Love, the elusive

By Chaplain Norbert Karava

Although universal experience seems to show that we are irrevocably drawn by a need to love and be loved, it also seems to suggest that this is the thing, love, if love be measured in fidelity, is what we generally are least able to do.

We could point to many things which inhibit, if not debilitate love. The one I point to here is self-indulgence, that is, when self-indulgence becomes an entrenched pattern and motive of life. Self-indulgence is about psychosomatic pleasure, which is the object of what philosophy calls the "sensitive appetite." Although we have obvious and blatant pleasures, we also have the ability to enjoy many pleasures so subtle that we are not even aware of them, until we are deprived of them, and these are the ones that can so completely deceive us into thinking that we are "in love." For this reason, we find the company of certain persons charming and the company of others tedious, boring, annoying and sometimes intolerable; the former afford us the chemistry of the pleasant, and the latter, either the lack of pleasure or the chemistry of the unpleasant.

If man were capable only of the desiring of the sensitive appetite, there would be no loving for him: As long as we are about the pleasure of desiring the company of other people under the rubric of the sensitive appetite, the person who affords us a pleasure which is the object of the sensitive appetite is only a vessel of the particular pleasure we seek. "I love you," we say, but, "without your smoldering good looks, I'm not so sure." Persons, as such, and in themselves are never the object of the sensitive appetite, because persons are simply outside the class of things merely pleasant. And so, if there is such a thing as love, it must be a different sort of desiring.

In the case of man, for better or for worse, there is the desire of the rational appetite is called "the will" and it is distinct from mere desire in that its object is no longer the pleasant but the good. This is something possible only for rational creatures because they, unlike irrational ones, have minds that are capable of framing purpose. We quickly learn that the good is not identical with the pleasant, because we discover many goods not only void of pleasure but truly unpleasant to the point of being agonizing, beginning with eating your spinach here, to embracing your pregnancy, there.

Thus, the mind makes possible and sets the stage for love: Whereas the sensitive appetite always takes objective reality and packages it in the subjective realm of my experience of pleasure (no one can have my experience of sushi in my palate but me), the mind takes our subjective state of affairs and objectifies it. With the mind, we are no longer in the world of things as I can taste them, or things as a mere aspect of my experience, but things in themselves, independent of my experience. Thus, although we cannot share our palate-experience of sushi, we can share our ideas, as dangerous as that may be!

The mind is able to bring our desiring into this world of things in themselves, and when this happens, our desiring becomes willing. Thus, the first element of love is made possible: Love is the focus of the will on a reality outside ourselves. And here we must pack our bags; since our loving will is taking us outside ourselves, we must be willing to go beyond our pleasure. To the degree that we are capable of going beyond our desire and need for pleasure, we are able to enter the realm of the good, where love goes about its business, focused on realities outside itself. Thus, our need for pleasure is rightly construed as leash on our will's ability to love.

Once the loving will has brought us to the world of realities existing outside ourselves, what is its business there? We return to a unique quality of the rational mind, i.e., its ability to frame purpose. The mind is able to connect something or someone with a purpose which is framed as "good": "I will give flowers to my girlfriend" or "I will feed my dog" up to things like "I will give my kidney to that stranger." This is the business of the loving will – it intends the good to the beloved. Its purpose is: to give food to the dog, flowers to the girlfriend, a kidney to an anonymous homeless man or a tip to the waitress.

Here, the need for pleasure in addictive self-indulgence debilitates the activity of the loving will yet more completely: The goods that are willed to the beloved are not only beyond the pleasure of the sensitive appetite, (therefore not pleasant) but very often painful, and sometimes, even lethal. Thus it is that when we are about the business of love, we very often are about the business of surrendering pleasures we very much enjoy and would like to have, and embracing pains we very much would like to avoid. The more our character has been defined by self indulgence, the less we will be able to love, until we can reach a point where love no longer is a possibility, and all we are left with is ever increasing desires for ever diminishing pleasures.

Our addiction to pleasure facilitated in patterns of self-indulgence corrupts our entire perception of reality, especially our perception of other persons; hence arises the unspoken attitude of the mind that things and persons are valuable insofar as they serve our needs and purposes. We think we are about the business of love but really we are about the business of using, and this becomes clear when the people we "love" no longer afford us the things we need or the pleasures we require. They become boring and burdensome and annoying to us and we are sorely tempted to look for opportunities to be free of them and find other persons whom we will seduce into becoming our next surrogate vessels of pleasure, the next victims of our policy of exploitation begotten by our self-indulgence.

Would not here be a good place to look for the origin of our throw-away culture, in which we so easily discard things and people? What do we do with people once they are unpleasant or no longer useful? Here, the nursing home is a lighthouse of truth; on numerous levels, these are people truly beyond the realm of the pleasant, and the reason we find no attraction to go there, or even an aversion to, is because we desire much, and love but little.

This is perhaps what we find most wonderful and most disturbing about God: He embraces and gathers the exploited, discarded, bitten off, partially swallowed and spat out pieces of man the worn out and man no longer the beautiful and the pleasant, or even useful. Ah yes, and here it dawns on us: God is love.

Navy families to see school meal price increase in January

By MC1 (SW/AW) Monique K. Hilley, CNIC Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – Students headed back to school at Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) after the holidays will face an increase in student meal prices mandated by The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296).

Beginning January 3, 2012, students participating in the DoD Student Meal Program that pay full price for their lunches will begin paying 35 cents more per meal. The new prices will be $2.40 for elementary students and $2.55 for secondary students.

The January 2012 school meal cost increase marks the first time in over seven years that prices have risen.

The last price increase was ten cents per meal in 2004.

Households qualifying for the Free and Reduced Meal Program will not be impacted by the meal cost increases.

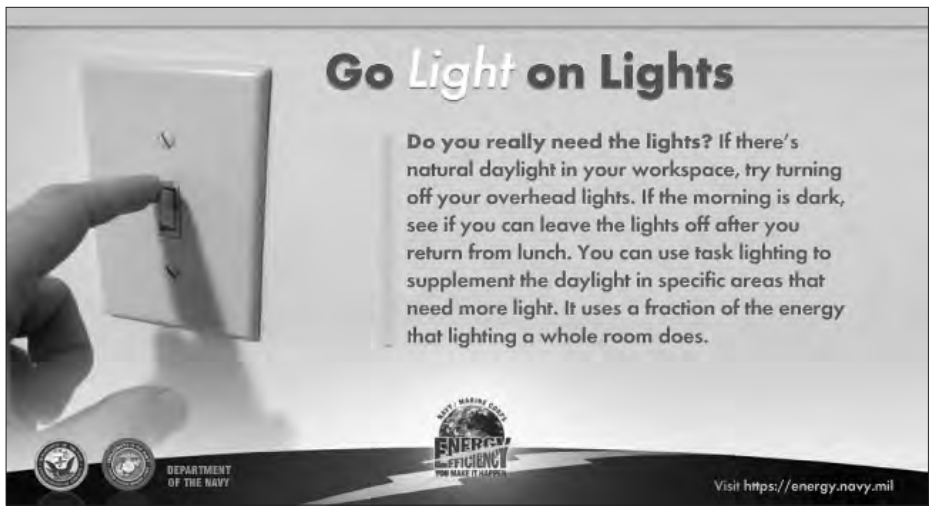
The cost of a reduced-price meal will remain unchanged at 40 cents per meal through school year 2013-2014.

The DoD Student Meal Program is an overseas school program authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act. It will remain a subsidized, USDA-approved and nutritious option for Navy families with school-age children.

"The Public Law requires a review and adjustment to student meal prices. This law, plus the fact that meal prices have not kept pace with the increased costs to provide meals during the past seven years have led to an increase in prices," said Charles S. Clymer Jr., Program Manager, Child and Youth Program, N913 Commander, Navy Installations Command Headquarters, N9, Fleet and Family Readiness. "Just like everything else, the cost of quality food, labor and equipment increase each year, and this increase will help ensure that school food authorities have funding available to support serving nutritious meals to all students."

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, signed into law by President Obama on December 13, 2010, mandates changes to school lunch and breakfast programs nationwide with a focus of improving child nutrition.

The legislation authorizes funding and sets policy for USDA's core child nutrition programs: the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

For more information on DoD meal programs, families are encouraged to contact your local school's Navy Liaison School Officer.

For more information about Commander, Navy Installations Command, visit us at www.cnic.navy.mil.