

In today's First Reading, we hear one of the most often used Scripture passages:

*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

We all know that life is filled with up's and down's ... with good and bad ... with vice and virtue.

On first examination, Romans 8:28 might sound like the ramblings of an eternal optimist ... the rantings of a cheery-eyed Pollyanna.

Yet what we need to recognize here are two similar but distinct things.

When we speak theologically of God's Will, it is often classified in three ways.

The first is God's sovereign or revealed Will ... as in when we hear in the Second Letter to Timothy, that God "*wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*"

The second is what would be called God's 'permissive' Will.

In the second instance, what we are talking about is what happens in-between start and finish. God's permissive will comes into play when we speak about occurrences within the laws of nature - such as earthquakes or devastating storms ... or else when through some human agency ... something bad happens.

The third is what would be called God's 'direct' Will.

In this instance, we are talking about miracles. When God bends the laws of nature and acts outside of space and time to do something ... well ... miraculous.

And so, while God desires all to be saved, He doesn't break His own rules to interfere with our own free will. Neither does He jump in like a super-hero to stop every aspect that we would see as 'bad.'

Rather, God's Will allows "*all things [to] work for good for those who love [Him, and] are called according to [H]is purpose.*"

In other words, Romans 8:28 speaks to us of engaging the supernatural virtue of Faith in our lives. We need to do our best to discern His will through prayer and Scripture. And if we should fall short ... or - God forbid - something tragic should happen ... we need to exercise the virtue of Faith to realize that while God is not some sort of divine puppet master ... no matter how bad things may seem ... good wins in the end.

Or as a mentor of mine used to say: "God always gets the last word."

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for an increase in Faith, Hope, and Love. So that we might discern well the Will of God; and by His grace, act as best we can within His Will.