

Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Romans 8:28-30 / Matthew 1:1-16. 18-23)
8.08.2015

Some of us find it hard to believe that God really wants to use us to carry out His Divine Plan. Such is the humility of our God that He does!
The Lord wants to see us cooperate with His grace in His great work of redemption. God wants to use every person in some way for a particular mission. All of us have a calling in life to which the Lord longs to see us respond. Newman captures this idea in a famous prayer he wrote. It is a rather long prayer, so I will content myself to quote just a few lines from it here.
Newman prays in his prayer '*Some Definite Service*':
God knows me and calls me by my name....
God has created me to do Him some definite service;
He has committed some work to me
which He has not committed to another.
I have my mission (...)
Somehow I am necessary for His purposes....
I have a part in this great work;
(...) He has not created me for naught. I shall do good,
I shall do His work....

Understand me.

When I say that we all have a particular mission, a calling in life, to which God longs to see us respond, I am not saying that every little detail of our life has already been mapped out for us in advance before we start out in life and that things must go in a particular way, as if we have no free will.

That is not how life works.

God created us with free will. He never forces our hand. He respects us too much to act in that way. He leaves us freedom of choice, room for manoeuvre and scope to express ourselves. But, the Lord does have a dream for us. He holds a hope in our regard in His loving heart.

It is this thought that leads the hymn-writer to speak in the popular Lourdes hymn of how when creation was begun God had chosen Mary to be mother of His Blessed Son.

From the beginning of time, the Lord held in His heart the desire to become one with us. Propelled by His infinite love for us, the Lord desired to take flesh and come to live in our midst. This is what He did in the child the Virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the young woman of Nazareth, the faithful daughter of Zion, chosen and called by God for the particular mission of being the *Theotokos* (the God bearer, the Mother of God), God became man in Christ-Jesus. In the child of Mary's womb, God's dream found fulfilment. God's dream was always that He might become one with us in Jesus, so that we might become one with Him in Christ.

This happened on one fundamental condition: Mary's consent to God's plan for her, and, through her, for all humanity.

That required of Mary a vision of faith, a trusting attitude of heart, a total disposal to do God's will. It was Mary's *yes* that permitted the Word to take flesh in her and make His home in our midst.

To think of this reminds us of the fact that the same basic call to allow the word to be made flesh and come and dwell in our midst is made upon each one of us.

Like Mary, we are called to be men and women of open minds, open hearts and open hands, so that God can find an open space wherein He may pitch His tent in the midst of this world.

Like Mary, we are called to be men and women who trust that God wills to use us in some way to advance the coming of His kingdom here on earth. The coming of God's kingdom was Jesus' great proclamation. His mission was to inaugurate its coming in our lives.

Whatever about the minute details of life, here we have God's great and ultimate plan: the establishment of His kingdom in people's hearts, with all the good and well-being that the coming of this kingdom will bring about in our fallen, broken world.

I wonder if we dare to believe in the trust God places in each one of us as members of his Chosen People.

I wonder if we dare to believe that there is a Divine Plan for our world and for each one of our lives, and, through our lives, for the well-being of this world.

A prayer used in French at the *Orate Fratres* of the Eucharist reminds us that we are called to make the offering of our lives *for the good of the Church and the salvation of the world*.

Do we remember this sufficiently?

St Paul certainly had this vision of a Divine Plan.

He speaks in this vein in more than one place in his writings.

This morning we hear the apostle speak of how the Lord works everything together for the good in our lives – even the seemingly negative experiences we traverse, the hardships we endure, the difficult times we endure along the way, can all become part of God working out His purpose.

I think the important thing for us to grasp as we contemplate the infant Mary, whose birthday we celebrate today, is how already in that little child God's great plan for the world's salvation, was wrapped and enfolded.

It was there already when the infant Mary was nursed, hidden from view, awaiting to be made visible when the time would come.

In the same way there is an action that God wants to accomplish for the good of the Church and the salvation of the world hidden in each one of us. This Divine plan is awaiting to be discerned by us, first of all, and then later consented to by us, so that God's will may be done in and through our lives as it was in and through Mary's life.

There is a call for us to believe that God's plan is wrapped in the folds of each one of our beings, even as an oak is wrapped in the acorn and the rose is wrapped in the bud.

Nothing can stand in the way of God's ultimate plan for us which is that we come to share in His very life.

Things can become distorted along the way. They can go awry at certain moments. We can sometimes mess things up badly, to speak bluntly.

But, ultimately, God will always find a way to work out His purpose, which is always a saving purpose.

The Lord will work everything together for our good – even the seemingly negative and bad things that somehow fall into the mix of our lives.

The challenge for us is to dare to do as Mary did.

It is to consent to God's plan and, even more than that, it is to simply relax into it.

It is to seek out and consent to God's desire: His particular plan for us.
It is to abandon ourselves to the great current of grace that carries us through life.

When we relax into God's plan for our lives then we come to know that inner peace and security that Mary evidently found. We know that patience and stillness that carried her through even the most horrendous events of Calvary.

We find the strength we need to face up to difficulties of every kind.

We come to see the painful passages we endure as birthing moments in our lives and so we can do as Paul tells us he did: we can even rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that God's will is being accomplished in some mysterious way through them.

God's mysterious way is most often not one we might have chosen for ourselves, but God can and will use it to the good: our good and other people's good.... if only we trust Him to do so.

Let us ask the Lord to bring His will to birth in each one of our lives.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to relax into His plan for us.

Let us ask the Lord to unfold His plan within us as the acorn unfolds into the oak, or the bud into the blossoming rose.