
19 Wednesday

WEDNESDAY 24th Week in Ordinary Time

1 Cor 12: 31 - 13: 13

Ps 32: 2-5, 12, 22

Luke 7: 31 - 35

“The greatest of these is love”. Perhaps St Paul’s best-known, most famous, words are those he wrote about love, in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth in Greece. It’s a beautiful passage, often quoted and a favourite scripture reading in Christian marriage ceremonies. It appeals to people, even non-Christians, because of its seeming simplicity, clarity and inclusiveness. Yet it is also so profound.

Of all the different gifts people have, of all the things we can wish for, hope for, or have ambition for, St Paul advises us to ask for the gift of love, for this is one of the “higher” gifts, together with faith and hope.

But, compare the words Paul uses (“love is always patient, kind, never jealous, never selfish, always ready to trust, to hope” etc.) with the notions of love that we hear in the world’s love-songs, whether modern pop or old traditional. Our songs express the longings of our hearts, our desires to be loved and to love someone. And also the pains and aches and fragility of what we think that love really is. There are so many levels of love.

The human heart, in its actual shape and in its symbolism, is so closely associated with the emotion and feeling of love. St Augustine wrote that our hearts are restless till they rest in God, for nothing else than God, who *is* love, can satisfy those desires. The love St Paul’s talking about is this gift of God, a gift of heart. It goes together with faith and with hope, and all three of these are gifts that last. Let’s pray to receive the greatest of these, to share with others.