



Dolorosa

HOLY WEEK

MARCH 2018



THE PERFECT EFFORT

The Perfect Fiat

Father Paul Krug, C.S.P.V

Each year, according to the World Health Organization, an estimated 2.7 million people are bitten by poisonous snakes. Of those 2.7 million, anywhere from 81,000 to 138,000 die. These numbers do seem large, but if we were to compare them to the number of snakebite deaths forty or fifty years ago, we would see that today the chance of dying from a venomous snakebite is much smaller. This is owing to the development of numerous anti-venom serums and treatments. Many years ago, such anti-venom treatments were not so readily available and consequently deaths were more frequent.

Several years ago, I came across an interesting and rather unique article. It was about a man who had developed an immunity to deadly snakebites. During his life, he had been bitten 172 times by poisonous snakes—cottonmouths, rattlesnakes, cobras, kraits, and vipers to name a few. While he did feel the effects of the venom in his body, he did not die as so many others had; rather he made a full recovery after each bite. In time, it was discovered that his venom-immune blood could be used to help people infected with poisonous snakebites. Thus, transfusions from his blood were

the means used to save the lives of more than twenty snakebite victims around the world.

In the Garden of Paradise, it was a snake that inflicted the most venomous wound in the history of the world. Satan, the serpent from the pit of hell, bit the human race in the person of Adam and injected a venom so lethal—the venom of original sin—that there was no antidote.

In the Garden of Paradise, it was a snake that inflicted the most venomous wound in the history of the world . . . a venom so lethal . . . that there was no antidote.

As a result, mankind was destined for the torments of hell: an eternity of starvation and thirst without refreshment, of despair and anguish with no hope of release, of torture in all the parts of the body and soul without the slightest relief, of burning forever in a fierce and penetrating fire.

Thus, after the venom of original sin had infected man, he was left for dead.

Almighty God saw this. He looked down from heaven, and He saw us. He saw the human race poisoned, destined to an eternity of misery and suffering. Witnessing such a tragedy, God wept, as it were. He wept because He saw us doomed, and He could not bear the thought that we, the ones He loves more than anything He ever created, would never see our heavenly home.

God knew that there was no cure for this snakebite, save one: the blood of One Who was immune to the venom of sin, the blood of One Who was both God and man, the Precious Blood of His Divine Son. Thus, moved by the love and compassion He has for each and every one of us, Almighty God sent His Beloved Son into the world to become man and give His Blood to heal us.



One of the most pivotal days in the annals of human history, then, was the day that the eternal Son of God became incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That day, of course, was March 25. Cornelius a Lapide, the learned scholar of Sacred Scripture, in his *Great Commentary*, makes a number of other observations that show how crucial a role the 25th day of March plays in our holy Faith. He writes:

Many [Biblical scholars] are of [the] opinion that God created the world on the same day, so that it was created by God on the same day on which it was afterwards recreated and restored by Christ in His incarnation and cross. (3: 141)

Furthermore, Cornelius adds:

Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin on March 25, and after 33 years was crucified on the same day. . . . (2: 680)

Many suppose that Adam was created on the same day . . . and ate the forbidden fruit at the same hour, when Christ expiated his sin by dying on the cross. . . . (2: 681)

It is therefore the learned opinion of Cornelius a Lapide, as well as of those authors he cites—among them Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom—that the creation of the world, the creation of man, the fall of Adam and Eve, the Incarnation, and the Death of Our Divine Redeemer all took place on March 25 in their respective years.

This day is, therefore, of paramount importance to our holy Faith and should be so for all mankind.

From the earliest centuries, Holy Mother Church has celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25. However, depending on when Easter falls in the liturgical calendar, the Feast of the Annunciation is, at times, transferred to another day. This is to allow for Holy Week—the most solemn week of the ecclesiastical year—to be properly observed. Such is the case this year; the Feast of the Annunciation is transferred to April 9.

One of the most pivotal days in the annals of human history, then, was the day that the eternal Son of God became incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On that glorious day when the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin to ask, on behalf of Almighty God, if she would consent to be the Mother of God, Our Lady was praying in her room at the holy house of Nazareth. In his Gospel Saint Luke records:

And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. (1:26-27)

“[The angel Gabriel] glided into the closed chamber of the virgin,” writes Cornelius a Lapide, “as she was praying in secret . . .” (2: 144). He then greeted her with those solemn words, which we repeat each time we recite the Hail Mary: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.”

Hearing this, the Blessed Virgin was troubled. “[She] was perturbed,” writes Saint Ambrose, “first, at the unusual appearance, brightness, and majesty of the angel. Secondly, at his unusual salutation . . .” (2: 151). Thus, Our Lady, as Saint Luke tells us, “thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be” (1:29).

Seeing the reasonable fear and concern in Our Lady's eyes, Saint Gabriel hastened to remove it and encourage her. “Fear not, Mary,” he said, “for thou hast found grace with God” (1:30). In other words, the angel sought to impress upon her how favorable she was in the eyes of Almighty God and that there was therefore no need to fear. She found grace and favor before God above all women for two

chief reasons as Cornelius a Lapide tells us. He writes:

First, because God chose her from all eternity above all others, without merit, and of His free and gratuitous love, to be His Mother . . . : secondly, because as soon as she was conceived and born in time, He adorned her with every virtue and grace, so that in His sight she appeared altogether pleasing and worthy to be loved by Him and exalted above all. (3: 153)

Saint Gabriel then delivered that most joyous news which changed the course of human history forever. “Behold,” he said, “thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High” (Lk. 1:31-32).

Our Lady, however, was still troubled. She did not understand how such a thing could be done, for she had already given herself wholly and entirely to Almighty God. But this concern, too, did Saint Gabriel dispel. He then stood in silence eagerly awaiting Our Lady’s answer.

Slowly and solemnly, the Blessed Virgin Mary pronounced her consent to be the Mother of God: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word” (Lk. 1:38). Hardly had Our Lady uttered these words, when the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became incarnate in her womb, and the sublime work of our redemption began.

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word” (Lk. 1:38).

With the words “be it done unto me according to thy word,” Our Blessed Mother not only consented to be the Mother of God, but she also gave us an admirable example of resignation to the will of God. “She resign[ed] herself completely to His will,” writes Cornelius a Lapide, “so that in it, and with it, and through it, she might do something pleasing to Him.” It is as though she had said, a Lapide continues, “I am the canvas, let the painter paint what he wants, let God do what He wants” (3: 166). As true children of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this must be our attitude, too.

Very often, we have an “Angel Gabriel” come and announce, as he did to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the will of God for us. Sometimes our Angel Gabriel appears in the form of another person; other times he appears in the form of a situation or a circumstance. At times, he announces joyful news; at others, sorrowful and difficult news. Yet, whether it be joyful or sorrowful, it is nonetheless the will of God for us.



We must therefore, like Mary, resign ourselves to God’s will. We must say, as she said, “be it done unto me according to thy word”—we must say “fiat.” *Fiat* [fee-aht] is the Latin word for “be it done.” Our Lady’s consent to be the Mother of God, then, has often been referred to as her “fiat.”

Very often, we have an “Angel Gabriel” come and announce, as he did to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the will of God for us.

Of course, it is very easy to say “fiat” to the will of God when things are going our way. The real test of our resignation to God’s will is whether we are willing to say “fiat” in times of difficulty and sorrow. Yet, this is not enough—it is not enough merely to utter the word “fiat” or “God’s will be done.” We must be resigned from the heart, and we must strive to bear whatever may come with patience.

Patience, as defined by Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., in his book *Divine Intimacy*:

is the virtue which makes us accept for love of God, generously and peacefully, everything that is displeasing to our nature, without allowing ourselves to be depressed by the sadness which easily comes over us when we meet with disagreeable things. (377)

Continuing, Father Gabriel writes, “Patience is a special aspect of the virtue of fortitude which prevents us from deviating from the right road when we encounter obstacles” (377). Patience is therefore a virtue which enables us to bear sufferings and trials for the love of God, a virtue which helps us not become upset when things go wrong, a virtue which assists us in our struggles and difficulties.

“Patience is a special aspect of the virtue of fortitude which prevents us from deviating from the right road when we encounter obstacles.”

We are going to have struggles, trials, and sorrows in this vale of tears. We are going to have crosses to carry, and sometimes these crosses will be extremely heavy. Yet, in the midst of our daily struggles, we must be ever mindful that we are not alone, for our Blessed Mother is with us. She will help us in our trials and sufferings.

Remember that Our Lady suffered more than any human being who ever lived. She knows what it is like to face difficulties; she knows what it is to be sorrowful and feel pain. In *The Glories of Mary*, Saint Alphonsus writes that “the grief of Mary was so great that were it divided among all men, it would suffice to cause their immediate death” (408). Our Lady faced struggles and sufferings of every kind, and by means of these, she set for us the supreme example of patiently resigning herself to the will of God.

At the presentation of the Divine Infant in the Temple, when Simeon foretold that a sword of sorrow would pierce her immaculate soul, the Blessed Virgin said, “Fiat”—“Be it done.” Shortly after, the Holy Family had to make the journey to Egypt to escape the murderous edict of King Herod. The journey was long—nearly three hundred miles. The roads were rough and untraveled. The weather was cold, damp, and, at times, snowy. Yet, as she made this difficult journey, Our Lady again said, “Fiat”—“Be it done.” Even in the midst of the tremendous grief Our Lady experienced at the thought that she had lost her twelve-year-old Son, she said, “Fiat”—“Be it done.”

Then, as the Mother of Sorrows lovingly, yet so sadly, gazed into the bruised and bleeding face of her

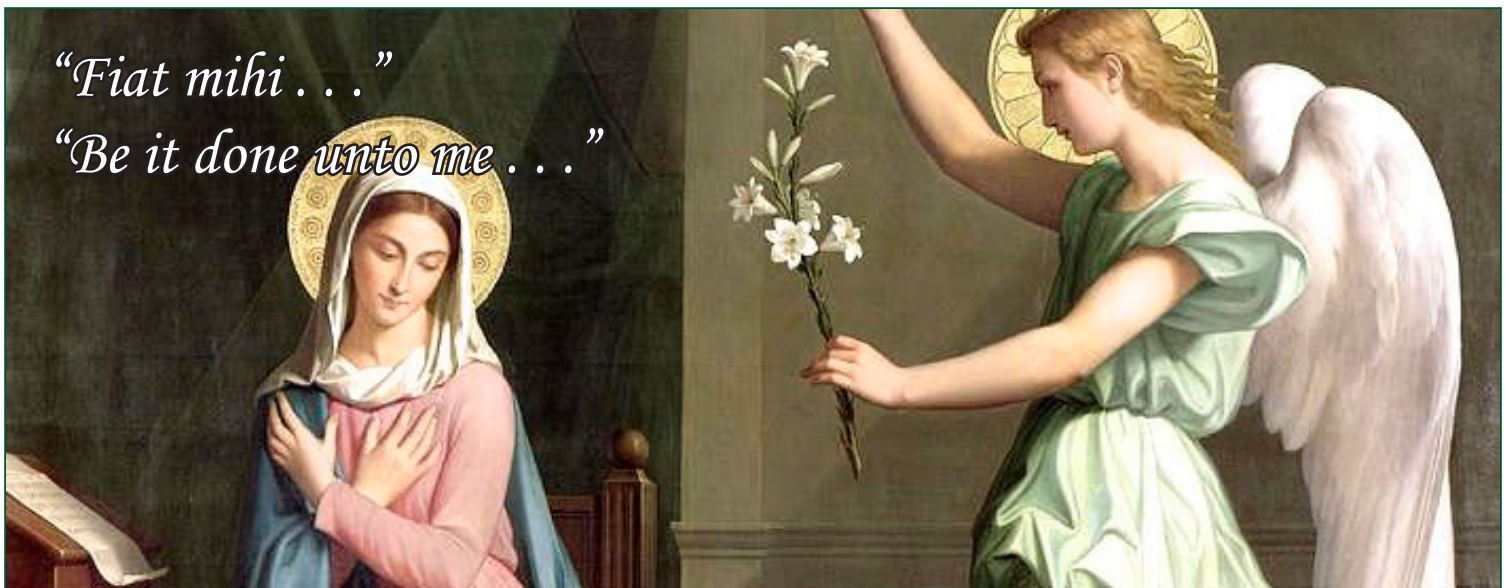
Divine Son and looked into His blood-covered eyes on the way to Calvary, she lovingly said, “Fiat”—“Be it done.” As she beheld Our Suffering Savior suspended from the cross by nails and, after His death, held His lifeless Body in her arms, she said, “Fiat”—“Be it done.” A few short hours later, the Sorrowful Mother stood at the Holy Sepulcher. There, as she watched the stone slab seal the tomb of her Divine Son, she again uttered the same word that she had said thirty-three years before at the moment of the Incarnation: “Fiat”—“Be it done.”

Indeed, throughout her entire life, the Blessed Virgin Mary was completely resigned to God’s will. Whether the time was one of joy, such as the Annunciation, or of sorrow, as was the Crucifixion, Our Lady made the perfect act of resignation—she uttered the perfect fiat.



As we strive to carry our daily crosses with patience, let us strive to imitate our heavenly Mother and give a perfect effort at resigning ourselves to the will of God. We must realize that everything that happens in this life is permitted by Almighty God for our spiritual good. “To them that love God,” Saint Paul says, “all things work together unto good” (Rom. 8:28). It is true that sufferings and hardships often come to us through secondary causes, such as other people. However, that makes no difference when we consider that everything ultimately comes to us from our heavenly Father. He uses these adverse circumstances to help us grow in virtue and advance in holiness.

One way, then, to help resign ourselves to God’s will is by not stopping to consider the human causes of pain and sorrow, but to accept all as coming from the hands of God and to say, “Fiat”—“Be it done.” In other words, “May God’s will be done.” “I am the canvas,” we ought to tell ourselves, “let the painter paint what he wants, let God do what He wants.”



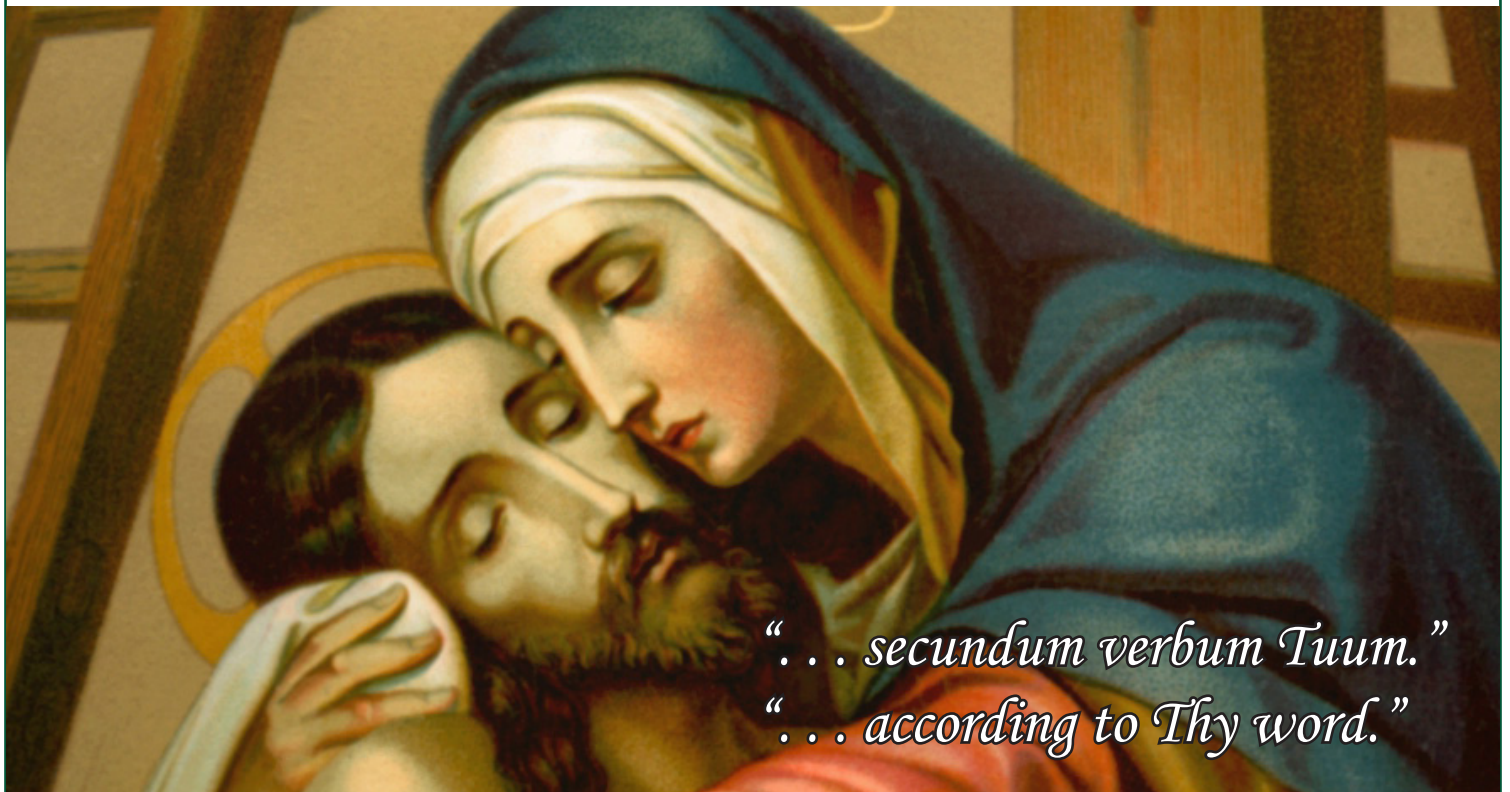
“Fiat mihi . . .”

“Be it done unto me . . .”

While it is true that this resigned acceptance does not prevent us from feeling the weight of suffering and hardship, still, as Father Gabriel writes in *Divine Intimacy*, “it does help us to be undisturbed, to preserve peace and serenity, to maintain self-control and, consequently, to be patient” (378).

As we strive each day to acquire a patient resignation to the divine will, may we bear ever in mind these words from an unknown author: “Every test in our life makes us bitter or better, every problem comes to break us or make us. The choice is ours whether we become victim or victor.” To be victor over ourselves and the struggles of life, it takes but one word said from the heart in all circumstances of life. That one word is “Fiat.”

Indeed, throughout her entire life, the Blessed Virgin Mary was completely resigned to God’s will. Whether the time was one of joy, such as the Annunciation, or of sorrow, as was the Crucifixion, Our Lady made the perfect act of resignation—she uttered the perfect fiat.



“ . . . secundum verbum Tuum.”

“ . . . according to Thy word.”