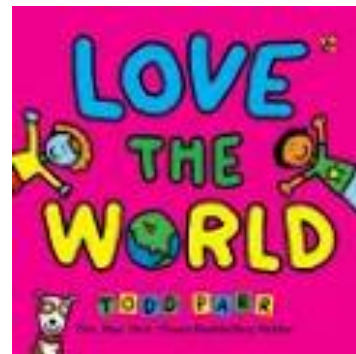


Love the World

Many of us enjoy a good book over a nice hot cup of tea or coffee. Children also adore reading, especially as it brings people together. It's our family's favourite pastime, hands-down. We get to cuddle, look at colourful pictures, and immerse into entertaining and magical worlds. Stories are also great teaching tools, helping to instil values, foster critical thinking and meaningful discussions. What surprises me the most, as I think about it, is the realization that I'm also learning when we spend time together. Perhaps you have had this experience, too?

Todd Parr is a New York Times Bestselling Author. He writes and illustrates many inspiring and empowering children's books, with his bold images and positive messages. One evening, our bedtime story was *"Love the World."*



The overall message was simple:

LOVE YOURSELF & LOVE THE WORLD!

Click on the image for a read-aloud video and pay attention to your reactions.

<https://youtu.be/IFjqkqCFsel?>

Intuitively, we can easily agree with this statement. When it reoccurred the second time, I noticed a small hesitation stir within me. My children totally accepted the message, but my adult mind did not buy it completely even though my heart did.

Sometimes the simplest messages are the easiest ones to follow, until we complicate it.

Reflecting on life has taught me that it's not straightforward to love. Whether it's loving yourself, other people or the earth. When we grow up, we discover that loving requires vulnerability, openness, forgiveness, compromise; that it requires WORK. While disapproval or discomfort, on the other hand, can naturally emerge, with ongoing work and God's grace, love can and does become a good habit.

Ladies, if we are honest, we can all relate. There seems to always be something, somewhere, someone, who does not meet our expectations. We dislike parts of our bodies and personalities, our "flaws." We struggle with our spouses, like how he continuously leaves his clothes on the floor despite the many free coaching sessions we provide. We get perturbed when others behave with values and attitudes not aligned with our own, because "we know better and they ought to as well."

We find ourselves, as Catholics, recognizing the imperative need to follow one of God's greatest commandments: **"Love one another, as I have loved you."** [John 15:12]. The core virtue of - 2 - Catholicism is LOVE after all. Some days we live it out wholeheartedly and shine our halos. Other days we trudge over to confession and recite the Act of Contrition, again.

It feels cozy to cuddle towards those who are similar or familiar to us. We get one another and effortlessly feel a sense of comfort and belonging. It feels good. We want to stay in this spot, until drawn into uncharted lands and territories.

As the world increasingly becomes more diverse, global, and ever-changing, is there a way to love yourself and the world as it is? Is there a way to summon fortitude and confidence to take action when the Holy Spirit prompts us to do so, when we rather stick to sitting on the couch, praying and reading? Love is a verb, an action word. Can we gently and fully love those who don't meet our expectations, or are different from us, without complicating it?

When I take the time to **Be Still** and **spiritually see** my children, God graces me with perception. Children love freely and deeply without fear. Even after they get hurt or cry, they carry on gleefully playing with their friends and siblings all over again. These little beings often teach us, just as we teach them.

Let us Be Open and invite the Holy Spirit to help us spiritually see the world and its inhabitants, as God desires us to See and Love. Let us in humility not glaze over the word, Love, like we already know what it means, no matter how old we are. Let us stretch out into the deep, even if it's initially just on the shore. God will give us what we need along the way. Let us get comfortable with the uncomfortable. We will be greatly blessed with more than perception.



Your Sister in Christ,
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