

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Role of Flexibility**    Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time    Wednesday, July 6, 2016  
8:15 AM    Hos 10:1-3, 7-8, 12;    **Mt 10:1-7** (St. Maria Goretti) (We create the need for God to change his ways, not his original intention, but the way he goes about something.)

**“Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”**

The Scriptures show that the plans of God are rather flexible. After all, **since God has created human beings with a free will and God is trying to elicit cooperation from people freely, God himself has to be flexible.** As every parent knows, trying to elicit cooperation from children requires a lot of flexibility. You can't be rigid and maintain at the same time the freedom of those around you. **Freedom requires flexibility, and God has willed freedom into our world.**

Now originally, as you see in today's gospel, the plan was to bring about a renewal in the house of Israel. Jesus was Jewish. He felt called to bring his work, his mission, to the house of Israel. At first he had no intention of sharing a message with anybody else; that was the original idea, but it didn't work. It simply didn't work. **So we can see in different incidents in the life and mission of Jesus where he himself is realizing that he has to change direction.** When the Syrophenician woman, who is not Jewish, asked for his help he said, “Well, it is not right to give the food of children to dogs,” which is a rather graphic way of speaking of gentiles, and most certainly off-putting and actually derogatory. But she changed his mind, and he turned around and yielded to her request.

Now this reveals something essential for us to understand about divine providence and about the way God works. **God's plans yield to necessity,** and necessity is often created by us. **We create the need for God to change his ways, not his original intention, but the way he goes about something.**

Now St. Paul thought about this a lot because **St. Paul himself was the recipient of extraordinary graces.** On the road to Damascus he received such a grace: he heard the voice of Jesus speak to him. And we know that this turned his life around totally and he became perhaps one of the greatest of all promoters of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even though he had been originally a great opponent because of his faithfulness to what he had been taught originally. **So this is another example of conversion, of change.**

But he wondered why this same grace wasn't given to his brothers, his fellow Jews. He didn't understand why that should be. And he came up with this solution that, well, God was using the situation for the betterment of the gentile so that the "ranks of the gentile will be filled," he says. So **originally it was always God's plan to save the whole world, but originally through the renewal of Israel. That didn't work, so then something else happened. We call that something else the Church.**

Now the question is, **will the Church as we understand it continue or will it be superseded? It all depends on us,** the point of today's gospel.