

Homily for the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Well, it's the end of the second week of January – any of you still sticking with your New Year's Resolutions? We all know it, when it comes to these resolutions, people say things like, "I *will* lose weight this year", or "I *will* exercise more" – I *will* have the *will*-power to do these things...*will, will, will*.

You know, that word "will" is mentioned a lot in our Scripture readings today too – not so much in the future-looking sense, like "I will go to visit my parents later this weekend"; but rather in the sense of "free will" and "God's will".

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions ... Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts." Now, I doubt any of this is news to most of you – we all know that we have a free will, and with that free will we can choose. Ultimately, at the end of the day though, we only have two choices – God's will or my will.

Now, we might think it's so nice and poetic for the psalmist to write the refrain we sang in our responsorial psalm today: "Here am I Lord; I come to do your will" – almost like a Hallmark card! But, what does God's will imply, or what does it cost? Well, let's just look at two of the people from today's Scriptures – Isaiah in the first reading and St. Paul in the second. Isaiah, like so many of the prophets had to deliver extremely unpopular messages from God to His people, often facing ridicule and persecution.

And Paul himself tells us all he suffered in 2 Corinthians: he was beat, imprisoned, shipwrecked... In other words, these men of God suffered because they freely chose God's will instead of seeking comfort and avoiding difficulty in the excuses of their own will.

But, why on earth would they want to do God's will? Well, because as St. Augustine himself discovered, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." In other words, God is our Creator, the one who placed our soul within us at the moment when our parents co-created with Him in giving us a body. And therefore, the Creator knows the reasons and the purpose for which He's created every one of His creatures. Should we use a spatula to comb our hair, or garden shears to clip our toenails? I don't even need to answer those questions! Or, as the prophet Isaiah says elsewhere in his writings, "Shall the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" or, "What you are making has no handles"?"

But why should I do God's will if it causes me such difficulty and hardship? Well, as the Catechism again reminds us, "so that we might of our own accord seek our Creator and freely attain His full and blessed perfection by cleaving to Him." In other words, so that we can be happy, eternally fulfilled, and at peace in every way imaginable. You see, like St. Augustine – who, by the way was a no good, dirty-rotten scoundrel before he became a saint – found out, like all the saints have: if we do not surrender our wills to God's will and rest in Him, we will be restless. We either rest in God or we will be wrestling with Him – guaranteed!

Well, then why wouldn't we seek God's will in everything we do, especially knowing the truth that He ultimately only has good in store for us; that He loves us perfectly; and that He wants to teach us all we need to be truly happy. Why? Because we struggle with trusting God. And it all goes back to the beginning. Look at Adam and Eve in the Garden. The devil comes to Eve and asks her, "Did God really say you can't eat from any of the trees in the garden, even that one? You know, you certainly won't die, like God told you, if you eat of it. In fact, God knows full well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil." The result, Adam and Eve exerted their own will over and against God's will – and then they knew good and evil alright. And although it didn't lead to their immediate death with God striking them dead with a bolt of lightning, they did eventually die and were eternally separated from God – all for a piece of fruit! Imagine how much they were kicking themselves after that, knowing that it was their free will alone which led to such devastating consequences.

My friends, we will ultimately only seek God's will when we truly trust Him. Trust is another word for faith. But trust is totally concrete in that we are challenged to put that faith into action in our daily choices. Are we going to trust God and do what He calls or commands us to, even if it's difficult, causes us discomfort, and means dying to our pride? Or, are we going to do what we want instead, and instead pay the price of restlessness and separation from the very fount of love? But, how can we really trust some abstract god-out-there, when He's really the God who loves us and wants a personal relationship with us? "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." God bless you.