

24th Wednesday II

1 CORINTHIANS 12:31-13:13

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

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.

PSALM 33:2-3, 4-5, 12 & 22

Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises. Sing to him a new song; pluck the strings skillfully, with shouts of gladness.

For upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he has chosen for his own inheritance.

May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

LUKE 7:31-35

Jesus said to the crowds:

“To what shall I compare the people of this generation? What are they like?”

They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We sang a dirge, but you did not weep.’

For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, ‘He is possessed by a demon.’

The Son of Man came eating and drinking and you said, ‘Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”



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.

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I've proclaimed these words of St. Paul's at, oh, so many weddings that I've been privileged to witness as a deacon. They are almost the ultimate word in marriage preparation and speaks to the relationship that the bride and groom hope to mature in. It's wonderful and it's romantic.

The challenge in English is that the word *love* covers a range of definitions that other languages assign separate words. In our Christian understanding, we search out the meaning of Scripture in its original Greek. In this case the Greek used for *love* is *agape*. Christians say *agape* is the highest form of love, ie. charity. It embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance. It goes beyond just the emotions to the extent of seeking the best for others.ⁱ

Now going back to our wedding couple, we would not ascribe the love word, *philia*, which is brotherly love, but we certainly wouldn't object to applying the love word, *eros*, which pertains to those affections of a sexual nature.

So, while St. Paul's letter is so fitting for a marriage ceremony and emulation by spouses, it is, more pointedly, an Epistle to the Corinthians in particular and to all of us in general.

It speaks to a young Christian community fresh in the Spirit and, regrettably, full of itself, so proud to display their religiosity.

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

The spiritual gifts St. Paul refers to are speaking in tongues, prophesy, knowledge and service with one's own goods and very life. All are the greatest of spiritual gifts, **BUT**, there's still a more excellent way: **AGAPE**. Saying it in Greek gives us precision of mind, but we have to say it in English to begin to experience its power: **LOVE !**

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.*

So, while St. Paul's words are great advice to our marriage couple, critically, they are a call to how, in the love of God, we are called to care for each other in community.

What we do is important, but if it is not done in love, it amounts to nothing more than non-existent. Those who do not love do not exist as God intended us to exist.ⁱⁱ

To understand how to love, one need only to meditate on Jesus's great Mandatum given at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday:

I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. (Jn 13:34)

If you are unfamiliar with the way Jesus loves us, I encourage you to start with the Gospel of Mark, <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/0>

And, of course, we can always talk. You can contact me at: DcnPat@WordBecameFlesh.org.

Until then: May your Guardian Angel direct all the angels of Heaven to attend to your needs and dreams. May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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ⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agape>

ⁱⁱ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., *1st Corinthians*, The Liturgical Press, p. 124