Daddy or Chips

A Soule

It's said good advertising is an art form in itself. The ads which one never quite forgets are usually those which touch an emotional chord in us. There was an ad in the Nineties for oven chips, which many people still remember. A young girl sitting in a school bus being asked by her older sister if she loved Daddy or chips. The young girl puzzled over the question, Daddy or chips or Daddy, all the way home.

It does seem rather an odd question for a sister to ask; pitting love of chips against the largely philosophical concept of love for their father. The way the ad went, it wasn't an easy choice, given that love for her father didn't seem to tip the scales straight away.

Aside from what the question meant to the young girl, it also touches on something more fundamental; what do we mean when we say we love a thing or a person; and more specifically in what order do we place the various loves of our life. The hierarchy of love is something which does play on people's minds, however much it is denied or rationalized. Where one stands in the ladder of love has frequently been the subject of popular writings and drama; which is not surprising given art mirrors real life after all.

In Shakespeare's King Lear, the tragic dimension of the play unfolds with the old King asking his three daughters to tell him how much they love him; with the intention of dividing his kingdom in accordance with their answers. It was important to the old King to know where he stood with them. The play is, after all, a work of fiction but it does show that it not only matters to us that people care for us, but also how much more or less in relation to all the other things they love.

Going back to the advert of Daddy or chips. The young girl mulling over the question reaches home and when sitting at the table to eat, Daddy sneaks a chip off her plate. Somehow in her little brain that tilted the balance in favour of chips - perhaps based on a childish understanding that it was Daddy first who, not withstanding her annoyance, had chosen chips.

In all honesty, the ad in itself is nothing more than an affectionate play amongst siblings and a parent. It does, however, show that our reactions to others are often guided by what happened to us.

A key aspect of Christianity is about keeping love at the centre of all our dealings with each other. This may seem simple but it is quite at odds with how the world at large shapes us. It is often thought that much of the love we can show for others is a reflection of what we have felt from others. For many though, in reality, this may be a mixed bag - for not every one may have grown up surrounded with love.

What can make a difference is if we are able to rise above our own experiences. This may not always be as straightforward as it sounds, for it is not always easy to break away from the tracks of past experiences laid down in our minds.

The reality is that we remain on a journey of not only understanding ourselves, but also to understand how to care for others. That being so, genuine love and care for others does have the power to breakthrough any barriers.

If there is love and a caring concern at the very core of any relationship, one can usually understand how best to make it right for the other. After all, the good Samaritan in the parable told by Christ, did not wait for the injured man on the road to articulate his plight (he probably couldn't in the semi conscious state he was). The Samaritan knew what needed to be done, without any verbal justifications or expectation of gratitude.

All said and done, the question still remains; Daddy or chips - love for person, who has cared for you, provided you chips or just chips in themselves. Love for someone who has control of everything in your life or for just something you can see in front of you. A child's lens might see the more immediate, but if the question was looked through the eyes of an adult, the scales would have tilted differently.

Understanding love and consideration for what it actually involves, means growing up.