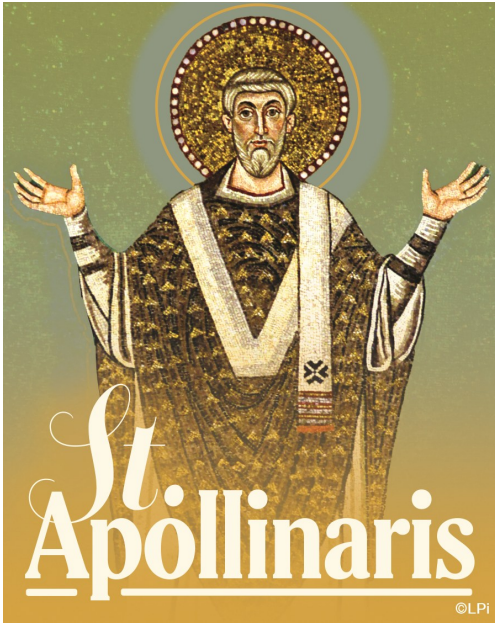


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I like to invite us to fix our eyes on the living witness of the saints, who help us rediscover the beauty of our Baptism and walk the itinerary of Faith that leads us to mature communion. On July 20, the Church celebrates the memorial of Saint Apollinaris, Bishop and Martyr. He is a luminous sign for us of what it means to be sent, like the first Christians, to proclaim the Kerygma in the midst of a hostile world.

According to tradition, Apollinaris was from Antioch in Syria and a disciple of the Apostle Peter, who consecrated him and sent him as the first bishop to Ravenna during the time of the Emperor Claudius. For about twenty-six years he shepherded the flock in Emilia-Romagna, preaching the Paschal Mystery with great power. Miracles accompanied his proclamation: the sick were healed, demons were cast

out, and many pagans were converted to the living faith in Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us.

Yet this light provoked the fury of the idolaters. He was beaten cruelly and driven from the city, left half-dead on the seashore. Christians hid him, but he returned again and again to continue the work of evangelization. He endured repeated persecutions: walking on burning coals, imprisonment with chains, exile to Greece, and savage beatings. Finally, under the Emperor Vespasian, he was attacked at Classis, near Ravenna. Mortally wounded, he lived seven more days, prophesying that persecutions would come but that the Church would triumph. His martyrdom sealed his fidelity as a good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

Saint Apollinaris shows us the true nature of the Christian vocation: to be martyrs, that is, witnesses. Not by our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit who makes us participants in the victory of the Cross. The martyr does not seek suffering for its own sake; he lives the Passover of the Lord — passing through death to life — and in doing so becomes a living sermon for the nations.

We too are called to this same witness today. In a world that still worships its own idols — money, power, pleasure, indifference — we are sent to announce that the only true God is the Father of Jesus Christ, who raises the dead. Like Apollinaris, we may face misunderstanding, rejection, or even subtle persecution. But we do not walk alone. We walk in community, nourished by the Word of God that is proclaimed and celebrated, especially the Eucharist, the memorial of the Paschal Mystery.

Let us ask Saint Apollinaris to intercede for us: that our community may be a place where the Gospel is announced with power, where the sick are healed, the possessed are liberated, and the poor hear the good news. May his example strengthen us in the tribulations of this time, so that, like him, we may persevere until the end and one day hear the words of the Risen Lord: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” May the Lord bless you and grant you the joy of the Resurrection.

Peace,