

1 Cor. 13:1 (KJV)

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

There is an old saying, "Love makes the world go round." This particular passage from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that love, particularly a kind of love, described as charity, is the most important thing we can possess, the most important part of our make-up.

God is love. God is love and if we are to live as God wants us to, we have to have that special kind of love called charity, God's love.

How do we get to know God's love? And how do we get to know God through his son Jesus Christ? Only through prayer.

Over the last two weeks we have talked about Abstinence and Fasting, about Almsgiving. Today, we are going to look at prayer, the third point of Lent.

With Abstinence and Fasting we talked about giving up, with Almsgiving we talked about giving away and now with prayer we are going to talk about adding to.

It is not enough to love God. We need to be in love with God. We need to be in love with God and prayer is the means that we use the best.

We cannot begin to know God intimately without prayer. Without prayer we are only maintaining a acquaintanceship, not even a friendship with Him.

If you have ever read any of the writings of St. John of the Cross, you would recognize that this is an example of someone who did not just love God but that he was in love with

God.

Let me read just a short passage from his poem The Living Flame of Love.

How gently and lovingly
you wake in my heart,
where in secret you dwell alone;
and in your sweet breathing,
filled with good and glory,
how tenderly you swell my heart with love.

That is a love letter if I have ever read one.

There are others also who, over the years, have been able to express their deep love in words that convey their feelings but this is only after many years of prayer.

When I talk about prayer in this sense, I am talking about the deep one-on-one prayer with God.

We all have to start somewhere in our prayer life and the best way to do that is to take a certain moment in your daily routine and spend some time with God, and to do it regularly.

If you do not take time to have prayer as part of your daily schedule, you do not know what you are missing. This Lent is a good time to begin.

I know that you are probably getting tired of me standing up here and nagging you about your prayer life, but it is such an important part of being a Christian I can't stop bringing it up.

Coming to church and participating in the prayers of the Eucharist are important, very important, so important that if you do not do it you are not getting fed enough for your journey. But coming to church is only one part of being a Christian. Warming a pew on Sunday morning is just the beginning.

Life on our own without God is impossible. How we hear God is only through prayer, silent prayer, listening prayer. Like Elijah we have to listen to hear the still quiet voice of God.

Its alright to talk to God, but we have to shut up and listen for him in order to listen to him.

Eccles. 5:2 (KJV) Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Thomas Keating, the Monk and author, once wrote that the first language of God is silence, that in silence God created the universe.

Prayer is one thing that Christians cannot get enough of.

In today's world there is too much noise, not just the audible racket but there is also too much clutter in our daily lives that just like the chaff we used to use to confuse radar signals it can block the God's voice. We are so intense on "success" and "getting ahead" that we put up barriers, walls between us and God that we cannot hear Him.

Lent is a time of reflection, reflection on how we are in our relationship with God. Look at yourself honestly and ask yourself if you are in love with Him or do you have only a casual relationship.

If it is the latter, then ask yourself if this is what you want for the rest of your eternal life.

Amen.

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