

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

Conference 2 – Witnesses to God’s Merciful Love and Friendship

Eucharistic processions; public witness of our belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Witnesses to God’s merciful love: Mercy = to treat someone with compassion; cf. corporal and spiritual works of mercy; not only forgiveness. FSGMs have been doing works of mercy for 100 years: caring for the sick and teaching children.

Mercy is not a “get out of jail free” card. Mercy requires repentance. The sin of presumption: I presume I will be saved no matter what I do.

How many are going to be saved? The saved are those who repent. So how many are truly repentant? How many are walking away sad like the rich young man who walked away from Jesus? In our culture today, there is a vast denial of sin, which leads to a denial of hell, and does away with the need for a Savior. We do ourselves a disservice if we do not recognize the evils of this world. Many saints such as St. Augustine and St. Philip Neri taught that the majority of people choose damnation, that is, they refuse to acknowledge their sins and turn to God.

St. Teresa of Avila was given a vision of hell in which she was alone. Hell is isolation. Heaven is sharing in the glory of God in communion with God and the saints.

We should strive not only to avoid hell, but even the punishments of purgatory.

He who directs himself in the spiritual life has a fool for a spiritual director.

Apart from Jesus we can do nothing.

St. John Paul II: episcopal leadership must be based on holiness. This applies to everyone. "All Pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* – On Entering the New Millennium).

We need saints, not more programs in our parishes and in our dioceses.

St. Josemaria Escriva: We must desire sainthood more than a miser covets gold.

St. Francis of Assisi wrote to the clergy decrying dirty churches and soiled altar linens.

Chapter 5 of *Lumen gentium* addresses the universal call to holiness. This is one of the main themes of the Second Vatican Council. To grow in holiness, we must be people of prayer. Jesus is often depicted in the Gospels as being at prayer. We must imitate His example.

Teaching people to pray is one of the biggest challenges in our culture today. People want immediate results and expect an emotional high when they pray. There are also so many distractions and noises in our world around us. The key to the spiritual life: just show up!

To be people of prayer, we need a program of prayer at set times worked out with a spiritual director. This includes praying the Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, the Sacrifice of the Mass, reading the Bible, spiritual reading, and mental prayer. All this takes 2-3 hours a day.

Our mental prayer should not be about thinking more, but loving more. We use our intellect in mental prayer, but the goal is growth in love of God, not growth in knowledge.

We seek to become joyful saints!

Two means that saints use to grow in holiness, to grow closer to Christ: the first is prayer; the second is mortification.

Daily list of small mortifications:

- Start with the heroic moment: get out of bed as soon as the alarm goes off. No snooze!
- Hold fast to the Cross: join your cross to the cross of Christ.
- Embrace the pain: offer up to God whatever sufferings come your way.
- Don't complain! Complaining to others is uncharitable because it brings them down.
- Be cheerful and happy even when you do not feel to be in a good mood.
- Pray on your knees.
- Fast from food and drink from time to time to cleanse body and soul.
- Answering email can be a mortification!

True communion with God is simply basking in His friendship.

Having a personal relationship with God: spending time with Him, talking with Him, doing things for Him, etc.

* * *

I am a friend of God
 I am a friend of God
 I am a friend of God
 He calls me friend.

* * *

God Almighty
Lord of glory
You have called me friend

* * *

I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
I am a friend of God
He calls me friend.¹

¹ This song has also been recorded by Phillips, Craig and Dean, a contemporary Christian music trio composed of Randy Phillips, Shawn Craig, and Dan Dean. See:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcxKRsn-hGc>