

Dear Friends,

We just began another month of our 'retreat,' because it looks like this May we still will be locked down in our houses and will be waiting for any comforting news that the virus is decreasing. Perhaps, they will even find a cure for it. I talk to many of you over the phone or when I meet you while you are walking and enjoying nice weather. We also at times communicate over the Internet, and I hear from many of you how much you miss coming to Church. I miss it too, and this year for the very first time as a priest and the first time at St. Thomas of Villanova, I missed the Holy Triduum, Easter, First Holy Communion of our children and many more important events. This is very disappointing, but I hope and pray that slowly we will be able to start opening the doors to our churches. Maybe not for a full Mass right away, but be open for a prayer service, or just for some private adoration.

I was listening to the radio recently and in the program that was on, they invited people to call them and just share their experiences of this lock-down. It surprised me that most people who called complained about spending too much time with their spouses, parents or children. It surprised me because I got used to living alone. But hearing all of these people, I realized that indeed it may be difficult to have patience with a lot of people around us. Yes, we love them very much, but we got used to spending only a portion of our day with them. We were not prepared to be together all the time.

I can compare that to my going back to Poland and spending time with my mom. She loves me much, and I love her too, but being with her all the time got me somehow impatient and maybe even jittery. Those constant repeated questions: are you hungry? do you want me to make your coffee? what would you like for me to make for dinner? how about breakfast? don't you like my food anymore? Or she also asked me to call people from my family, or to visit them or to dress up warmer... Yes, she loves me and wants all the best for me like every mom for her child, but it can be overwhelming.

I can relate with all of you who are going through this right now, but this will last only for a short time (we hope!). So, let us try to be more patient and nicer to each other. This is a great spiritual practice for us now. We love each other, but we may be tired of each other. Yes, this is normal, but it doesn't mean that we should respond to anger with anger, impatience, or mistreating others. Talk to people next to you. We are practicing physical distancing, not "social" distancing. This Sunday in the second reading Saint Peter invites us to think about our relationships with others. This is what he says:

*"Beloved:
If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.
For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.
He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*

*When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten;
instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.
He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross,
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed.
For you had gone astray like sheep,
but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.” (1 PT 2:20B-25)*

So, Saint Peter invites us to be patient in our suffering. He also asks us to be nice to each other, even if we are tired of being locked down all the time. I started this reflection with saying that we are in another month of our ‘retreat’. Yes, this time can be a great retreat time for us, and maybe we can use this time for reevaluating our relationships with our parents, spouses, children, neighbors and friends. There will be times that we will no longer have them with us, so God is giving us this time right now to enjoy and value our families and friendships. Let us pray for patience and for each other because even though we can get angry and impatient, “*you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.*”

God bless you!

Fr. Kris