

**QUINQUAGESIMA 2021**  
**SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**I COR. 13.1-13 ST. LUKE 18.31-43**



Faith, Hope and Love...define the basis of our relationship with God and each other. Faith is necessary for us to experience Hope and practice Love. Love...Saint Paul tells us...is the greatest gift...because it never dies. Christian Love is forever.

We say we have Faith...we believe what the Scriptures teach us about Jesus is true. We say we have Hope...in that which we have not yet experienced...life in heaven with Jesus. We talk about Love...more than an emotion or a personal attachment.

Christian Love is more than a temporary feeling...it is unending and uncompromising. Christian Love is an action...the kind of action that is self-sacrificing...the same kind of self-sacrificing action that led Jesus to the Cross. Jesus always did what was best for others. Christian Love often requires we put our own interests aside...and do what's best for others.

Paul's Letters to the Corinthians deal specifically with Love being the underpinning of everything we do in the Church...without which everything we do becomes nothing more than a "loud gong"...a constant and offensive self-serving noise.

Paul's Litany in today's Epistle about what Christian Love isn't is countered by what Christian Love should be. Inspired by Paul's Letter about Faith, Hope and Love...Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome, wrote a Letter to those Corinthians about 30 years after Paul's death:

*... "Let the one truly possessed by the love of Christ keep his commandments. Who can express the binding power of divine love? Who can find words for the splendor of its beauty? Beyond all description are the heights to which it lifts us. Love unites us to God; "it cancels innumerable sins," has no limits to its endurance, bears everything patiently. Love is neither servile nor arrogant. It does not provoke schisms or form cliques, but always acts in harmony with others. By it all God's chosen ones have been sanctified; without it, it is impossible to please him."...*

The operative word in Clement's Letter is Love! While Clement's Letter was addressed to the Church in Corinth...it was read in many other

parish churches...much in the same way Pastoral Letters from our own bishops are read in Anglican Catholic parishes today. This gives us a clear indication we should pay attention to what Saint Paul and Saint Clement are saying.

Paul's letter about Faith, Hope and Love is often read at a Nuptial Mass. The Exhortation read at the beginning of Holy Matrimony in the *Book of Common Prayer* reminds us the joining together of the Man and Woman symbolizes the mystical union between Christ and his Church. Husband and wife are supposed to love each other and want what is best for each other...just as Jesus loves us and wants what is best for us. That means sacrificial love is also the foundation of Christian Marriage.

What Saint Paul is asking us to do in today's Epistle is take a good hard look at ourselves in a mirror...what do we see? We don't see our true selves...we get a distorted image of our selves and those around us...we don't see the whole picture. Some things we see clearly; other things we don't see so clearly. In the end...we will see ourselves in the same way God sees us...with perfect clarity.

The blind beggar in the Gospel couldn't see at all. Ostracized by the community and told to shut up by the people around him...he shouted even more loudly calling Jesus "Son of David"...a title for the Messiah. Though he was blind...he was able to "see" Jesus for who he really was...and asked Jesus to let him see again. His faith was strong and he knew Jesus had the ability to restore his sight.

We're about to commence the Season of Lent. What Saint Paul and Saint Clement are asking us to do is get beyond the spiritual blindness that keeps us looking at the distorted image of ourselves in the mirror. They ask us to stop acting like spoiled children and start acting like mature adults. We want to see ourselves as God's grown up children who are completely dependent on his love and compassion and mercy.

Faith and Hope teach and sustain us during this lifetime. They must lead us into practicing the kind of uncompromising, sacrificial, Love, Jesus practiced.

And we will see clearly...now and forever!

