

Our Giving God

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Centenary Auction Sale,
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Significantly adapted for...*

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Based on Ephesians 3: 14-21

One of the most hurtful human experiences – and also the most common – is having a gift of ours rejected, unappreciated, or reacted to indifferently.

For the purposes of that comment and this sermon, you can ignore gifts inappropriately given – the ashtray given to a non-smoker, the whisky given as a corporate gift without finding out that the person is a non-drinker, the yellow tie given by a child to their father who never, ever, ever wears yellow!

I'm referring to gifts of self, our time or our money; gifts that represent effort, thought and care on our part. Gifts of this nature may be unappreciated or taken for granted. I would include acts of friendship not reciprocated, acts of love from one spouse to another that are not appreciated. One could even include giving of ourselves professionally in ideas and skills that may be unappreciated in a company.

Or the self-sacrifice of a mother in her home, or parents sacrificing themselves in many ways for their children, which at times may seem so utterly unrewarding – "nothing to show for it"!

We have all had such experiences – and, I say with certainty, we have all done the same to others in various ways too.

That sense of being un-appreciated as a person, or of being responded to indifferently, is a most hurtful human experience... and as I've already said, is common, and I have no doubt that it links us to a common experience of God!

Yes of course God feels! God is a loving being, and whilst we cannot fully fathom God's nature, God's "emotions" (to use human but also biblical terminology) are expressed in various ways through the Scriptures. We learn of them via the words of the prophets, and they are also displayed in the person of Jesus Christ – the revelation to us in person of God's characteristics, of God's "personality", if we can use such a word for God.

These characteristics include pleasure, the warmth of relationships, deep concern especially for those hurting and certainly for those disregarding of God or contemptuous of God's laws, and even anger at hypocrisy amongst the religious people whose observance of religious laws had no substance to it, only show.

This is our God. For to love is not an abstract philosophical concept, it is to engage in the fullest way possible with another.

And this is what God has done for us, giving to us "without strings" in the sense that we have freedom to respond to God: Freedom to respond in a like manner, or to reject, or to be indifferent. We may at times even deliberately ignore acknowledging how great is the gift that has been given us, instead seeking to dictate terms to God – which becomes a manipulative response to God!

What humility on the part of God! The Creator of all things, the intricacies of which science and technology have yet to unravel, let alone learn to master or control, gives us such wide berth to decide how we will respond.

Knowing the love of God, as we who worship God claim, calls forth response from us. God is utterly giving by nature. As we mature, hopefully we grow in acknowledging that, and modeling our life upon it.

We heard St Paul today, exhorting the Christians in Ephesus to grasp how wide and high and long and deep is the love of God in Jesus Christ.

This is our God!

Thanks be to God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever, Amen.

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***[Preface to the Eucharistic prayer, tying in the readings for the day, follows...]***

*[Eucharistic Preface – adapted prayers]*

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you  
AND ALSO WITH YOU

Lift up your hearts  
WE LIFT THEM TO THE LORD

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM THANKS AND PRAISE

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,  
for we are overwhelmed by the length and breadth, height and depth  
of your mysteries, your glory, and your love for us in Christ.

You brought forth the earth and the heavens,  
and from tiny fragments you created a rich abundance  
to nurture and strengthen all who look to your hand.  
You have given yourself generously to your people.

In your Son, Jesus,  
you have given us the Saviour we longed for.  
Though he was crucified,  
you raised him to life and he comes to us again,  
striding over chaos and death,  
dispelling our fears with a love beyond comprehension,  
strengthening us in our inner beings,  
and bringing us safely to your kingdom.

Therefore with...