

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A
Fr. Chad S. Green
Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Sammamish, Washington
22 January 2023

Marian Festival: Mary, Queen of Peace
Isaiah 9:1-6
Luke 1:46-55
Galatians 4:4-7
(Luke 1:28) Luke 1:28-38

Partners in the Gospel: May It Be Done to Us According to God's Plan

Once again, Happy Marian Festival, on this weekend each year that we honor and venerate our parish patroness, Mary, Queen of Peace! This is an important weekend each year in the life of our parish. After the highest ranking feast days (such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc.) this is just below that rank for us here at MQP. And we've had a beautiful and fitting celebration this year, beginning last week with the nine days of Novena Prayers, the Living Rosary on Friday evening, dinner last night, Masses this weekend, and concluding with Movie Night tomorrow evening.

Thank you to everyone who has helped with praying, planning, organizing logistics, signups, setups, takedowns, cleaning, cooking, purchasing supplies, communications, decorating, preparing and serving in liturgies, and playing music! As you can see, it's an important weekend for our parish, which is also reflected in the number of all of us that it takes to bring it all together so well. *Thank you, all! Thank you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Thank you, Mary!*

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As I spoke about at the beginning of Mass, this is also an important weekend in the life of our Archdiocese, as we launch the next phase in Pastoral Planning. As a recap of what's been happening the past few years, when Archbishop Etienne began serving in our Archdiocese three-and-a-half years ago, he initiated a pastoral planning effort.¹ A couple summers ago, Archbishop encouraged us to be on a "summer retreat" in which we were praying about and discerning how we could better Know Jesus Christ and Embrace His Mission.²

Here at MQP, during that summer and since then, we've been working on three letters as part of our daily retreat experience: **TPG**.

- **Time:** intentionally setting aside time (twenty minutes a day)
- **Place:** getting away from distractions of ordinary life (church, prayer space at home)
- **God:** reprioritizing one's relationship with God

To help us better Know Jesus Christ, and be equipped by Jesus to embrace His Mission, which is found at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, in Chapter 28.³ As disciples of Jesus Christ, He has commissioned us to go make other disciples. To Baptize others in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And to teach others what we have learned from Him, particularly His commandment to love God and love neighbor.

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The next stage of Pastoral Planning begins today, with an effort called *Partners in the Gospel*.⁴ Archbishop first wrote about *Partners in the Gospel* last year in his letter to all of us in the April/May edition of *Northwest Catholic* magazine.⁵ As he wrote, planning was beginning at that time in preparation for the full launch, which begins today.

So, what is the purpose of *Partners in the Gospel*? Its purpose is to continue helping all of us together utilize all the gifts and resources that God has given us, in order to grow as disciples. That is, help all of us Know Jesus Christ and Embrace His Mission. We'll be watching a video from the Archdiocese in a few moments that will elaborate further on what that means to put our resources in this time and place at the best service of the Gospel.

What is going to happen? There are many pillars or aspects to this effort. But, one of the most visible ones for us at the parish level is that, for the remainder of 2023, through prayer, consultation, and discernment, most—not all, but most—of the parishes throughout the Archdiocese will be brought together into groups called Parish Families. There will be iterations

along the way, and opportunities for feedback and input. About one year from now, the parish families will be finalized. At that time, there will begin a three-year period, until 2027, in which the Parish Families will discern together how to combine their resources into becoming one parish.

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This announcement might lead to a variety of questions and a mixture of emotions. All of those are understandable. There is a packet of information available in the Narthex and on the Archdiocese website. It has an Overview, Glossary of terms, and Q&A. There are many answers available, but not all answers to every question have been revealed yet. Much more will be revealed as we go through this planning process together. Along the way we'll have time to talk, process information, pray together, and let God's plan unfold.

It's a particularly beautiful weekend for us at MQP to begin this process, as we celebrate Marian Festival and hear these Marian Readings proclaimed. The Gospel, in particular, is meant for a time like this. I don't mean to compare The Annunciation with Partners in the Gospel. Rather, The Annunciation gives us a model and posture to learn from, as we face a time like this.

As Mary heard the Angel Gabriel announce to her, she had a mixture of emotions, feelings, and questions. She was even "greatly troubled."⁶ In the midst of it all, she had a posture of faith, listening, and prayer, which allowed her to say "yes" to God.

We can also learn a lot by contrasting Mary with Zechariah, who had a similar encounter with the Angel Gabriel.⁷ Both Mary and Zechariah were visited with big news. Both were troubled.⁸ Both were afraid.⁹ Both asked a question. So, what's the difference? The difference is one word. Zechariah asked, "How shall I know this?"¹⁰ Whereas Mary asked, "How can this be...?"¹¹

The difference is subtle, but it revealed the posture of each. Zechariah, by using the word “know”, revealed that he was doubting God. He didn’t quite believe it yet. He was skeptical and wasn’t yet consenting to God’s plan. Whereas Mary, by using the word “be”, revealed that she believed in God. She knew it would be, but she just didn’t know how it would be. She was consenting to and believing in God’s plan, but did not yet see how it was going to unfold.

At a time like this—whether we’re receiving news as a whole parish, or when we receive news individually—we are called to learn from the example of Mary. And say to God, “I don’t understand how this will work out, but I trust that You *will* work it out, and You will reveal in Your time.”

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The goal of Partners in the Gospel is that MQP will become an even *more* vibrant parish. However, not more vibrant for us, who are already coming to MQP. Well, only partly for us. But, really, the goal is that we become an even more vibrant parish for *others*. For those we are called to share the Good News with. For those we are called to teach what Jesus taught. For those we are called to Baptize. For those we are called to love and serve.

We might have questions about how this plan will unfold and what it will mean for MQP. But, with the intercession and protection of our parish patroness, Mary, Queen of Peace. And by following her example of listening, praying, and trusting in the Holy Spirit to unfold God’s plan, then we can confidently join Mary in saying, “May it be done to [us] according to [God’s plan].”¹²

¹ The Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Seattle: <https://archseattle.org/about-the-archdiocese-of-seattle/archbishop-etienne/pastoralplanning/pastoral-plan/>

Also see: Archbishop Paul Etienne, “The Simple Path of Pastoral Planning” in *Northwest Catholic*, July/August 2021 (<https://nwcatholic.org/voices/paul-d-etienne/the-simple-path-of-pastoral-planning>)

² Archbishop Paul Etienne, *As You Go, Proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven*, found at *Truth in Love: Reflecting the Good News of Christ* on 8 July 2021 (www.archbishopetienne.com/as-you-go-proclaim-the-kingdom-of-heaven)

³ Matthew 28:16-20

⁴ Archdiocese of Seattle Partners in the Gospel: <https://archseattle.org/partners/>

⁵ Archbishop Paul Etienne, “Partners in the Gospel” in *Northwest Catholic*, April/May 2022
(<https://nwcatholic.org/voices/paul-d-etienne/partners-in-the-gospel>)

⁶ Luke 1:29

⁷ Luke 1:5-25

⁸ Luke 1:12, 29

⁹ Luke 1:13, 30

¹⁰ Luke 1:18

¹¹ Luke 1:34

¹² Luke 1:38