

Homily preached at the Glastonbury Pilgrimage

8<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Our Lady Queen of Peace

Friends, today's Gospel declares to us the central importance of Mary and her 'fiat' – and when I say 'fiat' I do not mean that fashionable but highly unreliable Italian automobile – no, I mean her 'let it be so'. That is what the Latin word, 'fiat' means. In today's Gospel, after the Archangel announces to Mary her unique vocation to be the Mother of the Incarnate Lord, what does Mary say at the conclusion of their exchange? What one word clinches and concludes the encounter? She says, 'fiat' – 'let it be so'. This short Latin word bears an immense spiritual significance for us Catholic Christians for it is precisely because of her 'fiat' that we honour Mary as nothing less than the Mother of God. We say with the bold confidence of faith that the salvation of the whole human race – and what is 'salvation' other than the total healing of the whole human person, body and soul – hangs upon this Maiden at this moment in human history, in this place, and that one word, 'fiat'.

To help us understand the immense significance of this one word and the woman who speaks it, we need to turn from the first Chapter of St Luke's Gospel to the first chapter of Genesis.

In that first chapter God summons all created things out of non-existence, emptiness, darkness. Why? Well, so that it might be in loving and intimate friendship with him. God creates in order that he might enjoy communion with what he creates, for God longs for friendship with all he has made (not out of any need he has, of course, but only because he *is* Love and Love lives not for itself but only for the other.) And how does God begin to create in order that he might share most abundantly his love, his life

with his creation - by his 'fiat'! 'Fiat lux', he says ('let there be light') and creation is begun. The impenetrable void of non-being is shattered by the light of God's creative, radiant will. God's 'fiat' at the beginning of creation fills the creation with life and light. Hold that in your mind, because there is an 'however...'

As we know, this state of original blessedness, of original justice, of original life and intimate communion with God - which culminates in the creation of mankind, the only created thing to be so like its creator that it bears his image and likeness - falls away into original sin. And the effects of that sin? Sin infiltrates and infects all things. From a state of blessedness to a state of blindness. From daylight to twilight. A destructive sickness falls upon the creation because of Adam and Eve's original sin. And whereas life had once reigned, now sin rules hearts, and through sin - division, enmity, suffering, and death. A creation which was once in communion with God (and so with itself), falls out of communion with God (and so out of communion with itself). Profound dis-integration, dis-location, dis-chord: a world at war with itself summed up so powerfully with those words from Genesis: 'it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel'. Deep alienation and conflict.

You see, now, why I place such stress on this one small word used by Mary to the Angel; for the vast, mighty weight of the world's longed-for release from this sin-sickness, from this inner and profound alienation and enmity; this state of existence which Isaiah in today's first reading calls 'a land of deep shadow', rested on Mary's 'fiat' - Mary's co-operative, free self-surrender to the re-creative will of God! Through and with Blessed Mary, God is making his creation new again, alive again. This is why we honour Mary ever-Virgin, Mary ever-Blessed, precisely because

by an act of unmerited and unparalleled grace, Mary willed not to live her life for herself but to live it only for God; she willed to do God's will. Indeed, never in all of human history has a person been so perfectly attuned and aligned to the will of God than Our Lady. Mary's 'fiat' opens the way for God to knit back together the torn fabric of his creation; to bring peace where there was only enmity and strife by the presence among us of the Prince of Peace. Truly, therefore, Mary is the Queen of Peace. Mary's 'fiat' makes the impossible possible.

All of this makes Mary the very model of true discipleship, for her 'fiat' to God not only allowed God to push concretely into his creation to save and heal it, but it also show us – shows you – what true discipleship is. Mary is the model and the ground of every disciples response to God. What Our Lady shows us is that God's redemptive work is a work of co-operation not coercion; God doesn't impose but invites, for it is precisely by your free co-operation with his will for you that God makes the impossible possible.

God wants to hear anew your 'fiat', your 'let it be so to me'. He wants your will to align with his; he wants you to be his co-operator – as Our Blessed Lady supremely was; he wants you to be a true disciple. By the prayers and example of Our Blessed Lady, Queen of Peace, may you rededicate yourselves wholly and again to the service of Christ and his Church, until he comes again.