

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer. **Amen.**
[Psalm 19:14]

As we heard in today's Second Lesson from the Gospel according to St. Luke, in order to inherit eternal life, one must do what is written in the law, which is, to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." So, I would like to spend some time this morning unpacking how we might live more fully into our Lord's commandment on *Love*.

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love! Quite an appropriate topic for a weekend focused on, as St. Paul put it in his letter to the Philippians: Rejoice in the Lord always. [Philippians 4:4] So, Again, I Say Rejoice!

Today's first lesson is that well-known passage from Galatians [5:22-26]; where St. Paul, addressing the people and the churches of Galatia in central Asia Minor, advises them that people become right with God only by faith in Christ, and not by the performance of good works, ritual observances, and the like. As St. Paul said, "by contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." In making this pronouncement, St. Paul notes that "[t]here is no law against such things." He tells us that "those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" and that "[i]f we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."

I have actually been contemplating this topic long before the Boris' came up with the theme for our parish weekend. As some of you know, I am a Chaplain at the Inova Alexandria Hospital. Most of the Chaplains there take a four hour shift each week ministering to the hospital's patients. In addition, once a month, each Chaplain takes a 12-hour overnight shift so that we can be available to patients and their families and loved-ones, as needed, between the hours of 8:00 pm and 8:00 am. For those Chaplains who serve the shift in the hospital, there is an on-call sleeping room, where chaplains can relax and sleep when they are not actively seeing patients, family members, and loved-ones. I serve my overnight shifts in the hospital and sleep in the on-call room when I am not needed.

The first night I stayed in the on-call room, I noticed a beautiful framed picture with a caption at the top that says "The Fruit of the Spirit is Love." Below the caption is a picture of nine flowered interlinking wreaths in three groups of three. In the center of each of the first eight wreaths is a further exposition of the rest of the fruits of the Spirit:

- **JOY** is Love's strength;

- **PEACE** is Love's security;
- **LONG-SUFFERING**, or *Patience*, as St. Paul put it, is Love's patience;
- **GENTLENESS**, is Love's conduit;
- **GOODNESS** is Love's character;
- **FAITH**, or *Faithfulness*, as St. Paul put it, is Love's confidence;
- **MEEKNESS**, or *Kindness*, as St. Paul put it, is Love's humility; and
- **TEMPERANCE**, or *Self-control*, as St. Paul put it, is Love's victory

In the center of the ninth wreath is that portion of Galatians 5:23, that reminds us that: "There is no law against such things."

I spend a portion of each night that I am in the Chaplain on-call room focusing on and praying about The Fruits of the Spirit and thinking about how I can apply these principles to my life and my service as a Volunteer Chaplain.

This beautiful depiction I described was created by the late Charles F. Humphrey, a residential architect who spent most of his life living his dream of being a Christian artist. He and his son were owners of a family business that created and supplied home interior and gift products. Humphrey was a Deacon and Sunday school leader in the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. It was said that his faith gave him a deep desire to serve Christ in sharing Jesus with others, and he participated in many mission trips domestically and abroad.

In preparing today's homily, I came across an interesting article that posed the question: "How can you display more of the fruit of the Holy Spirit?" The author's answer to this question was that we should devote time each day to contemplation and reflection on one of the nine attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit, making notes of our reflections and ending with a prayer asking God to transform us so that we display that attribute in our lives. And, on the tenth day, the author suggests that we read through all of our reflections and pray that in our daily lives that we will be a living testimony for Christ.

In our daily reflections and reading from scripture on the Fruit of the Spirit, the author suggests that:

On **Love**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will help us to love like He does. Scripture reminds us that: "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." [1 Corinthians 13:4-7]

On **Joy**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will give us the joy of the Lord. Scripture reminds us that: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" [Nehemiah 8:10]; and "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." [Hebrews 12:2]

On **Peace**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will give us the peace that passes all understanding. Scripture reminds us that: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” [Romans 5:1]

On **Patience**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will give us patience in all our dealings. Scripture reminds us that: We are “*strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience...*” [Colossians 1:11]

On **Kindness** or **Meekness**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will give us a heart of kindness. Scripture reminds us that: We should live “*in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left.*” [2 Corinthians 6:6-7]

On **Goodness**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will enable us to do what is good in the sight of the Lord. Scripture reminds us that: “*For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*” [Ephesians 5:9]

On **Faith** or **Faithfulness**, pray that: The Holy Spirit will give us the gift of faith and the assurance that God Himself is faithful to all His promises. Scripture reminds us that: “*O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name; for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things; things planned long ago.*” [Isaiah 25:1]

On **Gentleness**, pray that the Holy Spirit will give us the desire to be gentle. Scripture reminds us to: “*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*” [Ephesians 4:2]

And, on **Self-control** or **Temperance**, pray that through the Holy Spirit we may learn self-control. Scripture reminds us that: “*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*” [2 Peter 1:5-7]

May God help us as we journey towards becoming Christians who have the mind of Christ. **Amen.**