

Quinquagesima

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. It is, however, anything but sweet and sentimental. It is an example of Paul's "tough love" approach to the Church in Corinth. They had forgotten the real meaning of Christian Love!! Paul is telling it like it is to the Corinthians and it is a message we want to hear and put into action in our own lives.

The word the King James Bible translates as charity is translated in other versions of the bible as love. People often attach a sentimental or emotional meaning to the words love and charity. We "love" a good book. "Charity" is something that we do to help people who need clothes, food, or money... people who are less fortunate than we are. We feel good when we're reading that book or giving to people in need. Feeling good about what we do is not a bad thing. But Christian love is more about doing what is good and right and best for the other person.

Christian love is selfless and unconditional. Christian love never asks the question, “What am I going to get out of this action?” When we do what is best for others, the doing is the 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.

We don’t have to look any further than the cross on the altar to know just how far Jesus was willing to go to show His love for us and the whole world. He never asked the question, “What am I going to get out of this?” He knew what was waiting for him, a painful death upon the cross. He also knew this was the reason He came to us, first as a 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.

It is unlikely any of us here today will ever have to face death because of our belief in Jesus Christ and our claim to be Christians. Paul and the other early-day Christians knew they risked imprisonment, if they were lucky. However the common punishment was death because they were spreading the Gospel message of Love. They were doing what Jesus told them to do:

they showed their love for others just as much as He showed His love for them.

Jesus always did what was best for others and He never expected to be congratulated for the things that He did. He knew it was the reason that He came to us. In the Gospel He heals the blind man. People in those days thought a person who was blind or who had some other illness had committed a horrible sin and were being punished by God. Jesus showed that 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 us in his Body and Blood. We will spend some time doing some honest soul-searching. A good place to start that soul-searching is Paul's litany about Christian Love in the Epistle and how we should put that Love into action. We need to pay attention to what he says.

Where do you need to make some improvements in your spiritual life? Have you said something bad about someone? Have

you been mean to someone? Have you been jealous? Have you been dishonest? Have you held on to grudges? Have you refused to try and fix a broken relationship? Christian Love does mean that you have to say that you 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 as 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. We will show we are Christians by our selfless and unconditional Love.

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