

Quinquagesima 2025
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 of the Holy Spirit. We did not earn them. God gave them to us because he wants us to have them and use them according to his plan. And the greatest of these gifts is Love!

Our friend Saint Paul's Sermon on Faith, Hope and Love is often quoted and perhaps the most misunderstood of his letters. The word the King James Version translates as charity is derived from the Latin *caritas* (CARE-itas), and means "love". The Greek equivalent word is *agape*.

We usually think of the word "love" as having to do with feelings or emotions. While those qualities are not entirely absent from *caritas/agape* love, the kind of love Paul is talking about is dynamic unconditional love that comes from the heart. *Caritas/agape* love is an action...motivated by a selfless concern for the good of others.

Paul's "Love Sermon" primarily addresses the problems of corporate worship in the Corinthian Church, but his message applies to us as well. Certain people with spiritual gifts such as "speaking in tongues", "prophesying", "teachings" and "interpretations", were creating confusion among their fellow parishioners. They could not see how their actions had made worship disorganized and disorderly. All of these gifts are worthless, Paul tells us, unless we have love.

What is Christian Love? In his Letter, Paul gives us a list of eight things Christian Love embraces and eight things Christian Love resists:

- *Love embraces patience...Love resists jealousy*
- *Love embraces kindness...Love resists conceit and pride*
- *Love embraces truth...Love resists arrogance*
- *Love embraces resilience...Love resists rudeness*
- *Love embraces faith...Love resists selfishness*
- *Love embraces hope...Love resists anger*
- *Love embraces endurance...Love resists resentment*
- *Love embraces perseverance...Love resists evil*

Whatever special gifts we possess during this lifetime are intended to build up the whole Church body now...they are temporary and will not last. Even faith and hope, which rely on unconditional love, will not last beyond our lifetimes here on earth. Love, however, will last forever. Love will never die. Love is with us now and it will be with us throughout eternity.

Our job now is to pay attention to Paul's message. He tells us when he was a child he talked and acted like a child, but now that he's all grown up, he has no more use for childish things. He is talking about spiritual growth and maturity. When we look at our image in a mirror we only see a reflection...an incomplete picture of who we are. We are to continue to grow in our understanding of love and keep maturing our faith. Even our understanding of God is imperfect. But in the end, we will see God in person, face-to-face, and we will see ourselves as he sees us. There will be no more empty reflections. Everything will be clear.

The Gospel records Jesus telling his disciples it's time for them to go to Jerusalem to complete his mission to redeem mankind. When they were near Jericho, a blind man begging outside the city heard Jesus was passing and cried out for help. Mark gives the man a name, Bartimaeus. His blindness would have made him an outcast. He calls Jesus "Son of David"...a title for the Messiah. Jesus restored his sight. Jesus always acted with unconditional love. He never refused to help someone who asked to be healed. He always acted for the good of others...especially the outcasts and disenfranchised.

This Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and the commencement of the Season of Lent. We are about to begin a journey with Jesus to the cross. This is the time for us to take a good hard look at ourselves in the mirror. Have we "left undone those things we should have done"? Have we "done those things we should not have done"? This is the time for us to listen to our friend, Paul, and put away childish things. This is the time for us to ask God to help us see our way more clearly.

Faith, hope and love are the three greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit. And the greatest of these is love, which is with us now and will be with us forever!

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