

4th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “C”

Readings: Jer. 1:4-5, 17-19; 1 Cor. 12:31- 13:13; Luke 4: 21-30

January 29-30, 2022

“There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love.” This passage from our second reading caused me to think about what lasts in a world of change. So many changes, and at such a rapid pace, it is increasingly easy to feel left behind.

I’m old enough to remember when Seattle’s baseball team was nicknamed the Pilots, **leaded** gasoline was \$0.24 per gallon and Hershey Bars were a dime. TV consisted of five stations, and the NBC peacock informed us the upcoming program was “in living color.” We could all make our lists. Does anything last? The Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed this in 500 B.C., writing that “the only constant in life is change.”<sup>1</sup>

Some people love change and embrace it. Others shy away from it because it is scary. What is known makes us more comfortable. If you return to a place that you have not visited in many years, it is amazing how images etched in the deep recesses of your heart come back in an instant. We instinctively notice what has changed. St. Paul says in the end three things last– perhaps he is onto something quite profound.

However, few here have gone through as much a radical change as has Saul, who once persecuted Christians, and then became one of the greatest of apostles and saints? He knew through grace that the things of this world were passing away and that what is most essential will remain.

The three theological virtues of **faith, hope, and love** enable us to participate in the divine nature of God, for they directly relate to Him. They are the very foundation of Christian moral activity; they give it its special character. Theological virtues differ from the human virtues you see pictured in the ceiling mosaic in that they are received by grace.

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<sup>1</sup> *Panta Rhei* in Greek.

**Faith** is the virtue by which we believe in God and what he has revealed to us, as well as what the Church has proposed for our belief. It is as mentioned in the Letter to the Hebrews: “Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1) We also know through experience that faith without works is dead—our faith must be manifest through our actions.

**Hope** is the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven as our ultimate happiness, placing our trust in God’s promises and not relying solely on our own strength. Above all, God desires a life of joy and peace for us. Yet, He endowed us with the greatest gift—that of free will. Too often, that freedom can be abused. The virtue of hope staves off discouragement. Hope is a buoy amid the turbulent waters of life.

**Love** is the greatest of all because it alone remains in heaven. It is the virtue by which we love God above all else, and others on account of Him. Without love, we are nothing at all. The virtue of **charity** binds all else together, allowing us to see more clearly the big picture. It alone remains in heaven. **Faith** is not needed because what was unseen will one day be visible for all to see. **Hope** is no longer operative because He for whom we hope has now embraced us.

Love is also the virtue that may well take the most work on our part. Love does not just happen. It is borne in the trials and tribulations of our daily lives. Love of God is not earned; it is pure gift, yet one for which we must be disposed. In this respect, we have plenty to say about the matter.

We can close off our hearts to the love of God, to a family member, to a classmate at school, even a spouse. We can build an impenetrable wall if we so choose. Or we can construct the edifice of our soul with a purpose and plan. When we allow Christ into our heart, he captivates us. We choose to follow him unreservedly. Let us pray for the grace to allow the three greatest virtues to find a willing place in our hearts and souls. May we experience all the joy and happiness God would desire for us.