

Readings Quinquagesima Sunday

1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Luke 18: 31-43

Then he took the Twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon; and after they have scourged him they will kill him, but on the third day he will rise." But they understood nothing of this; the word remained hidden from them and they failed to comprehend what he said.

Now as he approached Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging, and hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" The people walking in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me!" Then Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He replied, "Lord, please let me see." Jesus told him, "Have sight; your faith has saved you." He immediately received his sight and followed him, giving glory to God. When they saw this, all the people gave praise to God.

Measuring our Love

Quinquagesima – 1 Cor. 13: 1-13 / Lk. 18: 31-43

Ave Maria Catholic Church, February 27, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul answers a most fundamental question as he explains what love is. This is a most fundamental question because, as St. John of the Cross teaches: *“At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.”*

At the evening of our life, at the moment of judgment, the fundamental question will not be how much money or how many possessions we had, how many degrees or how much honor we received. The question that we will hear will only be one and simple: how did we love?

To love or not to love: that is the fundamental question. Our eternal happiness depends on that question. For this reason, knowing what love means is so crucial for us.

Then, we must ask: what is love?

Love is a virtue that goes beyond the performing of actions. As we learn from Saint Paul in 1 Cor. 13, one can speak in angelic tongues, prophesy and reveal great mysteries, move mountains through faith, distribute all one’s possessions to the poor, and even offer one’s body to be burned, but still have no love. And Saint Paul clearly says that all those actions, without love, profit nothing.

Then, we learn that love is more than performing certain actions. We also learn that love gives meaning and value to those actions. Without love those actions count as nothing, but with love they become very profitable. We learn too that even the most insignificant action, such as giving a cup of water with love, is rewarded. (See: Matthew 10:42).

Love is more than a sentiment, a strong feeling, or an emotion. Some people mistake love with feeling. Then falling in love means for them to have fun together. There is nothing wrong with sharing joyful and pleasant moments with the people we love, but to define love as “having fun” does not do it justice. Love is something more profound and divine.

Because we were created in the image and likeness of God, we have a spiritual soul with intellect and will. In His image, we know and love. We are able to know what is good and we are drawn by goodness. Then, we understand that love is a spiritual quality present in our souls.

Now, love is more than a natural perfection. Love is a virtue and a gift coming from God. In his letter to the Romans, St Paul tells us: *“The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us,”* (Rom 5:5). This love that we are trying to define is divine in nature. And this supernatural love plays a fundamental role in

our lives, as St. Thomas explains when he teaches that love is not only “the noblest of all the virtues,” but it is also “the form of all the virtues, because through love the acts of all the other virtues are ordered to their right and ultimate end,” (*Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 23, aa. 6 and 8).

If we define love as our noblest moral quality, it will not be difficult to conclude that this highest moral quality must lead us closer to God, our Creator, and to our neighbors in God.

Now, we can also ask: How is love manifested?

This is how true love is manifested. According to St. Bernard: “*Divine love leads to an unceasing search for God, to continual work for Him . . . It gives a true thirst for God; it makes us run quickly toward Him; it gives us holy courage and fearless audacity; it attaches us inseparably to God; it burns and consumes us with a very sweet ardor for Him; finally, in heaven, it likens us completely to Him,*” (St Bernard, *The Canticle of Canticles*, V, 8; VIII, 6).

Love looks for union or communion. Then, God invites us not only to know Him but also to live in Him, to be one with Him. That is what love looks for and that is the ultimate desire of our hearts.

When we love God in this way, necessarily and consequently, we will love our neighbor in God and for God. If we truly love God, how can we not love what God loves? How can we not love people who were created to God’s image and redeemed by Christ?

Jesus makes this request of love explicit, when He says: “*Love one another as I have loved you,*” (John 15: 12). “*By this shall all men know that you are My disciples,*” (John 13:35). In other words, we are invited to love as God loves us, as Jesus loves us.

How can we describe the love of neighbor?

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes true love in this way: “*Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,*” (1 Cor. 13: 4-7).

Is it possible to love in this way? Can we love our neighbor in the way Saint Paul describes it? The answer is yes. And it is not only possible, but it is the explicit invitation of our Lord Jesus: “*Love one another as I have loved you,*” (John 13:34).

True love has its fulfillment in Christ: Christ is patient and kind; Christ is not jealous or boastful; Christ is not arrogant or rude. Christ is not irritable or resentful; Christ does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in what is good. Christ bears all things and endures all things.

In Jesus, we find the perfect model of love, the source of our perfection and sanctification. Contemplating his life, with the spirit of prayer and humility, we need to ask for a greater desire to imitate Him.

When we received the grace of baptism the love of God was poured into our hearts, and we received a sacred commandment and a holy task: to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbor as Jesus has loved us.

The fundamental obligation stems from the very nature of sanctifying grace. This fundamental obligation comes from the commitment made at our Baptism in Christ, and it is meant to increase in us.

At that time, we were children, but now we are called to be truly mature in our faith and love. St. Paul tells us that we must attain "*the mature measure of the fullness of Christ,*" (Eph 4:13). Then, we realize that there is still room for improvement, there is still room for growth, and that we have not yet achieved our goal.

We are also sure of another truth: "*At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love.*" If love is what determines our final judgment, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, let us learn from Him, and let us love as He loved us.

May our Blessed Mother, and the Mother of the Most Beautiful Love, obtain for us the grace to attain the mature measure of the fullness of Christ. Amen.