



Your will not mine.

On Maundy Thursday, we gathered in our chapel to remember Gethsemane. A dark velvet covering clothed our altar. On this we placed one small candle that flickered in the dimmed light casting a shadow on a sombre picture of Jesus kneeling before the rock of his agony. Taize music played in the background, "Stay here and watch with me." The first of our Easter liturgies had begun. The familiar words from the Gospel echoed again in our hearts, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."¹

Even Jesus could choose the path the Heavenly Father had chosen for him, or he could refuse. Without free will he would

not have been fully human. Daily we too are called to say humbly, as Jesus said in Gethsemane, "not as I will but as you will."² He taught us in the Lord's Prayer to say, "Your will be done". It is no use praying this for the world if we are not yielding our will to him.

Our will is the citadel within us. We often use the phrase, "I have given my life to Jesus" but what do we mean by that phrase. Fenelon has some warning words. "Alas! How many self-asserting souls we meet - people who would fain do right and love God, but only after their own fashion and choice - who practically lay down the law to God, as to his dealing with them! They wish to serve Him and possess Him, but they will not give themselves up to him, and let him possess them; and as a natural result how much resistance God meets with from such people, even when they seem full of zeal and ardour for his service!" He also writes of, "Those fervid, enlightened people who persist in travelling to heaven by their own self-chosen path".³

What does giving our will to God, and it is undoubtedly this he asks of us, mean in ordinary everyday life. First of all it is allowing the Lord to mould our lives to conformity with his life every minute that we live. This isn't anxiously looking within and thinking, "Am I within his will or outside it at this moment in time". It is rather learning to listen to the Holy Spirit correcting us until we become obedient children of the heavenly Father in all things and being obedient to him is as natural as breathing. This in turn moulds our character into Christlikeness and also leads us to acceptance of God's will whatever -----.

Marti was a young American girl in love with a handsome Greek fellow. Their romance turned into a nightmare when he persuaded her to smuggle hash out of Lebanon. She was caught and sentenced to three years in Sanayeh prison, Beirut. Sharing a small cell with nine other women resulted in relationships in disarray and often outright hostility. Depressed and becoming increasingly dependent on tranquilisers, the Lord spoke to her

through a book she was reading. He gently led her to the place of repentance for her hatred, lies and anger. This was only the beginning – something we forget sometimes.

As she listened to the Holy Spirit, he pointed out the effect her anger had had on others and the destruction she had caused through her hatred. In obedience she began to apologise. Then the Lord spoke to her about lying. She confessed to those to whom she had lied. Her parole date had been postponed and now the civil war in Lebanon raged around them. The question came, “Why am I here?” Until one day she whispered, “You win, I give up. If you want me to stay here and finish my sentence – then I accept that. You decide. Not my will but yours, Lord, be done.” She continued, “Instead of feeling miserable, I felt contented and hopeful. I felt loved, really loved for the first time in my life.”⁴ There was one woman however she found difficult to forgive. She knew there was no escape. She must apologise, although she had considered all the blame was with the other woman. She wrote her a note asking forgiveness.

Despite the fact that she was still in an overcrowded prison cell, in a war zone and the future uncertain, she writes, “Praise God, I was free.” They are dramatic circumstances but in our lives too, our wills need to be brought into conformity with God’s will however difficult that seems to be. This is the place of peace.

¹ Matt 26:39 NIV

² Matt 26:39 NIV

³ Letters to Women Archbishop Fenelon

⁴ Sunrise over Sanayeh Marti Sinclair