



Why does God allow evil if He is infinitely good? Why do some of our prayers seem unanswered? How can God desire the salvation of all and yet allow some people to be lost? What does it truly mean to say, “Thy will be done”?

These questions have accompanied Christians since apostolic times. And behind all of them lies one of the deepest, most beautiful, and often least understood teachings of Catholic theology: **the two wills of God**.

Understanding this doctrine is not merely an intellectual exercise. It has direct consequences for our spiritual life, our relationship with suffering, our trust in Divine Providence, and our way of interpreting the events of the world.

In an age marked by uncertainty, wars, family crises, moral confusion, and the loss of faith, rediscovering this truth can help us find peace where it seems impossible to find it.

Does God Have Two Wills?

The first thing we must clarify is that **God has only one divine will**, because God is absolutely simple and perfect.

However, theologians, especially **Saint Thomas Aquinas**, distinguish two ways in which that one divine will is manifested:

1. **The antecedent will of God.**
2. **The consequent will of God.**

This distinction does not mean that God has contradictory desires or that He changes His mind.

Rather, it is a theological tool that helps us understand how God acts in governing the universe.



The Antecedent Will: What God Desires in Itself

The antecedent will expresses what God desires considered in itself, according to His infinite goodness.

For example:

- God wills that all men be saved.
- God wills holiness.
- God wills goodness.
- God wills truth.
- God wills life.

Saint Paul expresses this clearly:

“God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(1 Timothy 2:4)

This statement is absolutely true.

God did not create hell to fill its halls. He does not delight in punishment or human suffering.

God loves every soul He has created.

Christ died for all.

Every person who is born is loved by God from all eternity.

The antecedent will reveals the merciful heart of the Father.



The Consequent Will: God Governs While Taking Our Decisions into Account

However, God does not treat human beings as robots.

He created us free.

And here the consequent will comes into play.

It considers the concrete circumstances, including the free decisions of creatures.

God wills the salvation of all, but He also wills to respect the freedom He Himself has given.

Therefore, if a person obstinately rejects grace until the end of his life, God permits the consequences of that choice.

Not because He desires that person's condemnation in itself.

Rather, because He respects created freedom.

Saint Thomas explains it masterfully:

“God wills all men to be saved according to His antecedent will, but not according to His consequent will.”

That is, God wills universal salvation, but He also wills justice.

And both belong to His perfection.



A Simple Example to Understand It

Imagine a just and good judge.

That judge desires that no citizen should end up in prison.

His initial will is that everyone should live according to the law.

But if someone commits serious crimes and rejects every possibility of repentance, the judge may justly sentence him.

Does that mean he desired that person's imprisonment from the beginning?

No.

He desired that person's rehabilitation.

Yet the reality of the choices made requires a just response.

Something similar occurs with the divine will.

The Supreme Example: The Passion of Christ

The Cross is one of the most striking examples for understanding this doctrine.

God does not will evil.

God does not will injustice.

God does not will murder.

Yet He permitted the greatest crime in history: the crucifixion of the Son of God.

Why?

Because from that evil He would bring forth an infinitely greater good.



Saint Peter preaches:

“This Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”

(Acts 2:23)

The betrayal of Judas, the hatred of the Pharisees, and the cowardice of Pilate were free and sinful acts.

God did not will those sins.

But He did will to permit them in order to accomplish the redemption of the world.

Here we find one of the most important keys to Providence:

God never wills moral evil, but He may permit it in order to obtain a greater good.

Positive Will and Permissive Will

Theologians also distinguish between:

Positive Will

That which God directly brings about.

For example:

- Creation.
- Grace.
- Miracles.
- The sanctification of souls.



Permissive Will

That which God permits without directly causing it.

For example:

- Human sins.
- Injustices.
- Persecutions.
- Many temporal sufferings.

This distinction is fundamental.

When we see evil in the world, we should not conclude that God approves of it.

He permits it.

And permitting is not the same as approving.

The Problem of Suffering

Here we arrive at one of the most painful questions for humanity.

Why does God allow suffering?

The Christian answer has never been simplistic.

Not all suffering is a punishment.

Not every illness is the consequence of a personal sin.

Not every tragedy has an immediate explanation.

Nevertheless, faith teaches us that nothing escapes Divine Providence.

Romans 8:28 states:



“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him.”

It does not say that everything is good.

It says that God can bring good out of everything.

Even out of what seems to destroy us.

The saints understood this truth profoundly.

The Saints and Acceptance of the Divine Will

The history of the Church is filled with men and women who learned to live abandoned to the will of God.

Not because they always understood His ways.

But because they trusted Him.

Saint Francis de Sales

He said:

“Nothing happens that God does not will or permit.”

Saint Teresa of Ávila

She wrote:

“Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things pass



| *away; God never changes.”*

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

He considered conformity to the divine will to be the shortest road to holiness.

They did not seek to understand everything.

They sought to trust.

Prayer and the Two Wills of God

Many people ask:

“If God already knows what will happen, why pray?”

The answer is simple.

Because God has willed that our prayers become part of His plan.

Prayer does not change God.

It changes us.

And, mysteriously, God has ordained to grant many graces precisely through our petitions.

That is why Jesus taught us to pray:

| *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

| *(Matthew 6:10)*

This is not a phrase of resignation.



It is a declaration of trust.

The Modern Danger: Wanting a God Made in Our Own Image

We live in a culture that exalts absolute autonomy.

Many people want a god who confirms their decisions.

A god who blesses any lifestyle.

A god who never contradicts their desires.

But the true God is not a projection of our preferences.

He is the Lord of the universe.

Accepting the divine will means recognizing that God knows more than we do.

And that requires humility.

The root of original sin was precisely the refusal to accept that God knew better.

Adam and Eve wanted to decide for themselves what was good and what was evil.

That same drama continues today.

The Will of God and Daily Discernment

A common question is:

“How can I know God’s will for my life?”



Catholic tradition offers several criteria.

1. It Never Contradicts Divine Law

God can never will something contrary to His commandments.

2. It Is Revealed Through the Duties of One's State in Life

A father must care for his children.

A mother must love her family.

A priest must serve the Church.

God's will is often found first in our ordinary responsibilities.

3. It Is Discovered Through Prayer

Without an interior life, it becomes difficult to hear God's voice.

4. It Is Illuminated Through Spiritual Direction

The Church has always recommended seeking prudent counsel.

5. It Is Confirmed Through Supernatural Peace

Not necessarily emotional peace, but a profound inner certainty born of trust in God.

Can God's Will Be Frustrated?

From a human perspective, it may seem so.

We see sins, wars, and apostasies.

Yet from a divine perspective, never.



Nothing can defeat God.

Nothing can surprise Him.

Nothing can destroy His ultimate plan.

Even the greatest evils are ultimately integrated into Providence.

History is not governed by chaos.

It is governed by Christ.

That is why the Book of Revelation concludes with the definitive victory of the Lamb.

The Two Wills of God and Christian Hope

Understanding this doctrine radically transforms our view of life.

It helps us understand that:

- God loves every human being.
- God desires our salvation.
- God respects our freedom.
- God can bring immense good out of great evils.
- God never abandons those who trust in Him.
- God directs history toward a glorious end.

When life seems incomprehensible, when illness strikes, when families go through crises, when we see the Church suffer, or when the world seems to be moving away from God, this truth becomes an anchor for the soul.



Conclusion: Learning to Say “Yes” to God

The great spiritual lesson of the two wills of God is not merely intellectual.

It is profoundly existential.

The decisive question is not only what God wills.

The question is:

Am I willing to trust Him even when I do not understand His ways?

The Blessed Virgin Mary offers us the perfect answer.

Faced with a plan that surpassed all human understanding, she replied:

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word.”

(Luke 1:38)

In those words we find the secret of all holiness.

The antecedent will of God reminds us how much He loves us.

The consequent will reminds us of the seriousness of our freedom.

And both teach us that human history is not a succession of accidents, but the stage upon which God, with infinite wisdom and mercy, leads His children toward eternity.

Whoever learns to live in the light of this truth discovers a liberating reality: even when we do not always understand what God is doing, we can trust completely in the One who never ceases to love, never ceases to act, and never loses control of history.