Quinquagesima Sunday, the Sunday before Lent
February 13, 1972
Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

I Corinthians 13: 13: THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

LOVE IS, without any question, the most IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE in the LIFE of a HUMAN BEING. St. Paul put LOVE AHEAD of EVERYTHING ELSE - at the TOP of the HEAP - GREATER even than FAITH - GREATER than HOPE. He said that you can ACT and BEHAVE in many SPLENDID WAYS - you can DO many MARVELOUS THINGS - - but WITHOUT LOVE it is NOTHING.

"IF I SPEAK IN THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM A NOISY GONG OR A CLANGING CYMBAL. AND IF I HAVE PROPHETIC POWERS, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL KNOWLEDGE, AND IF I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO AS TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I AM NOTHING. IF I GIVE AWAY ALL I HAVE, AND IF I DELIVER MY BODY TO BE BURNED, BUT HAVE NOT LOVE, I ~~AM~~ GAIN NOTHING." St. Paul claims that you can even go so far as to be MARTYRED - you can GIVE your LIFE for somebody else - but if LOVE is NOT THERE, it is WORTH NOTHING.

you can give away all you have to a worthy charity —

Isn't this the PROBLEM of the CHURCH TODAY - OUR PROBLEM? Where is the LOVE??? There are the CRUSADERS for the TRUTH - for ORTHODOXY - for RIGHT and PROPER and CORRECT DOCTRINE - - - - BUT I DON'T SEE MUCH LOVE! I don't see very much CARING and CONCERN about the OTHER FELLOW. It all remains very INTELLECTUAL, and very ETHICAL and very PROPER - - - but how many ever get down to the GUT-LEVEL FEELINGS? How often do we ever come down to LOVING? .....The same thing happens in our HOMES. A HUSBAND may go to his job to do his DUTY. He comes home and does HIS DUTY with his WIFE and his FAMILY. Or his wife may simply be doing her DUTY for her HUSBAND - - - COOKING CLEANING, even MAKING LOVE. .....The APOSTLE says that you can go thru ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES - thru ALL of these MECHANICS - thru ALL of these ACTIONS -

but WITHOUT LOVE, it is NOTHING.

What is LOVE? The apostle characterizes it like this: "LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND; LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS OR BOASTFUL; IT IS NOT ARROGANT OR RUDE. LOVE DOES NOT INSIST ON ITS OWN WAY; IT IS NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL; IT DOES NOT REJOICE AT WRONG, BUT REJOICES IN THE RIGHT. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS, ENDURES ALL THINGS."

What is LOVE? You might want to read for your own PRIVATE or FAMILY DEVOTIONS this week what has sometimes been called THE EPISTLE OF LOVE, the 1st Letter of St. John. St. John exclaimes AGAIN and AGAIN that "GOD IS LOVE." ....."SEE HOW MUCH THE FATHER HAS LOVED US! HIS LOVE IS SO GREAT THAT WE ARE CALLED GOD'S CHILDREN!" And that means that WE, under the SEAL of our BAPTISM, are now the CHILDREN of LOVE! .... "WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE LEFT DEATH AND HAVE COME OVER INTO LIFE; WE KNOW IT BECAUSE WE LOVE OUR BROTHERS. WHOEVER DOES NOT LOVE IS STILL IN DEATH." ..... "Dear Friends! Let us LOVE ONE ANOTHER, because LOVE COMES FROM GOD. Whoever LOVES is a CHILD OF GOD and KNOWS GOD. Whoever does NOT LOVE DOES NOT know God, because GOD IS LOVE. Whoever LOVES is a CHILD OF GOD and LOVES GOD. This is how God SHOWED His LOVE for US: HE SENT HIS ONLY SON into the world that WE might have LIFE through HIM." ....."GOD IS LOVE, AND WHOEVER LIVES IN LOVE LIVES IN GOD AND GOD LIVES IN HIM."

What is LOVE? Today's Gospel Lesson tells of Jesus going up to Jerusalem where He would be "MOCKED AND SHAMEFULLY TREATED AND SPIT UPON; THEY would SCOURGE HIM AND KILL HIM, AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE would RISE." It tells how on the way He had MERCY on a BLIND MAN and restored his SIGHT.

WHAT IS LOVE? Love is GIVING - Loving is CARING. Jesus loved US and GAVE HIMSELF for US. Loving and giving GO TOGETHER. Love is NEVER just selfishly turned in upon ITSELF. Jesus' last words to His disciples included these: "BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

What is LOVE? Love is never anything or any law that is SUPERIMPOSED from the OUTSIDE. Love is ALWAYS something that COMES FROM THE INSIDE - from the HEART. It is a part of the NEW CREATION IN XP. It is a part of the NEW LIFE of GOD IN US. I want to emphize that - LOVE IS NEW LIFE! It is the ability to LOOK at YOURSELF in the MIRROR in the morning and say, "HEY, YOU'RE IMPORTANT - YOU'RE WORTH SOMETHING - GOD LOVES YOU, AND SO YOU CAN LOVE YOURSELF." And then to turn around and say to your wife or your husband or children - to the people at WORK, to your NEIGHBORS - to EVERYONE you SEE on the STREET : "YOU'RE WORTH SOMETHING TOO - YOU ARE IMPORTANT - GOD LOVES YOU AS HE DOES ME."

- you count -

WHAT IS LOVE? Love is more than just a WORD. It is more than just something that you SAY or that HAPPENS in your BRAIN. LOVE is a COMMITMENT toward CARING about the other PERSON, about MYSELF, about our RELATIONSHIP, and our RELATIONSHIP to GOD. LOVE is the RELATIONSHIP between PEOPLE in which they confer MUTUAL BENEFITS upon eachother. LOVE is the RELATIONSHIP between PEOPLE which CONTRIBUTES to the WELFARE and DEVELOPMENT of each. Or as John Wycliffe once said, "LOVE IS A MUTUAL HELP TOWARD BLESSEDNESS."

WHAT IS LOVE? Love is not only a SUBJECTIVE FEELING which one has - an EMOTION - - but rather LOVE is a SERIES of ACTIONS by which you CONVEY to another person the feeling that you are DEEPLY INVOLVED, PROFOUNDLY INTERESTED in HIM and in his WELFARE. LOVE is UNCONDITIONAL. It makes NO BARGAINS. It NEVER has the ~~alterier~~ motive

ulterior

of, "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?" LOVE CONVEYS the GUT-LEVEL FEELING that you really are ALL FOR that OTHER PERSON, and that you will ALWAYS be available to give him your SUPPORT - and to CONTRIBUTE to his DEVELOPEMENT as BEST YOU CAN. LOVE VALUES the other person for WHAT HE IS - not because he is something YOU WANT or EXPECT him to be.

WHAT IS LOVE? Look at the CROSS! Here your LORD - your BROTHER - LOVED YOU to the END. He lived His life FOR YOU - He suffered FOR YOU - He died FOR YOU! He GAVE HIMSELF FOR YOU! He MEETS you just where you are - He ACCEPTS you for the PERSON you ARE - He LOVES YOU JUST AS YOU ARE! He loved you all the way to the end - and even THROUGH THE END - to ALL ETERNITY. He lives FOR YOU, and WITH YOU, and IN YOU NOW! LOVE is the ONE THING in the world of which one can NEVER ~~GET~~ GIVE TOO MUCH. Christ shows us that - He gives Himself to US time after time in Holy Communion - and He SENDS US OUT to LOVE as He LOVED US. No wonder the APOSTLE exclaimed: "THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE." Amen.