

Leader From the First Epistle of St Paul to Christians at Corinth *chap. 13*

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Reader 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 do not have love, I am nothing.

Leader If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Reader Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Leader Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.

Reader For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

Leader When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

Reader For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Leader And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Reflection **Leader** This is possibly the most famous passage in the New Testament letters. It stands on its own as a poetic hymn to love, and as such is often read at weddings. In its context it is part of a discussion of spiritual gifts in the life of the Christian community. The point is that, however gifted we may think ourselves to be in all sorts of ways, it is as nothing compared to the importance of love, in all things. Maturity comes when we realize this. Life is not a competition. We may well feel we are far from ready for God's kingdom of love. But we need to be on that journey. With St John we look forward to the day when "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Prayer

Reader Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Leader Let us bless the Lord **Reader** Thanks be to God