

Good afternoon my fellow parishioners,

I have asked Our Lord again to give me words for you. I'm not afraid, but I would not want you to think for a moment that I cannot appreciate the very realistic fears that many of you may have: fears concerning your health, the health of your parents, and financial fears of all kinds. I never discount people's anxieties and worries.

Over the years, over the course of my lifetime really, I have tried to understand so many inexplicable things that changed the course of my life, for better or seemingly for worse. I say seemingly for worse because if God had answered my prayers the way that I hoped He would you would not be reading this letter and I would not be typing it, because I wouldn't be your pastor; I wouldn't be a priest.

Over the course of my life, as I grew in the knowledge and love of Jesus, I had to learn that it's not my world, that nothing's mine, and that even I'm not my own, not if I belong to God, and more than anything else I want to belong to God. Remember what I told you Tuesday, that God created the universe *in a state of journeying* toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which He has destined it. Even now, especially now, His Divine Providence is infallibly leading us to that ultimate perfection.

As we do most things, I learned to revere and submit to the Divine Providence over time, through prayer, through disappointments, through opportunities and through truly extraordinary interventions in my life. Additionally, I found examples of Divine Providence in the Sacred Scriptures once I began looking for them, but, most of all, I learned about the Divine Providence through the writings and examples of the saints.

Today I want to share with you some insights from the saints. Their knowledge of the Divine Providence has helped me so much.

When **Saint Teresa of Calcutta** was experiencing obstacle upon obstacle as she tried to follow what she perceived to be the Lord's call to love, live and work outside the convent walls of Calcutta she had a flash of light one day about the whole matter and realized,

If things happen, it's because the Lord want them to happen. If they don't, it means He doesn't. It's so simple.

It's so simple, but it's not so easy. Why? Because we almost always have in mind some way of our own that seems right to us, then we hope and pray that God will follow that way. But we have to learn to want what Our Father in Heaven wants, whatever it may be, and that's something we often have to learn the hard way.

Pope Clement XI came to understand the superiority of God's ways over his ways and so he prayed,

I want whatever You want, I want because You want, I want as You want, I want as long as You want.

Centuries later **Pope Saint John Paul II** would declare:

In the designs of Providence, there are no mere coincidences.

Edith Stein had an amazing life story and conversion that propelled her as **Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross** through the solitude of two Carmelites convents and into the packed gas chambers of Auschwitz. It was God's plan for her sanctity, and on October 11, 1998 she was canonized in Saint Peter's Square by **Pope Saint John Paul II**.

As a late vocation in the Carmelite Convent of Cologne, **Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross** wrote:

Things were in God's plan which I had not planned at all. I am coming to the living faith and conviction that – from God's point of view – there is no chance and that the whole of my life, down to every detail, has been mapped out in God's divine providence and makes complete and perfect sense in God's all-seeing eyes.

To be sure, the Divine Providence *makes complete and perfect sense in God's all-seeing eyes*. But it does not in ours. Why has He allowed this virus to terrify the whole world? I have no answer for you, except to tell you again that I know our lives are in God's hands and that His Divine Providence upholds the. And if The Lord of History's eternal preference for *writing straight with crooked lines* perplexes me, and it does, it helps me to remember that His infinitely wise and eternal perspective is impossible for me to wrap my arms around because He is God and I am not, because HE IS and I am not. And if God thought like me, even for a moment, what kind of God would He be?

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, the handmaid of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, wrote:

Do not be afraid to abandon yourself unreservedly to His loving Providence, for a child cannot perish in the arms of a Father Who is omnipotent.

Saint Margaret's spiritual director, **Saint Claude de la Colombiere**, undoubtedly was the instrument God used to teach her. This humble priest laid the following down for her benefit then, and for ours' now.

It is one of the most firmly established and most consoling of the truths that have been revealed to us that (apart from sin) nothing happens to us in life unless God wills it so. Wealth and poverty alike come from Him. If we fall ill, God is the cause of our illness; if we get well, our recovery is due to God. We owe our lives entirely to Him, and when death comes to put an end to life, His will be the hand that deals the blow.

This is where I would offer you a word caution. To trust in the Divine Providence is first and foremost a matter of faith responding to grace. Perhaps later, after becoming accustomed to the reality that God's ways are different than ours, trust may begin to become an increasingly rational response to what our Heavenly Father is doing. Until then, what Scripture calls *The Hidden Counsels of God* may confront, disturb and perplex us.

But let us now consider with faith the following exhortation of **Saint Claude de la Colombiere**:

It is then a truth of our faith that God is responsible for all the happenings we complain of in the world and, furthermore, we cannot doubt that all the misfortunes God sends us have a very useful purpose. We cannot doubt it without imputing to God a lack of judgment in deciding what is advantageous for us.

It is usually the case that other people can see better than we can ourselves what is good for us. It would be foolish to think that we can see better than God Himself, who is not subject to any of the passions that blind us, knows the future and can foresee all events and the consequences of every action.

Experience shows that even the gravest misfortunes can have good results and the greatest successes end in disaster. A rule also that God usually follows is to attain His ends by ways that are the opposite of those human prudence would normally choose.

In our ignorance of what the future holds, how can we be so bold as to question what comes about by God's permission? Surely it is reasonable to think that our complaints are groundless and that instead of complaining we ought to be thanking Providence.

Now recall what I wrote to you in my letter on Tuesday in light of what you have just read from **Saint Claude de la Colombiere**:

Last Tuesday, the 24th of March, I wrote:

“In the midst of it all I thanked Him, suddenly and spontaneously, for the *Coronavirus* and *for the good that it would do*. I surprised myself for a moment when I did, but just for a moment. I know my Father in Heaven well enough by now at least to know that He always has a plan.”

I began this letter assuring you that I am not unaware of the very realistic fears that many of you may have. I told you that I never discount people’s anxieties and worries. People all over the world are feeling vulnerable and afraid right now.

Jesus had only three years with His Twelve Apostles. Some of the things that He had to teach them were hard to hear and often they did not understand. Toward the end of His incarnate life on earth He had to teach them very difficult things just before, or in the midst of, an unfolding crisis. Sometimes there isn’t time to teach any other way.

This morning, in my private quarters, I was very conscious of carrying all of you, with your intentions and concerns in my heart as I approached my makeshift altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In a very real sense you are always with me, and we are in this together.

Here, at Saint William of York we are the Mystical Body of Christ, present and accounted for, and now perhaps more than ever, during this global health and economic crisis, we are providentially *being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the*

proper working of each individual part... for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:16). I wouldn't have it any other way. I am so proud of Father Lino, Deacon Benisek, Mr. Armstrong and our dedicated office staff, Mr. Lima, our Saint William of York School Principal, our devoted school teachers and staff, and all of our ministry heads and volunteers.

May God grant all of you a grace-filled remainder of the day and a most restful night to come.

With kindest regards and prayers for you each day, I remain

Your grateful pastor,

Father DeMartino