

Each day in God's hands

The Liturgy of the Hours ends each Monday night with a prayer that never fails to catch my attention: "Lord, give our bodies restful sleep and let the work we have done today bear fruit in eternal life."

It is always good for me to take stock of the fact that somehow what I do each day plays a part in God's plan and through him can bear fruit for me and for others in eternal life. Because it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that only the projects I complete and the goals I accomplish bear fruit, God invites me to broaden my horizons. He asks me, "Do you believe that your life matters to me, that I have included you in my plan? Are you willing to recognize that everything you do in the course of a day participates in my plan, even activities which seem to be of no consequence, even those which seem to have failed or leave you perplexed and fearful?"



ARCHBISHOP
J. PETER
SARTAIN

Incalculable value

In his love and providence God uses us in ways far beyond our understanding, and what we do each moment matters to him and serves his purpose. God depends neither on our success nor on our awareness of exactly how we are serving as his instruments. He can bring fruit from a humdrum

daily routine, the smallest step we take and even our failures.

He simply asks that we cooperate with him by trying our best to follow his ways.

Does God use only people of influence to execute his plan? If we do not have a position of importance or hold some measure of power, are we of any use to him? Are there certain aspects

of our lives that matter to him but others about which he cares little?

Jesus answers such questions quite clearly: "Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows" (Lk 12:6-7).

Not only is each of us of incalculable value to God — he has a plan for us, one that matters a great deal to him, to us and to others; and each moment of our lives participates in that plan.

'Nothing in vain'

Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote:

"I have a place in God's counsels, in God's world, which no one else has; whether I be rich or poor, despised or esteemed by man, 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. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do his work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep his commandments and serve him in my calling.

"Therefore, I will trust him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him. If I am

in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He does nothing in vain ... He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me — still, he knows what he is about."

'Rest in him'

Even if we do not understand God's plan for us, and even if the moments in our day seem so scattered as to follow no rhyme or reason, we can hand ourselves over to him. We can seek at each moment to act as he would have us act, let go of our need to control each minute, and put everything in his hands. As we prepare for bed, we can rest assured that he has lovingly used our day for good.

Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), a convert from Judaism who died at Auschwitz, offers further reflection for the evening:

"[W]hen night comes, and you look back over the day and see how fragmentary everything has been, and how much you planned that has gone undone, and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed: just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with him. Then you will be able to rest in him — really rest — and start the next day as a new life."

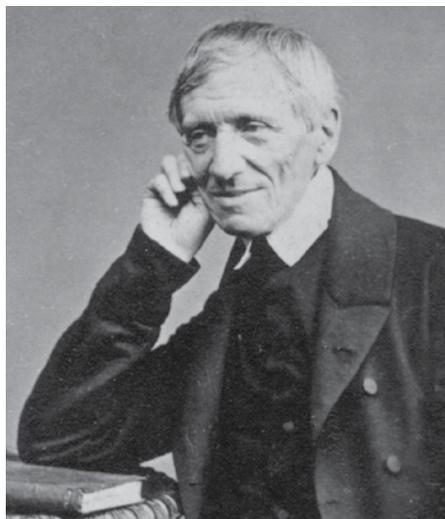
The knowledge that each of our days is in God's hands, that each plays a part in his plan, gives us strength and hope. I pray for the wisdom to see things as he sees them and the generosity to work with him though I may not always be aware how I am doing so. I pray that somehow what I do each day will bear fruit now and in eternal life.

"Just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with him."

EDITH STEIN



Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)



Blessed John Henry Newman