

5. Emerging oneself in the will of God

Recently I visited a 92-year-old nun in Germany, condemned by now to stay always in bed, and with the rare name of Sr. Notburga. A solar gaze which it always does me well to find again when I visit her community, which is certainly fragile in numbers and strength, but I believe that every community, even the most miserable, has a hidden treasure for which it is worth existing. Sr. Notburga told me that she would like to go to Heaven. But then she added, all smiles: "But what is important is that God's will be done, as we always ask him in the Our Father. I immerse myself in the will of God."

Spoken by this nun sinking into her bed and her sickness, this word reached me as if from the depth of the mystery. It was like finding oneself on the ocean shore, and you would see this nun sinking happily into the abyssal depths of the Father's good will.

Above all, it was evident that for this nun God's will was not an abstract reality, an idea, a concept, a series of precepts separate from each other, but *the Reality, all of Reality*. And that for this reason all of reality was something personal, was animated by a Thou, was imbued with relationship, with love. You do not immerse yourself into it, sink yourself into it, as if into nothing, into the annihilation of our I, but like a newborn sinking himself into the lap of its mother, in complete trust and happiness. One who sinks himself into the sea of God's will does not die drowned, but is like a fish who throws himself back into the water and, the deeper he dives, the more he lives.

Thus, thinking back to this old nun's word – "I immerse myself in the will of God" – I found myself getting deeper into daily reality with this awareness, with this positive hypothesis, that for us everything is an occasion and area for immersing ourselves in the Father's good will, and, instead of demeaning our freedom, this exalts it, opens for it an infinite space of expression, of affirmation. This hypothesis launched me into the real with a feeling of sympathy for everyone and everything. I could go deeper into daily life, unarmed, defenseless, because if reality is an expression of God's will, a space where I can immerse myself in it, even that which seems hostile to me is no longer negative, no longer threatens me, does not threaten the true fulfillment of my life, of my destiny, because the fulfillment of my destiny is that God's will be done in me, for me, and through me.

We are often like fish whom the pride of original sin has cast out onto the seashore, and which now fear to let themselves be thrown back into the water by Christ to begin living with fullness again. Is this not somehow the experience that the sacrament of baptism makes us have?

In Gethsemane Jesus did not withdraw from the reality that was threatening his life. He wanted instead to enter also into the reality of the temptation, of the human frailty and fear before death, and death on a cross, to immerse himself even more in the Father's will, which transfigured all the evil of the passion and death of Christ into the absolutely most positive and best event in history.

“My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me! But not as I will, but as you will! (...) My Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, let your will be done!” (Mt 26:39, 42).

“My Father”: with what a tender relationship with the Father does Jesus live the temptation, the anguish, the sadness! His prayer is for letting emerge in his heart, facing the evil that threatens him, the Reality of realities which is the Father’s good will. Prayer is that setting oneself before the Mystery that restores all of reality, all of history, into its true light. Reality is an event of God’s will to let be accomplished. Jesus quickly rediscovers this light shining even on the absolute negativity of the Cross, and his *Fiat* allows the Cross to be transformed in the total accomplishment of the Father’s good will.

Gethsemane, for all its dramatic quality, reveals to us that, for Jesus, the Father’s will was not an object of fear, but of desire. Jesus is in anguish, but not before the Father’s will. He fears the passion, he fears death, he fears the hostility of men, he fears above all men’s indifference to the grace of the Redemption that he will merit for all by his blood. But he does not fear the Father’s will, even if it is the Father’s will that He drinks the chalice of the passion. By praying, by transforming his anguish into prayer, into a request, Jesus transforms the outlook of all that threatens him and will destroy his life into a burning request that, in all this, what the Father wills be accomplished. He does not say, “But not as I will, but as you will!” with resignation, lowering his head before a sad destiny. He says it with desire, with a profound desire, more profound than the human feelings that he feels rising in his heart. The Father’s will, for Jesus, is always a fulfillment, is always the most positive thing that can happen. The completion of the Father’s will, for Jesus, is the victory of invincible good against every evil that Satan or men can want and achieve. For this reason, though he expresses the anguish he feels in himself, Jesus puts at the top of his prayer the request that the Father’s will be done. It is this that he desires above all things, indeed, even above his own life.

The prayer of Gethsemane is the correct interpretation also of the last words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: “I thirst!” and “It is finished!” (Jn 19:28,30). Jesus thirsts for the fulfillment of the Father’s will. He had said so after the encounter with the Samaritan woman, when his disciples were insisting that he satisfy his hunger with the food that they had bought in town: “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work” (Jn 4:34).

The thirst, the hunger, the desire of Christ is for the fulfillment of the Father’s will. And in his whole mission, Jesus wants to communicate this passion, this desire to his disciples and to everyone. “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!” (Lk 12:49-50).