

All you need is love

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Only love

What do you need when you are feeling crushed? Sometimes we need time and space. Perhaps a listening ear. Eventually, wise advice may be helpful. In the end, however, it is love that makes the difference.

Ironically, it is often difficult for us to express our need for love, especially when we are feeling vulnerable. So, we shy away. Of course, those who know us, and love us, also know how to disarm us with kindness and good grace.

Love is the key to understanding Paulâ??s first letter to the Corinthians. In I Corinthians 1:18-31, Paul draws attention to the wisdom of God, in contrast to the wisdom of the world.

In this light, the quintessential expression of the wisdom of God is found in Christ crucified. In Paul, Christ crucified is not a feeble sacrifice. Instead, Christ crucified is a generous and decisive act of love.

Arguably, Paulâ??s tribute to love in 1 Corinthians 13 represents the climax of the letter. It gathers in one all the pain and confusion of the people of God, offering a healing balm, and prefiguring a transformative future (1 Corinthians 15).

Certainly, Paulâ??s rhetorical flourishes can be a little abrasive. Whatâ??s more, we recognize there are other opinions in Corinth besides Paulâ??s. But the key is love.

Of course, there is more to love than this. This tradition of love finds its locus in the life and teachings of Jesus. It is the Churchâ??s source of resilience and integrity. It is the defining measure of all things Christian.

The theme of love shines through the story of Ruth, the Song of Songs, the lives of Mary Magdalene, our Celtic mystics, Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, 17th century poets, Evelyn Underhill, Desmond Tutu, Carter Heyward, and Kwok Pui Lan.

In the real world, love is expressed in ordinary, complex, sometimes heroic, often, fragile lives. Love makes a difference. It is powerful. It is healing. It is our best hope. This personal face of love is not a distraction from the fruit of scholarly labor: on the contrary, this is the real deal. It is an incarnation of the wisdom of God.

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