

Living the Christian Life
By Fr. Orlando J. Addison

Someone recently posted on their Facebook a cartoon of Noah's Ark floating over water filled with animals. It shows two dinosaurs, standing on the top of a hill surrounded by water; with rain pouring down on them; the male and female dinosaur watched Noah's ship sail away. Then the male dinosaur looked at the female and said, "Oh crap! Was that today?"

The cartoon tries to explain the extinction of the dinosaurs. According to the cartoon, dinosaurs did not survive because they did not pay attention to Noah's invitation.

They took the warnings, the signs of the time for granted, and they were living in their own world. So when the rains came down and the world was covered with water, it was too late; the ship was already loaded, and on its way to dry land. The dinosaurs were left behind to die because, according to the cartoon, they did not listen.

Now, we know that this was not the reason of the dinosaurs' extinction! Furthermore, the Bible does not tell us why they were

not in Noah's Ark. We also know, according to science, that their extinction was caused by an asteroid that slammed into the earth millions of years ago. We know that the story the cartoon tries to depict is not true; still, it has a strong message for Christians and the world today. That message is to listen to the Lord, to pay attention to his instructions, to His warnings, and not to take the signs of the time for granted.

Today we are living in a world that is constantly changing, we are evolving, and we have discovered new technologies that are taking us to places that dreams are made of.

We have found the cure for many illnesses that would have taken us to the grave a long time ago, and scientists continue to search for treatments that will help eradicate other diseases that are killing thousands of people today. We are living better and longer than people who lived millions of years ago. Regardless of all this, however, there is one thing that we have not learned to do well, one thing that will help stop violence in this world, one thing that will bring us together, one thing that will build us up as a community, as a nation, as children of God, and that one thing is love.

It is the oldest ingredient, the oldest formula given to the world by God to keep us together and yet we fail, every day, to practice God's love among ourselves.

Can you picture a world free of violence, hatred, discrimination, racism, and unforgiveness! Can you imagine a church with brothers and sisters, from all nations, different cultures, and languages, loving one another! Can you see Holy Faith becoming that church? Those who are skeptical would say, 'it will never happen here' or "we will never live in a world free of violence, hatred, discrimination, racism and unforgiveness!" And you know what? they might be right! This might never happen if we continue to practice all of these hateful behaviours with one another and if we continue to harvest them in our hearts. They are in contrast to what the Lord commands us to practice; they are the opposite of Love. If we can practice these negative behaviors and be successful at them, then without doubt we can practice loving each other and be successful with it. The key to help us stop these negative behaviors in our churches, in our communities, and in our world, is each one of us gathered in this sanctuary this morning. You are the solution to the problem; we are the answer to negative behaviors among ourselves. It all

starts with you; it begins with each of us “laying aside the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light” as Paul says in his letter to the Romans.

Paul also says in today’s second reading from his letter to the Romans 13:8 “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” This is the message the Lord has been teaching us all these years! This is the message we have been ignoring all this time! And this is the message I have been preaching to you these past few Sundays!

We are dying for people to love us, but we turn the other way when it is time for us to return that love; we want people to respect us, but we disrespect them when we have the opportunity to show them respect; we want people to include us in their activities and in their world; but we keep locking doors, we keep rejecting them when the time comes for us to include them in our activities and in our world; we want people to thank us for what we have done for them, but when we have the opportunity to thank them, we ignore them and say things that drive them away from us. All this happens because we are not listening to what the Lord is teaching us, we don’t care about practicing God’s love among ourselves. We close our ears to the

things the Lord wants us to do, but open them only to listen to those things that are convenient for us! **We find it hard to love one another, because it is easy to do the contrary!**

This message, of loving your neighbor, is not new to us Christians. You have heard, for instance, Fr. Bill and many other clergy in this parish, before him, preach on the subject. You have read about it in the Bible; you have heard about it on television from televangelists, now you are hearing it from me and you will continue to hear this message of loving your neighbor preached by others after me. How long will we continue to ignore the Lord's command to love one another? How long will we continue to practice the opposite of love among each other? How much longer will it take for you, for us, to start loving one another?

Paul says "you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near." We don't have enough time to fulfill the Lord's command to love one another. We see signs around us and in the world that tell us that Jesus is coming soon. One only needs to watch the news or read it on the internet to be aware of the violence, the lack of love that exists in the world right now.

The beheading of two Americans this past week by people with hate in their hearts, toward us; the continual war between Israel and Palestine, direct descendants of Abraham and Sarah; the assassination by the police of an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri; the tension created by the Russian Government with its intention to invade the Ukraine; the persecution of Christians in Iraq and around the world; all these and many other events that are taking place in our world right now, are warning signs for us to wake up and to begin to fulfill our Lord's command before He returns.

There is urgency for Christians to practice love among ourselves. Tomorrow will not be good for us to start practicing the kind of love the Lord wants us to practice, because it might be too late. The time is now, the time is here! Jesus will come at any time, we don't know the day, and we don't know the time. All we know is that Jesus is coming soon and, that "salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers." We also know that we don't want to be left behind, standing on the top of a mountain, like the dinosaurs in the cartoon, watching other Christians leaving for heaven with Jesus, including those we thought would not have

made it, and looking at one another saying “Oh crap, was that today?”

These past two Sundays I have been preaching and teaching on Christian Identity and the Characteristics of a Christian. You will find in the insert in your Bulletins, a list of some of these qualities. I encourage you not only to read them, but also to put them into practice with one another every day, so that when Jesus returns for the second time, He may find a Christian community in this church, loving one another, caring for each other, building each other up and sharing His love with the world! Would you exchange today, the sharing of the opposite of love with your brothers and sisters, for the love of Christ that is in you? Let us honor that love today. Please bow your heads

and say the following prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, we bend our hearts before you. We come not only to worship you but to ask your forgiveness for not loving one another the way you commanded us to love. Teach us once again to love you and to love our neighbor as ourselves; to live in a community of love, and to love one another like our Father in

heaven loves us, who sacrificed you, Lord Jesus, His only Son, for the love of the world. In your precious name we pray! Amen!

If you have said this prayer in your heart, then I commission you, in the name of Jesus, who

loves us with unconditional love, to go and share God's love with one another and with the world!