

YET MORE OF A LAPSED CATHOLIC'S BIBLE STUDY

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

I mentioned in comments beneath my first Lapsed Catholic's Bible Study post that I had other biblical material I was chewing on.

Funny enough, the chapter and verses I was referring to are absolutely appropriate to the Trump administration's ethical and moral failures as well as that of the GOP's congressional caucus.

It's one of the most popular portions of the Bible. It may be familiar to you even if you're not a church-going Christian as you may have heard as a reading at Christian weddings. It's frequently used as an exhortation to the newlyweds and their future lives together.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

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 have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant
5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues,

they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Nice, huh? You can imagine the newlyweds before the altar, glowing with happiness, feeling all the wonderful attributes of love described in these verses.

Except that's not what appears in every Bible published. In the King James version, this is 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 –

13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but

rejoiceth in the truth;
7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I don't ever recall *this* selection being read at Christian weddings, do you?

But even this version in which the word charity is used to describe the greatest of three virtues still doesn't fully convey the intended meaning.

The English words love and charity are rough approximations of a Greek word ἀγάπη, agape – the love of humanity. Agape is both love and charity; it is the emotion of love combined with action of charity, felt for and offered to fellow humans who are God's creations.

Trump and his minions, particularly Russell Vought, wanted to reshape the U.S. by way of Project 2025:

An influential think tank close to Donald Trump is developing plans to

infuse Christian nationalist ideas in his administration should the former president return to power, according to documents obtained by POLITICO.

...

Christian nationalists in America believe that the country was founded as a Christian nation and that **Christian values should be prioritized throughout government and public life**. As the country has become less religious and more diverse, Vought has embraced the idea that Christians are under assault and has spoken of policies he might pursue in response.

One document drafted by CRA staff and fellows includes a list of top priorities for CRA in a second Trump term. "Christian nationalism" is one of the bullet points. Others include invoking the Insurrection Act on Day One to quash protests and refusing to spend authorized congressional funds on unwanted projects, a practice banned by lawmakers in the Nixon era.

Emphasis mine. Source: Trump allies prepare to infuse 'Christian nationalism' in second administration, Politico, Feb 20, 2024.

By actively choosing to starve or bankrupt Americans by refusing to extend healthcare subsidies and fully fund SNAP, thereby endangering human lives, Trump and his administration are doing the furthest thing from establishing a Christian nation. They are not acting with charity, and in this sense the demonstration of agape. They are treating persons who are marginalized by circumstances with more than disrespect but malignant disregard.

It is yet another mortal sin, on top of other mortal sins committed by knowingly seeking individuals to murder in the Gulf of Mexico and

the Pacific Ocean, by turning over individuals for abuse and torture abroad as part of deportations, by encouraging cruel and unusual punishments in painful forms of execution of individuals on death row. I'm sure there are more examples in this profile of Chicago under occupation by Trump's ICE.

Being the lapsed Catholic that I am, I don't ordinarily ask this kind of question, however I feel I need to ask as Trump and his Christian nationalist purveyors clearly haven't asked either. What would Jesus do if confronted with this level of hate for fellow humans? What would Christ say about consciously choosing to deny food and healthcare to those most in need, including persons who are needy because they serve now or have served in the military? This level of hate for fellow humans is creating a national security threat; we can't expect strong defense of our nation from people who haven't eaten, or who are worried about feeding their family.

Ed Walker examined Trumpist Moral Choice in his most recent post as part of his excellent series on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. I'm beyond the eeny-meeny-miney-moe of moral choice; our fellow Americans' urgent needs call for more than mental exercise by the Trumpists who appear unable to consider consequences in advance of decisions.

Nor are platitudes enough; they don't pay healthcare premiums and medical bills, make the rent, or put food on the table.

We need deeds not words. Genuine, *immediate* demonstrations of agape, the greatest of Christian virtues.

Little children, let us not love in word
or talk but in deed and in truth.
— 1 John 3:18