

QUINQUAGESIMA 2008
SERMON-CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
I CORINTHIANS 13.1



“BE ATTENTIVE”...chants the cantor in some Eastern Orthodox liturgies to announce a reading from Holy Scripture. St Paul calls us as today's Epistle to the Corinthian Church to PAY ATTENTION The Collect for Peace on p49 BCP does likewise...we use it at every celebration of the mass.

O LORD JESUS WHO SAID TO HIS APOSTLES, PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU; REGARD NOT OUR SINS BUT THE FAITH OF THY CHURCH; AND GRANT TO IT PEACE AND UNITY...

Just SAYING it is not enough...it calls us to ACTION. C S Lewis notes that prayer without intent and follow through amounts to just words...one could get a bunch of parrots to do that with exactly the same results...nothing! Words don't count...actions do...

Today's Epistle is one well familiar and I always look forward to Quinquagesima because we have an opportunity to talk about one of St Paul's greatest writings.

There is no greater description of how we are to behave than the letter St Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth...it speaks to the same problem as that collect...getting individual and collective acts together...and **SUSTAINING** them.

Our daughter returned home for a weekend visit during her first year of college. She was taking a course on comparative religion and said... "Dad, what do you think love is." I simultaneously startled and grateful at having been asked! We never really got to the context of the question but I thought for a moment and said, "well, St Paul says...and we talked quite a lot about today's Epistle. I recall eye rolling, dirty looks and poised forks from her brothers sending a clear message to their college freshman sister for providing such 'opportunity' at the dinner table!

Summarizing our discussion was simply the point that Love/Charity toward others is

DOING exactly what God asks...treating them the way he treats us...

Among some "enlightened, modernist" types is a tendency to regard St Paul as outmoded...unfashionable. That is precisely because we've experienced the setting of Paul's letter in our own lifetime as the fabric of Christianity has been torn into pieces. It has been made into something far different than the message that Jesus delivered. Some have helped with the tearing...some have sewn it back.

It was peace and quiet in the Church that Paul speaks to in this letter. Bitter debate, rejection of instructions and degeneration into DESTRUCTIVE activity beset the Corinthian Church. Paul stops them in their tracks saying if they're not doing these things in a charitable manner...because they love God and love each other, then the whole thing is a waste and a fraud. He concludes by saying, at first, we have only ourselves to deal with...in the end we shall see God face to face and we will have to explain what we've been doing.

Examining how you are applying these principles in your life seems a pretty good way to get ready for Lent.

Summarized in 'plainspeak', there are three basic Christian virtues: Faith...in God, Hope...that we shall attain eternal life and Charity/Love...for those around us and what we are called to do. Paul says it succinctly...it all starts with love, without which first two are frauds...the words and the music don't match and it's a clumsy dance.

The demand is simple...run your life according to the Epistle and peacefulness will come to you and those around you.

BE ATTENTIVE

