

**QUINQUAGESIMA 2017**  
**SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**1 COR. 13.1-13**



LOVE...we use the word often in church...we hear about God's love for us in giving us his Son Jesus so we might have eternal life. How are we to apply God's love for us in our own lives...how do we show love for others?

Jesus tells us if we love him we must keep his commandments. He tells us all of the commandments are summed up in the Great Commandment...love God first...love others even more than we love ourselves.

Saint Paul was a man who did not hold back on words...or actions. When he wrote to the Church in Corinth to try to help them solve their parochial mess...he did so out of love...tough love...selfless love.

Love, Saint Paul writes, is patient and kind, is not jealous or conceited or proud, doesn't behave badly, doesn't hold grudges, doesn't encourage lies, is happy with the truth, never gives up...and its faith, hope and patience never fail.

The kind of love Saint Paul is talking about is the visceral love that should govern everything we do. We don't get that kind of love from the world...it is God's gift to us...beyond anything this world has to offer. Paul expects us to use God's gift of love as he intended...LOVE...is what we are all about.

Love is what binds all Christians together and all other gifts depend on its application. Christian love is simply selfless concern for the good of others! God wants what's best for us...we should want what's best for others. Our love for others must be the same UNCONDITIONAL LOVE Jesus has for us.

The life of Saint Joseph Parish...who and what we are all about...must always be defined by our love for others inside and outside of our parish. Love is the action that makes this place Saint Joseph Parish...and not just a collection of people coming together on Sunday.

We talk a lot about love and "those Corinthians" and Paul's frustration over their antics. Did they get the message? Did they respond to Paul's call to get their house in

order? Some did...some didn't! If we are paying attention to what Paul is saying...we must realize he is also writing to us...and he is writing about us...because of his love for us.

Do we find ourselves lacking in the patience and kindness department? Do we get jealous? Do we think we're better than everyone else? Does pride keep getting in our way? Do we hold grudges? Do we enjoy telling lies and manipulating others to get our own way? Have we given up on ourselves or others?

Lent begins this coming Wednesday...Ash Wednesday...a good time for us to take a look in the mirror and get a better understanding of God's plan for us...who we are and where we are going...and what areas of our lives need some improvement.

Paul tells us it's time for us to act like the grown-ups we are. We're not children any more...we should not get carried away by childish thoughts or actions...we should try to get a better image of ourselves...not the reverse image of a mirror...we want to see ourselves as God see us...the real us!

Paul tells us the three greatest gifts God has given us are faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is LOVE. Faith is more than saying Jesus has saved us...faith must be acted upon. For faith to be real it must produce good works...without which Saint James says it is meaningless. Hope is what the writer to the Hebrews says we confidently expect but have yet to experience...heaven.

Faith and hope are an important part of our lives...they sustain us now during this lifetime...and like love...are actions. Faith and hope are totally dependent upon love...the kind of love that can only come from the heart...the visceral love Paul so passionately talks about in his letters.

Love is the greatest gift because it lasts forever. Faith and hope will not be necessary when we get to heaven and see God face to face...but love will last forever. And we will love God and each other perfectly for all time.

LOVE...is more than a nice word or feeling. It's God's gift to us. Let's open up the gift of God's LOVE and put it to good use.

