

Living Our Christian Virtues

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The Christian virtues are faith, hope and love. In today's reading St. Paul states, "Remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of **faith** and labor of **love** and endurance in **hope** of our Lord Jesus Christ before God the Father." We often hear that as people of faith we are people of hope. However, St. Paul in his first letter to Corinthians 13: 13 makes it clear, "So faith, hope, love remain these three, but the greatest of these is love."

The current pandemic and social uprising for justice require the virtue of hope for us to see light at the end of the tunnel. We have heard people stating, "We are here in together" assuring the common challenges to overcome in solidarity. Yet we have also witnessed disregard for each other by refusing to wear facemasks, claiming to infringe their individual liberty. This mindset goes contrary to the endurance of love, St. Paul stated. We have noticed that some members of our society rebelling against wearing facemasks to protect themselves and others. Yes, God has created us with the freedom to choose yet St. Paul warns us, "But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor. 8:9). For not wearing facemasks, we endanger the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters. If we value our own life, we should value the life of others as well.

The first reading and Gospel tell us the supremacy of God above all things. It is only when we give God priority in our life; we understand the proper meaning of love. Though we cannot choose God on our own or comprehend him, our faith informs us that God always makes the first move "claiming us as his own." Under God then we belong to each and only love can bind us together as our divergent interest and needs might not easily converge. In the Gospel we read that Jesus outwitted the Pharisees who tried to sneer him where his loyalty is - to God or to Caesar. Jesus responded, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." The Pharisees act if God is under their control because they follow all the precepts of Moses and the ministry of Jesus seemed outside of such confines. That is why they tried to trap him – their strategy was that there is no way out for him to escape their trapping.

In this election season, Christian values are peddled in the negative commercial adds, denigrating each other. Jesus is telling us again "give to God what belongs to God." We cannot use God for our selfish purposes, especially when our goal is to alienate each other because they do not think or behave like us. This approach devalues the common good and endurance of love.