

DAY 5



Weekly Reflection: Understanding God's Will



By Whitney Hetzel

"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence." —St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Trustful surrender does not come easily for me. Although I say the words "Thy will be done" every time I utter the Lord's Prayer, that does not mean that I regularly put them into practice.

The truth is, even when I say those words quietly under my breath, as I often do throughout the day, something gets in the way of

my complete trust in God. (Spoiler alert: that something is me.)

Underneath the surface of that prayer lies a shadowy doubt that emerges and whispers, "If I turn it over to you, Lord, do you really have this?" or "What if it doesn't turn out as I'd hoped?" or (if I'm really honest) "Couldn't you conform your will to mine, Lord?"

I recently saw a meme that read, "Until we believe that prayer is worth our time, we won't make time for prayer." Considering Father Miller's words this week, perhaps a similar line of thinking can be applied to trustful surrender: until I believe in God's eternal goodness and in His infinite sovereignty, it will be difficult to trust in His will.

If I truly contemplated the immeasurable goodness of God, would I still find it hard to surrender to His will? How often do I think about the sovereign nature of God? Why do I hesitate to unite my will to His if I believe that God can do all things and that He wills my highest good?

The truth is that nothing I do takes God by surprise. God is not making things up as He goes along, as though I suddenly confront Him with some action that He had not expected. There is nothing outside of His sovereign and redemptive plan. And yet, how often do I really think about how much He loves me and stands always ready to forgive me? Scripture constantly assures us of the unfathomable mercy of God:

*"But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is thy faithfulness."
(Lamentations 3:21)*

God, who is the author of all things, gives me free will and allows my choices to matter because He loves me and respects my freedom. He is the "Sovereign Gentleman" who will never force our will. (I admit there are times when I wish He would.)

The Connection between Surrendering to God's Will and Interior Silence

I recently read a [biography](#) of Mother Teresa and was struck by her willingness to surrender to God. She once said that to know God is to want to give Him everything. Her trustful surrender really shouldn't surprise me since she sought to develop in herself and in her Sisters "the constant awareness of the Divine Presence everywhere and in everyone."

How did she accomplish this constant awareness? By seeking silence. Mother Teresa told her Sisters, "The fruit of silence is prayer." She spoke often about interior silence, saying that since she was surrounded by noise and restlessness, she had to find silence in her interior. To make interior silence possible, she said we should practice it often:

"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noises and restlessness. God is the friend of silence...The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in active life. We need silence to be able to touch souls. The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us. Jesus is always waiting for us in silence. In this silence he listens to us and speaks to our souls. And there, we will hear his voice...In this silence we find a new energy and a real unity. God's energy becomes ours, allowing us to perform things well. There is unity of our thoughts with his thoughts, of our prayers with his prayers, of our actions with his actions, of our life with his life."

Mother Teresa believed that silence was the key to uniting her will to God's.

Do we seek out silence? Or do we fill in any opportunity for quiet with noise? Do we turn on music in the car when we could drive in silence for a while? Do we phone a friend when we could spend some time in prayer? Do we speak when words are unnecessary?

I help teach Confirmation at our parish. At a recent retreat, students had a chance to spend time in Adoration. As we prepared to

enter the chapel, Sister Mary Elizabeth, one of the young nuns who assists with spiritual education at our church, was walking out. I asked her if she could share with the students some suggestions on how they might spend the time with Our Lord. She said: "First, think about how amazing He is and thank Him for bringing you here. Then just talk to God about what's on your mind. Tell Him about your day...your week...and what you are struggling with. Ask His help in bringing to mind those sins that are keeping you from Him. If you can't think of something else to say, just sit there with Him. Don't be afraid of the silence. Think how an elderly couple might sit in rockers on a porch together in comfortable silence...and just sit that way with Jesus."

I am so grateful that we bumped into Sister Mary Elizabeth on our way to Adoration!

Although it is difficult to find silence in the midst of a noisy world, we can learn to unite our will to God's will; but we must make time for it, at least interiorly, as much as possible. How hard this is! But if we don't, trustful surrender will remain elusive, and those nagging doubts will have more room to creep in from the shadows.

Meditate with Scripture

"To know God is to want to give Him everything." Mother Teresa's words encourage us to get to know Our Lord better.

Today, spend a few minutes meditating on God's will acting in creation guided by Psalm 8. Notice how creation's beauty and perfection is ordered for the good of His human creatures.

*O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!...
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
All sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Questions For Quiet Reflection

Do I spend time in silence with God? Do I choose silence each day?

Do I believe that God wills my highest good? Do I stop to contemplate the sovereignty of God and consider His majesty?

Do I actively seek to know and do God's will, so that I can better discern what He is asking of me?

Coming in Day 6 . . .

Abandonment to the Divine Will

