

God's Providence

On August 22, the Gospel reading at Mass was the story of the landowner who hires workers throughout the day for work in his vineyard. The last batch of labourers only work one hour. When the time comes to pay the workers, everybody receive the same amount, the one-hour workers as well as the eight-hour ones. You know the rest of the story.

On that same day, I celebrated the 12-noon mass at the Ottawa cathedral. In my homily, I told the story of two boys who were anticipating the school picnic scheduled for the next day. The boys decided to pray for good weather. As one would expect, the next day brought storm and rain. One boy said to his friend, *'I guess God did not hear our prayer.'* The other boy replied, *'O He heard our prayer, but He decided to say No.'*

Indeed, life is full of similar situations; we must grow in our understanding of God's providence. I was in need of a haircut and my barber is an elderly chap whose shop is in the Ottawa suburb of Kanata. It is about a 30-minute drive from my downtown home. My first idea was to go to the barber right after my 12:15 mass at the cathedral. For the first time in my life, I placed myself in the wrong traffic lane to make the initial turn to go west. I then decided to go home, have lunch and then go to the barber. The whole episode lasted about an hour.

Interestingly, when I did get to the barbershop, I discovered that my friend, the old barber, had just arrived. This meant that if my initial plan had been successful, I would have missed him. I then realized that providence had been at work; the delays were necessary!

An art all Christians must develop is to discern the work of providence. God's love is great for all of us, and it includes saying "no" for our own good. When we do our best, when we live an organized and well-balanced life, we provide a favourable context for God's providence to work.

God took the tremendous trouble to supply us with a brain and He wishes dearly that we will use that brain to full capacity. However, He knew that even with our best efforts, we often need help, and so, He devised the wonderful assistance we call providence.

As Vincentians, we are often called upon to be agents of providence. Keep that idea in mind so that whenever you encounter people in need, you will not only provide them with material goods, but you will also nourish their spiritual being. Never leave a home without asking providence to remain present after you have gone.

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