

*Prayer*

June 5, 2024



Fiat: Seeking and  
Following God's Will

The topic of tonight's novena talk is Fiat, discerning and following God's will in imitation of Our Lady. To start with, we might want to just clarify the word Fiat. I want to make sure that we all understand what we mean when we say this phrase. If you would finish this phrase from the Angelus: Behold the handmaid of the Lord... *Be it done unto me according to Your Word.* That response is the response of Our Lady to the Angel who asked if she would consent to becoming the mother of Our Lord. And her response was Fiat mihi, let it be done to me.

Fiat is a very full word, especially when Our Lady utters it and when we say it in union with her, in imitation of her. Fiat means let it be done. It also means I accept it, I embrace, I cooperate, I submit. I will not take this decision back. This is a permanent disposition of my heart. That's what we mean when we talk about Fiat.

St. John Paul II wrote that Mary's Fiat was a disposition of her heart. She was expressing the position she's always in with our Lord. Her disposition is always Fiat. She is always saying Fiat to Him in her heart. Her expression of it at the Annunciation flowed from a heart that was in a disposition of saying yes to God. It wasn't just a onetime yes; it wasn't a new thing in her life. This was something that Mary lived. It's where her heart stood. In discerning and following our Lord's will, that's really the first step: to seek to have a heart that is in the disposition of saying Fiat to our Lord.

Often times I have either parents or priests ask me: what can I do to foster vocations? How many convents do you visit? How long do you visit? How do you know which convent to visit? What at what age do you start visiting? Practical things. Well, we could put that on a timeline... if saying yes to your vocation were the same kind of yes that you say to a career, to a moving your home to a different location, a practical decision in life. A yes to your vocation, however, that's a Fiat. This is a lifelong let it be done to me. I accept, I embrace, I cooperate, I submit.

There's not a set timeline for this. There's not a program that we can put together: you go through this program, start praying about it at this age, say these prayers, visit this many convents, do these things and then make a decision. We can't force it. What we do is we discover our vocation. We discover the person we are called to marry. We discover that I'm called to religious life.

We discover a call to the priesthood and then we go through an interior process of saying Fiat to that call.

When I'm talking to priests, parents, or young women about this, I tell them, the first step is simply to fall in love with Our Lord, to develop a prayer life. This is very much in imitation of Our Lady. And the goal, so to speak, is for that young woman to have in her heart this disposition of Fiat. When she is in a place where she has spent enough time with our Lord. She knows Him, she trusts Him, she loves Him, and all of that to a degree where she can with confidence and joy say, Lord, whatever you ask of me, the answer is yes, I trust you, I love you, I know you will the good for me. I know that your ways are amazing and joyful and life giving. Let it be done to me, whatever you say, whenever you say it, however you wish it to be done. That's the first thing that we need to work on with discerning our vocation, whatever our vocation is.

Every single Christian is called to be in this position with our Lord. Our Lady shows us how to do this. We're we are all called to be other Mary's. We are all called to have this Fiat in our heart. Why should we desire this Fiat so much and what are the obstacles that can get in the way of it? I think we need to understand those two things. And Our Lady very much helps us in this process.

The constitutions for our community give a beautiful illustration to understand how this works. In the section on obedience, there's an article that states that our Lord from all eternity sang obediential love for the Father, and this is expressed in the Psalms: I come to do your will, O Lord. But then the sentence goes on. In the fullness of time, Our Blessed Mother joined her Fiat in harmony with His. It's not the same note. It's not an eternal or a divine note. But what is it? It's a different note that's in perfect harmony with our Lord's Fiat. There is an increasing beauty as we listen, as we read the story of our salvation in Scripture. And the increasing beauty is, firstly, Our Lord revealing Himself to us over time, but it's also Our Lady joining her Fiat in harmony with His.

This increases the beauty. Not that there was anything imperfect about it before, but now we have a perfect harmony to Our Lord and we are also included. Our constitutions further state that in this divine drama all are called to share. So we join our voices to the song of praise. And Our Lady teaches us how to harmonize each of us with our own unique voice. I am to work my obedience in a unique way according to my personality, temperament, ability, desires, calling from God. Each one of us has a unique Fiat to offer to our Lord, and it is precious. We join our voices in the song of praise, and Our Lady teaches us how to learn to harmonize.

This article concludes by saying there is no other way to eternal life than perfect unity of wills with the Father. Fiat is about salvation. And just as Our Lady's cooperation in redemption helps to save souls, ours as well. The more fully I offer a Fiat to Our Lord, the more souls will be saved. There are souls on the other end of this, and that is a joyful thing.

What are the obstacles that hinder us from speaking our Fiat? The devil feeds us the lie that God is not a loving Father and we cannot trust Him. We can say in our hearts, yes, God is all powerful. But then there's this question, can I trust Him? And the "What if" temptation plays on our fears. What if God asks something of me that I can't give? What if He wants me to do something that's very difficult? What if He asks suffering of me?

We simply cannot give up on trust, or else the enemy wins. And we must admit that trusting doesn't come easily. Yet trust is the language of Fiat, of love. Our Lord knows how difficult it is to know what true love is and how to respond to being loved. We have very few examples of people in authority loving well. So He reveals His love to us in the Divine Mercy image. Our Lord told Faustina that a certain phrase was to be seen at the bottom of every image of the Divine Mercy. The image reveals His love to us, and the phrase teaches us how to respond. Jesus, I trust in you.

Perfect love casts out all fear. Trust overcomes the obstacle of fear. How did Our Lady have perfect trust which allowed her to follow Him perfectly? She knew Him. If we know Him truly, if we really know Him, we know that we can trust Him. An illustration: a little boy who was on the second story of a burning home. His father was on the outside under the boy's window, yelling at the boy to jump. The boy couldn't see his father through the smoke, but the father could see him. The little boy trusted his father so much that he leapt through the blinding smoke at the sound of his father's voice. He knew his father. He knew he could trust his father. He heard his father's voice and he jumps. That's immense trust.

How did Our Lady know Our Lord so well? We read this several times in Scripture. She ponders His word, she treasures His word, she keeps His word in her heart. We need to allow our Lord to reveal Himself to us. He reveals Himself as He truly is, and it's just a beautiful thing. If you look through the Old Testament, every time that God describes Himself, He describes Himself as compassionate and merciful. Compassionate and merciful. He also repeats often throughout the Old and the New Testament. Be not afraid. Pondering His word is a way of spending quality time with our Lord. It's how we give Him a chance to reveal Himself to us. Our Lady models this for us and she accompanies us like any good mother, lovingly teaching us how to listen, how to slow down, how to allow Him to show me who He really is. If I don't do this, I will have a distorted understanding of Him.

Another obstacle and lie of the devil is seeking my way as the greatest good. My way will bring me the greatest happiness. I know better than anyone what will make me happy. The belief that true freedom is being independent and not considering anyone but myself. Self-care is important. I need to make sure my needs are met. Martyrdom: my way and happy or God's way and heroic. Now there is some truth here. I do have a certain amount of a right to exercise my free will. We are to recognize God, our God-given dignity, and take care of

ourselves. And surrendering my will is heroic. But none of these mentalities express the full truth, so as is, they are distorted.

I personally tend to fall for the heroic martyr syndrome. This view of incessant opposition to God is unhealthy: My way and happy or God's way and heroic. If that's all I see, God's will becomes an imposed burden rather than a sweet relief. The remedy is integration. My pondering the Word will help me to develop an interior life. As I develop an interior life, I grow in healthy self-knowledge. I acknowledge a conflict between surface desires and deep desires. The language of surface desires is: I want/I don't want; I feel like/I don't feel like. The language of deep desire, however, is what do I really want/truly desire?

Perhaps an example will illustrate. Let's say I like Almond Joy candy bars. I don't. But we're using the language of surface desire here. I like. Is there anything wrong with enjoying Almond Joys? No. What about when I'm at school and it's 15 minutes before Mass is going to start and I discover that someone has left an Almond Joy on my desk for me? Is there anything wrong with me eating it at that time? Yes. If I eat that candy bar, which is a legitimate good, what do I miss out on? I miss out on a greater good, the highest good, and my deepest desire, Our Lord and the Eucharist. In this situation, my desires are disintegrated, unaligned. I can focus on, "I can't have the candy bar," or I can focus on my yes, my Fiat to the Eucharist, my deepest desire.

I need faith in God and I need self-awareness to identify and live by my deepest desires. If I focus merely on the no's and can'ts that are required of me, the faith becomes burdensome and it really does feel like a battle between my will and Our Lord's will. Our Lady can help me to become aware and to live by my deepest desires. Then I discover Our Lord's will and my will are not opposed. Deep down, my deepest desire is heaven. It is Him, it is the Eucharist, it is to grow in virtue, it is to love and to be loved. I am called to live life by constantly saying yes to these deep, beautiful goods. This helps me to identify when my surface desires don't align with what I really want deep down.

Practically speaking, how does Our Lady help me to say a joyful Fiat to Our Lord? The Rosary. I pray the Rosary with this in mind. The Rosary is quality time with Our Lady. It has helped me to learn from her how to see with the eyes of faith, how to identify what I really want, how to seek our Lord as the highest of all goods. She teaches me how to say yes to Him in the big and the small things. She shows me her son, and she shows me how to trust.

The final obstacle to Fiat that I would like to touch on this evening is fear. Fear is the devil's playground when we allow it to rule and push us. However, when we calmly take a step back and look at it, my fear can show me what I need to bring to Our Lord. Then it becomes a bridge instead of a wall. I can fear what our Lord will ask of me, and this fear can definitely hinder my ability to give a joyful, yes, a Fiat to Him. I can fear my ability to do what He asks or to suffer what is asked of

me. How can Our Lady help us overcome this obstacle? Again, I turn to the Rosary, especially the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows. This helps me tremendously.

Our Lady suffered through being asked overwhelming things from Our Lord. Will you, a poor teenager from a tiny town, be the Mother of God? She was a refugee, leaving Bethlehem in the middle of the night with no time to prepare, fleeing from men seeking to kill her son. She suffered the ridicule and hatred aimed at her Son during His ministry. She suffered the death of her husband. She watched the violent death of her Son and His burial. She suffered through the time of waiting expectantly for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. How is it possible to consent to the Father's will and especially difficult circumstances? Did she shove down the pain and give a stoic yes? Or was her faith so great that she didn't acknowledge or feel the pain? How is it possible to say Fiat in the midst of such pain?

It seems there are two options, admit the pain and resist it, which is to fight against saying Fiat or ignore the pain, pretend it doesn't matter and say Fiat. Our Lady did neither of these. She teaches me how to consent to Our Lord's will in the midst of pain. Praying the rosary of the Seven Dolours has helped me tremendously in this regard. She teaches me how she knew that no circumstance was big enough or evil enough that it would carry her beyond His loving care. She taught me, when in distress, to throw myself at the feet of Jesus on the crucifix, or in the Tabernacle, or in my heart, and to pray: You love me; nothing else matters! Sometimes I have to pray that prayer strongly many times before I can calm down and enough to go on. Grounding myself in the truth of His love for me helps me get through trials. It does not take the pain away, but it does put things in perspective. Our Lord's love for me is bigger than the pain helps me get through the suffering.

Our Lady helps us to have faith and hope that evil and suffering do not have the final word. This is how I can cooperate with it, because my faith teaches me that the end is glorious if I see only suffering without hope. Suffering without hope is like watching the greatest epics only halfway through. Imagine the following stories if we didn't get to the ending. The Count of Monte Cristo, Les Misérables. Job, Esther, Judith, Daniel. The Passion, any one of the Narnia stories, The Lord of the Rings, or watching the Marvel movies and stopping at the end of Infinity War. There are so many epic stories I could include in this list.

It can seem difficult to identify with this perfection of Our Lady, but it is possible, and I'll give you the example of a few Saints who did just this. St. Maximilian Kolbe had a very deep and tender devotion to Our Lady. She was everything to him. Read his writings if you ever have the chance. He will teach you true tender devotion to her. His devotion to Our Lady is what enabled him to find peace and consent to the Lord's will in the midst of horrific suffering. He wrote to His mother: "Dear Mama, at the end of the month of May, I was transferred to the camp of Auschwitz. Everything is well in my regard. Be tranquil about my health, because the good God is everywhere and provides for

everything with love.” At another point, when tensions were mounting all over Europe and Kolbe’s community was experiencing particular hardship, we hear his Marian devotion expressed: “I see Mary everywhere. I see difficulties nowhere.”

The three Fatima children also give us an example of how spending quality time with Our Lady, especially in the Rosary, helped them endure severe trials and unite their wills with Our Lord. Francisco said, “Our Lady told us we would have much to suffer, but I don't mind. I'll suffer all she wishes. What I want is to go to heaven.” Do we see there the integration of his deepest desires in his life? The children's understanding of uniting their wills with Our Lords through Our Lady is truly beautiful.

Jacinta tried to console Lucia, who was lamenting that she had to stay on earth while Jacinta and Francisco would soon be in Heaven. Jacinta replied, “Poor thing, don't cry. Lucia, I shall pray a lot in heaven for you. You are going to stay here, but it is Our Lady who wants it. If she wanted that for me, I'd gladly stay to convert more sinners.” When Francisco was dying, Lucia asked him when he got to Heaven, to ask Our Lady to take her to heaven soon. Francisco replied, “That I won't ask. You know very well that she doesn't want you there yet.” The examples go on and on. When the children thought they were going to be martyred, Jacinta said, “If they kill us, it does not matter. We'll go straight to heaven.”

We see in these Saints how devotion to Our Lady, especially through the Rosary, enabled them to say Fiat even in the darkest of circumstances. They truly loved our Lord's will. That's what devotion to Our Lady does for us. She teaches us to fall in love with Our Lord to the point of uniting our wills to His even in the face of death. The children and Maximilian Kolbe had confidence that the greatest evil couldn't take them out of the Father's Providence.

This truly transforming growth is slow, deep, and steady. So be patient with yourself as Our Lady is with you. It's worth the time. Take the time and as Our Lady gently works with you through the Rosary and through contemplation of Scripture and through praying the Dolors, you will see the fruit.

Studying Our Lady's life through meditation, imitation and the Rosary helps me to have the disposition of Fiat as a way of life. I am ready to receive His will and say yes in the big and small things. That's Our Lady's secret, a way of life that leaves the heart in a constant state of a joyful and trusting Fiat to Our Lord. This is the way she was able to give her Fiat at the Annunciation, in Egypt, at the Foot of the Cross.

This daily way of life will give each of us the ability to seek and to say yes to the life changing decisions in life, our vocation, making adjustments to place Christ more in the center of our life. An obstacle to this is the fear of the unknown and hyper focusing on what we stand to lose. I'll close with some words from Pope Benedict that are very Marian in tone:

*“If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to Him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not, perhaps, afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and depriving ourselves of freedom? And once again Pope John Paul II said No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of a long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people, do not be afraid of Christ. He takes nothing away and gives you everything. When we give ourselves to Him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open wide the doors to Christ and you will find true freedom. Amen.”*