

CLOSING THOUGHTS – FUTURE WITH HOPE 2018

On the clock, we've been together for less than 24 hours – can you believe it?! But, oh how much was packed in to those hours.

It is my pleasure right now to walk with you through these past 24 hours to highlight the journey we've taken and the gifts that have been shared with us by our wonderful speakers. But that's only been part of the journey – we have also enjoyed conversations at our tables, gone on a spiritual treasure hunt, gotten reacquainted with old friends, made new friends, enjoyed scrumptious meals, and had many opportunities for growing closer to our Lord – through Night Prayer, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and our greatest prayer of all – the Mass.

I think if I had to sum up everything for me, it would be this: “God uses all circumstances to reach us in our lives, and no matter where we are, if we are open to Him, anything is possible.”

Take a moment to reflect with me upon some of the wonderful things we have heard - close your eyes and consider what has spoken to your heart during our time together:

- Fr. Edlefsen focused on what our Conference is all about – a Future With HOPE;
- Duffy reminded us to take from here what we can use in our lives, and leave behind what we cannot;
- Erin Benbennick..... God restores the pattern to our lives, despite a lifetime of dropping and adding stitches all along the way,”It is well, it is well, with my soul.” 2 Corinthians reminds us where to place our trust: “⁹Indeed, we felt we were under the sentence of death, in order that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead.”
- Tony DeCristofaro.....embracing piety and turning our backs to the distractions.....follow the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict, to LISTEN.....Pray with our hands open to receive what God wants to give to us; and.....if piety doesn’t take you out of your comfort zone, it’s not the cross you’re picking up, it’s just a crutch.....
- Maria Suarez Hamm.....Heart speaks to Heart.....The Best is Yet to Be... these years are the culmination of our life’s work, not the termination,..... sharing our experience and wisdom with others.....making adjustments..... accepting changes.....pride dies only half an hour after our bodies do.....

- Alejandra Segura – an epic journey covering three continents..... a spiritual journey with Mary..... a special cruise, a trip to Ephesus,.....a request..... and a Fiat.....no matter how unlikely, no matter the challenges..... a procession through Georgetown.....we are women of HOPE.....fearless, free, for the glory of God. Do not be afraid.
- What did you find on your spiritual treasure hunt?
- Mary Elizabeth Sperry – AOL computer disks.....our junk lives better than most people on the planet..... our spirituality and our lives are inseparable....."Once I get my house in order, I will....."..... Clutter is a thief.....Honor the memories.....Somebody else needs this..... Florence and Gladys....."Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do, or Do Without.".....Now is the time.....Make Room for God.

[okay, now *open your eyes*]

So, now what? We know that Moses had to come down from the mountain, and we have to leave here and go back to our 'ordinary' lives. But that's just it, isn't it? Being women of faith, gifted already with four plus decades of living - we know that nothing about this life is ordinary. For each one of us, it is all extraordinary and it is all unique – your journey is different than mine, and

different than the person sitting next to you, and even different from where you *thought* your journey was headed last year, or maybe even just last week.

The purpose of a Conference like this is to take a timeout, using the most precious and limited resource we have - time – to listen and continue growing in our relationship to Christ.

Based upon the reflection we just did, take out a sheet of paper and write down ONE THING you are taking from here that will impact your life when you return home. There are probably many things, but for now, just choose one. If you're not sure yet, just commit to spending more time in prayer at home to LISTEN to what God is telling you.

You don't need to share what you wrote down with anyone, but keep that sheet of paper - perhaps post it on a mirror or on your bedside table as a reminder.

On page 46 of her book, "Making Room for God", Mary Sperry tells us: 'Avoiding the near occasion of sin means staying away from people, places and circumstances that tempt us into the behaviors that we are trying to purge from our lives.' I guess a natural extension of that would be 'to grow in holiness I need to surround myself with people, places and circumstances that feed my desire for holiness' – well, I guess we've all been in the right place for that.

You don't leave an experience like this unchanged. You may not see the change right away, but keep praying with your hands open, and God will show you how and where he wants you to step out with HOPE.