

DO YOU BELIEVE IN DESTINY? FOR YOURSELF?

Twenty-five years ago one of my nieces entertained some thoughts about possibly becoming an astronaut. She loved the idea of space travel. Double science major from Villanova. More than a dozen years as a gymnast. Very promising. But an additional fifteen years of training would be necessary with few guarantees versus getting married and having a family. This was a decision too difficult to postpone. She has three daughters and a loving husband. I thought of all that as I listened this past week to Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson, three self-made billionaires from very different commercial endeavors who have entered into the corporate side of space exploration and personal space travel.

Branson, Musk and Bezos want to provide opportunities for space travel for ordinary people but are starting with the rich people who can pay 25 million for a space flight right now. I think a lot of people would love to go into space. I would think about it myself. But then... Here we all are--on earth. Earth is this amazing sphere of a planet with a 25,000 mile circumference. While none of us can feel it and rarely realize it, we are spinning on our axis every twenty-four hours at the speed of 67,000 miles an hour, while orbiting the sun once a year, and the earth is orbiting the center of the Milky Way galaxy at about 500,000 miles an hour.

My friends, if you think about it we already are in space. And our spaceship? Why, the earth is our spaceship. Spaceship Earth. With 7.3 billion passengers. All of us are already hurtling through space. How did we get here? Why are we here? And most important of all—where are we going? What is our destination? What awaits us at the end? And if we don't make it to our destination and we die first? What then? These are really important questions. They are questions prompted by Saint Paul in his letter to the Christians in the city of Ephesus almost two thousand years ago.

Destination. Destiny. Too closely related words. What is your thinking? Do you believe that there is such a thing as destiny? For you? Is it the same as your destination, the place you are going to or the place you are supposed to be going to, the place that would indicate you have fulfilled the promise you exhibited early on. Destiny implies fulfillment. Including a certain triumph, a certain greatness of person or accomplishment. But destiny sometimes carries this understanding of pre-ordained and already mapped out, of something that will happen to me regardless of what I do or how I act, regardless of decisions I make—good or bad. My destiny. It is something beyond human influence or control.

What Saint Paul says is that God has pre-destined us. Pre-destined? As in we have no control, no freedom because God has already pre-programmed us? No. Not that. Predestination is God's way of laying out for us what he wants to accomplish in us and do for us, what he desires for us. Listen to what Saint Paul says.

- 1) God has blessed us
- 2) God has chosen us, in Christ
- 3) God wants us to be holy, without blemish or sin
- 4) In love, he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ
- 5) God has redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed his mysterious heart to us in Jesus
- 6) In Jesus we were destined in accordance with his own purpose for making us
- 7) So that we might praise him
- 8) And sealed us with the promise of his Spirit, as a down payment for our inheritance

All of the above is what God wants for us, what God desires for us, what God has ordained for us. Our destiny. Rich. Amazing. Beyond our wildest imagination. Our very purpose for being. Our ultimate destination. Our ultimate destiny. So, we are faced with the question of what our response is to be. The young maiden, Mary of Nazareth, when she first learned of what God's destiny was for her, gave the best possible response: Let it be done to me as you say.

The way we are made is that we can know God and what God intends for us. The way we are made is that we have been empowered to make the best possible response to God's plan as it unfolds. Freedom. Destiny. They are not opposed. They are twins. But not identical twins. Each has a role, a place, the possibility of response. But we are all in this together. We can also lose our way. We need to help each other, be there for each other, remain faithful and full of hope for each other. We are all on Spaceship Earth hurtling through this universe—by God's choice and God's design. In this Eucharist let us pray for the grace and the wisdom and the courage to choose accept the destiny that is ours in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.