

6. Desire for the Father's will

What is desire if not the ardor of the will, an intense willing, a willing that is entirely directed toward an end, toward a goal? But the ardor of Jesus' will was communion of desire with the Father. The Father's will is also ardent with desire, it is a flame that burns for a goal, for a fulfillment. The Father's will is an ardent love for men, to which Jesus clings with his whole will, to the point of not wanting to have any other will than the Father's: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (Jn 6:38–39).

And during his entire life, Jesus deep down does nothing other than draw men to cling to his desire for the Father's will, his ardor for the fulfillment of the Father's will. For this reason he always presents the Father's will as a fascinating, thrilling reality that attracts. The Father's will, as Jesus presents it, as he speaks of it, as he lives it, is revealed in all its goodness and power, is revealed as the true good for us, for all, even for the birds of the sky and the flowers of the field, even for every hair that falls from our head (cf. Mt 10:29-30)! In listening to Jesus, in looking upon Jesus, man's heart is filled with the wish that God's will be done. And the wish is a will that is directed, intense, ardent. A "willing," that is, a choice on the part of our freedom. As Jesus presents it, as he communicates it, the Father's will is no longer perceived as a demeaning of our freedom – as Adam and Eve thought – but as a fire that kindles our freedom, that makes it living, active, that it, truly itself, truly free.

The choice of sin, concupiscence, does not exalt freedom, because what one desires with concupiscence drags freedom along, like a chained up slave is dragged by his master. St. John recalls this in his first letter, while speaking of the Father's will in terms of love: "The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever" (1 Jn 2:15–17).

The freedom that is united to the Father's will enters into eternal life, into a limitless freedom, which does not pass away, which undergoes nothing, which is not demeaned by anything, not even by death. It is to this freedom that Jesus invites us, it is in this freedom that he accompanies us, proposing to us the fascination of his desire to abandon himself up to the end to the good Father's will.

There is particular aspect on which Jesus insists in order to transmit to us his passion for the Father's will: the familiarity with Him that obedience makes possible: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'" (Mt 12:48–50).

Jesus closely connects doing the Father's will with being close to him, being his friends and companions. No one is more closely related to us than our mother, than our brothers and sisters. And so, to be as close to Jesus as Mary was, the condition is to fulfill the Father's will. Because nothing is as dear to Christ as what his Father wills, as his Father and his will, his freedom, his design to save the world.

When we love a person, if we truly love them as a person and not as an object of interest or of egoistic pleasure, then their freedom is dear to us, and so also their will. The will, however, is not caprice. There are people who think they love when they enslave themselves to every whim of their beloved. On the contrary: whims are desires that a person is enslaved to and, to satisfy them, the person tends to enslave all others, especially the people who are affectively closest. A person's will, rather, is their freedom insofar as it is directed toward the ultimate goal of their life, insofar as it is directed toward actualizing what they live for, what life is given us for in order that it be given again. Freedom is given to us by God in order to guide us to be loving up to the end, to give our whole life. For Jesus, the Father's will was the most precious treasure, was the continual object of his love, of his attention, of his meditation, of his listening to the Scriptures. Jesus always lived a life directed toward embracing the Father's will with his freedom.

The Father's will, for Jesus, was like the light that illuminated all of reality, that thus directed his path, which gave meaning to every circumstance, to every encounter, to every word that he was saying and hearing. Jesus satisfied himself with the Father's will, he had no need for other food: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work" (Jn 4:34). For this reason he was totally free from everyone and everything. His freedom was his obedience to the Father; his liberation was in letting himself be constantly guided and oriented by the Father's will. He was not subjugated to any pressure of time and space, because his "watch" and his "compass" were his continual harmonization with God's will. And he had such a lively relationship with the Father's will, a relationship so far from being formal and schematic, that for Him it was a motive for continual amazement, of continual wonder. It was always like the Father's will were, for Him, a surprising novelty, even if in reality he knew it from all eternity. But eternity is God's present, a dimension in which nothing ages, and hence in which everything is always new, a newness that never ceases to be a newness. For this reason Jesus lives everything with wonder, especially when he sees the Father's will penetrating the smallest most insignificant details of human experience and inspiring the people and hearts who are the simplest, poorest, and smallest in the eyes of the world: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to little ones; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Mt 11:25-26).