

Jim's Notes
July 11, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 1:5-12

Eusebius Pamphilus (AD 260- 341)

And if it must needs be said that foreknowledge of events is not the cause of the occurrence of these events – for a foreknown sinner, when he sins, does not thereby hold God within his power – why, what is even more wonderful, we do in fact say that the event about to take place is the cause of the existence of the foreknowledge concerning it. For not because it is known does it take place; but because it is about to take place, it is known. A distinction must be made. Indeed, we will not concede to the interpretation which some make: that something absolutely must come about because what is foreknown must necessarily be about to take place. For we do not say that because it was foreknown that Judas would become a traitor, it was therefore of utter necessity that Judas became a traitor. (Preparation for the Gospel. 6,11: written c. AD 318)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

III. "THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

2822 Our Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."⁹⁵ He "is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish."⁹⁶ His commandment is "that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."⁹⁷ This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses his entire will.

2823 "He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ . . . to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will."⁹⁸ We ask insistently for this loving plan to be fully realized on earth as it is already in heaven.

2824 In Christ, and through his human will, the will of the Father has been perfectly fulfilled once for all. Jesus said on entering into this world: "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God."⁹⁹ Only Jesus can say: "I always do what is pleasing to him."¹⁰⁰ In the prayer of his agony, he consents totally to this will: "not my will, but yours be done."¹⁰¹ For this reason Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."¹⁰² "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."¹⁰³

2825 "Although he was a Son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered."¹⁰⁴ How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience - we who in him have become children of adoption. We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son's, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.¹⁰⁵

In committing ourselves to [Christ], we can become one spirit with him, and thereby accomplish his will, in such wise that it will be perfect on earth as it is in heaven.¹⁰⁶

Consider how Jesus Christ] teaches us to be humble, by making us see that our virtue does not depend on our work alone but on grace from on high. He commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say "thy will be done in me or in us," but "on earth," the whole earth, so that error may be banished from

it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from heaven.¹⁰⁷

2826 By prayer we can discern "what is the will of God" and obtain the endurance to do it.¹⁰⁸ Jesus teaches us that one enters the kingdom of heaven not by speaking words, but by doing "the will of my Father in heaven."¹⁰⁹

2827 "If any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him."¹¹⁰ Such is the power of the Church's prayer in the name of her Lord, above all in the Eucharist. Her prayer is also a communion of intercession with the all-holy Mother of God¹¹¹ and all the saints who have been pleasing to the Lord because they willed his will alone:

It would not be inconsistent with the truth to understand the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," to mean: "in the Church as in our Lord Jesus Christ himself"; or "in the Bride who has been betrothed, just as in the Bridegroom who has accomplished the will of the Father."¹¹²

III. TO CHOOSE IN ACCORD WITH CONSCIENCE

1786 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1787 Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult. But he must always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law.

1788 To this purpose, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times assisted by the virtue of prudence, by the advice of competent people, and by the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

1789 Some rules apply in every case:

- One may never do evil so that good may result from it;
- the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."⁵⁶
- charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbor and his conscience: "Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience . . . you sin against Christ."⁵⁷ Therefore "it is right not to . . . do anything that makes your brother stumble."⁵⁸

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI):

For man, the will of God is not a foreign force of exterior origin, but the actual orientation of his own being. Thus the revelation of God's will is the revelation of what our own being truly wishes - it is a gift. So we should learn anew to be grateful that in the word of God the will of God and the meaning of our own existence have been communicated to us. God's presence in the word and his presence in the Eucharist belong together, inseparable. The eucharistic Lord is himself the living Word. Only if we are living in the sphere of God's Word can we properly comprehend and properly receive the gift of the Eucharist. (*God is Near us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 104-105.)