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## The Will of God (II)

The will of God is revealed already in the creation of man's **freedom**. As persons made free in the image of God, we use our reason and exercise our will to discover the truth and to possess the good. Trouble comes when we mistake what is false for the true, and seek something as good when it is not. The result is deception and heartache.

Because man's freedom is related to the true and the good, there is a necessity about our freedom, both in relation to God and to the creation in which He has placed us. In this sense the will of God is given very much in particular.

For example, we are made of body and soul. And so if we are to flourish, we must be nourished in body, and educated in mind and heart, and then allowed to act accordingly.

Moreover, we are made with the capacity for marriage and procreation and civil life,

not to mention the various occupations and professions to which we give so much. We enter these various relationships and circumstances freely, based on peculiar likes and dislikes, and with different talents and interests. When we embrace this freedom we also accept a certain necessity.

If we would discern the will of God in particular for our lives, we must learn to love this necessity for which God has made us. Within the dynamic of marriage and the

family and the community, God works His will through necessity to provide for those essential elements of life in body and soul. It is through this necessity we become who we are in **character**. Our spouses, children, neighborhoods, cities, state and nation, all provide a place and context for us to become what we are. And what we are is most importantly what we are within, in the justice of our own souls, in the habits of the mind and the heart. That is where our freedom, our loves really live.

This is a long way of saying that we discern the will of God first of all at home. With what attitude of heart do you go to sleep at night? On what do you set your mind when you awaken? The daily tasks, the round of duties, all the tasks that seem so mundane, are the necessity of God. To look elsewhere first is to miss the will of God in its most

particular form.

But it is not what we might think of as the mundane that are alone necessary. All that fills the mind and heart, material and intellectual, political, aesthetic, and religious, these all are necessary to that being which is created in the image of God. It is equally necessary for man to eat and to think and to dance, if he is to be man.

This is why the second table of the Ten Commandments can be understood to be such an excellent exposition of the love of neighbor. **Honor thy Father and thy Mother, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet.** These are commandments that protect the integrity of our created necessity, and allow man to flourish. If you break them, you soon discover that you yourself are broken.

It is of course no small matter for the necessary to be done, especially with grace and thanksgiving. Necessity can and often is the hardest and most demanding, simply because it occurs every day. Because of the routine it might seem mundane, but it is not. Necessity is the proving ground, the fire in which we, like precious gold, are tried.

So then, if you would seek the will of God in particular, you must begin with necessity, and then with the extraordinary opportunities. These come next, not in place of necessity, but afterwards when the necessary is provided.

What then of the will of God in the extraordinary, when all that is necessary is prepared or finished for the day?

I would suggest that this is also a matter of freedom, but not an abstract freedom. To seek the will of God beyond what we ask for in our daily bread, beyond His particular will in the concrete details of our daily existence, is altogether valid. But there is one caveat. The Holy Ghost does not contradict Himself. God does not call us to deny what is necessary for the sake of the extraordinary. If your liberty has embraced the responsibilities of raising children, it is not the will of the Holy Ghost for you to abandon your own children in order to serve someone else's across town.

Rather, if you bring yourself and your child into a special work of mercy and charity, then no doubt it is God's will, and **it is always God's will**, for His charity and goodness are boundless, and He intends for us, the Body of Christ, to be His arms and hands and feet. Whether it is feeding the hungry, or teaching the illiterate, or giving music lessons, or becoming a missionary, these are all related to what you already are by necessity, and what you can therefore offer to someone else in love's freedom.

If you prefer one ministry to another, then most probably God wills you to be there. But I would not be surprised if God would just as well have you to be somewhere else. God's options may not be as limited as you think. After all He has created you and redeemed you to become a remarkably adaptable creature.

If you wish to strain the gnat out of the question, and ask what God's will might be for you in relation to two different choices, both of which you are equally qualified for, and in which you find you have an equal

interest, then you must pray for wisdom. As St. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let Him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given Him." This is especially true if your

decision affects a wife or children or others close to you. Pray for wisdom and then choose what you want.

Of course, there are those occasions when you are not prepared to serve, when you have no experience or education or inclination, but God calls you because His grace and operation are sufficient. Then we walk, again, as we already are, by necessity and by faith.

Sometimes, though, I think the element of ambivalence and surprise is also God's will. He intends for us to be somewhat in the dark, so to speak.

Finally, when it comes to the will of God, much remains inscrutable to our feeble and imperfect sight. We are left with faith and dependence and the will to rely upon God to give us Himself in his own time and in His own way. That is after all what we seek when we truly seek His will, it is Him we seek.

I am reminded of one of the beautiful frescoes of Fra Angelico. It is of the Resurrection, when Jesus meets Mary Magdalene and she mistakes Him for the gardener. Jesus is depicted looking at her, almost with a cheerful grin on his face, and with a hoe placed on his shoulder, as if to say, "I am the true gardener, and I have made and cultivated your very own soul for my happiness, which it is my pleasure to bestow upon you, in person, right now...**Mary.**" God knows when it is best for us to discern His will. If we will trust Him with all our heart, He will make it clear. Jesus solemnly promised. "Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

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