



A weekly reflection by members
of the Precious Blood Community

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Phil Hartke

We don't have to like God's plan,
but we all must know we play a part in His greater plan.



Through much difficulty and tribulation, God leads us to the “Promised Land.” Like the Israelites wandering in the desert of Egypt, God doesn't forget any of us; he has a plan for all of us, a hidden plan that God alone knows.

On August 20, 2017, I wondered what path God had sent me on. My 3-year-old son Ezra had been home most of the week with an illness that confused my wife and me. His pediatrician diagnosed it as “probably a virus.” One of Ezra's favorite things was Thomas the Tank Engine, and when Ezra said he wanted to skip going to see the traveling *Day Out With Thomas* event nearby, I knew he really didn't feel well.

We decided it was time to take him to the hospital ER to try and get some answers. I'll never forget when the emergency physician entered the room and said, “We found something, and I want to introduce you to a neurosurgeon.” The CT scan they ran as a precaution revealed a large brain tumor that needed to be operated on immediately. I felt a profound and immediate range of emotions. On the one hand, I finally had an explanation for the mysterious illness, but on the other hand, I had no idea what the future would hold.

In our modern world, we have a false sense that there should be an explanation for everything; after all, we can “just Google it.” My wife and I had spent Ezra's entire life searching for answers to his many undiagnosed medical challenges; since the day Ezra was born, as ecstatic first-time parents, we were quickly informed by his pediatrician that we would need to do some tests to find out if Ezra would ever be able to walk. Those words began our journey into the unknown world of medical parenting but did not leave us without hope. God leaves us with many challenges, but I've been told, and I believe it, that God only gives each one of us what we can handle.

During this Advent season, as we wait with great anticipation for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, I wonder what Mary and Joseph were thinking as they made their way to Bethlehem for the census ordered by King Herod and into the unknown of parenthood. Mary and Joseph spent that time wondering where they would go and how they would get there, but all the while, they listened to God, and He kept them safe.

When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, he made his own plans to divorce her until an angel delivered the message of God's plan to care for Mary. Often, while we make our own plans, God steers us in His direction. My life was like the child's poem, "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage." Life events seemed to come in the correct order; we had two boys, and I was living a good life with our little family and a successful career. I never foresaw that I would leave work one day to care for my son only to never return to that job, but God knew the path laid out before me and took care of my family through it all.

Throughout Ezra's 13-month cancer battle before he went home to God, I was struck by the good in this world. So many people touched our lives, and I know Ezra touched theirs as well. The love and generosity of others put into our path remains strong. My view of the world has been forever altered for the better. We don't have to like God's plan, but we all must know we play a part in His greater plan.

I am inspired by the mission statement of the Sisters of the Precious Blood:

Urged by the redeeming love of Jesus the Christ and rooted in Eucharistic prayer, we Sisters of the Precious Blood proclaim God's love by being a life-giving, reconciling presence in our fractured world.

God gives us time to apply our talent and treasure, as part of his plan. Jesus got less than 40 years before his crucifixion, so don't waste a day because we know not the hour of our death; go out and be a life-giving, reconciling presence in our fractured world.

Phil Hartke currently serves as the Treasurer for the Sisters of the Precious Blood. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the Precious Blood of the Precious Blood Spirituality Institute. To learn more about the Institute, [click here](#). To learn more about the Sisters of the Precious Blood [click here](#).

This weekly reflection is made available to all who are part of our Precious Blood family. Feel free to share it with others. Would you be willing to write a reflection? If so, please contact Vicky Otto at votto@pbspiritualityinstitute.org