

*by St. Claude de la Columbière*

## **TRUSTFUL SURRENDER TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

### **1. CONSOLING TRUTHS**

It is one of the most firmly established and most consoling of the truths that have been revealed to us that (apart from sin) *nothing happens to us in life unless God wills it so*. Wealth and poverty alike come from Him. If we fall ill, God is the cause of our illness; if we get well, our recovery is due to God. We owe our lives entirely to Him, and when death comes to put an end to life, His will be the hand that deals the blow.

But should we attribute it to God when we are unjustly persecuted? Yes, He is the only person you can charge with the wrong you suffer. He is not the cause of the sin the person commits by ill-treating you, but He is the cause of the suffering that person inflicts on you while sinning.

God did not inspire your enemy with the will to harm you, but He gave him the power to do so. If you receive a wound, do not doubt but that it is God Himself who has wounded you. If all living creatures were to league themselves against you, unless the Creator wished it and joined with them and gave them the strength and means to carry out their purpose, they would never succeed. *You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above*, the Savior of the world said to Pilate. We can say the same to demons and men, to the brute beasts and to whatever exists -- You would not be able to disturb me or harm me as you do unless God had ordered it so. You are sent by Him, you are given the power by Him to tempt me and to make me suffer. *You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above*.

If from time to time we meditated seriously on this truth of our faith it would be enough to stifle all complaint in whatever loss or misfortune we suffer. What I have the Lord gave me, it has been taken away by Him. It is not a lawsuit or a thief that has ruined you or a certain person that has slandered you; if your child dies it is not by accident or wrong treatment, but because God, to whom all belongs, has not wished you to keep it longer.

### ***Trust in God's Wisdom***

It is then a truth of our faith that God is responsible for all the happenings we complain of in the world and, furthermore, we cannot doubt that all the misfortunes God sends us have a very useful purpose. We cannot doubt it without imputing to God a lack of judgment in deciding what is advantageous for us.

It is usually the case that other people can see better than we can ourselves what is good for us. It would be foolish to think that we can see better than God Himself, who is not subject to any of the passions that blind us, knows the future and can foresee all events and the consequences of every action. Experience shows that even the gravest misfortunes can have good results and the greatest successes end in disaster. A rule also that God usually follows is to attain His ends by ways that are the opposite to those human prudence would normally choose.

In our ignorance of what the future holds, how can we be so bold as to question what comes about by God's permission? Surely it is reasonable to think that our complaints are groundless and that instead of complaining we ought to be thanking Providence. Joseph was sold into slavery and thrown into prison. If he had felt aggrieved at these apparent misfortunes, he would really have been feeling aggrieved at his happiness for they were the steps to the throne of Egypt. Saul loses his father's asses and has to go on a long vain hunt for them. But if he had felt annoyed at the great waste of time and energy it caused him, his annoyance could not have been more unreasonable as it was all a means of bringing him to the prophet who was to anoint him king of his people.

Let us imagine our confusion when we appear before God and understand the reasons why He sent us the crosses we accept so unwillingly. The death of a child will then be seen as its rescue from some great evil had it lived, separation from the woman you love the means of saving you from an unhappy marriage, a severe illness the reason for many years of life afterwards, loss of money the means of saving your soul from eternal loss. So what are we worried about? God is looking after us and yet we are full of anxiety! We trust ourselves to a doctor because we suppose he knows his business. He orders an operation which involves cutting away part of our body and we accept it. We are grateful to him and pay him a large fee because we judge he would not act as he does unless the remedy were necessary, and we must rely on his skill. Yet we are unwilling to treat God in the same way! It looks as if we do not trust His wisdom and are afraid He cannot do His job properly. We allow ourselves to be operated on by a man who may easily make a mistake -- a mistake which may cost us our life -- and protest when God sets to work on us.

If we could see all He sees we would unhesitatingly wish all He wishes. We would beg Him on bended knees for those afflictions we now ask Him to spare us. To all of us He addresses the words spoken to the Sons of Zebedee: *You know not what you ask -- O blind of heart, your ignorance saddens me. Let me manage your affairs and look after your interests. I know what you need better than you do yourselves. If I paid heed to what you think you need you would have been hopelessly ruined long ago.*

### ***When God sends us trials***

If you would be convinced that in all He allows and in all that happens to you God has no other end in view but your real advantage and your eternal happiness, reflect a moment on all He has done for you; you are now suffering, but remember that the author of this suffering is He who chose to spend His life suffering to save you from everlasting

suffering, whose angel is always at your side guarding your body and soul by His order, who sacrifices Himself daily on the altar to expiate your sins and appease His Father's anger, who comes lovingly to you in the Holy Eucharist and whose greatest pleasure is to be united to you. We must be very ungrateful to mistrust Him after He has shown such proofs of His love and to imagine that He can intend us harm. But, you will say, this blow is a cruel one, He strikes too hard. What have you to fear from a hand that was pierced and nailed to the cross for you? -- The path I have to tread is full of thorns. If there is no other to reach heaven by, do you prefer to perish forever rather than to suffer for a time? Is it not the same path He trod before you out of love for you? Is there a thorn in it that He has not reddened with His own blood? -- The chalice He offers you is a bitter one. But remember that it is your Redeemer who offers it. Loving you as He does, could He bring Himself to treat you so severely if the need were not urgent, the gain not worthwhile? Can we dare to refuse the chalice He has prepared for us Himself?

Reflect well on this. It should be enough to make us accept and love whatever trials He intends we should suffer. Moreover it is the certain means of securing our happiness in this life quite apart from the next.

### ***Loving recourse to God***

Let us now suppose that by these reflections and the help of God you have freed yourself from all worldly desires and can now say to yourself: All is vanity and nothing can satisfy my heart. The things that I so earnestly desire may not be at all the things that will bring me happiness. It is difficult for me to distinguish what is good from what is harmful because good and evil are nearly always mixed, and what was good for yesterday may be bad for today. My desires are only a source of worry and my efforts to realize them mostly end in failure. After all, the will of God is bound to prevail in the end. Nothing can be done without His command, and He cannot ordain anything that is not for my good.

After this let us suppose that you turn to God with blind trust and surrender yourself unconditionally and unreservedly to Him, entirely resolved to put aside your own hopes and fears; in short, determined to wish nothing except what He wishes and to wish all that He wishes. From this moment you will acquire perfect liberty and will never again be able to feel troubled or uneasy, and there is no power on earth capable of doing you violence or giving you a moment's unrest.

You may object that a person on whom both good and evil make the same impression is a pure fiction. It is nothing of the kind. I know people who are just as happy if they are sick or if they are well, if they are badly off or they are well off. I know some who even prefer illness and poverty to health and riches.

Moreover it is all the more remarkable that the more we submit to God's will, the more He tries to meet our wishes. It would seem that as soon as we make it our sole aim to obey Him, He on His part does His best to try and please us. Not only does He answer our prayers but He even forestalls them by granting the very desires we have

endeavored to stifle in our hearts in order to please Him, and granting them in a measure we had never imagined.

Finally, the happiness of the person whose will is entirely submitted to God's is constant, unchangeable and endless. No fear comes to disturb it for no accident can destroy it. He is like a man seated on a rock in the middle of the ocean who looks on the fury of the waves without dismay and can amuse himself watching and counting them as they roar and break at his feet. Whether the sea is calm or rough, whichever way the waves are carried by the wind is a matter of indifference to him, for the place where he is is firm and unshakeable.

That is the reason for the peaceful and untroubled expression we find on the faces of those who have dedicated themselves to God.

### ***Practice of trustful surrender***

It remains to be seen how we can attain to this happy state. One sure way to lead us to it is the frequent practice of the virtue of submission. But as the opportunities for practicing it in a big way come rather seldom, we must take advantage of the small ones which occur daily, and which will soon put us in a position to face the greater trials with equanimity when the time comes. There is no one who does not experience a hundred small annoyances every day, caused either by our own carelessness or inattention, or by the inconsideration or spite of other people, or by pure accident. Our whole lives are made up of incidents of this kind, occurring ceaselessly from one minute to another and producing a host of involuntary feelings of dislike and aversion, envy, fear and impatience to trouble the serenity of our minds. We let an incautious word slip out and wish we had not said it; someone says something we find offensive; we have to wait a long time to be served when we are in a hurry; we are irritated by a child's boisterousness; a boring acquaintance buttonholes us in the street; a car splashes us with mud; the weather spoils our outing; our work is not going as well as we would wish; a tool breaks at a critical moment; we get our clothes torn or stained -- these are not occasions for practicing heroic virtue but they can be a means of acquiring it if we wish. If we were careful to offer all these petty annoyances to God and accept them as being ordered by His providence we would soon be in a position to support the greatest misfortunes that can happen to us, besides at the same time insensibly drawing close to intimate union with God.

To this exercise -- so easy and yet so useful for us and pleasing to God -- another may be added. Every morning as soon as you get up think of all the most disagreeable things that could happen to you during the day. Your house might be burnt down, you might lose your job or all your savings, or be run over, or sudden death might come to you or to a person you love. Accept these misfortunes should it please God to allow them; compel your will to agree to the sacrifice and give yourself no rest until you really feel prepared to wish or not to wish all that God may wish or not wish.

Finally, if some great misfortune should actually happen, instead of wasting time in complaint or self-pity, go throw yourself at once at the feet of your Savior and implore His grace to bear your trial with fortitude and patience. A man who has been badly wounded does not, if he is wise, chase after his assailant, but makes straight for a doctor who may save his life. Even if you wanted to confront the person responsible for your misfortune, it would still be to God you would have to go, for there can be no other cause of it than He.

So go to God, but go at once, go there and then. Let this be your first thought. Go and report to Him what He has done to you. Kiss the hands of God crucified for you, the hands that have struck you and caused you to suffer. Repeat over and over again to Him His own words to His Father while He was suffering: *Not my will but thine be done*. In all that Thou wishest of me, today and for always, in heaven and on earth, let Thy will be done, but let it be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

## **2. ADVERSITY IS USEFUL FOR THE JUST AND NECESSARY FOR SINNERS**

Imagine the anguish and tears of a mother who is present at a painful operation her child has to undergo. Can anyone doubt on seeing her that she consents to allow the child to suffer only because she expects it to get well and be spared further suffering by means of this violent remedy?

Reason in the same manner when adversity befalls you. You complain that you are ill-treated, insulted, slandered, robbed. Your Redeemer (the name is a tenderer one than that of father or mother), your Redeemer is a witness to all you are suffering. He who loves you and has emphatically declared that whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye, nevertheless allows you to be stricken though He could easily prevent it. Do you hesitate to believe that this passing trial is necessary for the health of your soul?

Even if the Holy Spirit had not called blessed those who suffer, if every page of Scripture did not proclaim aloud the necessity of adversity, if we did not see that suffering is the normal destiny of those who are friends of God, we should still be convinced that it is of untold advantage to us. It is enough to know that the God who chose to suffer all the most horrible tortures the rage of man can invent rather than see us condemned to the slightest pain in the next life is the same God who prepares and offers us the chalice of bitterness we must drink in this world. A God who has so suffered to prevent us from suffering would not make us suffer today to give Himself cruel and pointless pleasure.

### ***We must have trust in Providence***

When I see a Christian grief-stricken at the trials God sends him I say to myself: Here is a man who is grieved at his own happiness. He is asking God to be delivered from something he ought to be thanking Him for. I am quite sure that nothing more

advantageous could happen to him than what causes him so much grief. I have a hundred unanswerable reasons for saying so. But if I could read into the future and see the happy outcome of his present misfortune, how greatly strengthened I would be in my judgment! If we could discover the designs of Providence it is certain we would ardently long for the evils we are now so unwilling to suffer. We would rush forward to accept them with the utmost gratitude if we had a little faith and realized how much God loves us and has our interests at heart.

What profit can come to me from this illness which ties me down and obliges me to give up all the good I was doing, you may ask. What advantage can I expect from this ruin of my life which leaves me desperate and hopeless? It is true that sudden great misfortune at the moment it comes may appear to overwhelm you and not allow you the opportunity there and then of profiting by it. But wait a while and you will see that by it God is preparing you to receive the greatest marks of His favor. But for this accident you would not have perhaps become less good than you are, but you would not have become holy. Isn't it true that since you have been trying to lead a good Christian life there has been something you have been unwilling to surrender to God? Some worldly ambition, some pride in your attainments, some indulgence of the body, some blameworthy habit, some company that is the occasion of sin for you? It was only this final step that prevented you from attaining the perfect freedom of the love of God. It wasn't really very much, but you could not bring yourself to make this last sacrifice. It wasn't very much, but there is nothing harder for a Christian than to break the last tie that binds him to the world or to his own self. He knows he ought to do it, and until he does it there is something wrong with his life. But the very thought of the remedy terrifies him, for the malady has taken such a hold on him that it cannot be cured without the help of a serious and painful operation. So it was necessary to take you unawares, to cut deep into the flesh with skilful hand when you were least expecting it and remove the ulcer concealed within, or otherwise you would never be well. The misfortune which has befallen you will soon do what all your exercises of piety would never have been able to do.

### ***Unexpected advantages from our trials***

If the consequence of your adversity is that which was intended by God, if it turns you aside completely from creatures to give yourself unreservedly to your Creator, I am sure that your thanks to Him for having afflicted you will be greater than your prayers were to remove the affliction. In comparison with this misfortune all the other benefits you have received from Him will appear to have been very slight favors indeed. You have always regarded the temporal blessings He has hitherto showered on you and your family as the effects of His goodness towards you, but now you will see clearly and realize to the depths of your being that He has never loved you so much as when He took away all that He gave you for your prosperity, and that if He was generous in giving you a family, a good position, an income and good health, He has been over-generous in taking them all away.

I am not referring to the merit we acquire by the virtue of patience. Generally speaking, one day of adversity can be of more profit to us for our eternal salvation than years of untroubled living, whatever good use we make of the time.

It is common knowledge that prosperity has the effect of softening us. When a man is materially well off and content with his state, it is a great deal if he takes the trouble to think of God two or three times a day. His mind is so pleasantly occupied with his worldly affairs that it is easy for him to forget all the rest. Adversity on the other hand leads us as if naturally to raise our eyes to Heaven to seek consolation in our distress. Certainly God can be glorified whatever condition we are in, and the life of a Christian who serves Him when fortune is favorable is most pleasing to Him. But can he please Him as much as the man who blesses Him while he is suffering? It cannot be doubted that a man who enjoys good health, position, wealth and the world's esteem, if he uses his advantages as he ought, attributing them to God and thanking Him for them, by doing so glorifies his Maker and leads a Christian life. But if Providence takes away what he has and strikes him down, and in the midst of his reverses he continues to express the same sentiments, returning the same thanks and obeying his Lord with the same promptness and submission as he did formerly, it is then that he proclaims the glory of God and the efficacy of His grace in the most convincing and striking manner.

### ***Opportunities for acquiring merit and saving our souls***

Judge then what recompense those persons will receive from Christ who have followed Him along the way of His Cross. On the judgment day we shall understand how much God has loved us by giving us the opportunities to merit so rich a reward. Then we shall reproach ourselves for complaining at what was meant to increase our happiness, for grieving when we should have been rejoicing, for doubting God's goodness when He was giving us concrete evidence of it. If such will be our feelings one day, why not anticipate them now? Why not bless God here and now for something we shall be thanking Him for everlastingly in heaven?

It is clear from this that whatever the manner of our life we should always accept adversity joyfully. If we are leading a good life adversity purifies us, makes us better and enables us to acquire greater merit. If our life is sinful it serves to bring us to repentance and obliges us to become good.

### **3. RECOURSE TO PRAYER**

It is a strange fact that though Christ repeatedly and solemnly promised to answer our prayers, most Christians are continually complaining that He does not do so. We cannot account for this by saying that the reason is because of the kind of things we ask for, since He included everything in His promise -- *All things whatsoever you shall ask*. Nor can we attribute it to the unworthiness of those who ask, for His promise extended to

everybody without exception -- *Whoever asks shall receive*. Why is it then that so many prayers remain unanswered? Can it be that as most people are never satisfied, they make such excessive and impatient demands on God that they tire and annoy Him by their importunity? The case is just the opposite. The only reason why we obtain so little from God is because we ask for so little and we are not insistent enough.

Christ promised on behalf of His Father that He would give us *everything*, even the very smallest things. But He laid down an order to be observed in all that we ask, and if we do not obey this rule we are unlikely to obtain anything. He tells us in St. Matthew: *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be given to you besides*.

### ***To obtain what we want***

We are not forbidden to wish for money, material well-being and whatever is necessary to maintain us in our position in life, but we must wish for these things in their proper order. If we want our desires in this respect to be met without fail we must first of all ask for the larger things, so that while granting them He may also add the smaller ones.

We can take an example from the case of Solomon. God gave him the choice of whatever he desired and he asked for wisdom, which was needful for him to carry out his kingly duties. He did not ask for riches or glory, judging that if God gave him such an opportunity he ought to make use of it to obtain the greatest advantage. His prudence gained for him both what he asked for and what he did not ask for. *Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life or riches . . . behold I have done for thee according to thy words --I will willingly grant you wisdom because you have asked me for it, but I will give you long life, honor and riches as well because you did not ask for any of them -- Yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask, to wit, riches and glory*.

If then this is the order God observes in the distribution of His benefits, we must not be surprised if our prayers have so far been unsuccessful. I confess that I am often moved to pity when I see the eagerness of some people in giving alms, making vows of pilgrimage and fasting, or having Masses said for the success of their temporal affairs. I am afraid the prayers they say and get said are of little use. They should make their offerings and vow their pilgrimages to obtain from God the amendment of their lives, the gift of Christian patience, contempt for the things of the world and detachment from creatures. Then afterwards they could pray for return of health or success in business. God would then answer these prayers, or rather He would anticipate them; it would be enough to know their desires for Him to fulfil them.

Until we have obtained these first graces, anything else may be harmful to us and, in fact, usually is so. That is the reason why we are refused. We murmur and accuse God of not keeping His promises. But our God is a Father of kindness who prefers to put up with our complaints and criticisms rather than stop them by gifts which would be fatal to us.

### ***To be delivered from evil***

What has been said of benefits can also be said of the ills from which we wish to be delivered. I do not desire wealth, a person will say, but I would be satisfied with not having to suffer hardship. I leave fame and reputation to those who want it, but I would like at least not to be an object of scorn. I can do without pleasures, but I cannot support pain; I have prayed and begged God to lessen it but He will not hear me. It is not surprising. You have secret ills far greater than the ills you complain of, but you do not ask Him to deliver you from them. If for this purpose you had said half the prayers you have said to be healed from your outward ills, God would have delivered you from both a long time since. Poverty serves to keep you humble while your nature is proud, the scorn of the world to free you from your attachment to it, illness to keep you from the pleasure-seeking which would be your ruin. It would be hating you, not loving you, to take away your cross before giving you the virtues you lack. If God found some desire in you for these virtues He would give you them without delay, and it would be unnecessary for you to ask for the other things.

### ***We do not ask enough***

It is clear then that we do not receive anything because we do not ask enough. God could not give us little, He could not restrict His liberality to small things without doing us grave harm. Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that we offend God if we ask for temporal benefits or to be freed from misfortune. Obviously prayers of this kind can rightly be addressed to Him by making the condition that they are not contrary to His glory or our eternal salvation. But as it is hardly likely that it would redound to His glory for Him to answer them, or to our advantage to have them answered if our wishes end there, it must be repeated that as long as we are content with little we run the risk of obtaining nothing.

Let me show you a good way to ask for happiness even in this world. It is a way that will oblige God to listen to you. Say to him earnestly: Either give me so much money that my heart will be satisfied, or inspire me with such contempt for it that I no longer want it.

Either free me from poverty, or make it so pleasant for me that I would not exchange it for all the wealth in the world. Either take away my suffering, or -- which would be to your greater glory -- change it into delight for me, and instead of causing me affliction, let it become a source of joy. You can take away the burden of my cross, or you can leave it with me without my feeling its weight. You can extinguish the fire that burns me, or you can let it burn in such a way that it refreshes me as it did the three youths in the fiery furnace. I ask you for either one thing or the other. What does it matter in what way I am happy? If I am happy through the possession of worldly goods, it is you I

have to thank. If I am happy when deprived of them, it gives you greater glory and my thanks are all the greater.

This is the kind of prayer worthy of being offered to God by a true Christian. When you pray in this way, do you know what the effect of your prayers will be? First, you will be satisfied whatever happens; and what else do those who most desire this world's goods want except to be satisfied? Secondly, you will not only obtain without fail one of the two things you have asked for but, as a rule, you will obtain both of them. God will give you the enjoyment of wealth, and so that you may possess it without the danger of becoming attached to it, He will inspire you at the same time with contempt for it. He will put an end to your sufferings and even more He will leave you with a desire for them which will give you all the merit of patience without having to suffer. In a word He will make you happy here and now, and lest your happiness should do you harm, He will let you know and feel the emptiness of it. Can one ask for anything better? But if such a great blessing is well worth being asked for, remember that still more is it worth being asked for with insistence. For the reason why we obtain little is not only because we ask for little but still more because, whether we ask a little or we ask a lot, we do not ask often enough.

### ***Perseverance in Prayer***

If you want all your prayers to be answered without fail and oblige God to meet all your wishes, the first thing is never to stop praying. Those who get tired after praying for a time are lacking in either humility or confidence, and so do not deserve to be heard. You would think that they expected their requests to be obeyed at once as if they were orders. Surely we know that God resists the proud and shows His favors to the humble. Won't our pride allow us to ask more than once for the same thing? It shows very little trust in God's goodness to give up so soon and take a delay for an absolute refusal.

Once we have really understood just how far God's goodness extends we can never believe that we have been refused or that He wishes to deprive us of hope. Rather, the more He makes us keep on asking for something we want, the more confident we should feel that we shall eventually obtain it. We can begin to doubt that our prayer has been heard only when we notice we have stopped praying. If after a year we find that our prayer is as fervent as it was at the beginning, then we need not doubt about the success of our efforts, and instead of losing courage after so long a delay, we should rejoice because we can be certain that our desires will be all the more fully satisfied for the length of time we have prayed. If our first attempts had been quite useless we would not have repeated them so often and we would have lost hope; but as we have kept on in spite of this, there is good reason to believe we shall be liberally rewarded.

In fact it took St. Monica sixteen years to obtain the conversion of Augustine, but the conversion was entire and far beyond what she had prayed for. Her desire was that her son's incontinence might be checked by marriage, and instead she had the joy of seeing him embrace a life of holy chastity. She had only wanted him to be baptized and become a Christian, and she saw him a bishop. She asked God to turn him aside from heresy,

and God made him a pillar of the Church and its champion against heretics. Think what would have happened had she given up hope after a couple of years, after ten or twelve years, when her prayers appeared to obtain no result and her son grew worse instead of better, adding avarice and ambition to the wildness of his life and sinking further and further into error. She would have wronged her son, thrown away her own happiness, and deprived the world of one of the greatest Christian thinkers.

### ***Obstinate Trust***

As a final word I address myself to those faithful souls kneeling in prayer before the altar and asking God for the graces He is so pleased to hear us asking for. You who are happy that God has shown you the vanity of the world, you who groan under the yoke of your passions and beg to be delivered from them, you who burn with desire to love God and serve Him as He would be served, you who intercede with God for the sake of one who is dear to you, do not grow weary of asking, be steadfast and tireless in your demands. If you are refused today, tomorrow you will obtain everything; if this year brings nothing, the next will bring you abundance. Never think your efforts are wasted. Your every word is numbered and what you receive will be in the measure of the time you have spent asking. Your treasure is piling up and suddenly one day it will overflow to an extent beyond your dreams.

Consider the workings of Divine Providence and think that the refusal you meet with now is only God's stratagem to increase your fervor. Remember how He acted towards the Canaanite woman, treating her harshly and refusing to see or listen to her. He seemed to be irritated by her importunity, but in reality He admired it and was delighted with her trust and humility, and for that reason He repulsed her. With what tenderness does He repulse those whom He most wishes to be indulgent to, hiding His clemency under the mask of cruelty! Take care not to be deceived by it. The more He seems to be unwilling, the more you must insist.

Do as the woman of Canaan, use against Him the very arguments He may have for refusing you. It is true that to hear me, you should say to Him, would be to give the bread of the children to dogs. I do not deserve the grace I ask, but I do not ask You to give me what I deserve; I ask it through the merits of my Redeemer. You ought to think more of Your promises than of my unworthiness, and You will be unjust to Yourself if You give me only what I deserve. If I were worthier of Your benefits it would be less to Your glory to give me them. It is unjust to grant favors to a sinner, but I do not appeal to Your justice but to Your mercy.

Do not lose courage when you have begun so well to struggle with God. Do not give Him a moment's rest. He loves the violence of your attack and wants to be overcome by you. Make importunity your watchword, let persistence be a miracle in you. Compel God to throw off the mask and say to you with admiration '*Great is thy faith, be it done as thou wishest.* I can no longer resist you, you shall have what you desire, in this life and the next.'

# EXERCISE IN CONFORMITY TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The practice of this exercise is of great importance because of the advantages it always confers on those who undertake it devoutly.

## 1. ACT OF FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

First make an act of faith in God's Providence. Meditate well on the truth that God's continual care extends not only to all things in general but to each particular thing, and especially to ourselves, our souls and bodies, and everything that concerns us. Nothing escapes His loving watchfulness -- our work, our daily needs, our health as well as our infirmities, our life and our death, even the smallest hair on our head which cannot fall without His permission.

After this act of faith, make an act of hope. Excite in yourself a firm trust that God will provide for all you need, will direct and protect you with more than a father's love and vigilance, and guide you in such a way that, whatever happens, if you submit to Him everything will turn out for your happiness and advantage, even the things that may seem quite the opposite.

To these two an act of charity should be added. Show your deep love and attachment for Divine Providence as a child shows for its mother by taking refuge in her arms. Say how highly you esteem all His intentions, however hidden they may be, in the knowledge that they spring from an infinite wisdom which cannot make a mistake and supreme goodness which can wish only the perfection of His creatures. Determine that this feeling will have a practical result in making you ready to speak out in defense of Providence whenever you hear it denied or criticized.

## 2. ACT OF OF FILIAL SUBMISSION TO PROVIDENCE

After repeating these acts several times with fervor, commit your soul lovingly to Divine Providence as a child rests and sleeps in its mother's arms. Make your own the words of David: *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for thou alone, O Lord, hast established me in hope.*<sup>1</sup> Or again in the words of the psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
Beside restful waters he leads me;  
    he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me in right paths for his  
    name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side

With your rod and your staff that give  
me courage.  
You spread the table before me in the  
sight of my foes;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
And I shall dwell in the house of the  
Lord  
For years to come.<sup>2</sup>

Filled with the joy these consoling words inspire, the soul can trustfully accept from Divine Providence whatever happens now or in the future with tranquility and peace of mind. Its happiness is that of a child who feels protected and secure. Not that it lives in idle expectation of what it needs or neglects to occupy itself with the affairs of daily life. On the contrary it does all in its power and employs all its faculties in attending to them well. But what it does it does under God's guidance and regards its own judgment as entirely subject to God's. It freely entrusts everything to His governance without expecting any other result from its actions but what is in accordance with His will.

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1. Ps. 4:9
  2. id. 22:1-6

### 3. USEFULNESS OF THIS EXERCISE

What honor and glory is given to God by the soul that acts thus!

It is a great glory for Him to have a creature so attached to His Providence, so dependent on Him, full of such firm hope and peace of mind in the expectation of what He will send. His concern for such a one is redoubled, He watches over the slightest things that are of interest to him and inspires those who are over him to act prudently; and if for any reason they try to act in a manner harmful to him, He prevents them in the hidden ways of His Providence from carrying out their designs and compels them to do only what is to his advantage.

*Thus the Lord keeps those who love him.*<sup>1</sup> If the Scriptures speak of God as having eyes, it is in order to watch over them; as having ears, to hear them; as having hands, to defend them. And those who touch them, touch the apple of His eye. *I shall carry you in my arms*, He says by the mouth of the prophet Isaias, *I shall caress you upon my knees. As one whom his mother caresses, so will I comfort you*<sup>2</sup> And in Osee: *I was like a foster father to Ephraim, I carried them in my arms.*<sup>3</sup> Long before Moses had said: *In the desert the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his child, all along your*

*journey until you arrived at this place.*<sup>4</sup> Again God says in Isaias: *You shall be nursed with the breasts of kings, and you shall know that I am the Lord your Savior and your Redeemer.*<sup>5</sup>

In the person of Noah we can find a figure of the happiness of the man who throws himself entirely upon God. While the floodgates of heaven were opened and the world was laid in ruin Noah was safe and at peace in the ark because God was guiding him. Others remained at the mercy of the waters, losing all they had, their families, their lives. Thus the man who entrusts himself to Providence, lets God be the pilot of his bark, floats tranquilly on the ocean of life in the midst of storm and tempest, while those who try to guide themselves are in continual unrest, and their only pilot being their own inconstant will, they are tossed about by sea and wind until they end in shipwreck.

Let us then trust ourselves entirely to God and His Providence and leave Him complete power to order our lives, turning to Him lovingly in every need and awaiting His help without anxiety. Leave everything to Him and He will provide us with everything, at the time and in the place and in the manner best suited. He will lead us on our way to that happiness and peace of mind for which we are destined in this life as a foretaste of the everlasting happiness we have been promised.

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1. Ps. 144:20
  2. Is. 66:12-13
  3. Osee 11:3
  4. Deut. 1:31
  5. Is. 60:16