

April 3, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Yesterday was the optional commemoration of Saint Francis of Paolo. I love this saint. He is not very well-known in our day, and he would have wanted it that way. But he made it though Vatican II and kept his pre-Vatican II feast day of April 2. I always gravitate to the little known saints.

These days we are looking at life, people and God in different ways, I hope we are appreciating the gift of life, faith, family and friends with greater appreciation than ever.

In my vocation as a priest I do my share of listening. Last week, I was reflecting on the problems we have in our relationships. Relationships are complex because all of us, even the most simple of us, have temperaments, doubts, longings, hopes, fears and a whole gamut of emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical needs and defects. In the course of a lifetime, we all win some and lose some. By the time we get to the playground at school we've all had our share of ups and downs, hits and misses.

I was trying to help someone recently and afterward a thought came to me that rings true, at least for me, and it was this: *We have to learn to love the people we lose and learn to lose the people we love.* I think if I had known that long ago my heart might have hurt less.

*Patient endurance:* that's what we need; that's what we've always needed as children of our Heavenly Father and brothers and sisters of Christ.

Saint Francis of Paola certainly knew this; his words from a letter he wrote in 1486 make so much saintly sense to me now. Read them and understand them for yourselves:

*Brothers, I most strongly urge you to work for the salvation of your souls with prudence and diligence. Death is certain, and life is short and vanishes like smoke. Therefore you must fix your minds on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ who so burned with love for us that he came down from heaven to redeem us. For our sakes he suffered all the agonies of body and mind, and did not shrink from any torment. He gave us a perfect example of patience and love. For our part, we too must be patient when things go against us.*

*Put aside hatred and hostility. See to it that you refrain from harsh words. But if you do speak them, do not be ashamed to apply the remedy from the same lips that inflicted the wounds. In this way you will show each other mercy and not keep alive the memories of past wrongs. Remembering grievances works great damage. It is accompanied by anger, fosters sin, and brings a hatred for justice. It is a rusty arrow spreading poison in the soul. It destroys virtue and is a cancer in the mind. It thwarts prayer and mangles the petitions we make to God. It drives out love and is a nail driven into the soul, an evil that never sleeps, and sin that never fades away, a kind of daily death.*

*Be lovers of peace, the most precious treasure that anyone can desire. You are already aware that our sins drive God to anger, so you must repent of them, that God in his mercy may spare you. What men conceal is open to God. Turn to him with a sincere heart. Live in such a way that you bring upon yourselves the blessing of God, and that the peace of God our Father may be with you always.*

Now it's time for me to offer Mass, but not without you. I never say Mass alone. There really is no such thing as a *private Mass*. I will take you with me to my makeshift altar, carrying you in my heart and in my mind, and bringing you to Our Lord as I pray *that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.*

Now I send you my blessing *through the air*. Through the intercession of our Lady, Saint Francis of Paolo, and Saint William of York, may the Lord bless and keep you.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Father DeMartino