

## **OUR FREE WILL**

One of the more difficult things for our Faithful to understand is what appears to be a contradiction between God's unchanging dominion over us and the free will with which He has endowed us. We have been taught that we have free will. That is, we have the ability to choose freely. We have the freedom to make choices, which can be good or bad. That ability and our intellect set us apart from all other creatures. It is in this that God created human kind in his own image. Humans can say "no" to God. None of the other creatures can.

Why did the Almighty create us this way? It was love. He is a lover and, as in the case of all lovers, wants to be loved in return. Genuine love cannot be forced. God does not force us. Consequently, when we choose to love him by making good choices, we give him more praise than any other creature is able to do.

Yet, we know that our Creator is the Almighty God. He has the power to protect us, even from our own devices. We are encouraged to seek his assistance, as we travel into his Reign and Kingdom. He promised that assistance if asked. Yet, it will never be at the expense of our free will. If we strike a match and choose to put our finger into the flame, it will hurt. Doing so was our choice, - a stupid one, at that.

So, where does God's help come in? He can arrange circumstances in such a way as to call us to a proper response on our own. God will not protect us by making it impossible for us to put our finger into the fire. However, He can protect us by not allowing the match to light. Of course, when that happens and we do not get our way, we complain that God does not listen. In actuality, He does.

The formulation of some of the prayers that we priests and deacons have to say upset me. Proper translations are so very important. That is the reason why we will be receiving the new Roman Missal. It is important that we pray properly. After all, prayer is our dialogue with an Almighty God.

For example, there are prayers that have us asking of the Lord, "...make us love you." God does not MAKE us do anything. A better formulation would be, "Grant that we might love you." Or, "May we love you." Perhaps, even, "Help us love you." In other words, we need to ask God to arrange things in such a way that we might be prompted of our own free will to love him.

When we ask God to protect us from being hurt, we should not be asking for a miracle. What we need to ask is for God to protect us from making bad choices by putting obstacles in our way, if need be. A bad choice may not be, necessarily, immoral. Drivers often choose to take a road that is considered a shortcut, only to be confronted by a delay or even a detour. Before complaining, they ought to consider that it may have been God's way of keeping them safe. Have you ever wondered why the line you choose at a bank or toll booth always seems to turn out to be the slowest? Count your blessings!

Our Lord strives to bring our free will into conformity with his. Coming to understand how that is working out in our individual lives may well be the work of a lifetime. Our accepting God's way of doing it in our own particular case can change a life of stress into a life of peace.