

Walking With God *Life*



Ch VIII

It is said that your entire life passes before your eyes for judgment.

Well, it seems to me that every time that I pick up my Rosary my life is passing before me. No matter how hard I try to concentrate on the Mysteries of the Rosary, I am drawn into my past life. I see the good times, and the not so good times, and imagine how I could have managed to make a more productive life, with the freedom that we all have from God. In our country, the United States of America, we all say that we value freedom, but what is freedom? Freedom is not the permission to do anything that I want to do. It is our God given ability to recognize our part in God's design of His Creation, and then to take the action to succeed. Of course we can also take action to satisfy our own pleasures and desires that might be contrary to the good, and the manner for which God wills of His creation. The question for me is always , “how do I work in God's Will?”

before you die, passes before your

Well, it seems to



When I was about 7 years old, my parents gave me a bicycle for my birthday. This, to me, was the symbol of my freedom. I could now travel and explore my neighborhood more effectively. It was wonderful, as I rode with the wind rushing through my hair. Up and down the hills and through the neighborhoods by our house, allowed me independence and escape from the everyday life of an introvert. Of course, this didn't give me ultimate satisfaction, I wanted more freedom.

In my late teen years, after joining the Navy, I purchased a 1957 Chevy. I thought, this is the ultimate in freedom. Of course my freedom was tempered by the Navy, but when time permitted, driving that car was exhilarating for me. The Navy itself had given me independence, of a sort,

at least from my parents. I guess that is what I was looking for when I joined. This independence had come with a revelation, I may have gained freedom from my family but only in exchange for the discipline and requirements of military life. Personal freedom is relegated to the team effort. Only then will a ship's crew become effective. Resistance to the team effort was natural to a man who always was concerned about his own needs and desires. It took me three years to begin to realize that everything happening around me was not directed at me personally. It has always been a difficult lesson to learn.

Where was God in all these choices for freedom? Where is God when war is declared? Where is God when forest fires are engulfing the countryside? Where is God when earthquakes destroy innocent people? What good is freedom when all it brings is pain. God, in His justice has made us responsible for the freedom He grants us. When we make decisions to gain a position or advantage, or personal wealth, it is not evil in itself, but when it takes advantage of another or causes another person hardship, we are responsible and will answer for it. We have the choice and, will ultimately suffer the consequence, either in this life or in the next. As for the innocent person disadvantaged by my action, now I have the opportunity to be charitable towards them. That is not my choice. The innocent person also has the choice to accept the help offered and to forgive the offense. He will also answer for his own choice. All of humanity is tied together in this great network of choices. The good choices will bring us closer to God in heaven, while other choices will give us what we are looking for outside of heaven.



This has led me to the question, “What is a just war?” Why doesn't God stop war when we pray for it to stop? To do so He would necessarily, be taking away someone's freedom. He will always allow us the freedom to do good, or not to do good. Good would be my choice, were I in charge. Whoever is in charge, the politicians or other military leaders, they have the responsibility to make that choice. In my own life, when the school yard bully attacks an innocent child, do I have the responsibility to try to prevent the attack? If so, by what means? I cannot be motivated by vengeance but only by the desire to protect the innocent. The way I do this cannot exceed the threat perceived by the victim. I cannot shoot the aggressor when he is taunting the innocent by smashing his

lunch bag. These rules apply to the just war as well. I must stand to protect the innocent but cannot use aggravated aggression beyond the scope of the threat by the aggressor. Who then, determines what that threat is?

The examples in Vietnam are relevant. Even though the USA entered the conflict with honorable intentions, there were those who said the country had no business there. If I have the means to affect an outcome for the good benefit of the people, how can I let them be overcome by a regime that would remove from their grasp, any rights of humanity and subjugate them to a form of slavery or death? The US did not bomb the population centers of the north or completely destroy their infrastructure. The objective was to protect the people of the south and prevent a military incursion from the North, not to destroy the North. Perhaps our ill founded trust in the government of the south made it impossible to achieve success in these endeavors. Approaching war with vengeance never leads to complete success; the winner will necessarily impose his will on the people to his own advantage.

How can freedom be achieved within a society? God has given us an example in Jesus, in His teachings through parables and His Sermon On The Mount. There have been attempts in the human story to put the philosophy of Jesus into practice. None have been perfected. In our own experience, the US Declaration of Independence outlined the hope for freedom within society. It is rooted in the necessary acknowledgment of God as the source of all freedom and liberty. Again, a significant group within society rejects this premise, and therefore, we do not see "Utopia", or heavenly freedom here on earth. We are not new to this failure. The Old Testament of the Bible is full of the rejection of God and its consequences. In secular human history the rise and fall of civilizations all display a lack



of the acknowledgment of the primacy of God in the world, and in human society. In my own walk with God, How many times do I place God on a shelf while I pursue my own pleasures, until I need His help, beyond my own capabilities? It seems that I am constantly seeking His forgiveness for treating Him with such a lackadaisical attitude. This question of freedom and the permissive will of God will not be answered during our human existence but

we must strive to seek the answer because in doing so is to seek God himself who is the source and end of all knowledge. Why then, with all this goodness that God displays in his gift of freedom for us all, why does He allow bad things to happen?

This is the ultimate question asked by countless people who seek friendship with Him. It is not fair. Well, was it fair for Jesus to be scourged, crowned with thorns and crucified on the cross like a criminal? What had He done? He had done nothing but display kindness and love for everyone who came into contact with Him. After all, He is God, and created all of those who did that to Him. They are ultimately answerable to Him for their own lives and what they do with them. I am also responsible to Him for my own life and how I conduct myself, and I pray for forgiveness every day, for not living up to His standards.

Heaven, to become one with the Communion of Saints, is our destiny according to God's plan. What then is our plan? We spend our entire earthly existence making that decision. God, in His mercy, provides the freedom where we all will decide whether our destiny will be with Him or not. If not, what then? There are two spiritual realms from which we can aspire. The realm of The Creator in Heaven and the purpose for which He made us, or the realm of the rebellious deceiver who will never be satisfied in Hell.



The essence of God is Love and He intends for us to experience His Love. When we resist, evil enters our life. A whole lifetime is available to us with which we can come to love God. May I take advantage of this gift of life.