

My Will Be Done

In a small village lived a cabinet maker who every day began his work with a simple prayer, “Lord, Thy will be done.” People of the village would visit the cabinet maker and request projects to be done. One day, the cabinet maker received a request to build a very large cabinet for a house. The person making this request knew exactly how he wanted the cabinet to be made—the type of wood, the size of each shelf, the way each corner was to be joined, and a particular method for finishing the piece. However, this person was unable to construct the cabinet himself, so he sought out the skilled cabinet maker to assist him. Each day he would visit the cabinet maker to inspect his progress and would criticize and complain that the job wasn’t being done correctly. The cabinet maker tried earnestly to satisfy his customer and finally came to the conclusion that satisfaction was an impossibility. He refunded the person’s money and said, “I suggest that you buy yourself some tools and wood and complete it according to your designs.” The process of requesting help and then ignoring the advice is a common occurrence when it comes to the spiritual life. Our souls are like that “fine cabinet” that requires a thoughtful construction. Each aspect of the soul must be perfect for it to work properly.

Each Sunday the Church gathers and is given a lesson for the soul to be perfected. However, when a *fear* and a certain *condition* prevail, the instruction is disregarded. The *fear* is that of change. As people progress in life, they tend to settle into a comfort zone. Infrequently does one invite change; usually circumstances in life necessitate change. Whether it is a change in employment, a sudden illness, or a personal loss, changes are either inevitable or invited. The members of the Church are continually called upon to invite change in order that the soul may reflect a transfigured reality and not a fallen one.

The *condition* is that of religious nominalism. A nominalist is defined as existing or being something in *name* or *form* only. The Church has always been aware through the experiences of very large cathedral churches (i.e. Agia Sophia, Constantinople) that as memberships grow so does the tendency to neglect the rigors of the spiritual life. A consequence is usually a distancing between the clergy and the laity. The condition of a nominal Christian leads to a disdain for spiritual advice and to isolation.

Fear of change and nominalism reign in a heart because of two major vices that freeze the soul—*pride* and an *autonomous* will.

Each human being is a “creation” of God the Father, His Son is the “Restorer,” and the Holy Spirit is the “Perfector.” For a soul to be perfected, it must first be the work of God and not man alone. Either God is allowed to shape us according to His will, or a false god takes over the job.

The *imposter* is always an autonomous self-will. A self-willed person is one who acts *independent* of God. This is the beginning of unhappiness, discontent, complaining, and being in a perpetual state of dissatisfaction.

“The blessed living corpse grows sick at heart when he finds himself acting on his own behalf, and he is frightened by the burden of using his own personal judgement.” (John of the Ladder)

True happiness and joy are found when we abide in God’s love by uniting our will with His.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love . . . These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:9-11)

The virtue that allows a soul to “abide in God’s love” is *obedience*.

“Obedience is a total renunciation of our own life, and it shows up clearly in the way we act.” (John of the Ladder)

A soul must invite obedience at every level of encountering God and must be obedient first of all to Christ.

“Those who submit to the Lord with simple heart will run the good race.”(John of the Ladder)

All Christians are called to be MADE disciples by denying ourselves (our self-will), taking up our Cross (offering our lives as living sacrifices), and following Christ.

The Fathers insist that *confession* is the bath of tears that frees us from sin and renews our souls in Christ. In confession we become aware of obedience to Christ through the priest. He is a spiritual father who has been given the grace to discern the illness of the soul and to offer a remedy.

“Confession is like a bridle that keeps the soul which reflects upon it from committing sin, but anything left unconfessed we continue to do without fear as if in the dark.” (John of the Ladder)

The soul is a complex part of a human being that must be free from fear and nominalism that take hold because of pride and self-will. The Church as the body of Christ is the skilled craftsman that fashions the soul. Either God is invited to perfect our soul, or we decide to build the “cabinet” on our own.

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