

Spirituality from the Bathroom Wall

(excerpted from *For Your Love Alone* by Michael Syslo)

On a recent Saturday morning, I was visiting at the home of some friends where we have a regular prayer and spiritual sharing session. Before our session began, since it was a long ride to their home, I asked to use the bathroom. There on the wall in the bathroom was a sign that hit me as an important message – a message to be shared, a message for Vincentians as well as everyone else. The sign, colorfully printed and framed, had this message:

Patience with others is *LOVE*.

Patience with self is *HOPE*.

Patience with God is *FAITH*.

Patience with others is *LOVE*. This has a strong meaning when it comes to our St. Vincent de Paul ministry. The people we visit have called us because they are in many cases in crisis mode. They have one thing on their minds – to get out from under the heavy weight of the burden they are carrying. They are looking to us for that relief. They are anxious. They may not be listening closely to what we say. They may be very loud. They may be demanding. They may be rude. They may be using very colorful language. We may be in a setting where we are very uncomfortable: an apartment complex known for drug dealing; an apartment or home that smells terribly of stale tobacco, urine or other things we are not accustomed to; surroundings that are extremely cluttered and dirty; a place we would rather not be at. Or, they may have the appearance of wealth (52" TV, fancy cars in the driveway, etc.) and yet they have the nerve to ask us for help. We may have any number of personal things going through our minds. We ourselves may have a commitment to meet and are in a hurry to get this visit over with. All of these possibilities (and many more besides) are reasons for us to be patient with them. It is this patience that shows them we care. It is this patience that shows them we love them. And remember, Jesus is not asking us to satisfy their every material need. He is asking us to love them in the best way possible, taking the time to listen to their troubles and concerns. He is asking us to love them as He loves us.

Patience with self is *HOPE*. People worry about a lot of things that affect them personally. We worry about our jobs, our family, our children, our next meal, our health, our savings, our investments, and our retirement. We worry about the price of gas, the price of milk, the increased cost of everything we usually use or need. We worry about how much we know, how much we are growing in our jobs and in general, how we are going to pay the bills, how we are going to pay for our kids' higher education, how we are going to buy that new car or even a used car. We have all these things that cause us stress – all of these things that create havoc with our bodies and our minds – all of these things that may put us in an early grave – all of these things that we really

don't have to worry about. Our Lord told us to give our burdens to Him for His way is easy and His burden light. He will help us with all of our concerns. He can help us deal with all of this. Our one biggest problem is that it must all be fixed right now—this minute. And that is not going to happen. So, we must place it all in God's hands, in God's time and be patient. Patience will bring us hope.

Patience with God is *FAITH*. Just above, I wrote: *So, we must place it all in God's hands, in God's time and be patient.* That is so hard because God's ways are not our ways. We have spent our whole lives making things happen. We have been told all our lives that we must be in control. We have spent all our lives being shown by God that we are truly not in control of this life. We are not in control of our surroundings. We are not in control of what others may do or what Mother Nature may bring to us. We must understand that only God is control. He told us that, if we live our lives as He asks us to, if we give control to Him, then He will make us prosper. Our biggest challenge is to follow through and be patient. And, that patience reflects our faith in Him.