

We had lovely sharing the other day, from an ex-nurse, on the difference between being cared for in a functional way and being cared for in a loving way – that is, by someone who *really* cares for you. She said simply: *it's a matter of touch*: you can feel in the touch of the other person whether they really care for you, whether, that is, they are acting out of love rather than merely going through the motions, merely getting a job done with their eye and heart really elsewhere. Love, then, as not something ethereal, a nice idea, something that is merely a gloss on human living, but something that we can see and feel and sense and something, indeed, already at the core of our being, which gives life. We may despair that we often fail to live this reality to the full and feel diminished by our failings but, take heart, because this life is not firstly ours to give – it's God's work all the way down the line. It's what God *is* and what we *are* because of God, which is why we can use 'life' and 'love' interchangeably. God is our life. God is our love. Or, trespassing into the world of the mystics, we could just as well say, 'we are God's life, we are God's love', and something of that interchangeability is to be found in the words and the idea of today's feast. There's actually no beginning or end to it, this life or love which permeates everything. And part of our difficulty in discovering it – that is, God's love, that is, God – is, that we are in it 'as a fish is in the sea' as Sr Lucy so often liked to say. We are in it but we know it when we are loved, when we are in the presence, that is, of someone who knows how to love. This is Jesus for us, transmitting this love, this life, through word and action. The embodiment of God is love but known to us, as such, because we too are embodiments of God's love, only here because God first loved us – and still does. So don't despair. God has no other intention but to love us into being.

Br John Mayhead  
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour