

Quinquagesima 2023
Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
1 Cor. 13.1-13 St. Luke 18.31-43



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. While faith, hope and love are directly connected to each other...faith and hope are subordinate to love.

Faith is absolutely essential. There would be no Christianity...no Church...no 9:00 o'clock Sunday Mass at Saint Joseph Parish...without faith. Faith leads us to Jesus. And faith helps us run the race of life Paul says we run to win.

Hope is God's special gift to help us face the challenges everyday life brings. Hope helps us cope with adverse conditions. Hope helps us celebrate joyous occasions. Hope keeps us focused on what the writer of Hebrews says we wait for with eager expectation but have not yet experienced...heaven.

Love...is the greatest gift above everything else. Without love...faith, hope and anything else we do has little meaning. And Paul is not talking about friendship, romantic or emotional love...he is talking about a dynamic and active love that comes from the heart.

The Latin word **caritas** and the Greek word **agape** define Christian love. The word charity found in the KJV of this morning's Epistle is translated as *love* in other versions of the Bible.

Christian Love never asks the question "What are we going to get out of this action"? When we do what's best for others, the doing should be enough of a reward. It's the reward because we know in our hearts we are doing what Jesus told us to do: Love others just as much as he loves us.

Christian love is "God" love...God's love for us...our love for God...our love for each other. Our love for each other must be unconditional...the kind of love God shows us...the kind of love Jesus shows when he meets people who ask for his help.

C. S. Lewis wrote extensively about Christian love. In his book **The Four Loves**, he

uses **agape** to describe what he believes is the highest level of love known to humanity: a selfless love that is passionately committed to the well-being of others.

In his book **The Problem with Pain**, Lewis writes...

..."God loves us not because we are loveable but because He is love. And because He is love, He can only will what is best for us, which is to be transformed into a being of holy love like Himself. He will settle for nothing less. As we meditate on God's love for us, especially in the cross of Christ, our love for God and our neighbor will increase, and our hearts will become more and more like God's — filled with love."

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...now and in the Live to Come. In the Gospel he heals a blind man. In those days people thought a person who was blind or had some other illness had committed a horrible sin and were being punished by God. Jesus shows this isn't true. 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 some time doing some honest soul-searching.

We can start our journey to the cross by paying attention to Paul's sermon about faith, hope and love. There is a line in Erich Segal's 1970 Novel *Love Story* that became popular..."Love means never having to say you're sorry." That line is the antithesis of Christian love. Christian love means saying we're sorry...and meaning it.

Have we been mean to someone? Have we been jealous, dishonest, irritable or held grudges? Have we refused to try and fix broken relationship? Now is the time to make some positive changes...dynamic love-driven changes.

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