

DAY 39



The Week in Review: Life of Surrender



By Gretchen Filz

"Sanctity, then, consists in willing all that God wills for us. Yes! Sanctity of the heart is a simple "Let it be," a simple conformity of the will with the will of God." —Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade

God never takes the easy path; He always takes the most glorious one.

Consider His plan for our redemption—the painstaking effort He took to draw forth a remnant of faithful across every age of history, and after thousands of years of preparation, sending His Son to become Incarnate into the human family, to live for thirty-three years in daily obedience to the will of His heavenly Father, through all the simple pleasures and hardships of human

life, to suffer a heart-wrenching Passion to triumph over sin—all to make it possible for us to reign with Him forever.

If God did not choose an easy path for Himself, despite His infinite power to do so, should we not expect that His painstaking work in our personal redemption story will look something like a microcosm of His work in salvation history—in His attention to every detail, leaving no part of our lives unredeemed in His pursuit of perfect charity in our souls?

Why do we then expect a carefree life, that everything we desire should happen instantly and without real effort—rather than working hard to cultivate every moment of our lives to achieve the happiest ending possible?

God wants us to be *real* co-workers in His work of redemption. It is far from easy, and certainly messy, but He gives us the grace and the means. We must, then, be an active and willing participant in order to share in the eternal glory which He's working out in our lives *now*: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12–13).

The true, life-giving happiness that God wants for us isn't found—which we now know so well—in the absence of trials. We want heaven now, but heaven is the reward of those who die to themselves in union with Christ. "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). This is the path God has chosen for our salvation, and we won't be redeemed in any other way than by carrying our own Cross in imitation of Jesus, so that His image will be made perfect in us. "Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven" (St. Rose of Lima).

Consider [Jesus] who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. ...

Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? ... Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ... he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness.

Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. (Heb 12:3-12)

A life of holy abandonment is essentially an undoing of the first act of disobedient self-will that happened in the Garden of Eden. Eve decided for herself what was good, against God's will. It was true that the fruit was good; but it wasn't good *for her* at that time. Each of us does the same when we decide for ourselves what's good for us, and we often miss the mark by choosing the wrong thing, at the wrong time, in the wrong way, in small ways and big ways throughout our lives. That is what sin is—it's "missing the mark"—choosing what we want against what God wants, turning away from His will toward our own. If we surrender ourselves to God's will, we're assured of hitting the right mark, every single time.

*The Lord is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.
The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.
The Lord watches over all who love him,*

*but all the wicked he will destroy.
My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.
—Psalm 145*

Major Takeaways from This Week:

- Every act of trustful surrender conforms our will more closely with God’s will, and is the key to conquering our fears and pains
- A life of abandonment to divine providence isn’t something we learn to do quickly; it’s a discipline, a habit, a process, a way of life
- The saints discovered happiness and contentment not by avoiding crosses, but by carrying them well, because their happiness was found in doing God’s will
- As a soul increases in trust it also increases in charity and intimacy with God, in three stages: the beginner patiently bears the Cross of Christ; the one who has advanced carries it cheerfully; the perfect soul embraces it ardently
- These three stages can also be thought of as three kinds of relationships: the love of a servant, the love of a friend, and the love of a son or daughter
- Every faithful member of the Body of Christ must follow the example of our Head, Jesus Christ, who “merited the glory of being exalted, through the lowliness of His Passion” (St. Thomas Aquinas)
- If we meditate on Mary’s acts of surrender in her joys and sufferings, it will teach us how to abandon ourselves to God’s will in the events of our own life
- To surrender our will to the will of God is to begin a new way of life in which we view all the circumstances of our lives as the arrangements of divine providence
- Those who unite their will with the divine will become like other Christs; He then opens to us joy, peace, charity, and more divine treasures of His Sacred Heart
- If we entrust ourselves to our Blessed Mother, she will teach us how to more perfectly conform our will to the divine will, as she did throughout her life

Thought for Today:

The soul who recognizes the will of God in every event of life discovers the hidden majesty and authority of Christ the King.

The soul, enlightened by faith, judges of things in a very different way to those who, having only the standard of the senses by which to measure them, ignore the inestimable treasure they contain.

He who knows that a certain person in disguise is the king, behaves towards him very differently to another who, only perceiving an ordinary man, treats him accordingly. In the same way the soul that recognises the will of God in every smallest event, and also in those that are most distressing and direful, receives all with an equal joy, pleasure and respect. It throws open all its doors to receive with honour what others fear and fly from with horror. The outward appearance may be mean and contemptible, but beneath this abject garb the heart

discovers and honours the majesty of the king. ...

Pursue then without ceasing, ye faithful souls, this beloved Spouse who with giant strides passes from one extremity of the heavens to the other. If you be content and untiring nothing will have power to hide Him from you. He moves above the smallest blades of grass as above the mighty cedar. The grains of sand are under His feet as well as the huge mountains. Wherever you may turn, there you will find His footprints, and in following them perseveringly you will find Him wherever you may be.

Oh! what delightful peace we enjoy when we have learnt by faith to find God thus in all His creatures! Then is darkness luminous, and bitterness sweet. Faith, while showing us things as they are, changes their ugliness into beauty, and their malice into virtue. ...

The will of God has nothing but sweetness, favours and treasures for submissive souls; it is impossible to repose too much confidence in it, nor to abandon oneself to it too utterly. It always acts for, and desires that which is most conducive to our perfection, provided we allow it to act.

—Fr. Jean Pierre de Caussade

Put It into Practice: Developing the Interior Life

Our Lord knows that it's difficult for us to make interior acts of surrender, day in and day out—to continually die to our own will so that we can embrace His. This is why He made our holy Catholic faith incarnational and tangible, providing us with holy objects—sacramentals—on which we can lay our physical eyes and hold in our physical hands, to encourage us as we endure the obscurity of faith that's so integral to a life of holy abandonment.

These holy reminders are a great help to persevere in acts of faith, hope, and charity. A crucifix on the wall, images of Mary and the saints at our work desks, a rosary in our pocket—these things constantly remind us what our life is meant to be about: trusting God in every moment. Surround yourself with them, and use them daily.

With the aid of holy images of our faith, we can receive the physical reminders and interior inspiration we need in our moments of trial: for example, a knowing glance at an image of Our Lady or a touch of the beads of her Holy Rosary will give us, in a flash, the courage we need to take the difficult step of trust.

Coming in Day 40 . . .

Weekly Meditation: Life of Surrender

