

April 29, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Saint William of York,

I hope this letter finds you well. Today is the Memorial of St. Catherine of Siena. St. Catherine has a place in the Litany of Saints that I pray at the end of my Rosary, the litany I told you about in my letter of April 21. She is there to teach me how to love.

No matter what is happening in the world or in our lives at the moment, every moment can be a learning experience, and there is nothing more important than learning how to love God and our neighbor. To learn is to grow.

Ralph Martin has written a wonderful book entitled, *The Fulfillment of All Desire*. The book is subtitled: *A Guide for the Journey to God Based on the Wisdom of the Saints*.

Five years ago, in the months before Dad died, I turned on EWTN early one morning just as Ralph Martin was speaking about love and what he said really spoke to me, so wanting to learn more from him, I bought his book. What Martin set out to do in writing his book he accomplished, and I commend it to you.

Chapter 11 of Martin's book is entitled "Growing in Love." On pages 261 and 262 there are two quotations from *The Dialogue* by St. Catherine of Siena which always speak to my heart about growing as Jesus intends us to in true love and holiness.

The Dialogue consists largely of private revelations from our Lord to St. Catherine. We never have to believe private revelations, and in many cases we shouldn't even give them the time of day. But when such revelations have been written by a canonized saint and doctor of the Church, one may safely and profitably read and benefit from them as I have. What I found on page 261 of Martin's book has helped me understand so much love:

This is why I have put you among your neighbors: so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me—that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me.

Isn't that beautiful?

I think we often don't see and can't see the elements of selfishness and need that detract from the purity of our love for our neighbor; because we *don't mean* to be selfish, we *don't seem* to be selfish, at least to ourselves.

Maybe to those we are trying to love we *do seem* selfish and that might account for some of the disconnections we often experience in our relationships at home, at work, and even in our parish.

Jesus let St. Catherine know how to detect that selfishness:

Do you know how you can tell when your spiritual love is not perfect? If you are distressed when it seems that those you love are not returning your love or not loving you as much as you think you love them.

Or if you are distressed if it seems you are being deprived of their company or comfort, or that they love someone else more than you.... All this comes of the failure to drive out every bit of the root of spiritual selfishness. This is why I often permit you such a love, so that you may come through it to know yourself and your imperfection....

That last sentence is meant to give us hope: *This is why I often permit you such a love, so that you may come through it to know yourself and your imperfection...*

Jesus intends us to *come through* experiences of our imperfection and sinfulness. We are not lost causes as long as we are still trying. Reconciliation is at the heart of our faith and life as Roman Catholics. We fall and rise again, and again and again. If only falling were not so easy. But as long as we keep learning from our mistakes, those very same mistakes can become giant steps taken on the *ladder of ascent* or *the way of perfection* or whatever else you want to call growing in holiness.

I miss you so much. Last night a certain feeling came over me after I offered Mass. I just wanted to be able to take all this suffering away from you. If only I could. But if I could, would it be what Jesus wants, as if our brief suffering now were for nothing? I think not. I think there is something very good yet to be accomplished in you and in me, in all of us.

In their own way, these Masses I say behind closed doors are fulfilling that feeling I had last night. There are few things more powerful and extraordinary that a priest can do than offer Mass and absolve sins, and Our Lord and our Bishop still permit me to do both.

I have told you before that I carry you with me to the altar of God each day when I offer Mass, and it's true. I take all the concerns, fears and anxieties that I can imagine you have with me. You are always present to me, as I know I am to you. Thank you for your love.

Now I send you my blessing again, through the air, remaining

Always yours faithfully,

Father DeMartino