

On the occasion of Nano Nagle being declared Venerable

Nano's Honor

This is the time to reflect on the Vatican decree of October 31, 2013, that declared Nano Nagle, founder of Presentation Sisters, to be "Venerable" in the life of the Church.

This is a great occasion of pride and celebration for the Presentation family. A beautiful event that allows the entire world to see that our foundress was a unique and holy woman, set apart for our admiration and veneration.

However, let me also suggest that this day and this great event is about Nano Nagle. This event is not about us, it is about Nano and her holiness, her devotion, her singular vision and her dedication to Jesus. We, of course, can and should celebrate but this is not about us, it is about Nano. Now with that said I would like to suggest that this is an opportunity for us as Presentations to examine more carefully, who we are as Nano's daughters and faithful companions.

A word about the process

The process of Canonization in the Catholic Church is, by Church law and custom, a very careful process. It is not a process that declares to God what we have decided here or in Rome. The canonization process is about the revelation of God's divine plan. We are not giving instructions to God saying, "Ok, now You can put Nano in a higher realm of heaven, or now you can advance her in your great book". What the Church declares and has always declared is about earthly holiness. Nano lived as God's companion and servant here on Earth; she most certainly is with God in a special way in heaven. The process of canonization is not about us giving instructions to God but about God revealing the Divine Plan to us, with our weak and limited vision.

Venerable

According to the dictionary, venerable is defined as "worthy of being honored; entitled to honor and respect". In the Roman Catholic Church, it is used as a form of address for a person who has reached the first stage of canonization. Servant of God is a title given to a person when the Pope gives permission for the opening of the cause of their sainthood, and a second step declares the person Venerable, when it is established that the person had practiced virtue (theological and cardinal) to a heroic degree. So, what is it that we are venerating and admiring in Nano Nagle, the Irish woman who was a teacher and a companion to the poor? Certainly, the Church and we are lifting her holiness before our gaze today. It is her stalwart dedication to en-fleshing in her daily life the vision and mission of Jesus that is particularly arresting and demands our attention and our veneration. We honor Nano Nagle's holiness.

Holiness

It might be important for us to recognize that holiness belongs to God and to God alone and when we see holiness or when we ourselves do something holy, it is a window into the immense holiness of God that we are glimpsing. Nano lived that holiness in a venerable and honorable way...."For I was hungry and you fed me and I was naked and you clothed me, ill and imprisoned and you came to visit me ... come inherit the place prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt 25; 35)

It is Nano's holiness that we celebrate, but we too, Nano's daughters and friends, can dive into the holiness of God and carry it into the world. We have all encountered holy people in our lives, our own sisters and associates, dedicated parents, our innocent and delightful students and co-workers, friends and companions who draw us, by their dedication and devotion, to see God in the world. We have all **seen God in others** and that is a delight.

We are also called, as daughters of the Venerable Nano, to **see others in God**. This sounds like a small distinction, the idea of seeing God in others and seeing others in God, but it is significant. It is one thing to see God in others (the good and the holy), that is easy and filled with joy. It is something else to strive to see all others as "being in God". We are called to keep vigil by looking for God in the hearts and minds of the outcast and the deformed, those folks that the world casts off and forgets. Nano Nagle calls out the way and invites us to always have a vision that sees every person as a glimpse into the holiness of God. We are invited to see others in God, even those who find themselves ugly and deformed by bad choices and difficult roads, the addict, the prisoner, the hate filled bigot, the terrorist. We should search out those who have made a mess of their lives and cannot undo the pain and sorrow that comes into their experience. These are God's poor; these are Nano's children. The radical mission of Jesus that Nano so faithfully loved always sees all of creation and every single soul as being "in God". As daughters and friends of Holy Nano, we must cast off the blinders of our own prejudice and step across the lines that have been drawn in our own hearts so that we may keep vigil before the holiness of God manifest in every place and in every heart.

The Servant of God

The title that the Church granted to Nano Nagle is "Servant of God". Our study of Nano's life can reveal the wonderful ways that she led others to the experience of God. As a teacher, a companion to the poor, as a leader of women, she always centered her life on the Gospel of Jesus and the mandate to take the message to the ends of the earth. She stands as our intercessor before God. She carries our concerns and our burdens before the face of God and begs God's ear. From her place in God's dwelling, she guides us still by her vigilant attention to our concerns and our troubles. We need to make sure that the intentions that we bring to Nano are of Godly concern, not our petty differences, our narrow fears or our temporary wounds. Our prayers before Nano should ring of the real needs of the mission of Jesus, of our community and of our work in the vineyard of the Lord. "Fear is useless, what is needed is

trust.” (Luke 8:50) Jesus still speaks these words to us. Remember Nano started with a few followers on Cove Lane in Cork and her work blossomed into a great Presentation family. She fretted very little about the future but instead was concerned at every turn about the mission of Jesus. She pleads for us now ... let us weld the desire of our hearts to the tasks that Nano began so long ago.

The miraculous power of God working through Nano can transform our lives. We can entrust our cares and concerns to her but we in turn must devote ourselves to the mission that Nano so loved. Whoever seeks to preserve her life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it. (Luke 17:33)

Nano Nagle was a servant, the aristocrat, who gave up much to bring light to others. We need to break down the barriers of our own aristocratic indifference and bring the light of God to this day and this hour. She lives with us still and the miraculous power of her presence can transform our humble words and actions, our feeble attempts at holiness to become an offering to God. My companion daughters and friends of Nano, my sisters and brothers in the mission, let us hold the lamp for the vulnerable and the immigrant. Let us never tire of lighting the way for the lost and the marginalized. Let us dispel the shadows of hunger, ignorance and prejudice, let us shelter the bright light of hope.

The Venerable Nano stands as a light in the Church and in the world. Her holiness has drawn countless women and men to God and draws us still into God’s embrace. She serves us now, this good woman, now dead nearly 230 years. The miracle of her example, her holiness, her Godly service still rings in our hearts. Together, let us be servants of the mission of Jesus and rejoice always in the life, the strength and vision, the courage and dedication of the Venerable, Servant of God, Nano Nagle.

Father Brian Hughes