Francis, the comic strip

Pope Francis holds the Eucharist as he celebrates Mass at the Catholic University of the Sacre

Pope Francis holds the Eucharist as he celebrates Mass at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome Nov. 5, 2021. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Carol Glatz

View Author Profile



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Rome — November 5, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

People need to be passionate about serving others and caring for those who suffer, Pope Francis said.

"Lord, we entrust to your heart the vocation of care — let us make every person who approaches us in need feel special," he said in a homily to medical and teaching staff, students, patients and others at a Mass held outside the medical school connected to Rome's Gemelli hospital, where he was a patient for 10 days in July.

The pope presided over the Mass at Rome's University of the Sacred Heart, Nov. 5 — the first Friday of the month, which many devote to the sacred heart of Jesus. The university, which was founded in Milan and has four satellite campuses in Italy, is one of the largest Catholic universities in the world and is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

The Mass marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the university's Agostino Gemelli Department of Medicine and Surgery in Rome, known informally as "the pope's hospital" as it is where popes typically go for medical treatment. Pope Francis underwent colon surgery there in July.

In his homily, the pope recognized the fatigue and challenges medical staff face, not just in their day-to-day duties, but also when it comes to dealing with rare or undetected diseases and wanting to give everyone the same high-quality health care.

"We might get discouraged. This is why we need comfort," he said. Comfort can be found in Jesus' sacred heart, "which beats for us, always to the rhythm of those words, 'Have courage, do not be afraid, I am here.'"

"Have courage brothers and sisters, do not give up, the Lord, your God, is greater than your ills, he takes you by the hand and caresses you, he is near, compassionate and gentle. He is your comfort," the pope said.

Advertisement

People, particularly those in the field of health care, also need the strength of memory, he said. Reflecting on the sacred heart of Jesus reminds people of the boundless goodness and love he offers freely and unconditionally.

People are usually so busy each day that they forget to remember this love and to feel the same compassion for others, he said.

During "this time of pandemic, it would be good for us to also remember those more trying times, not to make us sad, but to not forget and to guide us in our choices with the light of a very recent past," he said.

The "art of remembering" should be practiced by not letting the day end in exhaustion but rather by taking note of and appreciating all the faces, smiles and friendly exchanges that happened throughout the day, he said. Remembering these small gestures are important for giving meaning to those who are ill, too, he said, explaining that the "therapy of remembering" restores and heals the heart.

Jesus' sacred heart also reflects how important passion is, the pope said.

"If we want to truly love God, we have to become passionate about humanity, each person," above all those who live in pain and who are abandoned or discarded, he said.

"Let us ask for the grace to become passionate about people who suffer, about service, so that the church, before saying anything, safeguards a heart that pulsates with love," he said.