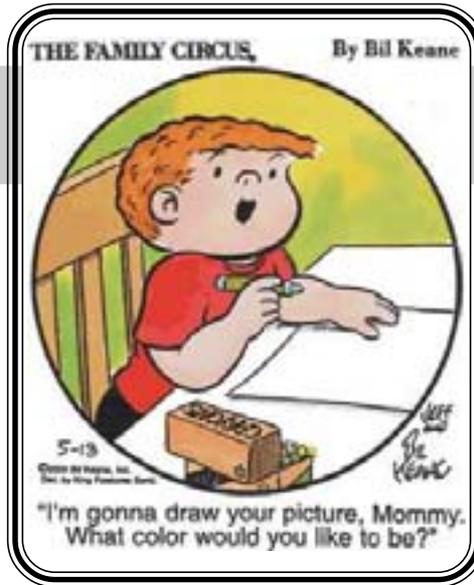


# “The Family Circus”



By Bil Keane

In the nearly 30 years that I've drawn the syndicated cartoon “The Family Circus,” I've learned a lot about love. I've found it in my own family, and frequently what I've observed has provided the basis for a cartoon with Billy, Dolly, Jeffy or PJ. But I make no secret about it—when it comes to love, my greatest inspiration, and the model for “Mommy,” has been my own wife, Thel.

We have five children (and now four grandchildren), and when they were younger, people often wondered how Thel managed with so many. I often wondered too. Whether she was soothing the hurt of a scraped knee, sitting in the audience at a school play, or helping

with homework at the kitchen table, Thel was always there for us. And the more she did for us, the more she seemed to have to give us.

That was how I came upon one of God's paradoxical laws of love. Real love doesn't come in limited,

finite amounts. It can't be used up so there is no more. Instead, in a manner that defies physics, the more love you give, the more you're able to give. Like enthusiasm that fosters enthusiasm, kindness that inspires kindness, cheerfulness that inevitably spreads, love increases when it's given away.

I tried to put all that in one of my cartoons. There is Mommy, a full bag of groceries in one hand, her purse in the other, and Billy, Dolly, Jeffy and PJ tugging at her knees. The woman at the left asks the question, “How do you divide your love among four children?” And Mommy's answer, real words to grow on:

“I don't divide it. I multiply it.”

## THE GREATEST OF ALL IS LOVE

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place,  
But have not love, I am a housekeeper, not a homemaker.  
If I live for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements,  
But have not love, my children learn of cleanliness, not godliness.  
Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh.  
Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window.  
Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk.  
Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.  
Love is present through the trials.  
Love reprimands, reprovcs, and is responsive.  
Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child,  
Then stands aside to let the child walk into adulthood.  
Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart.  
Before I became a mother, I took glory in my house of perfection.  
Now I glory in God's perfection of my children.  
As a mother, there is much I must teach my children,  
But the greatest of all is love.

—Author unknown (based on the Bible, 1 Corinthians chapter 13)

## *The Most Sacrificial*

The kind of love the world admires more than any other kind of love is not romantic love, it is not sexual love, it is not even love between husband and wife, although that can be admired also. What kind of love is the most respected?—A mother's love!

What makes a mother's love for her baby so marvelous?—It's totally sacrificial! She gives her all; she suffers for that baby. She gives up herself, her time, her strength, her sleep, and it costs something; it's a sacrifice.

What's the greatest love in the world?—Love in which you lay down your life for someone else. You sacrifice your own life and your own self for the sake of someone else. That's real love, God's kind of love, sacrificial love, spiritual love!

—David Brandt Berg