#1 Love

"Love" is a relatively new word in the human vocabulary. The dictionary defines love as "a strong affection for another arising out of kinship." Some of the words that indicate love are: cherishing, devotion, fondness and tenderness. Love is often wonderfully expressed in poetic form.

When asked to describe the meaning of love, people have a difficult time. With study, I began to understand why. Most people, when talking about love, go into a deeply emotional place. Those who had been loved could easily describe what it felt like. For instance, when I love someone, I feel warmth spread throughout my body. As I looked into their eyes, I imagined them watching a vast stream of memories flowing by. Many could not switch from the feeling state to choose words that express love in a rational way.

When I asked my good friend Michael to explain love, he paused and became reflective. His voice tone softened as he used feeling words: *"I feel a mix of attraction, affection and admiration for the ones I care for. Love is a special bond, a choice, an availability combined with a deep honesty that is able to endure anything life can throw at you."*

People have told me how important love is to them yet how hard it is to find—and that sheds light on one of love's mysteries. Love remains elusive until you clarify what it means to you. Each of us must find our own way of discovering this meaning.
I spent time asking family and friends to share their thoughts and feelings about love. I liked my mother's response to: What is love? *"I love different people in different ways and for a variety of reasons. I love them for who they are. Because each person is so distinct, I love each one differently."*

I attended La Salle High School, an all boys school taught by male instructors. Most of my teachers were Christian Brothers, an order committed to spiritual teaching. I liked most of my teachers because they treated me with respect. These men understood me, accepted me and encouraged me. They became models for me of the kind of man I wanted to become.

Many of the threads of virtues I have today originated from the presence of these good teachers. My high school experience was rather unique because every day we had a class on religion. In my senior year, Brother Kenneth asked the class to discuss the subject of love. By the end of the week we came up with the following definition: "Love is wanting what is best for the other person."

I liked this concept of wanting what is best for the well-being of another. Loving someone means supporting what he or she feels is optimum for themselves. Love is a decision to care for another's happiness as we would our own. Both the culture we grow up in and our life experiences contribute to how we view love. Our individual experiences with the topic of love help us to define what love means to us.