

QUINQUAGESIMA 2020
SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
1 CORINTHIANS 13.1-13



Faith, Hope, and Love are the greatest gifts we have. And the greatest of these gifts is Love!

First Corinthians 13 is one of the most quoted, and least understood of Paul's letters, especially when it comes to the subject of Christian Love. It is, however, anything but sweet and sentimental. It is an example of Paul's "tough love" approach to the Corinthian Church. They had forgotten the real meaning of Christian Love! Paul is telling it like it is to the Corinthians and it is a message we want to hear and respond to in our own lives.

The word the King James Version translates as *charity* is translated in other versions of the Bible as *love*. People often attach an emotional meaning to the words love and charity. Our emotions are also gifts from God but Christian love is all about ACTION...Christian love is dynamic...its about our love for God and love for others.

Christian Love is selfless and unconditional. Christian Love never asks the question "What am I going to get out of this action"? When we do what's best for others, the doing is the reward...we shouldn't look for anything else. It's the reward because we know in our hearts we are doing what Jesus told us to do: Love others just a much as he loves us.

We don't have to look any further than the crucifix on the Altar to know just how far Jesus was willing to go to show his love for us and the whole world. He never asked the question "What am I going to get out of doing this"? He knew what was waiting for him...a cross! He also knew this was the reason he came to us, first as the little baby in the manger, then as the man who died for us so we could be saved. God learned to walk among us; and made it possible we might one day walk with him in heaven.

It is unlikely any of us here today will ever have to face death because of our belief in Jesus Christ and our claim to be Christians. We should ask ourselves would we be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for Christ. Paul and the other early-day Christians knew they risked imprisonment and death because they were spreading the Gospel message of Love.

They were doing what Jesus told them to do: they showed their love for others just as much as he showed his love for them.

Jesus always did what was best for others and he never expected to be congratulated for the things he did. He knew it was the reason he came to us, to make life better for us. In the Gospel he heals a blind man. People in those days thought a person who was blind was being punished for a specific sin either he or one of his ancestors had committed. Jesus shows this way of thinking is defective. The blind man asked Jesus to give him his sight, and Jesus did just that.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. We will journey through Lent with our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on the cross on the Altar and the awesome gift of Love Jesus has left for us in his Body and Blood. We will spend time doing some honest soul-searching and realigning our priorities. A good place to start that soul-searching is Paul's litany about Christian Love in the Epistle and how we should put that Love into action. We need to pay attention to what he says.

Ask ourselves where we need to make some improvements in your spiritual lives? Have we said something bad about someone? Have we been mean to someone? Have we been jealous? Have we been dishonest? Have we held grudges? Have we refused to try and fix a broken relationship?

Christian Love does mean saying we are sorry! We need to follow Paul's instructions and turn away from those behaviors that separate us from God's Love. We need to look at the Cross and let Jesus heal our whole being like he did the blind man? If we do that, we will begin to see ourselves as God sees us, and not in a fuzzy and distorted way.

Faith, Hope, and Love are the greatest gifts God has given us. And the greatest of these gifts is Love! It's time to take ACTION!

