

Quinquagesima 2022
Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
1 Cor. 13.1-13 St. Luke 18.31-43



What do we see when we look at ourselves in a mirror? What we see is a reflection...a phantom image...not our true selves. In Paul's time...mirrors were polished pieces of metal. They showed fuzzy and distorted images...not a true image. We want to be seen as God sees us...we want to be seen as our true selves.

Paul's famous sermon on Christian Love is often quoted and greatly misunderstood. It was intended to get partisan groups in the Corinthian Church back on track...but it applies to us as well. Paul's message is simple and direct: Everything we do in the Church and the World means nothing...unless it is firmly grounded in Christian Love.

Paul tells us the three greatest gifts we have are faith, hope and charity (or love). They are the greatest gifts from God because they define what it means to be a Christian. Love is the greatest of these gifts because it never dies...it is eternal. We often think of charity only as acts of kindness to others...giving food, clothes and money to those in need. Christian Love is an action...we may feel good about what we do for others...and that's not a bad thing. But Christian Love is more about doing what is good and right and best for the other person...than how we feel.

Christian Love is Action! It emanates from the heart and is selfless and unconditional. We should never ask ourselves what we might get out of the actions we take. The actions themselves are the rewards. They are rewards because we know in our hearts we are following Jesus' example in loving others as much as he did and Paul's reminder there is no better way we can honor and love Jesus by trying to love as he did.

Jesus 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 walked among us, so we could learn to walk with him.

This parish has a strong tradition of avoiding partisan politics...whether church or secular.

But none of us are unaffected emotionally or spiritually from the attacks of this past week in Ukraine that has sent shock waves around the world. We may ask ourselves where is God is all of this. He is there...and he doesn't like what he sees. Everyone here today will have his or her own take on things. We all have the ability to do good or evil. Christian Love compels us to do that which is good...always and everywhere and at all times. And we must continue to pray for peace.

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. The blind man in the Gospel "saw" Jesus for who he was...he called him Son of David...a title for the Messiah. His physical blindness didn't mean he was spiritually blind. Other people told him to be quiet...he would not. Jesus answered the man's plea and healed him...he was able to see again.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Season of Lent. We will begin a spiritual journey with our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on the cross on the High Altar. The journey will culminate with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross on Good Friday...his ultimate act of love for us. We will spend some time during Lent doing some honest soul-searching. A good place to start that soul-searching is Paul's Sermon on Christian Love.

Where do 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 onto 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 us 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.

Paul tells us Faith, Hope, and Love are the greatest gifts we have. The greatest of these gifts is Love. Christian love lasts forever... it is always with us during this life...and it will be with us in the life to come!

