the snippets of brilliant dialogue that blew me away. Now I don’t know if we all get moved by good drama but when it stirs your very inside that is scary believe me.

There were several moments during the long wait for the inevitable rescue to begin where the two remaining officers caught under the tons of rubble shared on a level they normally would not go to. I guess under great stress and faced with likely death one would do the same. This was the core of the film as far as I was concerned and emotionally I was quite drained by the time the two were actually pulled out of the rubble that was once the Trade Centre. However the real moment of the film for me to my surprise was when Nickolas was being brought into hospital to start what was to be a two year recovery. His words to his wife as he entered the operating room were “You kept me alive down there honey” My heart seemed to jump at these words and I had a wow experience. (I don’t know how else to explain it)

My reactions to these words were unpredictable and I heard myself saying to myself “**So that’s the love I said no to nearly 50 years ago**” I guess I was reflecting on the power of love that can exist between two people, and how it can even work miracles. A love between husband and wife, Parents and their children and children for Parents was really portrayed well in the film. It was actually tangible, well so it seemed to me. I thought of the many definitions of love I have learnt over the years but never really understood but accepting them just the same. Here, in a simple way, I felt something

Not for love nor money – Reflection by Peter T (cfc) Davao 2008

extraordinary had happened to me, tears welled up and an emotion was stirred in me that I had not been aware of for some time. The extraordinary thing is that God was also in this emotion as I was able to be aware that this love is God sent and therefore a gift to all. The director of the film tried to say what love is through his actors and I believe he did it in an inspiring way. I think maybe he was saying love is the most powerful force in the world. It can even overcome the feelings of hate and revenge that was the fuel which generated the Trade Centre tragedy. Nothing justifies revenge on this scale but still I also found myself thinking of the people affected by war, oppression and poverty and how these things can ferment hate, killing love that is given to everyone, even those who find themselves marginalised and impoverished through no fault of their own.

The love Parents have for their children is a wonderful thing to see and the respect that Filipinos have for the family and the obvious love that pours out of the families I have visited was a joy to behold. The love that children have for each other has moved me. The simple sight of seeing two siblings hugging each other or walking arm over each others shoulders; Yes I have seen these things here and counted myself blessed for seeing them. This love, I suspect, we would all like to experience, is summed up in the words *“Greater love than this no man has than a man lay down his life for his friend.”* I have thought about those words a lot lately and saw them acted out in this film. We know where the lines belong and who they refer to and they are important to me. Mother Therese and Maxwell Kolbe are examples brought before us of people who had this gift. There are others walking our streets that if called to do so would do no less.

My reflection ends by my thinking, God is indeed good and He loves us and has given us that same gift of love we have seen in so many of our saints including Edmund. OK I may not be ready to step up on the plate just yet but maybe one day. At least I now know a little bit more of what this whole business of life is supposed to be about and hope that I will have a clearer picture of what God has asked of me. It was not a NO that was said so long ago, but rather it was a YES and with it a plea to God to help me understand and be faithful to that Yes. Maybe I was not mature enough to realise the full extent of what I was committing myself to at the time, and I bet I am not alone on this one, but it is slowly being revealed. A life long journey of giving and receiving which believe me has had its ups and downs. Someone asked me why I chose to be a religious with my background and why do I stay? Not an easy one to answer but the only reply I have now is *“I would not walk away from this decision made so long ago for love nor money”* because I know God has something to do with it and that’s enough for me. God knows what He is doing and I will know too one day. My prayer is *“Dear Lord teach me to love as you love”* I do believe this was the prayer of St Frances too so I’m in good company.