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## **“Retrieve the Full Meaning and Dignity of Love” Detroit’s Cardinal Maida on Pope Benedict XVI’s Encyclical**

“Short of an infallible statement, papal encyclicals are the highest form of papal teaching and the first encyclical issued by a pope at the beginning of his pontificate has always been significant; it offers a general vision and sense of direction regarding his priorities and perspective. We are, therefore, most grateful for our Holy Father’s first encyclical— ‘God is Love.’ It is interesting that our Holy Father wants to emphasize the primacy of God’s love, the source sustaining energy for all life and for the Church. The very reason that we have a capacity and desire to love God and one another is because ‘God first loved us.’

“As we all know, ‘love’ is one of the most over used words in our culture today. Our Holy Father’s encyclical helps us to retrieve the full meaning and dignity of love—not just as a word but as a way of living. He reminds us that natural human love between a man and a woman is a beautiful and sacred thing but it needs discipline and maturity lest it lose its true dignity and purpose. Love needs to become ‘ecstasy’ in the sense of moving out of one’s self, drawing one toward the other in self sacrifice. Our Holy Father uses two well-known Greek words to describe two kinds of love—eros and agape; eros refers to our human love which always looks for a response. Agape refers to a selfless love which has no agenda. Our human love needs the complement of God’s divine love.

“The Holy Father’s encyclical is also helpful because he reminds us that love for God and the love of God must express themselves in acts of Christian social justice and charity. By this he means something much deeper and more profound than philanthropy of generosity; he is speaking about a love which looks for the face of Christ on every other person, especially those most in need.”

**Statement from  
Cardinal Adam Maida  
Archbishop of Detroit**

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