

Lent: The love of God

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). These words present for us the fundamental premise upon which Christianity is built. In his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est,” Pope Benedict XVI writes, “God’s love for us is fundamental for our lives, and it raises important questions about who God is and who we are.”

As we reflect on the love of God, we are given many images in our Scripture of God as loving parent. We grow up learning that we are children of God. We learn at a very early age to call God “Our Father.” Through these images in Scripture we come to a greater sense of the relationship to which God calls us.

Not a mother myself, I am blessed with a niece and a nephew whom I have been close to their whole lives, and cannot imagine loving them more if they were my own.

One day we were at the family party after my nephew’s baptism and it was my turn to carry the bright 3-month-old around the bustling room while celebrating with relatives and friends. He was perfectly quiet and happy all day and a good sport when the priest had immersed him in the gently warmed water in the baptismal font.

As we wandered the rooms, I could feel his body begin to relax until finally his head was completely at rest against me. Then I could feel his weight totally settle against me. I was overwhelmed with the love I felt for this little boy and in awe of how wonderful it felt to feel his warmth so peacefully against me. It was a profound moment of awe – and love.

As it happened, the following Sunday we sang Psalm 131, the words, “Like a child rests in its mother’s arms, so will I rest in you.” In that moment I connected the magnitude of God’s love for each one of us with the memory of the overwhelming love I felt for my nephew falling asleep on my shoulder.

God’s love for each of us is beyond our imagination. In that moment, my awareness heightened by the week’s experiences, I came to a greater understanding that “I” was that trusting, sleepy baby and “I” was the one utterly dependent and resting in

the arms of God, who would hold and care for me out of an immeasurable love. “God is love.” It’s a phrase and a belief that I have held my entire life – but in that moment it was a new and powerful epiphany for me.

This is the first in a six-week series of articles on the spring session of Why Catholic? Margie Meyers is the director for Catholic Education Ministries of Western Maryland.