

**QUINQUAGESIMA 2018**  
**SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
***1 COR. 13.1-13***



When we were children we saw the world differently from our parents. The world was a place of adventure created just for us. A cardboard box could be a house, a train, a spaceship, anything we imagined.

Then one day we discovered we were all grown up. We left our childhood behind...expect perhaps for photos or a cherished toy...which we keep in a cardboard box on a shelf in the closet.

Our parents loved us and we loved them. We learned no matter how much we misbehaved...their love for us never wavered. We learned about God's love for us in Church. And we heard what Saint Paul says about love...it never dies...the love our parents had for us and our love for them...lives in our hearts.

We talk a lot about love in Church...every Mass begins with these words...Love God above all else...Love others like we want to be loved. Christian love is more than how we feel about someone...it is acting in their best interest...just as Jesus acted for us?

Saint Paul's sermon on Faith, Hope and Love is his definitive statement about Christian Love. Faith means to believe in God and trust Jesus. Hope means we look forward to that which we have not yet seen...heaven. For our Faith and Hope to be real...they must be grounded in Love.

Faith and Hope are God's gifts for us to use during this lifetime...we will not need them in heaven. Love...Saint Paul tells us is eternal...it is forever. We experience God's love for us and our love for each other now...and it is a love that will be with us for all time. There is no expiration date on Christian love!

We often hear Paul's sermon on Faith, Hope and Love read at the beginning of a Nuptial Mass...the Marriage Liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer* commences by telling us the Sacramental Union that exists between a man and woman...symbolizes the mystical union between Jesus and the Church...a union that will be consummated in heaven.

The love Jesus has for us is unconditional. A husband and wife are expected to love each other unconditionally...they are supposed to want what is best for each other. It's the same with each of us...we are expected to love each other unconditionally...and want what is best for others...within and outside the Church. Our love for each other must be active...not passive. Christian love simply put is selfless concern for the good of others...and we take our cue from Jesus.

Saint Paul tells us love lasts forever...the reflection we get when we see ourselves in a mirror will not. Mirrors in Paul's time were made of polished metal...the reflection was fuzzy and unclear. Even with the glass mirrors we have today...what we see is not the real us...it is a false image without a heart. The heart is where Christian love originates.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Season of Lent. Lent is the time when we should take a good look at the reflection we see in the mirror. What do we see? Are we practicing Christian love as we should...is our love unconditional...or do we want to love God and others on our terms? Do we talk, feel and act like children? Do we need to grow up? Maybe it's time for us to make some changes?

Jesus tells us in John's Gospel he is giving us a new commandment...to LOVE one another. His first commandment is to love God. Jesus tells us if we love him we will keep his commandments. We will hear his explicit command to love each other just as much as he loves us on Maundy Thursday.

Loving God above all else and loving others as we should is almost impossible...without some serious help! But...we MUST try...and we can only do that when we open our hearts to God's love.

We're not children any more but God wants us to believe in him and trust Jesus in the same way we believed in and trusted our parents to do what was best for us.

And we must love others...with the kind of unconditional love that can only come from the heart!

