

THY WILL BE DONE

[Italicized quotes – Pope Francis – General Audience on Mar.20, 2019]

Pope Francis says that “thy will be done” should be joined with the first two invocations (“hallowed be thy name” and “thy Kingdom come”) so that they form a triptych, a type of art that presents a picture in three panels. God’s will – salvation for all – is fulfilled when we glorify his name and transform our world into his Kingdom.

What is God’s will, incarnated in Jesus? To seek and to save the one who is lost. And in prayer, we ask that God’s seeking may be successful, that his universal plan of salvation may be accomplished, firstly in each of us, and then in the entire world.

God doesn’t hide his intentions. His plan of salvation isn’t beyond our understanding. St. Paul writes that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Tim 2:4). He not only invites us to share his life, he seeks us out, calls us to himself and gives us his Spirit to strengthen us in our efforts to follow him.

God knocks upon the door of our heart with his love. Why? To attract us, to attract us to him and to carry us forward on the path of salvation. God is close to each of us, with his love, to lead us by the hand to salvation. How much love there is behind this!

When we pray “thy will be done,” we’re not like servants bowing to a master. God’s love frees us – the “Our Father” is the prayer of children, not slaves. We’re children who know our father’s heart and are certain of his loving plan. We don’t accept our salvation grudgingly, but eagerly, trusting that God wants what is good for us.

The “Our Father” is a prayer which kindles in us the same love as Jesus’ love for the Father’s will, a flame that spurs us to transform the world with love. ... When we pray, we believe that God can and wants to transform reality by overcoming evil with good. It makes sense to obey and to surrender oneself to this God.

Even when confronted by the world’s evil, we don’t contest God’s will, but accept it, like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed, “Father, ... not my will, but yours, be done” (Lk 22:42). Likewise, the martyrs were not seeking death, but, rather, the “after-death,” the resurrection. They accepted their sufferings as their path to eternity, confident in God’s promise of everlasting life.

Out of love, God can lead us to walk along difficult paths and to experience wounds and painful thorns, but he will never forsake us. He will always be with us, beside us, within us. For a believer this is more than a hope, it is a certainty: God is with me.

In his reflections on the Lord's Prayer, Pope Francis doesn't comment on the phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" – a rare omission in a series of audiences over a 6-month period. Although we may think of this phrase as belonging with "thy will be done," it actually seems to modify the totality of the invocations – "hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done" – all three of these, on earth as in heaven.

Francis' comparison of the three invocations to a triptych supports this interpretation. Together, they form one scene, one reality, requiring our participation in each of its aspects – we glorify God's name, we make the Kingdom come in our world, and we accept God's will for our salvation. Each of these actions is ours to carry out here on earth as the angels and saints do in heaven. Doing them, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is how we transform our world into God's Kingdom, according to his plan. Thus, we achieve the salvation which has been won for us by Jesus Christ, who teaches us how to pray to his Father and ours.