

Food for Thought

BRINGING SOMETHING GOOD OUT OF EVIL

When hard things happen in our lives and the lives of those we love, we sometimes wonder how a loving God can allow them to happen. It is one thing when a person brings trouble upon himself. We may grieve over what he is going through, but we can understand why it is happening. More challenging is when someone suffers because of the weakness or evil intentions of others. The news is filled with stories of innocent victims—a person killed by a drunk driver, ethnic strife, *etc.* When tragedies like these strike, people need care more than explanations about evil. Yet the Lord does give us answers when we are ready for them.

Here are some quotes from the Lord's Word that may help us reflect on the way the Lord brings something good out of every evil that happens to a person. This will often not be evident from our natural point of view, yet the Heavenly Doctrine tells us that:

“Nothing is therefore allowed to happen except to the end that something good may come out of it” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6489).

Readings from the Word:

When the Lord is with someone, He leads him and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring him what is good. This is Divine Providence (*Arcana Coelestia* 6303).

In every present moment the Lord foresees evil, and provides good. This He does from the first thread of life even to eternity (*Arcana Coelestia* 9296).

The evils things that are foreseen are constantly being turned towards what is good by means of the Lord's provident arrangement, since the Divine end, which has good in view, governs everything (*Arcana Coelestia* 6489).

When we say that God permits, we do not mean that He wills, but that for the sake of the goal, which is salvation, He cannot prevent (*Divine Providence* 234).

Those who trust in the Lord are constantly receiving good from Him. For whatever happens to them, whether it seems to be advantageous or not advantageous, is nevertheless good, for it serves as a means contributing to their eternal happiness (*Arcana Coelestia* 8480:1,3).

Possible Questions for Discussion

1. If the Lord can foresee evil things, why doesn't He prevent them?
2. What would happen if the Lord intervened and prevented you from making a really bad choice in your life? How would this affect your chances of going to heaven?
3. Can you think of some examples of times when the Lord brought something good out of evil?