

In a certain village in the Swiss Alps there is a small church which has been used by generations of worshippers. Even though it is no work of art, the local people have always had a special affection for it. What is it that makes it so beautiful in the eyes of the people ? It is the story of how it came to be built on that particular spot. The story goes like this.

Two brothers worked a family farm, sharing the produce and profit. One was married, the other wasn't. The climate was harsh with the result that grain was sometimes scarce.

One day the single brother said to himself "It's not fair that we should share the produce equally. I'm alone, but my brother has a family to support". So every now and then he would go out at night, take a sack of grain from his own barn, quietly cross the field between their houses, and place it in his brother's bin.

Meanwhile, his brother had a similar idea, and said, "It's not right that we share the produce equally. I have a family to support me but my brother is all alone." So every now and then he would go at night, take a sack of grain from his barn, and quietly place it in his brother's bin.

This went on for a number of years. Each brother was puzzled how his supply of grain never dwindled. Then one night they bumped into each other in the dark. When they realised what had been happening, they dropped their sacks and embraced each other. Suddenly a voice from heaven said: "Here I will build my church. For where people met in love, there my presence shall dwell."

What's the purpose of life if not to love ? William Blake put it like this: "We are put on earth a little space that we may learn to bear the beams of love."

But we cannot give love unless we have first received love. A radiator cannot give out heat unless it has first received heat. This was true of Jesus too. He said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you." The love he shared so generously with his disciples and with the people at large

was the love he had received from the Father, and from Mary, Joseph and others too.

It is not a sign of weakness to admit our need of love. We should acknowledge and be grateful for the love we have received. As far as God's love is concerned, we don't have to earn it. It is God who first loved us. God loves us, not because we are good, but because God is good. Our very existence is a sign of God's love. All we have to do is receive it, and then try to share it with others.

Love is well-being. It makes life fruitful. To refuse to love is to begin to die. Few get the opportunity of showing their love for others by dying for them. But all have the opportunity to live for others.

Love is costly. To love is to accept that we might die another death before we die our own. We may have to die to our own needs and overcome our self-centredness. The way of love is the way of the cross, and it is only through the cross that we come to the resurrection.

There is a prayer which says: "Lord, don't let me die yet, because I haven't loved enough". It's a prayer we would do well to make our own.