

**Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George
St. Francis Convent, Alton, Illinois
Day of Recollection
December 27, 2023**

Conference 1 - Celebrating God's Providence

St. John Paul II - There are no coincidences; only God's Providence.

Providence is trusting that God will provide. Not passive resignation to "whatever,"

"Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you." - Saint Augustine

Example of my family: Nine children on one income (my father's).

We must promote vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The first miracle performed by Jesus was changing water into wine. When Mary says, "They have run out of wine," she is referring to Israel of the Old Testament, meaning, "They have run out of grace." Jesus has come to restore an abundance of grace flowing like wine. Mary: "Do whatever He tells you."

St. Therese of Lisieux was anxious about her responsibilities as Vice Prioress until she prayed before the tabernacle, telling the Lord that the sisters under her care were His responsibility. So she turned them over to Him and she felt great comfort and peace.

A woman was asked by a journalist how long she had been a member of Opus Dei. She paused and said, "Since before the foundation of the world!" In other words, God thought of us and made His plans for us; then He began His creation.

We pray for the gift of intellect to understand better our divine filiation as sons and daughters of God.

In our ministry, we must be men and women of action, but if we do not mingle this action with prayer, then we are only men and women of agitation. All that matters is that we are in communion with God.

Note the distinction between *felicitas* and *beatitudo*. *Felicitas* is human happiness, while *beatitudo* is the happiness that only God can give us. True happiness = holiness. What is holiness? Holiness is the very essence of God.

Freedom is not the same as free choice. Free choice in itself is meaningless. You may have free choice to smash a window, but what does that mean? Only the virtuous have true freedom. When one freely chooses virtue, this freedom has meaning.

We are called to be an icon of Christ, not a caricature of Christ.

What is more admirable in the Blessed Virgin Mary: her virginity or her humility? Her humility is more important. One can get to heaven without being a virgin, but one cannot get to heaven without humility.

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins found that the leaders of the most successful companies were not necessarily dynamic extroverted personalities, but rather humble leaders who listened and looked for the best interests of their companies rather than their own interests.

Humility involves knowing when we need to rest and knowing how to rest. We are truly humbled not when we humble ourselves, but when we are humbled by others.

The joy of our vocation is incompatible with the sadness of sin and the sluggishness of sloth.

Youth tend to be seen as full of hope because they have so many years of their future ahead of them, yet we must remember that we all have eternity before us!

"Mary gave birth to Jesus in the stable because there was no place for them in the inn." The "inn" was more like a living room than a hotel or boarding house. It was not that there was a "no vacancy" sign at the boarding house, but there was no suitable place other than the stable for Mary to give birth in secluded privacy as required by Jewish law.

St. John Paul used to write important letters before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Church has many buildings, activities and apostolates, and these could all collapse or disappear, but the Church would still exist as long as there is the Eucharist.

We have to be fervent in our devotion to God lest we slip into tepidity. We have to be on guard against spiritual tepidity, recalling the words of the Book of Revelation where God says He will vomit or spit out the lukewarm. Thus we must be on guard even against venial sins, which do great harm to the soul.

Three steps are needed in the Christian life: prayer, atonement and action.

St. Augustine: God's thirst for man meets man's need for God.

Prayer is the oxygen of our souls. A person does not live long without oxygen. A person's spiritual life will not survive for long without prayer.

Prayer is a battle (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

The rosary is the "4-wheel-drive" of prayer! The rosary was never formally introduced into the Church, but arose spontaneously out of the life of the Church.

St. Augustine said that we receive the Holy Spirit in the measure that we love the Church.