

HOMILY

The Fifth Sunday of Great Lent-Evening Vespers-April 10, 2022

Proverbs 10:12-Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all sins.

Love is fundamental to the Christian life. Love is to permeate all a Christian does. Love is to be the rule of faith for the Christian. Hatred has no place in the heart, mind or actions of a believer.

The only place proper for hatred is hatred of sin. The believer needs to battle sin. The believer needs to seek peace. The believer needs to find a state of life where Christ is dominant and sinfulness is to be eschewed.

Hatred expressed verbally or physically is disconcerting. Hatred expressed physically or verbally can produce similar reactions. Hatred needs replaced with love.

The dangers of hatred require assessment. The reactions to hatred should be measured. Strong reactions to hatred are required from time to time. Reactions to hatred are not to be motivated by hatred.

Measured reactions to hatred will take into consideration the necessities of achieving peace without compromising principles. Believers need not give in to hatred expressed physically or orally.

Strength from Christ is necessary to deal with hatred. Strength from Christ is necessary to exercise restraint. Strength from Christ is required to maintain perspective and composure in the face of adversaries.

Christian love will manifest forgiveness. Christian love will demonstrate forgiveness toward the repentant sinner. Christian love will embrace the returning prodigal son or daughter.

Christian love will produce support for the victims of discrimination. Christian love will result in an encouraging presence in times of distress. Christian love will provide a voice for the voiceless.

Hatred runs counter to the life in Christ. Hatred runs counter to the Christ in the Gospels. Hatred does not produce love. Hatred does not produce peace.

Cultivating love in the way of life requires patience. Cultivating love in the way of life requires love of God. Cultivating love is easier in an atmosphere of love.

Not all persons growing up in an atmosphere of hatred learn to hate...but many do. Not all persons growing up in an atmosphere of love reflect love in the way they live. Love is a mystery associated with God. Love is a mystery best understood with faithfulness to God. Love is a mystery best seen in the perspective of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

Love is to be cherished, cultivated and shared. Love requires forgiveness and the overlooking of perceived shortcomings in others. Love involves personal sacrifice for the spouse, son or daughter, friend or neighbor.

Love is willingly putting aside the self for the benefit of another.

Song of Solomon-8:6-Set me a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.

Seal the heart with the love of God. Seal the heart from attacks of sins. Seal the heart with joy. Value the heart as the home for Christ. Value the heart as part of the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Guard the relationship with God and do all required to maintain the relationship pleasing to God. Guard the relationship with God and maintain the discipline necessary.

Stay away from the pathway to death. Stay firm on the path to eternal life. The Crucified and Risen Christ demonstrated the power of love over death. The Crucified and Risen Christ can quench the flames that burn the soul.

The fire of Christ will warm the heart. The fire of Christ will ignite and provide the necessary speech. The fire of Christ will blaze the trail to the Kingdom.

Doubters will question the wisdom of following Christ. Doubters will question the wisdom of believing in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Doubters will be jealous of those loving Christ and finding fulfillment in Christ.

Doubters will try to derail believers. Doubters will try to sink believers. Doubters will try to persuade believers.

If an observer views an icon of The Ladder of Divine Ascent, the visual image of failure is apparent. Reaching the Kingdom requires faithfulness throughout life until the last breath.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."(Mt.7:14). Each person makes the choices affecting his or her direction in life.

Each person determines by the choices made whether the ultimate destination is the Kingdom of God or eternal damnation. The way each person exercises choices daily determines the ultimate outcome of his or her life.

Abuse of the relationship with God is not healthy. Abuse of the relationship with God is irresponsible. Abuse of the relationship with God fails to show appreciation to God.

The grave could not represent victory over Christ. Hatred is not victorious over love. Even where physical death results, love for Christ triumphs by the witness of the Christian martyr.

The martyrs of Kosovo show convincingly that love for Christ in times of adversity is not forgotten or hidden but revealed for believers to see. Even after

centuries have elapsed martyrs having died for Christ witness to succeeding generations.

Hold to love. Eschew hatred. Cling to God and love God.

John 13:35-By this they will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Followers of Jesus Christ are expected to have love for one another. Love for another is evidence of being a follower of Christ. Having love for one another on a continuous basis and under various circumstances is part of the challenge of being a Christian.

To achieve and maintain love for one another requires continuous love for and unity with Jesus Christ. Only in Christ, learning from Christ, turning to Christ in prayer and for nourishment through His Precious Body and Blood can love for one another be established and maintained.

Holy Confession and Holy Communion provide the means by which believers can maintain balance, perspective and relationships consistent with the way Christ would have relationships to be. The standards set by Christ are the highest of standards. The standards set by Christ are considered achievable. The standards set by Christ require adherence to the way of Christ.

Critics will say it is not possible to love one another. Critics will say the expectation to love one another is beyond reach. Critics will say circumstances will arise that will cast love aside and replace love with feelings other than love.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."(Mk.9:23). If we want to call ourselves followers of Christ, we must do our best to love one another.

To do less than our best is deceptive and dishonorable. Bearing the name Christian carries with it the responsibility to do what is expected by Christ. The purity of belief in Christ is measured by the love shown toward others in the name of Christ.

Love for Christ is made visible in love for others. The degree to which one loves Christ will be revealed in the love shown toward others. Christ is identified with the least of the brethren. (Mt.25:31-46)

Believers must confront feelings preventing love for others. Address difficult feelings with Christ's help. Enemies of Christ take great satisfaction when Christians fail to show love for one another.

Parish churches are healthier when the love for one another is dominant. Families are healthier when love for one another is dominant. Work environments are healthier when love for one another is dominant.

A person loving others genuinely in the name of Christ makes a difference. True love in the name of Christ is respected. True love in the name of Christ becomes obvious over time. Love for one another comes as the believer loves

Christ and grows in Christ. Christian love for others comes when pride and resentment are cast aside.

Father Rodney Torbic