

THE JOY OF FULL SURRENDER

PARACLETE ESSENTIALS

*The Joy of
Full Surrender*

JEAN-PIERRE DE CAUSSADE

Foreword by Michael Casey, ocsso

A REVISED TRANSLATION
of THE FRENCH CLASSIC
L'ABANDON À LA PROVIDENCE DIVINE

EDITED BY HAL M. HELMS AND ROBERT J. EDMONSON, *cj*



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FOREWORD

SOME THIRTY YEARS AGO flying from point to point in Papua New Guinea, I found myself sitting in the copilot's seat. As we buckled ourselves in, the pilot looked over at me and said laconically, "Don't touch anything." As we traversed the vast ocean of jungle green more than a mile below us, I sat like a rock with my hands on my knees, trying not to be alarmed by the flashing lights and flickering gauges, and making sure not to bump into any of the controls that were so close at hand, directly in front of me. Understanding nothing. Despite or because of my total inability to contribute anything, we arrived at our destination without incident.

This experience has been a metaphor for me of an imperative of the spiritual life. I—we—encounter these sorts of situations from time to time in the course of our journeys. We are compelled to yield complete control into the hands of God so that the divine will can work its saving wonder in us. At times like these, God's word to us is, "Don't touch anything."

I count myself blessed that, at an important juncture in my life, a wise elder introduced me to the writings of Caussade. From them I gained not only the guidance I needed to traverse a difficult terrain, but also a permanent element in my outlook on life: an appreciation of the operation of God's providence and my need to be receptive of that providence despite the lack of full understanding and the pressure of contrary desires.

The original title of Caussade's work was *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, and it is in this notion of "self-surrender" (as it is translated in the present version) that the book finds its focus. For Caussade, holiness consisted in faithfulness to God's will, however this be manifested. The greatest obstacles to this conformity are our delusions that disguise the promptings of self-will and set us in opposition to God's working in our life. We fail to understand that everything that happens in and around us needs to be interpreted as part of God's lifelong conversation with us. This means that every opportunity for action that presents itself is an invitation from God to draw closer, every burden we experience can be a means of growth, whatever suffering comes our way is a divinely chosen means of bringing us to joy and holiness.

Caussade uses the phrase "the sacrament of the present moment" to make the point that at every moment of every day we have the opportunity to do God's will as best we know it. Making this intention a priority in life is a sure means to deep inner peace, just as resistance to God's will—conscious or unconscious—is a certain source of agitation, fault-finding, and confusion.

Caussade is often categorized as belonging to the so-called Quietist movement. But, in reality, his doctrine has two interrelating parts. Alongside the passive acceptance of whatever life brings, there is an emphasis on the wholehearted performance of whatever duties are attached to one's state in life. In fact, this active fulfilment of God's will is given primacy. "It is foolish to envisage any kind of self-surrender in which all personal activity is excluded," he explains.

And what precisely is “self-surrender”? It involves the kind of faith or trust that acts on conviction that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. The only things that can truly stand in our way are our own compulsions to mastermind our lives and our own failures to yield control into the hands of Another.

—*Michael Casey*

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is a revised English translation, using as the main sources from which to work a very fine English version by E.J. Strickland, published in England in 1921, and an older but incomplete version by Ella McMahon, published by Benziger Brothers in 1887. We have referred to all other English versions available for the sake of clarifying some of the difficult passages, and compared it with the eighth French edition. For this new edition, the original 1986 edition has been reviewed in its entirety and further modernized.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN *ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE* was first presented to the Christian public in France in 1861, it became an immediate hit. A classic work of spirituality, it has gone through many editions, some of which included additional letters written by the author. Under the same name it has been translated into several foreign languages. *The Joy of Full Surrender* is a newly edited version of this classic work, following the eighth French edition. It consists of collected notes from retreats and talks that had been given to several communities of religious by the Rev. Jean-Pierre de Caussade, SJ, who died in 1751. These notes were carefully kept and transmitted within these communities because of the high value attached to them. Caussade has been credited with playing an important part in the spiritual renewal among French Catholics of the nineteenth century, not only because of his respected preaching, but also because of his letters and other writings.

Fr. Henri Ramire arranged these notes in their present order, adding whatever connecting thoughts and explanations he thought necessary to make them useful for people seeking the joy of full surrender to God. His version has been termed “a veritable mosaic” made up of Caussade’s own words and those of Ramire himself. Nonetheless, it is this format in which the book has been widely read and loved, and we have thought it worthwhile to bring out another edition of it in today’s English.

Ramire set forth three principles to guide the reader in meditating on these pages, two of them from Caussade, and one from himself. They are as follows:

First principle: “Nothing is done, nothing happens, either in the material or in the moral world, that God has not foreseen from all eternity, and that he has not willed, or at least permitted.”

Second principle: “God can will nothing, he can permit nothing, but in view of the end he proposed to himself in creating the world; that is, in view of his glory and the glory of Jesus Christ, his only Son.”

Third principle: “As long as human beings live upon earth, God desires to be glorified through the happiness of these privileged creatures; and consequently in God’s designs the interest of making human beings holy and happy is inseparable from the interest of the divine glory.”

It is important to emphasize that Caussade never intends to lead his hearers into a passive fatalism. Nothing could be farther from his intent. The surrender called for here is the *Yet not what I want but what you want* of our blessed Lord, and the *Let it be with me according to your word* of his blessed mother.

Dom David Knowles, in his introduction to an earlier edition of this work, says, “If we set ourselves to choose the ten greatest spiritual guides since St. Bernard—a magnificent list, indeed, including St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales—it would without a doubt be necessary to find a place for Father de Caussade.”

Perhaps a word needs to be said about the change of title and the problem of translating Caussade’s French word *abandon* into

some English equivalent. The word *abandonment* today has a negative connotation, hardly compatible with the central thrust of Caussade's thought. Some writers have used the word "self-abandonment" to try to convey the thought more accurately.

If one sentence could characterize this book above all others, it would be this: "God's will is always good, no matter how it may appear at the moment."

It may be argued that the teachings of this book are more suitable to those living in enclosed communities of contemplative monks and nuns, such as those to whom many of its words were first addressed. But it may also be seen from Caussade's own words, that the truths here and the call here are for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a simple and childlike faith. Whatever our state of life, there is always a "beyond" to our present level of commitment and surrender. And it is to the souls who feel the drawing of his great love to that fuller surrender of themselves to God that these words are addressed.

It is our prayer that such souls will find this book a welcome help on the path that leads to a closer walk with God.

BOOK I 

WHY FULL SURRENDER?

CHAPTER 1

Holiness Means Faithfulness to God's Will

God speaks today in the same way he spoke to our ancestors. There were no spiritual directors then, and spiritual methods were not so clearly defined. Spirituality simply consisted of faithfulness to the will of God. It was not reduced to an art, minutely explained, containing so many directions, maxims, or instructions as there are today. Our present needs may require this, but in those earlier days, when God's people were more simple and upright, it was enough to see that each moment brought a duty to be faithfully fulfilled. Their whole attention was fixed on that duty, like the hour hand of a clock that moves its necessary distance minute by minute. With their mind and spirit constantly moved by the impulse of the Spirit, they turned imperceptibly to each new task that God presented to them at each hour of the day.

Such were the secret springs of Mary's life, the most perfect example of simple and absolute surrender to the will of God. Her reply to the angel, "Let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), expressed all the mystical teaching of her ancestors. All that theology was reduced, as it still is today, to the purest, simplest surrender of a soul to the will of God in whatever form his will might present itself. This beautiful and noble attitude, the very essence of Mary's spirituality, is brilliantly shown in the words "Let it be with me." Notice how perfectly those words match the words our Lord would have always on our lips and in our hearts: "Yet not what I want but what you want." It is true that what was required of Mary at

that moment was indeed something glorious for her. But all the splendor of that glory would have made no impression on her if she had not seen in it the fulfillment of God's will.

It was God's will alone that mattered to her. Whatever her occupations, commonplace or extraordinary, they were to her eyes only appearances, sometimes obscure, sometimes clear, within which she could worship God and recognize the workings of his almighty hand. She joyfully accepted the duty or suffering that each moment brought as a gift from him who fills with good things the hearts of those who hunger and thirst for him alone and have no desire for created things or empty fantasies.

CHAPTER 2

Shadows That Veil the Hand of God

The power of the Most High will overshadow you, said the angel to Mary. This shadow, behind which is hidden the power of God for the purpose of bringing forth Jesus Christ in the soul, is the duty, the attraction, or the cross that is offered to us at each moment. These are, in truth, only shadows like those in nature that, like a veil, cover the objects of our senses and hide them from us. In the same way, in the moral and supernatural realm, the duties of each moment, like dark shadows, conceal the only thing that should hold our attention: the reality of God's will in them. This was the way Mary perceived them. As these shadows spread themselves over her mind, far from deluding her, they only increased her faith in the One who is unchanging and unchangeable. Withdraw, Archangel! You are only a shadow.

Your moment has passed. You have delivered your message and you are gone. Mary passes beyond you without stopping. The Holy Spirit, with whom she has been filled under the outward appearance of your words, will never leave her.

There are remarkably few extraordinary events in the exterior life of the most holy Virgin. At least there are none recorded in Holy Scripture. Her life is pictured as outwardly very ordinary and simple. She did what others in a similar state of life might do, and suffered what they might suffer. She went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Other relatives do that, too. She took shelter in a stable as a result of her poverty. She returned to Nazareth, from which she had been driven by the persecution of Herod, and lived there with Jesus and Joseph, who supported themselves by the work of their hands.

Such was the daily bread of the holy family. But what a divine nourishment Mary and Joseph received from this daily bread for the strengthening of their faith! It was like a sacrament to make all their moments holy! What treasures of grace lay concealed in these moments under the guise of the most commonplace events. That which was visible might happen to anyone, but the invisible, when understood and discerned by faith, was no less than God himself working great things. Bread of angels! Heavenly manna! Pearl of great value! Sacrament of the present moment! You bring God under the poor and humble appearance of the manger, the hay, and the straw! But to whom do you give him? “He has filled the hungry with good things” (Luke 1:53). God reveals himself to the humble in the lowliest things; but the proud, who attach importance only to outward appearances, cannot find him even in great things and are sent away empty.

CHAPTER 3

The Work of Making Us Holy

If the work of making us holy seems such a hard and impossible task, it is because we do not have the right idea of what it truly is. In truth, holiness consists of one single thing: faithfulness to the will of God. Now, this faithfulness is within the reach of everyone, whether it calls for active or passive practice of our faith.

Active faithfulness means fulfilling the duties that are ours by the general laws of God and of the Church, or by our particular state of life. Passive faithfulness consists in the loving acceptance of all that God sends us each moment.

Is either of these practices beyond our ability? Not active faithfulness, because any duties it might impose are no longer duties when we do not have the power to fulfill them. If the state of your health does not permit you to attend church, you are not obliged to go. The same rule holds good for all the precepts that have to do with duties to fulfill. Only those that forbid things that are evil in themselves are absolute, because it is never allowable to commit sin. Can anything, then, be easier or more reasonable? What excuse can we offer? Yet this is all that God requires of the soul for the work of making us holy. God requires it of both the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak—in a word, of everyone, always and everywhere.

So it is true that God requires nothing from us but what is simple and easy, for this simple method is sufficient to enable us to attain an eminent degree of holiness.

If, over and above the Ten Commandments, God shows us the Evangelical Counsels¹ as a more perfect aim for our efforts, he is always careful to accommodate the practice of them to our position and character. As a principal sign of our calling to follow them, he gives us the attraction of grace that makes them easier. He never urges any of us beyond our strength, nor in any way beyond our aptitude. Again, what could be more just?

All you who strive after perfection and who are tempted to discouragement by what you read in the lives of the saints and what you find prescribed in spiritual books, you who are overwhelmed by the terrible ideas of perfection you have formed for yourselves: it is for your consolation that God wills me to write this. Learn what you do not seem to know.

In the realm of nature, the God of all goodness has made easy the things that are universal and necessary—breathing, eating, and sleeping. No less essential in the supernatural realm are love and faithfulness. Therefore the difficulty in achieving them cannot be as great as is generally thought. Consider your own life. Is it not made up of numerous, unimportant little actions? Well, God is quite satisfied with these. They are the very things in which we must cooperate in the work of our perfection. God himself expresses it in terms too clear for us to doubt: “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). That is to say, this is all that is required on our part—that is what makes up active faithfulness. If we fulfill our part, God will do the rest.

Grace, working by itself, will achieve marvels that surpass human comprehension. For neither has ear heard nor eye seen, nor has it entered into the mind, what things God plans in his

infinite awareness and insight, resolves in his will, and carries out by his power in the soul that is given up entirely to him.

The passive aspect of faithfulness is easier still, since it consists only of accepting what most frequently cannot be avoided, and in bearing with love, consolation, and sweetness what we too often endure with weariness and irritation.

Once more, then, here is the whole sum of holiness. Here is the grain of mustard seed that is the smallest of all the seeds, which, being so tiny, is unrecognized and lost. It is the lost coin of the Gospel, the treasure that we do not search for and do not find, because we imagine it is too far beyond us.

Do not ask how it may be found. It is no secret. The treasure is offered to us at every moment, in every place. Our fellow-creatures, friends, and enemies pour it out liberally for us, and it flows like a fountain through every part of our bodies and souls, even to the very center of our hearts. If we open our mouths wide they will be filled. God's action floods the whole universe; it pervades every creature. Wherever they are, there it is. It goes before them, it goes with them, and it follows them. All we have to do is to allow ourselves to be carried forward on its waves.

Would that it might please God that kings and their ministers, princes of the Church and of the world, priests, soldiers, commoners—in one word, all human beings, might know how easy it is for us to arrive at a sublime holiness! All we have to do is to fulfill the simple duties of a Christian and of our state of life, and bear with submission the crosses involved, and to accept with faith and love the work and suffering that, although we do not search for them, come endlessly to us through God's own providential designs. This is the spirit by which the

Patriarchs and Prophets were moved and made holy before there were so many methods of direction and so many directors of the spiritual life.

This is the spirituality of all ages and conditions. Surely no state of life can be made holy in a more exalted manner or in a more wonderful and easy way than by the simple use of the means that God, the sovereign Director of souls, gives us to do or to suffer at each moment.

CHAPTER 4

Perfection Means Submission to God's Will

The designs of God, the good pleasure of God, the will of God, the action of God, and the gift of his grace are all one and the same thing in the spiritual life. It is God at work in the soul to make it like himself. Perfection is nothing more or less than the faithful cooperation of the soul with this work of God. This work begins, grows, and is completed in our souls secretly and without our knowledge.

Theology is full of theories and explanations of how each soul is brought into this wonderful perfection to the fullest extent of its capacity. We may know all the theories and understand the explanations of this work in the soul, speak and write about them beautifully, or instruct and direct others. But if this knowledge is only head-knowledge, one who possesses it will be like a sick physician compared to simple people who enjoy perfect health, who live and act according to God's designs, and who are guided by God's holy will, even though they are ignorant of

theories. When a faithful soul accepts the designs of God and his divine will with simplicity, this holy effect is brought about in it without its knowledge, just as medicine taken obediently will produce health, although the sick person neither knows nor wishes to know anything about medicine. Just as fire warms us, rather than philosophical discussions about fire or knowledge of its effects, so the designs of God and his holy will work in the soul to make it holy—not intellectual speculations concerning the principles or methods that produce holiness in our souls.

When we are thirsty, we must drink; theoretical explanations will not quench our thirst. The desire to know only increases our thirst even more. Therefore, when we thirst after holiness, the desire to know about it only drives it further away. We must put speculation aside and drink in simplicity of all that the will of God sends us, both to do and to suffer. Those things that happen at each moment by God's command or permission are always the holiest, the best, the most divine thing that could happen to us.

CHAPTER 5

The Limited Use of Reading and Other Exercises

All we need to know is how to recognize God's will for the present moment. Any reading we might choose without regard to the will of God is harmful to us. The will of God and obedience to his leading brings us grace, and this grace is what does the work in the depths of our hearts through reading or anything else we do. Without God, books are only vain appearances, deprived

of God's life-giving power as far as we are concerned, and they succeed only in emptying the heart by the very satisfaction our reading brings to the mind.

God's will, working in the souls of simple and ignorant persons through suffering or through a few very ordinary actions, produces an abundance of supernatural life in those persons without filling their minds with self-exalting ideas. On the other hand, proud persons who study spiritual books merely out of curiosity, with no concern for the will of God, receive only the dead letter of the law into their minds, and their hearts grow even drier and harder.

God's order of things, God's divine will, are the life of the soul, no matter in what way they work or are obeyed. Whatever may be the relation of God's will to the intelligence, it nourishes the soul and gives growth to it by giving it each moment what is best for it. Nor is one thing more effective than another in producing these happy effects, but rather, whatever God has willed for the present moment. What was best for the moment that has passed is no longer so, because it is no longer the better part: all we have to do is allow it to act and surrender ourselves to it blindly and with perfect trust. It is infinitely wise, powerful, and bountiful to those who trust themselves unreservedly to it, who love and go in search for it alone, and who believe with an unshaken faith and confidence that what it arranges for each moment is best, without searching elsewhere for more or less, and without pausing to consider the connection between these outward circumstances and the will of God. Such consideration would be the seeking of pure self-love.

Nothing is essential, real, or of any value unless it is ordained by God, who adapts all things and makes them suitable to the soul. Aside from God's will, everything is hollow, empty, and vacant: there is nothing but falsehood, vanity, nothingness, shallowness, the letter of the law, death. The will of God is the salvation, health, and life of both body and soul, no matter what may be its ways of reaching us. We must not, then, scrutinize too closely the suitability of things to the mind or the body to form a judgment of their value, because this is of little importance. It is the will of God, given in and through these things, that effectively works to renew the image of Jesus Christ deep within our hearts. We must not attempt to make God's will conform to a law or set limits on it, for it is all-powerful. Whatever ideas the mind may form, whatever feelings the body may experience, even if the mind is tormented with distractions and trouble, or the body with sickness and pain—nevertheless, God's will is always the life of the body and the soul at every moment. In fact, both body and soul, whatever their condition may be, are sustained by God's will alone.

Without it, bread may be poison; with it, poison can be a healthful remedy. Without it, books can only darken the mind; with it, darkness is turned to light. God's will is everything that is good and true in all things. In all things that will unites us to God, and God, infinite in all his perfections, leaves nothing to be desired by the soul that possesses him.

CHAPTER 6

The Limited Use of Intelligence

The mind with all its powers would like to hold first place among all the instruments employed by God, but it must, like a dangerous slave, be reduced to the lowest place. It might be of great service if made use of in a right manner, but it can do much injury if it is not kept in subjection. When the soul longs for outward supports, grace whispers to the heart that God's invisible work is enough. When the soul wishes to forego created means of help at the wrong time, God shows it that such help should be received and used with singleness of heart, in keeping with his established will. We should use such means as tools, not for their own sake, but as though we did not use them, and when we are deprived of them all, we should realize that we lack nothing.

Although God's action is infinite in its power, it can take full possession of our souls only insofar as we are empty of all confidence in our own action. For this confidence, being founded on a false idea of our own ability, excludes God's action. This is the obstacle that is most likely to hinder God's work, for he finds it in the soul itself. As far as outside obstacles are concerned, God can change them at will into powerful aids for our progress. Everything is both equally useful and useless to him. Without his action, everything is as nothing. With it, the tiniest nothing can become everything.

Whatever the value in itself of meditation, contemplation, spoken prayer, interior silence, intuition, quiet retreat, or bustling activity—whatever it may be in itself, even if very

desirable—that which God wills at the present moment is best, and everything else must be regarded by the soul as nothing at all.

Thus seeing only God in all things, we must take or leave them all as he pleases, so as to live, to be strengthened, or to hope only by what he ordains, and never by any power or virtue that does not come from him. We ought, at every moment and on all occasions, say with St. Paul, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6 KJV), without preferring this or that, but only to accomplish his holy will. “The mind prefers one thing, the body another; but Lord, I desire nothing but to do your holy will. Work, contemplation, or prayer, spoken or silent, active or passive; the prayer of faith or of understanding; universal grace or some specific gift—these are all nothing, Lord, unless your will makes them real and useful. Your holy will alone is the object of my devotion, not any of these *things*, however exalted and sublime they may be, because your grace has been given for the perfection of the heart rather than of the mind.”

The presence of God that makes our souls holy is the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the depths of our hearts when we submit to his holy will. The presence of God resulting from the act of contemplation brings about this intimate union in us in exactly the same way as do other acts that are done according to the will of God. However, it holds first place among them, for it is the most excellent way to unite ourselves to God when he wills us to use it.

There is nothing unlawful, then, in the love and esteem we have for contemplation and other godly exercises, if this love and esteem are directed entirely to the God of all goodness

who willingly makes use of these means to unite our souls to himself.

We receive the Prince himself when we receive his personal staff. It would be showing him little respect to neglect his officers under the pretext of wishing to be with him alone.

CHAPTER 7

Attaining Lasting Peace

The soul who is not committed to the will of God alone will find neither its satisfaction nor its sanctification in the various methods—not even in the most excellent devotional exercises. If that which God himself chooses for you does not satisfy you, from whom do you expect to receive what you desire? If you turn from the food prepared for you by God's own will, what food could satisfy a taste so depraved? A soul can be nourished, strengthened, purified, enriched, and made holy only by the fullness of the present moment. What more would you have? Since you can find all that is good here, why search for it anywhere else? Do you know better than God? Since he ordains it this way, why do you want it to be different? Can his wisdom and goodness be deceived? When you find that something is in accord with his divine wisdom and goodness, should you not conclude that it must be the best that could happen? Do you think you will find peace in struggling with the Almighty? Is it not, rather, this resistance, this struggle, too often continued without admitting it even to ourselves, that is the cause of all our inward agitations?

It is only just, therefore, that the soul that is not satisfied with the divine fullness of each present moment should be punished by being unable to find happiness in anything else. If books, the example of the saints, and spiritual conversations take away our soul's peace—if they fill our mind without satisfying it—it is a sign that we have strayed from the path of simple surrender to God's will, and that we are seeking only to please ourselves. The very fullness they offer prevents God from finding an entrance, and we must get rid of these things because they are obstacles to the work of grace. But if God's will ordains that we make use of them, we may receive them just as we do everything else—that is to say, as the means ordained by God, which we accept simply to use as they are, and when their moment has passed, leave them for the duties of the next moment. In fact, there is nothing really good that does not come to us from the order of God, and nothing, however good in itself, can be more effective for making us holy or more capable of giving peace to our souls.

CHAPTER 8

Who Is the Most Holy?

The will of God gives a supernatural and divine value to everything for the soul that is submitted to it. All the duties God's will imposes, all those contained in it, all the matters it touches, become holy and perfect, because the will of God is unlimited in power and makes everything it touches divine.

But in order not to stray either to the right or the left, we should follow such inspirations we believe we have received from God only if we are sure that they will not take us from the duties of our state of life. These duties are the most certain manifestations of God's will, and we should prefer nothing above them. In them there is nothing to fear, nothing to exclude, nothing to be chosen. The moments given to such duties are the most precious and most healthful for our souls because we are sure of accomplishing God's holy will. The entire virtue of what we call holiness lies in faithfulness to what God ordains. Therefore we must refuse nothing and seek after nothing, but accept everything that is ordained from him.

Books and wise counsels, vocal prayer and inward affections, when they are in accord with his will, instruct, guide, and unite us with him. In condemning the use of these means and everything that pertains to the senses, quietism erred greatly, for there are souls that God intends to keep always in this way. Their state of life and their leadings show this clearly enough. It is foolish to picture any kind of self-surrender in which all personal activity is excluded. When God requires action, holiness is to be found in activity.

Besides the duties imposed on everyone by the circumstances of their life, God may require certain actions that are not included in these duties, though not in any way contrary to such duties. A leading and inspiration are then the signs of God's approval. Those who are led by God in this way will find a greater perfection by adding the things that are inspired to those that are commanded, taking the necessary precautions to make sure that these inspirations do not interfere with the

duties of our state and the happenstances of Providence. God makes saints as he chooses. They are always made according to his plan and in conformity with his will. This conformity is the truest and most perfect surrender of self.

The duties of one's state of life and what comes from divine Providence are common to all the saints and are what God arranges for everyone in general. The saints live hidden from the world, for the world is so fatal to holiness that they wish to avoid the world's quicksand. But their holiness does not consist in this. Rather, it is in their surrender to the will of God. The more absolute this surrender becomes, the greater their holiness.

We must not look at those whose inner leadings and inspirations are unquestionably valid, and whose virtues are shown in unusual and extraordinary ways, and then conclude that these extraordinary gifts exempt them from self-surrender. As soon as God's will makes duties of these astonishing actions, if they were to refuse to do them simply to fulfill their ordinary duties or the usual inspirations of Providence, they would be resisting God. In that case his holy will would no longer be in charge of the moment, and it would mean they had ceased to practice self-surrender. They must consider their duties in keeping with the designs of God, and follow the path designated by their particular leadings. To carry out their inspirations would then become a duty to which they must be faithful.

And just as there are souls whose whole duty is defined by outward laws, and who should not go beyond it, because God's will has so ordained, so there are others who, in addition to exterior duties, are obliged to be faithful to the inward law

imprinted on their hearts. Each of us must follow the path appointed for us. Perfection consists in complete surrender to the will of God, and in fulfilling our normal duties in the most perfect manner possible.

But which state is most perfect? A vain and idle question! To compare the different states as they are in themselves can be of no help to us, since perfection is not found in the amount of work or in the sort of duties given to us. If self-love is the motive of our action, or if it is not immediately crushed when discovered, our supposed abundance of good works will in truth be absolute poverty because it is not coming from God's will.

To give some answer to the question, however, I think that holiness can be measured by the love we have for God, and our desire to please him. The more his will is our guiding principle, and the more we conform to and love his plans, the greater will be our holiness, no matter what means we use. This is what we notice in Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. In their separate lives there is more of love than of greatness, more of the spirit than of matter. It is not written that they searched for holiness of circumstances, but rather holiness in all their circumstances. It must therefore be concluded that one way is not more perfect than another, but that the most perfect way is the one that most closely conforms to God's revealed will, whether it means exterior duties or inward attitudes.

CHAPTER 9
Holiness Made Easy

I believe that if those who are seriously striving after holiness were instructed as to the conduct they ought to follow they would be spared a good deal of trouble. I speak as much of laypersons as of religious. If the former (that is, laypersons) could realize the merit concealed in the actions of each moment of the day—I mean in each of the daily duties and actions belonging to their state of life—and if the latter (that is, those who are members of religious orders) could be persuaded that holiness is found in what seems unimportant to them, they would all indeed be happy. If, in addition, they understood that the crosses sent them by Providence—crosses that they constantly find in the circumstances of their lives—lead them to the highest perfection by a surer and shorter path than extraordinary states or spectacular works, and if they understood that surrender to the will of God is the true philosopher’s stone that changes into divine gold all their occupations, troubles, and sufferings, what consolation would be theirs! What courage would they derive from this thought: that in order to acquire the friendship of God and to arrive at eternal glory, they have only to do what they are doing and to suffer what they are already suffering, and that what they waste and count as nothing is enough to bring them the greatest holiness, far more than any extraordinary state or wonderful works!

Dearest God! how much I long to be the missionary of your holy will, to teach everyone that there is nothing so easy, so simple, so within the reach of all, as holiness! I wish that I could