

Quinquagesima 2024  
Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*1 Cor. 13.1-13 St. Luke 18.31-43*



LOVE...a word we hear often used in church. The Epistles and Gospel talk about love. But what is Christian love? Christian love is not primarily about our emotions or how we feel. Christian love is an action!

This morning's Epistle is Paul's famous sermon on faith, hope and love. It is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied of Paul's letters. It is often read at weddings...but it is anything but sweet and sentimental...it is an example of Paul's "tough love" approach to his ministry. In Christian Marriage...the husband and wife often have to make sacrifices for each other. Making sacrifices for other is Christian love.

The kind of love Paul is talking about is "unconditional" love. It is not a self-centered love. It is a love that reaches out. Paul makes it clear unconditional love begins when we place another person's needs above our own. Christian Love never asks the question "What am I going to get out of this action"? When we place someone else's needs above our own...we are doing what Jesus commands us to do...love others just as much as he loves us.

We don't have to look any further than the cross on the Altar to know how much Jesus loves us. His sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate love-action. He never asked the question "What am I going to get out of doing this"? He knew what was waiting for him...a cross! Jesus, the Son of God, walked among us teaching and healing...everything he did was an act of love...for us.

Jesus never said no to anyone who asked for his help. The blind man in this morning's Gospel came to Jesus with a simple request..."I want to see again". In those days people thought someone born blind or had some other physical challenge, was being punished by God for a sin they or one of their ancestors had committed. The crowd walking along with Jesus tried to shut the blind man up. He was persistent in trying to get Jesus' attention. He shouted louder calling Jesus "Son of David" and to have mercy on him. Jesus restored the man's sight and told him his faith had made him well.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the commencement of the Season of Lent. We should do everything we can to make this an "active" 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.

Lent is a time to take on some spiritual disciplines. We will read and discuss Penitential Psalms during the Sunday Discussion Group. Morning Prayer will be read Wednesday's during Lent. This will give us an opportunity to pray for Mission and Evangelism. We should spend time in quiet meditation. And we need to do some honest soul-searching.

Our friend Paul, the man who never minced words, gives us an Action Plan for Lent in the Epistle...

*...Love means we are patient and kind; we are not jealous, conceited or proud,  
...Love means we should not behave badly,  
...Love means we are not selfish or irritable,  
...Love means we don't keep a record of wrongdoings,  
...Love means we are not happy with evil; we are happy with the truth,  
...Love means we never give up and faith, hope and patience never let us down,  
...Love is not temporary; Love lasts forever.*

Paul tells us when we were children we viewed the world through a child's eyes. Now that we are adults...we have a different perception of things. But our human nature gets in the way of us seeing God and ourselves as clearly as we should.

When we look at our face in a mirror...we see a reflection or our face looking back at us. It's not a true image of who we are. In Paul's time, mirrors were made of polished metal. The image people saw of themselves was fuzzy and distorted. It's still the same with us today. We don't have the big picture...but at the end of time we will see things clearly...as clearly as God sees us now.

LOVE...is the basis for our Lenten Action Plan. God has given us three great gifts...faith hope and love...and the greatest of these is LOVE!

