

X Trinity 2020
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
1 Cor. 12.1-11



Those Corinthians...they are at it again! Our friend Saint Paul founded the Church in Corinth. He had a vested interest in its spiritual welfare. When he heard the Sunday Liturgy had become a free-for-all, he knew he had to take action quickly to try to restore order.

Many members of the Corinthian Church came from pagan backgrounds. They set a high value on all manifestations of the Spirit as both evidence of supernatural power and true spiritual conversion. Unfortunately, this led to much confusion and disorder in worship.

Paul was not happy when he heard about what was happening in Corinth. He wrote to the Corinthians and told them he wanted them to know the truth about spiritual gifts. He told them not to backslide into worshipping lifeless idols. He told them spiritual gifts are meant to build up the Church community and are not to be used as a test of a person's holiness.

It's tempting to make fun of "those Corinthians" for getting confused and letting things get out of control. We miss the point if we don't see Paul's words are directed to us just as they were to the fledgling Corinthian Christians 2000 years ago. Paul also wants us to know the truth about spiritual gifts...so we don't get fooled.

All of us received the life-changing gift of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized and became members of the Church, the Body of Christ. He has been present at work in and through our lives from the very moment we were baptized. The Holy Spirit goes to work opening our hearts, minds and souls and helps us discern the truth about our faith in Jesus Christ.

The most important gift of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself. He is at work changing our lives and the lives of those around us. He is at work inside and outside the Church. All of us at Saint Joseph Parish have gifts to offer. Each of us contributes to the life and work of the Parish. Saint Paul reminds us that while not all of us have the

same function in the Church, we all do our work under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit. Together we build up the Church.

The current pandemic has redefined our daily lives including how and when we can meet in person for Mass. Saint Joseph Parish, like many Anglican Catholic parishes throughout the country, has had to get creative in reaching out to parishioners and friends who need assurance they are still connected to the Parish. We should see the Sunday Facebook Mass as another gift of the Spirit putting technology to good use.

The Holy Spirit also operates outside of the Parish in the lives of those who have influenced our lives and changed them for the better? Think about our parents, who loved us and raised us. Think about the teachers who took the time to help us understand difficult subjects. For me, math was the hardest subject. Think about the employers who gave us jobs in tough times, when it seemed no one else cared. Think about our friends today who are always there for us, in good times and in bad times, and the love, joy and hope they bring us by their presence. Think about the stranger who showed us kindness and hospitality. They too, were inspired to take action by the same Holy Spirit who inspires each of us in the work we do.

Our job is to try to figure out what God wants us to do with our lives and then take action. We can start by putting our effort into the three special gifts all of us have: Faith, Hope, and Love. Love is strongest of the three gifts because it never dies, and it is the gift that ultimately builds up the Church. All other special gifts are based on Love and everything we do must be motivated by Love, the same unconditional Love Jesus shows toward us.

It's not just about "those Corinthians". Paul reminds us it is the same Holy Spirit working within each of us giving us different gifts as he wishes...to build up our own spiritual lives...and to build up the Church.

