

TANGAZA COLLEGE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

HYMN TO CHARITY (1 COR 13:1-13)
"EXEGETESIS AND APPLICATION TO
DAILY LIFE"

**This is a long Essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Religious studies.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this essay is my original work and has not been submitted to any other educational institution for credit purposes.

Signed.......... Date..... 5th February 2002

LUTOMANTIMA NZENGELE LOUIS-MARIE

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed..... Date.....

Fr. TIMOTHY REDMOND

DEDICATION

To my Parents. To all those people who helped me to be what I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I extend my sincere gratitude to Fr. Timothy Redmond who accepted to be my tutor. In spite of all his occupations and activities he accepted and was willing to be the moderator of this work. His knowledge, courage, patience, advice and corrections made this work to be accomplished.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	
DEDICATION	
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	
TABLE OF CONTENTS	
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	
1. EXPOSITION OF THE TOPIC.....	
2. MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY	
3. PRESUPPOSITIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	
4. METHODOLOGY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENT OF THE STUDY	
CHAPTER ONE.....	
SITUATING THE TEXT	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	
2. DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT.....	
3. TEXTUAL CRITICISM.....	
4. FORM AND STRUCTURE	
4.1. Form	
4.2. Structure	
5. PARALLELS	
6. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE TEXT AND ITS CONTEXT.....	
6.1 Historical Setting of the Text.....	
6.2 The Context	
7. CONCLUSION	

CHAPTER TWO.....	1
DETAILED EXEGESIS OF 1 COR 13: 1-13.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT.....	1
3. THE THEOLOGY AND MESSAGE OF THE TEXT.....	3
4. CONCLUSION.....	3
CHAPTER THREE.....	3
APPLICATION TO DAILY LIFE.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.....	3
3. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.....	3
3.1 The life of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.....	3
3.2 The life of Saint John of the Cross.....	3
4. SOCIETY.....	4
5. CONCLUSION.....	4
GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	4
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	4

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. EXPOSITION OF THE TOPIC

This work is an exegetical investigation that analyses 1 Cor 13, 1-13 in order to reveal the original message, which Paul communicates. It unveils a clear idea of love according to Paul. This Pauline message is relevant for us today, and this same message of Paul is a message that our own societies may still need to hear.

2. MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Many issues within this text have motivated me to do a detailed exegesis and also to answer the following questions: Why Paul insists on love? Why love cannot end? Why love is the greatest of all the gifts of the Spirit? This is the reason why I have decided to focus on my own hermeneutical stance on love.

The main objective of this work is to show what Paul means by love. To investigate this point, I am going to expose this text to various exegetical methods, which will help me to bring out Paul's theology of love and to address some questions raised in this text, such as what are some of Paul's central teachings on love.

3. PRESUPPOSITIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Dealing with this text, I know that there are many issues that have been presupposed, based on the works of biblical scholars. For example, it is taken for granted that Paul is the real author of the first Corinthians even though it was written from Ephesus; it is also taken for granted that in 50-58 A.D. Paul was dealing with the Corinthians. This work agrees with all of those scholars about these particular

issues. But my study will only focus on what is pertinent to our investigation and does not deal with other issues outside of this topic of Paul's theology of love.

4. METHODOLOGY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENT OF THE STUDY

In this work, various biblical methods have been used such as: historical, textual, form, literary criticism and socio-scientific methods. It will be a systematic synthesis of what many scholars have written about this text, and I have added some of my own thoughts as well. For elaboration of the work, I have decided to use in some parts the Greek text in its original form and elsewhere the English translation of the Revised Standard Version.

This work has three chapters, with a general introduction and conclusion. Each chapter has an introduction with some concluding remarks. Chapter one is situating the text, chapter two gives a detailed exegesis, and chapter three is more practical and it gives some applications that will show how Paul's teaching on love can fit into our daily life.

CHAPTER ONE

SITUATING THE TEXT

1. INTRODUCTION

This text, which inspired me to investigate this topic, is not an island in the middle of the sea. Surely, it has some historical setting and clearly there is a basic motivation behind this redaction. This is why we need to place some delimitations on our investigation of the text in order to be precise in our presentation. Textual criticism will be the second stage. In this part, we will look at some commentaries, and then see where authors agree and disagree. In the third part we will examine the form and structure of this text. In the fourth part, we will look and consider some parallel texts in the Bible, which are relevant to this text. Now it is important to know when, where and why Saint Paul wrote this beautiful hymn in praise of charity. This will lead us to the study of the historical setting of the text and its context. Finally, we will evaluate this text in some brief concluding remarks.

2. DELIMITATION OF THE TEXT

We are going to deal with the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, chapter thirteen verses one to thirteen (1 Cor 13: 1-13). This text has many titles, but I prefer to use the "Hymn to Charity", which I think, expresses best what I will explain in this work. Chapter thirteen of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians is introduced by the last sentence of chapter twelve. Although there is nothing explicitly theological here, Paul seems to be presupposing knowledge of what he has already been saying about love in the earlier text 1 Cor. 8: 1-18. Nevertheless, we will be focusing on chapter thirteen primarily. Other texts, which deal with the same

previous statement before trying to understand the next, which says “that I may glory” or “that I should be burned”. He says, “This is a difficult textual problem that surrounded the next expression, where some MSS read, “give my body to be burned” (as NIV), and others, “give my body that I may boast”. On the whole, it seems a little more likely that we should read ‘boast’, but giving oneself to be burnt is certainly one way the body might be given. The expression reminds us of the three youths who gave their bodies to the fire (Daniel 3: 28, LXX), though there is, of course, no suggestion that they were lacking in love. Paul is saying, “it is possible for a person to give his body to be burned or to slavery and make this spectacular sacrifice without love.”³ For Léon Morris the second expression is probably the one Paul meant. According to many scholars who support the second possibility, it is the story of three men who gave their bodies to fire (Daniel 3), which may have influenced Paul's use of the expression “that I should be burned”. The form *καυθήσωμαι* is extensively discussed by the grammarians. The variant *καυχῆσωμαι*: “in order that I may glory”, did not even deserve enough attention to earn a place in the margin of the R.S.V. What ruins the thought for self-glory is this decided evidence of a lack of love for others. Although this text has been found to be important for some [...], for others it has little importance, and it ought to be discarded.⁴

A careful analysis is found in the work of Bruce M. Metzger, who weighs the ideas of many scholars, then gives a clear summary. He says a majority of the

³ Léon Morris, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: I Corinthians*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1998, p.179

⁴ R.C.H.Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p.552

committee responsible for the UBS text preferred καυχῆσθαι for the following reasons.

(A) After the Church entered the epoch of martyrdom, in which death by fire was not rare, it is easier to understand how the variant καυθήσομαι for καυχῆσθαι would creep into the text rather than in the opposite case. Likewise the passage in Daniel was well known in the Church and might easily have induced a copyist to alter καυχῆσθαι into καυθήσομαι. On the other hand, if the latter reading were original, there is no reason to account for its replacing the older copies by this other reading.

(B) The expression, παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυθήσομαι though certainly tolerable in itself, is noticeably cumbersome (“I give up my body, that I may be burnt”); one would have expected as a more natural expression ἵνα καυθη (“... that it may be burnt”). But in the case of καυχῆσθαι, this difficulty vanished

(C) The reading of καυθήσομαι (future subjunctive!), while appearing occasionally in Byzantine times, in a grammatical monstrosity that cannot be attributed to Paul (Blass - Debrunner - Funk, paragraph 28; Moulton - Howard, p. 219), but the future indicative does occasionally occur after ἵνα (Gal. 2:4; Phil. 2:10-11).

(D) The argument that the presence of this interpretation “that I may glory” destroys the integrity of the passage loses some of its force, especially when one observes that for Paul “glorying” is not invariably reprehensible; sometimes he regards it as justified (2 Cor. 8:24; Phil. 2:16; 1 Th. 2:19; 2 Th. 1:4).⁵

⁵ Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, London: UBS, 1975, p.564.

This research on text criticism illustrates that there are difficulties in trying to establish the original text. In this work, I am joining Metzger in using the interpretation of ἵνα καυχῆσωμαι, "that *I may glory*".

4. FORM AND STRUCTURE

4.1. Form

Chapter thirteen of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians as we can see is a true speech pronounced and written by Paul himself. Paul does not command here, but by extolling love, he shows its excellence. His purpose is to incite the Corinthians to seek love in the first place. The apostle is so overpowered by the greatness of love that he gives to this work this unique form. The hymn of charity is a literary form that instructs the Corinthians on love, which Paul placed above all other gifts.

4.2. Structure

As has already been stated in the delimitation of the text the last verse of the previous chapter is an introduction to chapter thirteen, because it is introducing what will be talked about in the following chapter. This structure has as one of its objectives to help us to follow what will be develop in the next chapter. Here we are not going to do a detailed exegesis, but rather an outline of its structure will be given. The structure is divided into six parts:

- 13: 1-3 Love is essential
- 13: 4a Love is Christ-like in its affirmation
- 13: 4b-6 Love is Christ-like in its negations
- 13: 7 Love is the most comprehensive of all graces

-13: 8-12 Love is the most complete grace

- 13: 13 The perfection of love

5. PARALLELS

In this part we shall see some biblical passages which may have influenced Paul. Some ideas are his own, but some have a background elsewhere. Another possibility is that, Paul and the other authors had similar background and cultural sources. In the next part, "The historical setting and its context" we shall examine the contemporary social problems Paul had in mind when he wrote, such as moral corruption, slavery, poverty, a small but extremely wealthy merchant class, etc. These are some of reasons why we need to go through some of the parallel texts. So from this point, we shall proceed in investigating each parallel verse that pertains to our investigation of Paul's theology of love.

1 Cor. 13:1: This verse has its parallel in 1 Cor. 8:1 where Paul already shows the primacy of love, saying, "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up". In Rom. 12:9-10, Paul gives the marks of the true Christian in saying, "let love be genuine, love one another with mutual affection". In 1Cor.16:14 Paul says, "Let all that you do be done in love", and he says in Rom. 13:8-10 "owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law". Love does no evil to a neighbour. In 1 Tim 1:5, he says: "But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith". In all of these texts

in the Pauline's literature it is apparent that all other gifts have no value if separated from love.

1 Cor. 13:2: "...the prophetic powers and to 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", says Paul. In the gospel according to Matthew, there is a similar idea: "many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?'" (Matt 7: 22). Or "if you have faith and do not waver, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'be lifted up and thrown into the sea', it will be done" (Matt 21: 21b). "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to human beings but to God, for no one listens. He utters mysteries in spirit" (1 Cor. 14:2). In his letter to the Colossians, he says: "to have all the richness of assured understanding, for the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). These passages are sharing the same idea, or are supporting supreme gifts.

1 Cor. 13:3: This famous verse, "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", has a parallel in the gospel according to Matthew where it is said, "when you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward" (Matt 6:2). The love which Paul is talking about, and the receiving of a reward from God can be an expression of the same idea of the supreme gifts.

1 Cor. 13: 4: Here, Paul is praising love which, according to Saint Peter's first letter, is above all. As Saint Peter says, "above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins"(1 Pet. 4:8). Paul in his letter to the Ephesians supports his idea of love saying "...with humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love" (Eph. 4:2). When Paul says that love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant (1 Cor. 13: 4), he has in mind himself and Apollos as models of love (1 Cor. 4:6). We realize that "all of us have knowledge", knowledge inflates with pride what love builds up (1 Cor. 8:1).

1 Cor. 13: 5: "Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; Love does not seek his own advantage, but that of his neighbour" (1 Cor. 10:24). Paul shows himself as an example, saying, "just as I try to please everyone, in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 10: 33). He clarifies this when he says, "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but for those of others" (Phil. 2: 3-4). "Always seek the interests of Jesus, not our own human interest" (Phil. 2:21). The last beautiful parallel of this verse is found in his first letter to the Thessalonians where he says, "see that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good for each other and for all" (1 Thess 5:15).

1 Cor. 13:7: This verse has a parallel in the Old Testament: "Hatred stirs up disputes, but love covers all offences" (Prov. 10: 12). It also shares the same parallel

with 1 Pet. 4:4 where Peter talks about love which covers a multitude of sins. "It is in bearing one another's burdens, that you will fulfil the law of Christ", says Paul (Gal. 6:2).

1 Cor. 13:9: We have found only one parallel to this verse where Paul says, "If anyone supposes that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know for all humans knowledge is partial"(1 Cor. 8:2).

1 Cor. 13:10: "When the complete comes", says Paul, "the partial will come to an end". Its parallel can be found in Isaiah 60:19, "no longer shall the sun be your light by day, nor the brightness of the moon shine upon you at night, the Lord shall be your light forever, your God shall be your glory". In the book of the prophet Jeremiah it is written, "no longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evil doing and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).

1 Cor. 13:12: "For we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7), says Paul. "All of us, gazing with unveiled faces on the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). Seeing in a mirror, according to Paul, means to see by faith, but then we will see face to face. "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In the future, our vision will be like the angels in heaven 'always looking upon the face of God' (Matt 18:10). That face to face vision which

Paul is talking about is not reached on earth, as he says in his letter to the Philippians: "it is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ" (Phil. 3: 12).

1 Cor. 13:13: Paul here is showing us the power of love, as he expresses it in his letter to the Colossians: "for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the holy ones" (Col. 1:4). In the previous verse he says, "We always give thanks to God..." (Col. 1:3). To give thanks to God, in this context, is to affirm that love is greater than all other things. To the Thessalonians he writes, "...calling to mind your work of faith and labour of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father, but since, we are of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love"(1 Thess 1: 3).

These are some parallels found in the scriptures. We do not say that they are the only ones. There are some parallels which have been left out that can be found in Paul's other letters because they are repeating the same themes; while other parallels focus more on faith than on love, others more on hope than on love. Now let us go to the historical setting and its context.

6. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE TEXT AND ITS CONTEXT

6.1 Historical Setting of the Text

To understand the writings of Paul one needs to understand his relationship with the people of Corinth. In the context of our work, we will go back to the history of that city which is called Corinth because we realize that Paul insists on love for a spiritual purpose, but also from a human point of view, when considering slavery, poverty, and the evil of a wealthy merchant class. It is here that we can begin to investigate the life of the Church of Corinth.

Corinth was the chief city of northeastern Greece, 8 km southwest of the modern canal that cuts the isthmus of this same city. At the present site of Corinth is a small village 4.8 km outside the ancient city. There is evidence of prehistoric settlement, but the foundations of Corinth are traceable to the Ionic and Doric people. It was a flourishing maritime power between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C. under the tyrants and again in the Hellenistic period.⁶

In 146 B.C., the Romans destroyed the city of Corinth. It was rebuilt in 46 B.C., one century later. It was to become in the time of Paul one of the most important commercial centres of the Roman Empire and the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia.

Being a commercial city, the population of Corinth consisted of a large number of people who came from different parts of the world. There were the people from Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Italy, Gaul and Spain. There was a well-established Jewish colony and a large transient population of sailors, commercial

⁶ Kugelman, R., "Corinthians, Epistles to the" in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. 4*, ed. By Most Rev. William J. Mc Donald. New York: Catholic University of America, 1967, p. 325.

travellers and itinerant entertainers. Every second spring, the famous Isthmian Games were held in Corinth. Athletes came from all over the empire to compete in the contests.⁷

Corinth was also a city full of immorality, especially prostitution and banditry. It was a notorious city. The term κορινθια κορη (Corinthian girl) was a current euphemism for a prostitute, while κορινθιαξειν (to behave like a Corinthian) meant to lead a dissolute life. The patron deity of the city was Αφροδιτη πανδημοσ (Aphrodite of all the people), the goddess of sensual lust, whose cult resembled that of the Asiatic fertility deity Astarte.⁸ In his letter to the Romans, which was written from Corinth, we can see how Paul is inveighing particularly against sexual promiscuity (Rom. 1:18-32). With this in mind, Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians.

It is known that between AD 50 and 57 Saint Paul must have evangelised in Corinth. "We have said that he arrived in Corinth in AD 50. He stayed there for about two years (Acts 18:11-18), and then went back to Antioch. After spending some time in Antioch, he set out again and eventually arrived at Ephesus (Acts 18:23-19:1). His arrival can presumably be dated in the year AD 53. He remained in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31), i.e. from 53 to 56. This means that I Corinthians was written sometime during the period AD 53-56".⁹ There is no

⁷Kugelman,R., "Corinthians, Epistles to the" in New Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. 4, ed. By Most Rev. William J. Mc Donald. New York: Catholic University of America, 1967, p.326

⁸,Ibid, p. 326.

⁹ Margaret E. Thrall, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: I and II Corinthians, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.11.

doubt that the first Letter to Corinthians was written at Ephesus, as he says himself, "I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost..." (1 Cor.16: 8-9). Many scholars support the idea that there must have been some delegation from Corinth that came to Ephesus to report to Paul the things, which were happening in their community. They Probably told him about the division (1 Cor. 1:11-12), about taking a brother or sister to court (1 Cor. 6:1-11), and fornication (1 Cor. 6:12-20). In the second part of his letter, from chapter seven Paul is replying to some questions on issues such as divorce and marriage (1 Cor. 7), about eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8); spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14); and questions on the resurrection (1 Cor. 15). This is a brief historical setting of this first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

6.2 The Context

From chapter 7 to chapter 14:40, Paul answers various questions. One of the questions which he was asked concerns the gifts of the Spirit. In general, those questions concern ethics. In the immediate context extending from chapter 12 to chapter 14:40. Paul is talking about the heart of all the gifts, which is love. Love excels all the gifts, its must regulate their use, and it must be considered above all the others gifts. There were probably many gifted Christians in that community and Paul realised that they were using their gifts for their own profit. To balance this kind of life, Paul's reaction was to show that all gifts must be animated by love. Only love is above all other gifts. He concludes by saying, "... and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13b).

7. CONCLUSION

The effort required to make such an investigation needs to be acknowledged. We have taken into consideration some remarks from scholars. We have also investigated the beginning and the end of our text and some of the questions, and this we have called delimitation of the text. In textual criticism we have tried to look at some of the opinions about verse 3, concerning ἵνα καυχῶμαι "that I may glory" or ἵνα καθήσομαι "that I should be burnt"? We briefly went through the form and structure, which are going to be developed further in the next chapter. In looking at the parallel texts above and as was already stated we only studied those texts that pertain to our investigation. The last point of this chapter was to focus on the historical setting and its context where we dealt with some of the reasons why Paul wrote this letter, in general, and chapter 13, in particular. Now we are going to the next chapter, to do a detailed analysis of the text and its theological message.

CHAPTER TWO

DETAILED EXEGESIS OF 1 COR 13: 1-13

1. INTRODUCTION

First in this chapter, I will provide a detailed exegesis; second, the theology and its message, and its contributions in interpreting and helping us to better understand Pauline theology. Finally, I will end this chapter with some concluding remarks which will be a summary of all its exegetical parts. This will bring us to the last chapter where we are going to apply this text to daily life.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

VERSE 1 “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.” (1 Cor. 13:1)

In this verse, Paul shows that all other gifts have no meaning if they are separated from love, even if someone possesses them in the highest degree. Love in this context is still considered the highest of all the other gifts. No language on earth or in heaven is to be compared with the practice of love. Paul shows that it is easy for the human being to be fascinated by high discourses made with such a high knowledge, but without love, he says, ‘I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal’. “This comparison, of a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal, is meant to emphasise that these instruments produce noises, but there is no melody, and therefore they have no musical value in themselves. In the same way, a person gifted with ecstatic utterance, but lacking in love, may produce an impressive (and perhaps noisy) display of religious emotion, but this will have no genuine value, either for the

person himself or for the congregation as a whole.¹⁰ Paul uses the first person singular; he does so not only to designate himself first, but also to make a general reference to a human reality. This is to show that the implication of what he writes is for all human beings. He makes it universal to show that he is going to say something important. The idea in this verse is that even if someone had a far higher faculty of speaking in languages and yet were destitute of love, all would be nothing. Even if someone could speak all the languages of human beings, and even possess the higher and more perfect mode of utterance which the angels have, and yet were destitute of love, all would be nothing.

The Greek original word used by Paul is “ἀγάπη”, which means love: “ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω”, and have not love. The vulgate translated it as charity, which is in a general sense, love, benevolence, good-will. In theology, it includes supreme love for God and universal good-will to all people. In a more particular sense, it denotes the love and kindness which springs from the natural relations such as the love of a father, mother, son, brother, sister, liberality to the poor, to the needy, and to objects of beneficence. This is a very common understanding of the word in our language at present. The Greek word ἀγάπη means properly love, affection, regard, good will, and benevolence. It is applied, to love in general. It is also applied to the love of God and Christ; the love which God or Christ exercises towards Christians, (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 2:4; 2 Thess. 3:5). That is the love which Paul is talking about in Eph. 1:15; 2 Thess, 2:10 and John in 1 John 3:1. Paul also takes up the command of the Old Testament and of Jesus to love (Rom. 13:8ff; Gal. 5:14), thus Paul is setting

¹⁰ Margaret E. Thrall, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: I and II Corinthians, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 92.

ἀγάπη over the nomos (law). The law has been fulfilled, because Jesus is love, and he died for sinners. Insofar as Christians love one another they too are fulfilling the law, not in the sense that they attain any perfection, but that they are now living in God's reality through the strengthening power of forgiveness. ἀγάπη is a reflection of what is still to come.¹¹ The best speech of earth or heaven, without love is nothing. It is only a noise. It will be like those cymbals which Corinthians were using for their devotion to Dionysius or Cybele.

VERSE 2 "...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"(1 Cor. 13:2).

The gifts of prophecy, knowing all mysteries and all knowledge are nothing without love says Paul. "If one has in addition to knowledge, faith sufficient to move a mountain, without love, *I am nothing*".¹² Καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείας and if I should have the gift of prophesying... in this verse he stresses that the prophetic gift is worthless without love. He recalls the teaching of Jesus who speaks about having faith, so as to move mountains (Mark 11:22; Mathew 17:20; 21:21). It is probable that both Jesus and Paul used a proverbial expression, 'moving mountains' being a common metaphor for a great difficulty.¹³ In this verse, Paul refers to chapter 12, especially when he talks about prophecy. By prophetic powers, Paul has in mind the stories of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-10) and Elymas (Acts 13:9-11), where the apostles showed their prophetic powers. "It is evident that where the gifts of

¹¹Brown, C., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Zondervan Publishing House, 1971, p.546.

¹²Freedman, D.N., The Anchor Bible Dictionary, New York, Doubleday, 1992, p.393.

¹³ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary, T & T Clark limited, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 290.

prophecy and inspiration were possessed, and where it would confer such advantages on those who possessed them, there would be those who pretended to possess these gifts. Therefore, Paul is establishing and encouraging structures of importance to the infant Church, to prevent such imposition and for the purpose of detecting such impostures".¹⁴

In the New Testament the word mystery means something that was hidden and later revealed (Eph 3:3 or Matt 13:11). "Mysteries are truths, which cannot be known through human reason alone, but they are given through divine revelation. They are spiritual truths, which relate to redemptive history, especially those truths revealing an eschatological nature; i.e. relating to future events in God's plan for the world".¹⁵

By knowledge, Paul means something, which is beyond intellectual comprehension. In the Pauline point of view, and in the New Testament in general, knowledge contains a mystical element, which is beyond human understanding (1 Cor 2: 12 or John 17:3).

Faith means an extraordinary power in performing miracles. He refers to the moving of mountains shown in Matt 21:21. This proverbial expression is plainly figurative and describes "faith" as being able to perform seeming impossibilities, to remove mountains, which seems almost impossible to be accomplished by a human being.

¹⁴ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary, T & T Clark limited, Edinburgh, 1986, p.231.

¹⁵ Donald S. Metz, "I Corinthians" in Beacon Bible Commentary Vol. 8, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1968, p. 439.

To conclude the verse Paul says that without love all the other gifts amount to nothing for even I myself am nothing', οὐδὲ plus ἓν, 'not one thing'.¹⁶ To have the gift of prophecy, to understand all mysteries, to have all knowledge, to have all faith without love I am still nothing. Once more, Paul reminds us that love is above all the other gifts.

VERSE 3 "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." (1 Cor 13:3). This verse was used in our textual criticism where we responded to the question: Did Paul write ἵνα καυχῶμαι (that I may glory) or ἵνα καυθήσομαι (that I should be burned)? "It applies to the distribution of goods to the poor, likewise a hypothetical case for Paul who was a poor man himself. On the other hand we should not forget that though this might be hypothetical it is not by any means unreal or incapable of fulfilment. Paul could have distributed the few things he possessed. As for those who are true lovers of God giving their bodies to the fire as we recalled from the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace (Dan 3),¹⁷ Paul says that it has no real value unless it is accomplished through love.

We wonder where did Paul find this expression "that I may glory" or "that I should be burned", probably in the book of Daniel. Paul has in mind Nero who is the first who is believed to have committed such horrendous acts against Christians; and under his reign, and during his persecutions, Christians were placed within pitch, and set on fire to illuminate his gardens. It is possible that some Christians had been

¹⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p. 551.

¹⁷ F. W. Grosheide, The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984, p. 305-306.

put to death in this manner when Paul wrote this epistle. To sacrifice my body for fanaticism, obstinacy, vainglory or selfish reasons seems useless. Everything done through love in this context even if it means to hand over my own body, if it is done in love, I become united in Christ's own redemptive work through love.

VERSE 4 " Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant." (1 Cor 13:4) In this verse, Paul enumerates the works of love. What does Paul mean by "love is patient"? Love does not return bad things to others. Under provocation of evil from others, love is patient, and in other words, love is not "an eye for an eye." Paul writes this to counteract the things, which were happening in that community. There were jealousies, suspicions, unkind judging, selfishness, envy, pride, boasting, all of which were inconsistent with love, and Paul reacts against them.

Love is kind in the Pauline context. The word kind means affectionate, tender, gentle, to be good-natured. It wishes well. It is not harsh, sour, morose, ill natured. Tyndale renders it, "is courteous." The idea is that under all provocations and ill usage it is gentle and mild.

Love is not envious, boastful, or arrogant. Love is not envious οὐ ζήλοι, that means without selfish zeal, the passion of jealousy and envy. Love is satisfied with its own portion and it is glad with another greater portion. Love is not puffed up.

VERSE 5 "Or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful" (1Cor. 13:5). The next link in the chain is that love "acts not unseemly", οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, contrary to the σχῆμα, form, fashion or manner that is proper. When

pride puffs up the heart, unseemly bearing and conduct naturally follow.¹⁸ By love does 'not insist on its own way' or 'is not rude' Paul means that love is not disgraceful, dishonourable, indecent. It avoids the whole range of unseemliness. It does not insist on its own way, which can be translated, it is not self-seeking. Love is not easily angered; it is not irritable at all; it is not touchy. It is not provoked. It does not credit others with evil motives, also it does not add up, or assign evil intentions and wrong designs to another. Paul gives here the real meaning of love.

VERSE 6 "...It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). Instead of rejoicing over the wrong, love grieves over the wrong. Οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικία, that means love rejoices not over unrighteousness or in other words it does not sympathize with what is evil. Love does not take delight when others are guilty of crime, or when in any manner, they fall into sin. Here Paul is close to the gospel, which says, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matt 7:12). Love wishes good for others.

συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ "love rejoices with the truth", or "love rejoices in the truth." Love and truth rejoice together. The truth, which Paul talks about, is equivalent to goodness. Love sympathizes with the goodness of others. "Love shares truth's joy and it cannot rejoice when the truth is denied. There is a stern moral undertone throughout the New Testament, and nothing is ever said to obscure this. Love must not be thought of as indifferent to moral considerations. If it is to rejoice

¹⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p. 557.

it must see truth victorious.¹⁹ In the Pauline context truth is opposed to iniquity, and it means virtue, piety, goodness and truth are perfective in Jesus (Eph 4:21); He says that, "every kind of wicked deception for those who refused to love the truth and to be saved are perishing" (2 Thess 2:10). So for him truth is set against unrighteousness which is a theme that comes up again and again. Love rejoices not in iniquity, but in the truth so Paul encourages the triumph of truth in his community.

VERSE 7. "It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:7).

Love bears all things can easily be understood if we take into consideration what Paul said in his previous writings. He said, "...we endure everything, so as not to become an obstacle to the Gospel of Christ" (1 Cor 9:12). That is what he means when he says love bears all things. The word used (στέγει properly means to cover, a covering, roof; Matt 8:8; Luke 7:6) to hide, conceal, not to make known and if this is the sense here, then it means that love is disposed to hide or to conceal the faults and imperfections of others; not to promulgate or blazon them abroad, or to give any undue publicity to them.

"Love believes all things." We can do all things with love. It certainly is remarkable that faith and hope are so rooted in Paul's understanding of love. Paul's meaning must be well understood here. "Love believes all things," but it does not mean love believes in falsehood as it does in the truth. Those who have love do

¹⁹ Léon Morris, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: I Corinthians, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1998, p. 181.

things consistently in friendship, in joy and out of virtue. Love produces and is rooted in all the good things it believes.

“Love hopes all things,” this hope is a refusal to take failure as the last word. “Hope is the eschatological complement of faith...Paul's expression of hope relates argumentatively to those who deem the spirit to be fully operative in the gifts they presently enjoy, to the denigration of the gifts enjoyed by others”.²⁰ The hope, which Paul is talking about, is one that transforms all things in Christ. This hope knows no pessimism. Yet, the basis for this hope of love is not mere natural optimism but the effective grace of Jesus Christ. Love always expects that grace will conquer and win all things. Love never gives up; it reaches beyond all limits, always expecting the greatest good.

“Love endures all things,” Paul realizes that sometimes people can no longer believe or hope, but they can love. Love then in this context endures all things, because it is steadfast. It perseveres in all crises, sustains, and does not murmur. “It thus excludes the limits of ἀγάπη rather than trying to define an all-inclusive content...There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance”.²¹ Love is ready in every situation to endure and excuse, to keep firm its faith, its hope, and its patience. With the Corinthian's situation in mind, some masters were maltreating their slaves. Paul is saying that love endures all things which can be clearly understood: even if one is a slave, one has to do every thing with love, because love will endure and transform all things.

²⁰ Collins, R.F., “First Corinthians” in *Sacra Pagina*, ed. Harrington D.J.: Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1991, vol.7, p. 482.

²¹ Thiselton, A.C., *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 2000, p. 1056.

VERSE 8 "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"(1 Cor 13:8).

Paul is comparing love to others gifts as he pointed out these three; prophecies, tongues, and knowledge that will end, but love never ends. Love will be adapted to all situations in life, and it is of a nature that needs to be exercised always. "It is brotherly love which gives value and content to all other actions or gifts. With ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει in this verse the train of thought is fixed on the end time when all other gifts will be pointless. Paul uses the verb "to fall". "Love is permanent, it never fails", the more common meaning of "fall" comes to be used with meaning 'collapse' 'suffer ruin'. Love will never suffer such a fate".²²

The Greek influence of the Corinthian community gave more value to the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge which gave them a sense of honour; Paul knew this only too well. He is not against these gifts, because he talked about them in his previous message about them saying, "some people have the gifts of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge", furthermore he continued, "it is the same Spirit who gives these". But in this verse, he says, all these gifts are for this life, and they will end one day. Love according to him is for this life and for the eternal life that is coming, therefore it does not end, or it will never end, it is eternal. In the life to come people will not need someone to foretell the events of the future. About prophecy, in the future life, people will no longer need someone to interpret for them the languages or to speak languages. People will not need a teacher to teach them

²² Kittel, G., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964, p.52.

knowledge. Jesus is and will be their supreme teacher, but still in the future love will not cease to be necessary, and it will be eternal. In that life we will know distinctly and clearly. There will be no need of knowledge, because this need for special knowledge will seem to have vanished and disappeared.

VERSE 9 “For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part”(1 Cor 13:9).

The expression to “know in part” and to “prophesy in part” means to know or to prophesy imperfectly. Paul is showing the imperfection of the prophetic gifts and he observes that it is indistinct, compared with the fullness of truth in heaven. It is obscure, and all that is imparted by these gifts will soon become dim and lost in the superior brightness and glory of the heavenly world. Paul does not give the reasons why they are not perfect, and yet we know these gifts are in themselves perfect since they are from the Spirit. Paul is dealing with two realities, the present and the future. To know in part and to prophesy in part in this world does not mean they are imperfect, but compared to the world that is coming they are imperfect because, according to Paul, in the life to come we will live in the fulfilment of love. Those holy gifts are needed in this world where people need knowledge and need prophecy, but in the world to come those gifts will no longer be necessary.

VERSE 10 “But when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end”(1 Cor 13:10).

This verse is in the continuity of the previous one. In the former verse, he talks about knowing in part and prophesying in part. Here, when the complete comes, those gifts which are only partials that Paul talked about in the previous verse will come to an end. In other words, Paul says when the perfect will come that

which is imperfect will pass away. On that day all imperfections will disappear, only perfection shall last, and all obscurities will disappear. Nevertheless, on earth, both our knowledge and our ability to expound divine truths are incomplete and imperfect, and they will cease to exist altogether when they are replaced by qualities that are perfect.

VERSE 11 "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"(I Cor 13:11).

νήπιος means "child". All commentators of Paul agree that "child" is the original word, which was use by Paul. That word denotes exactly a baby, an infant. When Paul says, "I spoke like a child" he means that, in that period, he began to articulate in a broken and most imperfect manner. "Since the major movement here turns from childhood to adulthood, and since λογίζομαι is about to be used for a calculated evaluation, the most probable candidate seems to be "I (Paul) used to form opinions like a child". This would also cohere with the Corinthian concerns for rhetoric as shaping opinion by persuasion".²³ Paul is trying to explain that a Christian in this very life is just like a child whose way of thinking and acting must be laid aside when he grows in Christian maturity. It is clear that Paul is not talking about the natural child, but there is also a possibility that Paul is referring to his own life before conversion. In that sense, to be a child is to think as a child and to reason like a child and to act blindly. For Paul, becoming an adult, as in his experience after his conversion, one needs to act in collaboration with the power of the Spirit.

²³ Thiselton, A. C., The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 2000, p. 1066

The real interpretation, which is fitting here, is that to be a child in the Pauline context is connected with the life of this world. If we compare our thoughts and our knowledge with what we shall have in the future life, the present looks too limited, and this is what Paul calls “childish.” The future life is an adult life. “The idea here is that when Paul matured in Christian love he put away childish things as a deliberate decision and finality”.²⁴ So, childhood in this verse is compared with the present life, and adulthood with our future state of glory.

VERSE 12 “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”(1 Cor 13:12).

This verse cannot be isolated from other verses because it is connected with the fuller Pauline understanding given in verses 8 to 12. The contrast is between “for now” and “then”. “For now” represent the present life, and “then” represent the future life, which he has treated in verse 10. What does Paul mean by “seeing in a mirror?” As we know, a mirror is an object which reflects our own image, but that same image is ours and at the same time is not ours. It is ours in the sense that we see our own body in that image. It is not ours in the sense that it is not our real body. For example, the image which is in the mirror can be distorted without damaging the real body. So, when Paul says that we see in a mirror, he means that we see a reality which is not a true reality, but then one day we will see face to face, the real image. To see in a mirror is not to know a real image. Another thing we must take into consideration in order to understand this verse is the mirror in the time of Paul. The

²⁴ Donald S. Metz, “I Corinthians” in Beacon Bible Commentary Vol. 8, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1968, p. 444.

mirror in antiquity gave a very poor image, seeing through a mirror is to not see the reality, or to not see properly. “The *tertium comparationis* is found in the fact that we see only the reflection and not the person or the object itself in a mirror. So we, who are children and know only in part, now see the divine realities only as they are reflected in the mirror of the Word and not directly as they are in fact”.²⁵ Paul writes “δι’ ἐσόπτρου” which means “by means of a mirror”, not “through a mirror” as it is translated by others. Paul has already talked about our earthly knowledge being partial that is what he is trying to clarify here. When man shall see God face to face, his vision will be perfect, there will be no obstacle to obscure that holy vision between man and God. To see fully is to see God without any obstacle. Even as I have been fully known, “my vision shall be complete as complete as God’s knowledge of me”.

VERSE 13 “And now faith, hope, and love abide; these three; and the greatest of these is love”(1 Cor 13:13).

This verse is the climax of what Paul has been explaining since verse 7, but it is also the conclusion of what Paul is communicating, by now know this, love is above all. In the progress that is possible in the other world there will be room for faith and hope, but there will be no need for tongues, prophecies, healings or miracles. “Even in this world these gifts are not indispensable. One can be a good Christian without tongues or prophesying; but one cannot be a good Christian without faith, hope and love”.²⁶ Since the main idea of Paul in this text is to exalt

²⁵ R. C. H. Lesnki, The Interpretation of Saint Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p. 568.

²⁶ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary, T & T Clark limited, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 300.

love, he is right to conclude his text by “ἡ ἀγάπη” all of the other gifts shall pass away completely, but “ἀγάπη” shall last.

About faith, Paul in 2 Cor 5:7, writes: “for we walk by faith, not by sight,” from this we can conclude that, according to Paul, faith shall be necessary until the day it shall turn into sight. In that day, faith will cease because we shall see Christ in his splendour.

Paul speaks quite differently here about hope. “Hope remains as the expectation of the ever-new, unfolding of glory in the future age. Heaven is not one everlasting monotony which once obtained, leaves nothing further to expect. The angels sing ever-new praises to God. So we, too, shall pass from one state to another in the joys which God has prepared for us”.²⁷

About love, Paul says, it is the greatest; it seems Paul is saying faith, hope and love are great; these three are great but the greatest is still love. As Lenski adds, Paul simply makes the assertion and leaves us with the question as to how love is the greatest of the trio. One thing is of course, clear: love is not greatest because it outlasts faith and hope but because it outranks these two.

To conclude this part of the exegesis, we can say that Paul is totally right when he puts love above all other gifts. Why? Because love is the only answer we can give to God on the last day. In the new joy where our hope will be receiving in heaven, love shall be our only answer. In the last day, we shall not need to believe only to love. Love is eternal.

²⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, 1963, p. 572.

3. THE THEOLOGY AND MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

To draw out the theology and message of this text, we have to bear in mind the context in which Paul writes.

The city's population was cosmopolitan and had some Roman colonists; but the vast majority were of the Greek culture and those from the Middle East including a sizeable Jewish colony. Almost two-thirds of the people were slaves, and a small but extremely wealthy merchant class (1 Cor 1:26-31; 5:1; 6:9-20; 10:8; 2 Cor 7:1).²⁸ Therefore, it is very easy to understand when Paul says that love endures all things, love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant (1 Cor 13:4), he was trying to communicate how love can support and help those who were being wronged by the more powerful members of their community. It is because there was no exchange between these different groups. For the Jews, Greeks were pagans; therefore, they cannot associate with one another. The Romans were the invaders; therefore, it was not appropriate to cooperate with them.

The community and the culture felt themselves to be prosperous and self-sufficient, even though there were many have nots who were socially vulnerable or dependent on others; the core community were those of trade and entrepreneurial pragmatism in the pursuit of success, even if some paid a heavy price for business failures, lack of the right contracts or the right opportunities.²⁹ For the great mass of workmen and the poor, it is easy to understand that love is not envious. Paul is telling them to accept their human condition.

²⁸ Skeabeck, A.H., "Corinth" in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, ed. By Most Rev. William J. McDonald. New York: Catholic University of America, 1967, vol.4, p.325

²⁹ Thiselton, A.C., *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Wm.B. eerdmans Publishing company, 2000, p.4.

When viewing this merchant class, it is easy to understand why Paul says, “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” (1 Cor 13:3). By giving away all possessions Paul has in mind all of the wealthy oppressors of the poor in Corinth.

The Church of Corinth itself was composed of Gentile converts, mostly from the lower social state. Among them there were some people who were seeking gifts like knowledge, prophecy and tongues so as to be considered highly in the Church or to have a high place in the Church. With this in mind Paul is instructing them, by telling them that gifts like knowledge, prophecy and tongues are good at least for the pilgrim Church, but they are useless for the coming world, the only one which is useful in this world and in the next is love. Love is above all other gifts moreover it is eternal. These other gifts are only useful for the Church; furthermore love is universal, within and outside of the Church, therefore, seek the gift which is universal and eternal rather than the ones that will not last, according to Paul.

Prophecy was also one of the gifts, which the Corinthians brandished too much, because they believed that Jesus was coming soon, so they were prophesying that coming event.

Paul knew only too well the situation in which Christians in Corinth were living, so for that reason he advised the people to put love above all things.

4. CONCLUSION

We have reached the end of our second chapter. We tried our best to explain what Paul meant in this thirteenth chapter in the first letter to the Corinthians. We have given you the main idea of this text using some commentaries in which the

“Hymn to Charity” was explained. In the theology and message of this text, we have shown the motivation and the message. We attempted to answer the question of why Paul needed to communicate his theology of love and the audience Paul was addressing.

From this point on, we ourselves are the focus. After doing this exegesis, let us try to understand the message of Paul. This present question will lead us to the last chapter of our work, “Application to daily life”. Paul talked about love in the community of Corinth, and we find that same problem in our own societies, in the Church and in our own families. Many things in today’s society push us to believe that there is no love. There is division, tribalism, racism etc., because there is no love. The poor are becoming poorer because of the lack of love. In political life there is corruption and crime, because of lack of love. We shall go through the lives of some people who gave us an example of love. So, now let us see how this hymn of charity can fit in our daily life.

CHAPTER THREE

APPLICATION TO DAILY LIFE

1. INTRODUCTION

We have just concluded in the previous chapter, that there still is a lack of love in our society. If we go through the situation in which we live in our daily life, the answer is clear that we still need to put love where there is no love. As we said, this chapter will be focusing on the practical. By that we mean it will have as its foundations first, the life of the Christian family; second, religious community, and in a particular way we will review some aspects of the lives of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Saint John of the Cross, especially aspects of love; fourth, in general love that is found in our society; finally, we will conclude our chapter and investigation with some closing remarks.

2. THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

God in the fourth commandment tells us: "honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). Love within the Christian family has its foundation in this verse. To honour father and mother brings unity between the father, the mother and the children. This verse from Exodus strengthens the human family. We as the human family have as one of our most basic foundations in the divine plan to develop in this love as an essential response to our own vocation as a Christian family. This universal law presents us with two aspects: first, for the children, it is to find and to accomplish each one's personal vocation, and second, for the parents, it is to help children to accomplish the will of God for them. Until the children can

assume responsibility for their own Christian life, the parents have the duty to lead them to maturity. There is a correlation between the parents' and the children's affection. The parents' affection is essentially a protector, but their relationship usually transforms into friendship and into greater collaboration. Now, how can the text of Saint Paul's "Hymn to Charity", fit into Christian family life? We must take notice that the Christian family is a nursery of the future world. If the nursery fails to do its work, the future world is in danger, but if the nursery is busy at the work of preparing its children for Christian maturity, the future world becomes promising. Here is the question: How can the future world be rooted in the Christian family? The answer is in Paul's hymn, "love bears all things"(1 Cor 13:7a), or "love never ends"(1 Cor 13:8a).

The presidents who lead our countries today come from families, either Christian or non-Christians. Although we will focus on Christian families, it is good to notice that every family is a nursery. The pastors in different churches or denominations, come from families. Engineers, doctors, teachers, drivers, religious, nurses, etc, all come from families. Furthermore the family is like a source and the world is like a river, there is no river without a source. Love bears all things, as we saw in the previous chapter. Love is the source of all the good we can do on this earth. Love never ends. It will be adapted to all the situations of life, and love by its very nature need to be exercised always.

Love must be the central part of the Christian life; a family without love at the centre is a dead family. Children must be taught the meaning of love in their lives. As we called the family a nursery, a nursery must be watered with love, so that it can bear the fruits of love.

As stated above, the future world depends on today's families. If the families do not teach love to their children, if they do not show them how to love, they will not learn to love themselves, others, and especially God, and the future will hold little meaning for them.

To conclude, we can say that a family built on love is a foundation for the future because love bears all good things beyond what we can imagine, and love never ends, love is eternal.

3. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

At this point, we are going to see how love is essential for an ideal community life. We shall focus on the lives of two great saints of God that are well known: Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Saint John of the Cross.

3.1 The life of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

Thérèse is going to tell us more about her own experience of Paul's theology of love. As we know, when John Paul II proclaimed Thérèse as a Doctor of the Church, he named her the "Doctor of Love." Thérèse and her doctrine must be evaluated in the context of her own time. "In those years of the end of the 19th century, the people of the world were more concerned about charity. Every princess or countess has her own hospital or orphanage. One Baroness has even opened, in the street of the university, a shop of perfumery and a shop selling fancy items on which all profits were assigned in her businesses".³⁰

³⁰ "En ces années de la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle, les gens du monde s'occupent beaucoup de Charité. Ces dames multiplient 'les ventes de Charité'. Chaque princesse ou comtesse a son hôpital ou son orphelinat. Une baronne a même ouvert, rue de l'Université, un magasin de

Why did Thérèse base her spirituality on love? She discovered her vocation after many years of struggling. Finally, the Pauline teaching attracted her. The Hymn of Charity was the climax of her attraction. As she said “ I finally had rest. Considering the mystical body of the Church, I had not recognized myself in any of the members described by Saint Paul, or rather I desired to see myself in them all. Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a heart and that heart was burning with love. I understood it was love alone that made the Church’s members act and that if love ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that love comprised all vocations, that love was everything, that love embraced all times and places...In a word, that it was eternal! Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my love... my vocation, at last I have found it...my vocation is love!”³¹

After discovering her vocation, Thérèse's only occupation was to find how to put into practice this beautiful vocation of love. Thérèse became a Sister who showed her love even in the smallest actions of her daily routine. She sacrificed herself to help an old Sister who was very ill and in that illness she was very demanding and difficult causing almost all the other Sisters to avoid her. In Thérèse's own understanding of sacrifice she began to understand that love endures all things.

In the laundry, Thérèse accepted being splashed with water by a Sister who was doing it deliberately. She never complained; she understood again that “love

bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things”(1 Cor 13:7). She accepted all humiliations with this understanding until her own death. She was consumed by love. "Love never ends", says Paul. Through her own experiences of suffering Thérèse had learned to understand Paul's doctrine of love. After all a community without love is a dead community.

Thérèse is a model of community life; the community which she wanted was a community without division, a community based only on love. She understood as Paul that all gifts will end (1 Cor 13:8b). She wanted to live in paradise on earth, and she wanted a world built on love; that is the fulfilment, as Paul says "...but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end"(1 Cor 13:10). And what is that partial which will come to an end? That is the world without love.

We too, as Thérèse, need a religious community that is built on love, without divisions, because love, as it has been said in Paul own words, "endures all things and hopes all things".

3.2 The life of Saint John of the Cross

Saint John of the Cross is another model that we can use in our investigation of love in community life. This holy man as we shall see had experience of great sufferings in his life, he was even rejected by almost all of his confreres in the Order, and yet his own response was love.

Saint John of the Cross was born in Fontiveros, in Spain on 24th June, 1542. He entered religious life and became first a Calced Carmelite Friar and afterward became a Discalced Carmelite. Calced Carmelite Friars are those Carmelites who

did not follow the reform of Theresa of Avila, and the ones who opposed her reform movement within the Order. John of the Cross was one of the faithful followers of Theresa of Avila. He was one of the first fathers and initiators of the Discalced Friars within this Order. Because of his option for the Discalced Carmelites, he was taken prisoner by the Calced Fathers. As a result, he suffered without any fault of his own or of his superiors. "He was kept in total isolation. The few friars who visited him went there only to shower him with recriminations and throw his food on the floor. His jailer was not even allowed to speak to him, or remove the chamber pot from his cell, and the stench made John ill. His back was full of wounds a result of the scourging he had receive at the hands of the friars trying to teach him that it does not pay to be disobedient. His habit stuck to his flesh, his clothes began to rot, and his body became infested with worms".³² But, he bore his imprisonment and solitude with great serenity, modesty, and composure. Sometimes he was brought to the refectory three or four times, with all the friars present, to receive the discipline, which they gave him with a certain severity. He never spoke out, but rather bore it with patience and love.

When John of the Cross was sick, close to death, the doctor told him to take a rest, which he preferred to take in the convent of Ubeda, where he was not well known. The superior of that house treated John with severity; he denied him even the food prescribed by the doctor, alleging extreme poverty in the convent. Still John was happy, and he showed love even to this superior.

³¹ Carey, T., Thésèse of Lisieux: A discovery of Love, New City Press, 1992, p.107.

³² De Nicolas, A.T., Saint John of the Cross: Alchemist of the Soul, York Beach, 1996, p.27-28.

From this life of Saint John of the Cross, we are able to see that even in a community that lacks love, this does not prevent the unloved from loving them. John understood this passage only too well, "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"(1 Cor 13:3). Deprived of all, as John was, this still did not prevent him from returning his love to his oppressors for his only answer was love.

This attitude of John is a challenge for community life; everyone has a right to live in freedom as children of God through the exercise of love.

Saint John of the Cross endured all humiliations with patience. Surely, that was to say that "love is patient, love is kind"(1Cor 13:4a), "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"(1Cor 13:7). This is indeed a challenge of community life.

4. SOCIETY

Love is the greatest of gifts. Here we are going to show how love is an essential element for the growth of any society.

The growth of any society depends on the people in general; it depends on their own effort as people who are living in the society, but we must realise that no society can grow without individual growth in love, and without the effort to live in love. The love which we are talking about is in the ordinary life of any society, and it depends on each individual for its growth.

Before looking at love in a society, let us examine love at the individual level. What is an individual? "An individual is a singular being, one among many, a being within a multitude or a species...the individual is therefore the singular, substantial,

concrete being considered in its undivided unity and as separated from every other being.”³³ The growth of an individual can make sense only in the community. Our consciousness in its normal functioning is unitary, and we know nothing of any consciousness in a component cell. According to Pope Paul VI, “the complete development of the individual must be joined with that of the human race and must be accomplished by mutual effort.”³⁴ As was said at the beginning we will be talking about growth grounded in love, in the perspective of Saint Paul. “Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth”(I Cor 13:6). All human persons who think they do not need to grow in love place themselves outside the boundaries of the community, because such a people makes the world static and that is dangerous. The world must to be dynamic. The human person is another creator; he is supposed to continue God's creative act. How then, can he continue that creation if he does not have love? For we know that God created all things out of love. The purpose of this good, creative act of God will only be realised when the human person has attained that consciousness of being a ‘co-creator’, and he will only be a true ‘co-creator’ within a particular community or society. Any person that bases his acts on love builds up society. This can be compared with bees that build the honeycomb cooperatively.

If we can only look at our political leaders, we realize that a leader who governs with love, builds up his country, because he cannot tolerate the suffering of his people. He makes sure that each person receives his/her due. This is because love is kind; it does not insist on its own gain. The day that all people in our society place

³³ Corvez, L.M., “Individuality” in New Catholic Encyclopaedia, ed. By Most Rev. William J Mc Donald, New York: Catholic University of America, 1967, Vol. 7, p.474.

³⁴ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, Populorum Progressio, 1967, Number 43.

love as the first priority, then the world will change into paradise; with this love we will have a more developed world.

With this kind of understanding, it becomes the work of all human beings, and that work is exercised by each individual for the good of the entire community. Indeed, we can read the entire history of our society and its development from the perspective of its "effects". Love has urged the various generations of men and women to learn to give more, while remaining faithful to the values of society and yet being creative.

A society which is full of people without love cannot grow easily because such people are irresponsible. How can the human race develop without love? This signifies that the human person can never become a mere means towards the common good of society. We can only build the community when the entire fabric of our life is put in its place, including our family relationships, our industry, commerce, religion, art, and our relaxation. This development must begin with the individual and move to community. On one hand, without the works of individuals founded in love, community growth is difficult, and on the other hand, community must help each individual to be disposed to building up our society.

Another condition for development is the right treatment of creation. Do we treat creation with love? By this we mean how we use the resources of creation. How can we claim that there is a growth in our society, if our soil, our forests, etc. are not being protected and preserved? How can we experience this development if we fail to use creation with love, and forget that "love bears all things?"

While we talk about our resources, apparently we do not know how to protect them because we do not approach them with love. Big territories in the world have

been deforested and many hills, mountains, river sides, roads and streets are eroding. These have been affected by unthinking exploitation of the forest, absence of upkeep of the roads, lack of attention to the agents of soil erosion. All this negligence is due to a lack of love. If only we practise love, we would see that all these difficulties could be overcome and solved.

Lastly, let us realise that every person inherits the consequences of the previous generations. Society is an organism. The economy of the human person is also an organic whole. Hence, all the productive means must be put in place in a wise and balanced fashion within the state. All of us are obliged to continue the work of transformation of God's creation with love as Paul says, "love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth"(1 Cor 13:6). When we do so, the world will become a conducive environment for future generations. Work is an essential vocation, which can transform our world; it can modify human life. The social dimension of development cannot be authentic without safeguarding and promoting the duties of every member of society who is created in God's image. The future society depends on what we build today. Therefore, it is very important that every individual does something to build up the world. If every individual carries out his task with love, the edifice will soon be completed. The stones by which we construct this edifice are human beings who are full of love in the highest degree. The construction itself is the putting together of all these qualities of love in the service of this development. All individuals, who work generously rooted in love, participate in the construction of their society, their nation and their Church.

5. CONCLUSION

A society built on love will only come about if each individual tries to understand the deepest meaning of the hymn to charity because love, as Paul says, "...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It never ends"(1Cor 13:7-8a).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We conclude this investigation by saying that love is the climax of everything seen in the first two chapters. In the first chapter we discussed the text and demonstrated the delimitation of the text, and presented some of the criticism of the scholars. We went through some parallel texts. In concluding the chapter in which we dealt with the historical setting of the text, and its context, we demonstrated the reasons why Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians and, in a special way, we saw the reason why he wrote the hymn to charity. Then, we went on to chapter two in which we discussed the main idea of the text. The first chapter was brief whereas the second, as its title "Detailed Exegesis" suggests, was a detailed explanation of the whole text, using some renowned commentaries. In this second chapter, we examined the reason the text was written, and to whom Paul was speaking as far as could be judged from the theology and message of the text.

The last chapter dealt with some practical applications of the message. We tried to answer the question "Is there love in today's society?" The answer was "yes" and "no". Yes, because there are some models like Thérèse de Lisieux and John of the Cross who showed in their lives the power of love. No, on account of what we could see in politics and in some families. The question we need to ask ourselves is why is there not love in some individuals, in our society, and some families? Saint Paul offers the answer: "Love never ends" "Love is the greatest", if only we put love above all, the world would become a paradise because love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:7).

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