

7. The Will of the Father and Intimacy with Christ

“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).

Jesus finds a detail of truth and beauty in a simple person, in a baby, in a poor old woman, and he recognizes there a reflection, a spark of the whole truth and beauty that fills the heavens, that He and the Father share with each other from eternity in the communion of the Holy Spirit, and so he recognizes that it is the Father who, in the full freedom of his love and benevolence, has prepared this gift for Him, this sign of love. And he rejoices in it. Jesus already has everything, he possesses the whole universe and all the truth and beauty that can exist. And yet he rejoices in it fully, with wonder, in stumbling upon it in a detail, in an insignificant reflection. Why? Because in that reflection he sees all the Father’s freedom, all the Father’s decision, all the Father’s love which pours itself out for Him in a detail.

It is like the owner of an international orchid firm were to find on the table, upon entering his house, a wild daisy that a dear person has put there for him. All day he has seen the most beautiful orchids, but no one told him anything but the economic gain they represented. That daisy, however, is charged with a decision of gratuitous love which gives it an incalculable, infinite value.

For this reason, when Jesus met someone who love the Father’s will, not formally like the Pharisees, but with his whole heart, he right away felt that he shared with that person that which was dearest to Him, the most precious treasure of his life, and thus he felt that that person was a friend, related, beyond every connection of blood.

We should think of this when St. Benedict says that “immediate obedience (...) is proper to the one who esteems nothing more precious than Christ” (RB 5:1–2). Because Christian obedience means sharing what was dearest to Christ: obedience to the Father’s will. And thus, holding most dear that which was dearest to Jesus, one becomes a relative of Christ, one becomes precious to Christ himself.

The issue is not immediate obedience for the sake of doing things well since the life of the monastery must function like a Swiss watch. The point is participating in Christ’s passion for the Father’s will, of being passionate for the benevolent design of the Father who comes to illuminate and make precious this instant, this gesture, this encounter that I have been asked to live. And so one makes haste, does not tolerate delay, because in the thing that is commanded him there is hiding and being unveiled at the same time the freedom of God, which involves us in its fulfillment, in its being realized. And so every act, even the most banal, when lived out with this obedience, becomes dense with the infinite, as if it were granted to my freedom to be able to let the most high God’s whole design enter into a particular detail of the present, allowing his design to be fulfilled in all and for all. The paradigm of this experience is Mary’s “Behold!” to the angel, the Virgin’s *Fiat*, which allows the Son of God to enter into her and into the whole world, into the whole of history, in the whole of reality, and, with him, the whole benevolent design of the Father.

Jesus says: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Mt 12:50).

Of course, the first sense of this phrase is that becoming close to Jesus is the consequence of obedience to the Father's will. But I think that this phrase should also be understood in the sense that the Father's will is that we be brothers, sisters, and mothers of Jesus, relatives and friends of Jesus.

It is an important point that we must consider more deeply, because often it is precisely by not understanding this that obedience risks carrying us off track, distancing us from the will of God which, even so, we want to accomplish, or are convinced we are accomplishing.

Closeness with Christ is the Father's deepest will. God wants us to be close to the Son to the point of becoming His sons in Jesus. The Father's will is that all men be associated with the Son for eternal life, that all enter into eternal life, in the life of the Trinity, through communion with the Son who died and rose. Christ died and rose in order to bring to fulfillment the merciful will of the Father to save all men in the mystical Body of the Son.

The Father's will is not so much the Son's death, but rather that through that death the whole human race can be connected to the Son's eternal life, which is the communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Father desires our filial communion with Him in the form of communion with the Son. As we cling to the Son, the Father clings us to himself, because no one is more united to the Father than the Son in the Holy Spirit. Closeness to Jesus, friendship with Christ, has this thickness, this ontological, theological, and mystical profundity. The more we are with Jesus the more we become sons of God, and the more we live a life that is not just this life but eternal life.

St. Paul writes at the beginning of the first letter to the Corinthians: "God is worthy of faith; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:9).

This phrase summarizes the Christian vocation. We have been *called*, Christianity is a vocation, a calling that reaches us from the Heart of Being, from the Origin of everything and everyone: God the Father. It is a calling the response to which is, above all, faith: "God is worthy of faith." To have faith means listening to a call, entrusting oneself to a call, an invitation, a proposal, a hypothesis to verify in one's life, a verification that allows us to verify even the truth of God, God's fidelity, that God is truly "worthy of faith," that he deserves our trust.

But, that God is worthy of faith, that God deserves my trust, this I must verify in the area that his call, his proposal, defines. I do not verify faith if I begin first of all to break my skull in order to understand the truths of faith, to understand the dogmas of faith. God proposes that we make this verification of faith in the area in which it is truly granted to us to experience his faithfulness, his love, his truth in all and about all. St. Paul defines this area with a single word, a single reality: communion, *koinonia*, communion with Christ.