

## HOMILY for 22<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday reminds us about God's will & the importance of discerning & following it in our daily lives. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

One day, a man was praying to God & said, "God!?"

God responded, "Yes, my child."

And the guy said, "Can I ask you a question?"

"Go right ahead, my child," God said.

"God, what is a million years to you?"

God said, "A million years to me is only a second."

"Hmm," the man wondered. Then, he asked, "God, what is a million dollars worth to you?"

God said, "A million dollars to me is just a penny."

So, the man said, "God, can I have a penny?"

And God said, "Sure! ...Just a second."

Anyway, in last Sunday's Gospel, we heard how Jesus praised Peter for having a personal knowledge of his Master. In this Sunday's Gospel, we learn that Jesus revealed to His disciples about His upcoming suffering & death. He assumed that Peter would understand that divine plan of salvation & accept it like He did. But, Peter responded, "May you be spared, Master! God forbid that any such thing ever happen to you!" Evidently Peter did not like that news. Like most of us he did not like all the talk about suffering & death of Jesus. He didn't want the Son of the living God to go through all of those bad things. However, if Jesus avoided all the suffering & skipped the Cross, He would go against the will of God the Father. That would be unacceptable to Jesus; & hence He had to say to Peter, "Get out of my sight, you Satan! You are trying to make me trip & fall. You are not judging by God's standards, but by human." So, Jesus apparently was really mad at Peter & called him Satan because Peter tried to get Him to go against God's will. Peter went from being praised by Jesus to being cursed by Him for not following God's will. Then, why is God's will so important to Jesus & us? And what is God's will?

To help us answer those questions, let's first take a look at this Sunday's Second Reading & see how Paul tells us about God's will. Here is what he says, "I urge you, brothers & sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good & pleasing & perfect." So, evidently Paul thought that the will of God is something good, pleasing, & perfect. It's also contrary to the things of this age, or the current world. He encouraged us to make personal sacrifices for it & discern what it is for us. He hinted to us that God's will is always good, pleasing, & perfect in the end. Perhaps at the moment, we might not understand why we have ended up in a particular situation that we do not like at all. Or, we do not appreciate all the mishaps & challenges that we might have encountered in our lives. Or, we cannot figure out why we or some good people have to endure so much suffering while bad people seem to cruise through life without any problems. Indeed, God's will is mysterious & bewildering to our human comprehension.

Realizing how difficult it is for us to welcome & accept God's will in our daily lives, Jesus taught His disciples how to embrace it graciously by putting it above everything else. In fact, He included that lesson about God's will in the most famous prayer as following, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..." So, Jesus apparently calls us to pray for the Kingdom of God to come soon so that God could take care of our needs & protect us much better. Meanwhile, Jesus asks us to put God's will above everything else & line up our will with it. Otherwise, we would have tough time to accept God's will in our daily lives & will be disappointed about its result in the end. But, Jesus did not only teach us about God's will & how to follow it in our daily lives. He also showed us how to do it with His own example as He offered His own life on the Cross for our sins. It was the will of God the Father to send His only Son down here on earth to suffer & die for our salvation. As you might recall, Jesus struggled to take in the cup of suffering & accept God's will for Him. In fact, He made this desperate prayer, "Father, take this cup away from me. Yet, it's not my will. Rather, it's your will be done." However, in the end, Jesus accepted the will of God the Father & followed through with it by offering His own life on the Cross for our salvation.

Because of Jesus' obedience & conforming His will to the one of God the Father, we all have been saved & promised with an eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Otherwise, we would receive severe punishment for our sins & not be given that great promise. So, what would be our rewards for following God's will? Here is Jesus' response to that question in today's Gospel, "...If someone wishes to come after me, this person must deny oneself, take up one's cross, & begin to follow in my footsteps. Whoever would save one's life will lose it; but whoever loses one's life for my sake will find it... The Son of Man will come with His Father's glory accompanied by His angels. When He does, He will repay each person according to one's conduct." So, Jesus asks us to pick up our daily crosses & follow in His footsteps as God's will would want us to do. When we do that, we'll know for sure that we are doing the right thing & going to receive great rewards in the end. Maybe currently it is not easy for us to carry our daily crosses; but Jesus will give us the encouragement & a great example for us to follow.

My dear brothers & sisters, we rely on Google Map or GPS on our phones & Garmin devices to show us how to get to different locations & help us navigate around our hometown every day. Without those devices, we'll be lost or end up in wrong places in our daily lives. Similarly, we Christians count on God's will to help us make the right decisions every day & do the right things on earth. If we don't discern & follow God's will, we'll end up making bad decisions & possibly even hurt ourselves & people around us. By following God's will & not ours, we'll never regret about our decisions & actions in the end.