

FROM FATHER DAVE, PASTOR

I enjoy receiving mail. I think it goes back to the days before email and texts when I was a student in Rome. The only reasonable means of communication was letters and cards. Every day after leaving the university I would come home and go immediately to the mailbox. When one is 4000 miles away from home and cannot return home for two years mail was like gold. Letters became for me, again and again, a source of strength and encouragement.

Imagine how the Thessalonians must have felt when hearing Saint Paul's words from today's second reading, which are also directed at us. He writes, "We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen."

In this brief selection, Saint Paul offers two affirmations of the Church in Thessalonica. First, he expresses gratitude as well as the acknowledgement that he, Silvanus and Timothy are remembering them in their prayers.

I think it is always comforting knowing that people are praying for us. I know in my life as a priest I count so much on the prayers of others because I could never do what I do on my own. It is heartwarming when someone says, "Father, I am praying for you."

Sometimes in our prayer lives we can be tempted to succumb to selfishness and make it all about ourselves. As Catholics we are called not only to pray with one another, but also for one another. We acknowledge this reality every time we pray the Confiteor at Holy Mass. We ask for the community to pray for us. We say, "...therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God." It is so important that when we pray, we, like Saint Paul, remember one another. It is equally vital that we let others know that we are praying for them.

Another hazard we can fall prey to in the spiritual life is to fail to give thanks for everything that we have is a gift from God the giver of all gifts. We are not meant to live entitled lives but grateful lives. Even our crosses can become blessings. True faith is one that can thank God for our sufferings and crosses because they always have the opportunity to bring us closer to him.

The second affirmation that Saint Paul offers to the Thessalonians centers on their lifestyle. He points out that they are living every day the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The word "virtue" comes from a Latin word "virtus" which means "valor, merit moral perfection." Saint Paul was struck by how these people were living virtuous lives working at faith, enduring in hope and laboring in love.

To work at faith is to daily embrace the mystery of prayer in a spirit of dialogue with a particular emphasis on listening. To endure in hope is to be an Easter people that never loses sight of the resurrection. And to labor in love is to keep on giving, even when it hurts, and expecting nothing in return.

In this month of October, we honor Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary. How special it was to see a group of women praying the Rosary on the Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima at the cross in the Saint Alphonsus Cemetery. Every time we pray the Rosary, we pray those three Hail Mary's at the beginning typically "for an increase of the virtues of faith, hope and love." May God inspire us to grow in faith, hope and love every day.

As was announced previously in an email blast, it is our hope to open our churches on Sunday to celebrate one Mass indoors as long as we have a crew of volunteers to receive parishioners at the door with signing in and taking temperatures. We also need people to clean and sanitize after each Sunday Mass.

Pending the formation and training of a crew for this new ministry, we will make the 7:00 a.m. virtual Mass at Saint Alphonsus public with a maximum capacity of 80 people. The Mass will continue to be livestreamed. In addition, we will add a 5:00 p.m. Mass on Sundays at Saint Alexis with a maximum capacity of 90 people. This Mass will feature contemporary music. People will need to sign up online once these Masses begin. We will continue to follow our outdoor schedule. Please know that we are doing everything we can to keep everyone safe. Thanks for your cooperation during this unusual time.

Finally, please do not forget to complete your census form.

Have a Spectacular Sunday!