

We celebrate Easter at different times every year; this is because the Church in its wisdom has always wished to adhere to the Jewish way of finding Passover, according to the lunar calendar. We westerners base our calendar, not on the phases of the moon, but on the movement of the sun. But for this single calculation - the date of Easter - we return to the Jewish way.

This cutting through the ways of the modern world has the useful function of reminding us that God's ways are not ours, and that the deeds of God do not obey in any way the dispositions of human beings. If we are crying out for the help of God, he will accomplish his will. If we ignore God totally, and fail to make any reference to his being, he will accomplish his will. If we pray in accordance with his will, he will accomplish his will. If we pray against his will, he will accomplish his will.

We are in a good place to appreciate this, because we have only recently been meditating on the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where his heartfelt prayer, uttered in great agony, with the sweat falling like drops of blood, is heard in silence by the Father.

When the Church apparently breaks into the Easter cycle to celebrate the solemnity of the Lord's Annunciation, we may feel that there is a distraction before us. Not at all. The point is that the God of the first joyful mystery and the God of the rest of the rosary is the one God, and the face he shows in one mystery of salvation is in perfect harmony with the others.

This isn't a trivial point. In our life we are compelled to trust that the God who sets us in the highest state of joy we have ever known and the God who leads us through the valley of the shadow is one and the same. Joy, sorrow and glory are the varying responses we make to the mystery of God. But in all things he is accomplishing his will, and our task at all points - even the point of agony in the garden - is to align our will on the will of the Father. It is his will that his Son should take our flesh, and the Son is seen today through the eyes of the Letter to the Hebrews, straining at the leash: *Get me a body*, he says, *that I may come to do your will in its fulness*. We can want nothing greater or more beautiful, nothing more sorrowful and sacrificial, nothing more glorious than this. The shape it makes of our life is one thing, that will unite us, strike us, and save us; whatever the time and place through which we are passing, our greatest and most perfect prayer remains the same: *Let what you have said be done to me: thy will be done; let it be as you, and not I, would have it*.