

**REDEMPTORIST NORTH AMERICAN SECRETARIAT FOR PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION  
INITIAL FORMATION GATHERING #7  
THEME: ALPHONSUS AND PRAYER**

**CENTRE OF BEAUTY:**

- Bible
- Cloth (colour appropriate to the Liturgical Season)
- Candle
- Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

**READING MATERIAL:**

- For preparation: Chapter 9 from St. Alphonsus Liguori's *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. (attached)*

**OTHER PHOTOCOPIES NEEDED:**

- Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit (attached)
- Closing Ritual: A Praying with Alphonsus in Ordinary Time, @ from *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*, by Terrence J. Moran

**MATERIALS:**

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Name Tags (if needed)
- Masking Tape

**Notes:** This session is based on the session from *Charism 2001* entitled  
A Praying  
in the Spirit of St. Alphonsus. @ The theme is becoming a community of  
prayer. Prayer nourishes and sustains our life. Without prayer we are  
spiritually bankrupt, with little to offer.

**Preparation for the session:** Read Chapter 9 from St. Alphonsus Liguori's *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. (attached)*

The leader should review this chapter in advance, and be prepared to highlight, for the group, some key aspects about meditation and prayer. Before giving the introduction, it is important for each leader to do this preparation for themselves, while keeping their particular group in mind.

## **SATURDAY or EVENING SESSIONB approximately 90 minutes**

**7:00 p.m.**

*20 mins*      **Experience:** Opening Prayer: "Praying with St. Alphonsus in Ordinary Time," adapted from Terry Moran

**Presider:** Between the times of feast and fast, the Church year gives us large portions of "ordinary time."

"Ordinary Time" is an opportunity to savour the presence of God in the routine of every day. Its sacred places are the kitchen, the living room, the office, the supermarket, the factory. Its sacred ministers are the people closest to us—our family, friends, our co-workers, and also those with whom we have difficulty dealing, those we don't like, and those we don't love as we should.

St Alphonsus never taught a particular "devotion," but he was very concerned with teaching ordinary people how to live a devout life, a life in which all of our activities are acts of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Let us begin our prayer by raising our voices in a song of praise to our God, who does not reserve His power and presence to special times and places, but who loves us always and everywhere, in the ordinary times and places.

**Song:** A song of praise or thanksgiving

**First Reading:** from *The Way to Converse with God as a Friend*, by St Alphonsus.

When you behold beautiful scenes in the country or along the sea coast, or when you look at flowers or fruit, and are pleased by the sight or the perfume, say: "For me God has created these lovely things in this world, that I may love Him. What delights has He not prepared for me in heaven?"

When you see rivers or streams, reflect that as their waters run towards the sea, and never remain still, so ought you ever tend towards God, who is your only good. When you see a little dog, which for a morsel of bread is faithful to its master, reflect how much greater reason you have to be faithful to God, who has created and preserved you, and heaps upon you so many blessings. When you hear the birds sing, say: 'Hearken, O my soul, to the praise which these little creatures are giving to their Creator; and what are you doing? Then do you also praise him with acts of love.

**Psalm 27** (*recited antiphonally*)

**Side 1:** The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.

**Side 2:** There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;  
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

**Side 1:** The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the LORD are sure,  
making wise the simple;

**Side 2:** The precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear,  
enlightening the eyes;

**Side 1:** The fear of the LORD is holy,  
enduring for ever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are true  
and righteous altogether.

**Side 2:** More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey,  
and drippings of the honeycomb.

**Side 1:** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable to you,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

**Side 2:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

**Side 1:** As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

**Second Reading:** from *The Way to Converse with God as a Friend*, by St Alphonsus.  
Your whole life long, may God be your only happiness, the only object of your  
affections, the only end of your actions and desires. You will come one day to that world  
without end, where your love will be in every way perfected and completed. Your  
desires will be perfectly fulfilled and completely satisfied.

**Presider:** We respond in words of St. Alphonsus, about which he said, "Whoever says  
this little canticle from the heart causes joy in paradise."

**All:** Jesus, my true, my only love,  
I wish for nothing but you.  
Here I am, I am yours, my God.  
Do what you will with me.

**10 mins Reflection:** Share with one person on the following question:  
What helps you to pray? How do you pray?  
When the conversation seems to have died down, ask the  
participants to share with the larger group as much as they  
are comfortable sharing on how they pray.

**25 mins Generalization:** Ask the group, having prepared for the session by reading from *The Practice of the Love of Christ*, to highlight some of the key insights about meditation and prayer that emerged from their reading. You might wish to list these on chart paper as they are named. When all have been named, the leader should pause and review, adding anything from his/her own preparation that has not emerged from the group.

Pause for a moment and contemplate the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Centre of Beauty. The leader might say something like: *Let us look into the eyes of Jesus and see how much he loves us. Finally, let us express our love and gratitude to him through spontaneous prayer.*@

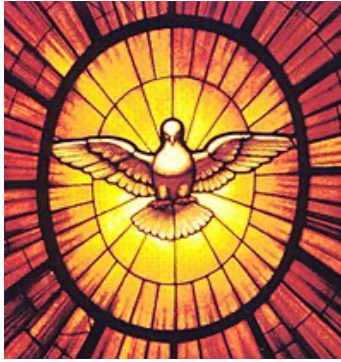
**10 mins Action:** Sharing visions and resolutions. Ask the group to reflect on these questions:

1. *Did the passage that was provided from the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus aid your personal prayer?*
2. *Did you find the writing of St. Alphonsus inspirational in any way?*
3. *Did you gain any new insights about prayer?*

Then, discuss the following with the group:  
*Faith-sharing is essential and should not be contrived. At times it can take place in a large or structured setting, while at other times it takes place in encounters with others that happen in a much more spontaneous way. How can we ensure an ongoing and genuine faith-sharing among ourselves?*

**5 mins Closing Prayer:** Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit (attached)

## PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT



**L.** You are **fire**;  
**R.** enkindle in me your love.

**L.** You are **light**;  
**R.** enlighten my mind with the knowledge of eternal things.

**L.** You are the **Dove**;  
**R.** give me innocence of life.

**L.** You are the gentle **Breeze**;  
**R.** disperse the storms of my passions.

**L.** You are the **Tongue**;  
**R.** Teach me how to bless you always.

**L.** You are the **Cloud**;  
**R.** shelter me under the shadow of your protection.

**L.** You are the **Giver** of all heavenly gifts;  
**R.** animate me,

**L.** I beseech you, with your **grace**;  
**R.** sanctify me

**L.** with your **charity**;  
**R.** enlighten me

**L.** with your **wisdom**;  
**R.** adopt me by your goodness as your child, and save me in your infinite mercy;  
so that I may ever **bless** you, **praise** you, and **love** you;  
first during this life on earth, and then in heaven for all eternity.

Amen.

*St. Alphonsus Liguori*

# THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

by St. Alphonsus Liguori

## CHAPTER IX: CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL

*(Charitas non cogitat malum, non gaudet super iniquitate, congaudet autem, veritati.)*

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He that loves Jesus Christ only wishes what Jesus Christ wishes. CHARITY and truth always go together; so that charity, conscious that God is the only and the true good, detests iniquity, which is directly opposed to the Divine will, and takes no satisfaction but in what pleases Almighty God. Hence the soul that loves God is heedless of what people say of it, and only aims at pleasing God. The Blessed Henry Suso said: "That man stands well with God who strives to conform himself to the truth, and for the rest is utterly indifferent to the opinion or treatment of mankind."

As we have already more than once asserted, the sanctity and perfection of a soul consists in renouncement of self and in submission to the will of God; but now it will be well to enter more into detail.

### I. The Necessity of Conforming to the Will of God.

If, then, we would become Saints, our whole endeavor must be, never to follow our own will, but always the will of God; the substance of all the precepts and Divine counsels is comprised in doing and suffering what God wills, and in the manner He wills it. Let us, therefore, entreat the Lord to bestow on us a holy liberty of spirit; liberty of spirit leads us to embrace whatever is pleasing to Jesus Christ, regardless of all feelings of repugnance arising from self-love and human respect.

The love of Jesus Christ makes those who love Him utterly indifferent; so that all things are alike to them, whether bitter or sweet: they do not wish for anything that pleases themselves, but only for that which is pleasing to God; they employ themselves in little and great things, be they pleasant or unpleasant, with the same peace of mind; it is enough for them if they please God. St. Augustine says: "Love, and do what you like." Whoever really loves God seeks only to please Him; and in this is all his pleasure. St. Teresa says: "He that seeks but the gratification of one he loves, is gratified with all that pleases that person. Love in its perfection produces this result; it makes a person heedless of all private interests and self-satisfaction, and concentrates all his thoughts on endeavoring to please the person beloved, and to do all he can to honor him himself, and to make him honored by others.

O Lord, all our ills come from not keeping our eyes fixed on Thee! Were we solely intent on advancing, we should soon come to the end of our journey; but we fall and stumble a thousand times, and we even lose our way, for want of looking attentively to the right path." Here we may see what should be the single aim of all our thoughts, actions, desires, and of all our prayers, namely, the pleasure of God; our way to perfection must

be this, to walk according to the will of God. God wishes us to love Him with our whole heart: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. [Matt. xxii. 37.]

That person loves Jesus Christ with his whole heart who says to Him with the Apostle: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' [Acts, ix. 6.] Lord, signify to me what Thou wilt have me do; for I desire to perform all. And let us be persuaded that whilst we desire what God desires, we desire what is best for ourselves; for assuredly God only wishes what is best for us. St. Vincent of Paul said: "Conformity with the will of God is the treasure of a Christian and the remedy for all evils; since it comprises abnegation of self and union with God and all virtues." In this, then, is all perfection: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Jesus Christ promises us, not a hair of your head shalt perish. [Luke, xxi. 18.] Which is as much as to say, that the Lord rewards us for every good thought we have of pleasing Him, and for every tribulation embraced with patience in conformity to His holy will.

St. Teresa said, "The Lord never sends a trial, without remunerating it with some favor as often as we accept it with resignation." [Life, ch. 30.] But our conformity to the Divine will must be entire, without any reserve, and constant without withdrawal. In this consists the height of perfection; and to this (I repeat) all our works, all our desires, and all our prayers ought to tend. Some souls given to prayer, on reading of the ecstasies and raptures of St. Teresa and St. Philip Neri, come to wish to enjoy themselves these supernatural unions. Such wishes must be banished as contrary to humility; if we really desire to be Saints, we must aspire after true union with God, which is to unite our will entirely to the will of God.

St. Teresa [Found. ch. 5.] said, "Those persons are deceived who fancy that union with God consists in ecstasies, raptures, and sensible enjoyments of Him. It consists in nothing else than in submitting our will to the will of God; and this submission is perfect when our will is detached from everything, and so completely united with that of God, that all its movements depend solely on the will of God. This is the real and essential union which I have always sought after, and continually beg of the Lord." And then she adds: "Oh, how many of us say this, and seem to ourselves to desire nothing besides this; but, miserable creatures that we are, how few of us attain to it!" Such, indeed, is the undeniable truth: many of us say: O Lord! I give Thee my will, I desire nothing but what Thou desirest; but, in the event of some trying occurrence, we are at a loss how to yield calmly to the Divine will. And this is the source of our continually complaining that we are unfortunate in the world, and that we are the butt of every misfortune; and so of our dragging on an unhappy life. If we were conformed to the Divine will in every trouble, we should undoubtedly become Saints, and be the happiest of mankind.

This, then, should form the chief object of our attention, to keep our will in unbroken union with the will of God in every occurrence of life, be it pleasant or unpleasant. It is the admonition of the Holy Spirit. Winnow not with every wind. [Ecclus. v. 11.] Some people resemble the weathercocks, which turn about every wind that blows; if the wind is fair and favorable to their desires, they are all gladness and condescension: but if

there blow a contrary wind, and things fall out against their desires, they are all sadness and impatience; this is why they do not become Saints, and why their life is unhappy, because, in the present life, adversity will always befall us in a greater measure than prosperity.

St. Dorotheus said, that to receive from the hands of God whatever happens is a great means to keep ourselves in continual peace and tranquility of soul. And the Saint relates, that on this account the ancient Fathers of the desert were never seen angry or melancholy, because they accepted whatever happened to them joyfully, as coming from the hands of God.

Oh, happy the one who lives wholly united and abandoned to the Divine will! He is neither puffed up by success nor depressed by reverses; for he well knows that all alike comes from the self-same hand of God; the will of God is the single rule of his own will; thus he only does what God wishes him to do, and he only desires what God does. He is not anxious to do many things, but to accomplish with perfection what he knows to be acceptable to God. Accordingly, he prefers the minutest obligations of his state of life to the most glorious and important actions, well aware that in the latter self-love may find a great share, whereas in the former there is certainly the will of God. Thus we, too, shall be happy when we receive from God all the dispositions of His Providence in the spirit of perfect conformity to His Divine will, utterly regardless whether or not they coincide with our private inclinations.

The saintly Mother de Chantal said: "When shall we come to relish the Divine will in every event that happens, without paying attention to anything else but the good pleasure of God, from Whom it is certain that prosperity and adversity proceed alike from motives of love and for our best interests? When shall we resign ourselves unreservedly into the arms of our most loving heavenly Father, entrusting Him with the care of our persons and our affairs, and reserving nothing for ourselves but the [www.basilica.org](http://www.basilica.org) sole desire of pleasing God?"

The friends of St. Vincent of Paul said of him while he was still on earth: "Vincent is always Vincent." By which they meant to say, that the Saint was ever to be seen with the same smiling face, whether in prosperity or in adversity; and was always himself, because, as he lived in the total abandonment of himself to God, he feared nothing and desired nothing but what was pleasing to God. St. Teresa said: "By this holy abandonment that admirable liberty of spirit is generated, which those who are perfect possess, wherein they find all the happiness in this life which they can possibly desire; inasmuch as, fearful of nothing, and desirous or wanting for nothing in the things of this world, they possess all." [Found. ch. 5.] Many, on the other hand, fabricate a sort of sanctity according to their own inclinations; some, inclined to melancholy, make sanctity consist in living in seclusion; others, of a busy temperament, in preaching and in making up quarrels; some, of an austere nature, in penitential inflictions and macerations; others, who are naturally generous, in distributing alms; some in saying many vocal prayers; others in visiting sanctuaries; and all their sanctity consists in such or the like



practices.

External acts are the fruit of the love of Jesus Christ; but true love itself consists in a complete conformity to the will of God; and as a consequence of this, in denying ourselves and in preferring what is most pleasing to God, and solely because He deserves it. Others wish to serve God; but it must be in that employment, in that place, with those companions, and in such circumstances; or else they either neglect their duty, or at least do it with a bad grace: such as these are not free in spirit, but are slaves of self-love, and on that account reap little merit even from what they perform; moreover, they live in perpetual disquiet, since their attachment to self-will makes the yoke of Jesus Christ become heavy to them.

The true lovers of Jesus Christ love only that which is pleasing to Jesus Christ, and for the sole reason that it does please Him; and they love it when it pleases Jesus Christ, where it pleases Him, and how it pleases Him; whether He chooses to employ them in honorable functions, or in mean and lowly occupations; in a life of notoriety in the world, or in one hidden and despised.

This is the real drift of what is meant by the pure love of Jesus Christ; hence we must labor to overcome the cravings of our self-love, which seeks to be employed in those works only that are glorious, or that are according to our own inclinations. And what will it profit us to be the most honored, the most wealthy, the greatest in this world, without the will of God?

The Blessed Henry Suso said, "I would rather be the vilest insect on earth by the will of God, than a seraph in Heaven by my own will." Jesus Christ said: Many shall say: Lord, we have cast out devils and done great wonders in Thy name: Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? [Matt. vii. 22.] But the Lord will answer them: I never knew you, depart from Me, you that work iniquity. [Ibid. 23.] Depart from Me; I never acknowledged you for My disciples, because you preferred to follow your own inclinations rather than My will. And this is especially applicable to those priests who labor much for the salvation or perfection of others, while they themselves continue to live on in the mire of their imperfections.

Perfection consists: First, in a true contempt of one's self. Secondly, in a thorough mortification of our own appetites. Thirdly, in a perfect conformity to the will of God: whosoever is wanting in one of these virtues is out of the way of perfection.

On this account a great servant of God said, it was better for us in our actions to have the will of God rather than His glory as their sole end; for in doing the will of God, we at the same time promote His glory; whereas in proposing to ourselves the glory of God, we frequently deceive ourselves, and follow our own will under pretext of glorifying God. St. Francis de Sales, said: "There are many who say to the Lord: I give myself wholly to Thee without reserve; but few indeed, in point of fact, practically embrace this

abandonment. It consists in a certain indifference in accepting all kinds of events, just as they fall out according to the order of Divine Providence, afflictions as well as consolations, slights and injuries as well as honor and glory." [Entret. 2.]

It is therefore in suffering, and in embracing with cheerfulness whatever cuts against the grain of our own inclinations, that we can discover who is a true lover of Jesus Christ. Thomas à Kempis says "that he is not deserving of the name of lover who is not ready to endure all things for his beloved, and to follow in all things the will of his beloved." On the contrary, Father Balthazar Alvarez said, that whoever quietly resigns himself to the Divine will in troubles "travels to God post-haste." And the saintly Mother Teresa said: "What greater acquisition can we make, than to have some proof that we are pleasing God?"

And to this I add, that we cannot have a more certain proof of this, than by peacefully embracing the crosses which God sends us. We please God by thanking Him for his benefits on earth; but, says Father John of Avila, one "blessed be God" uttered in adversity is worth six thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity. And here we must observe, that we must receive with resignation not merely the crosses which come directly from God; for instance, ill-health, scanty talents, accidental reverses of fortune; but such, moreover, as come indirectly from God, and directly from our fellow-men; for instance, persecutions, thefts, injuries; for all, in reality, come from God.

David was one day insulted by one of his vassals called Semei, who not only upbraided him with words of contumely, but even threw stones at him. One of the courtiers would have forthwith avenged the insult by cutting off the head of the offender; but David replied: Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath, bid him curse David; [2 Kings, xvi. 10.] or, in other words, God makes use of him to chastise me for my sins, and therefore He allowed him to pursue me with injuries. Wherefore St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said, that all our prayers should have for their end to obtain from God the grace to follow His holy will in all things.

Certain souls, greedy of spiritual dainties in prayer, go in search only of these banquets of sweet and tender feelings; but courageous souls that seek sincerely to belong wholly to God, ask Him only for light to understand His will, and for strength to put it in execution. In order to attain to purity of love, it is necessary to submit our will in all things to the will of God: "Never consider yourselves," said St. Francis de Sales, "to have arrived at the purity which you ought to have, as long as your will is not cheerfully obedient, even in things the most repulsive, to the will of God." "Because," as St. Teresa remarks, "the giving up of our will to God draws Him to unite Himself to our lowliness." [Way of Perfect. ch. 33.] But this can never be obtained, except by means of mental prayer and of continual petitions addressed to the Divine majesty, not without a cordial desire to belong entirely to Jesus Christ without reserve.

O most amiable Heart of my Divine Saviour, Heart enamoured of mankind, since Thou lovest us with such a depth of tenderness; O Heart, in fine, worthy to rule over and

possess all our hearts, would that I could make all men comprehend the love Thou bearest them, and the tender caresses Thou dost lavish on those who love Thee without reserve! O Jesus my love, be pleased to accept the offering and the sacrifice which I this day make to Thee of my entire will! Acquaint me with what Thou wouldst have me to do; for I am determined to do all by the help of Thy grace.

## **II. Obedience.**

Now what is the surest way to know and ascertain what God requires of us? There is no surer way than to practice obedience to our Superiors and directors. St. Vincent of Paul said: "The will of God is never better complied with than when we obey our Superiors." The Holy Ghost says: Much better is obedience than the victims of fools. [Eccles. iv. 17.]

God is more pleased with the sacrifice which we make to Him of our own will, by submitting it to obedience, than with all other sacrifices which we can offer Him; because in other things, as in alms-deeds, fastings, mortifications, and the like, we give of what is ours to God, but in giving Him our will we present Him ourselves: when we give Him our goods, our mortifications, we give Him part; but when we give Him our will, we give Him everything. So that when we say to God, O Lord, make me know by means of obedience what Thou requirest of me, for I wish to comply with all, we have nothing more to offer Him.

Whoever, therefore, gives himself up to obedience, must needs detach himself totally from his own opinion. "What though each one," says St. Francis de Sales, "has his own opinions, virtue is not thereby violated; but virtue is violated by the attachment which we have to our own opinions." [Entret. 14.] But alas! this attachment is the hardest thing to part with; and hence there are so few persons wholly given to God, because few render a thorough submission to obedience. There are some persons so fondly attached to their own opinion, that, on receiving an obedience, although the thing enjoined suit their inclination, yet, from the very fact that it is commanded, they lose all fancy for it, all wish to discharge it; for they find no relish in anything but in following the dictates of their individual will.

How different is the conduct of Saints! Their only happiness flows from the execution of what obedience imposes on them. The saintly Mother Jane Frances, de Chantal once told her daughters that they might spend the recreation day in any manner they chose. When the evening came, they all went to her, to beg most earnestly that she would never again grant them such a permission; for they had never spent such a wearisome day as that on which they had been set free from obedience. It is a delusion to think that anyone can be possibly better employed than in the discharge of what obedience has imposed.

St. Francis de Sales says: "To desert an occupation given by obedience in order to unite ourselves to God by prayer, by reading, or by recollection, would be to withdraw from God to unite ourselves to our own self-love." [Spirit, ch. 19.] St. Teresa adds,

moreover, that whoever performs any work, even though it be spiritual, yet against obedience, assuredly works by the instigation of the devil, and not by Divine inspiration, as he perhaps flatters himself; "because," says the Saint, "the inspirations of God always come in company with obedience." 'To the same effect she says elsewhere: "God requires nothing more of a soul that is determined to love Him than obedience." [Found. ch. 5.]

"A work done out of obedience," says Father Rodriguez, "outweighs every other that we can imagine." To lift up a straw from the ground out of obedience is of greater merit than a protracted prayer, or a discipline to blood, through our own will. This caused St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi to say, that she would rather be engaged in some exercise from obedience than in prayer; "because," said she, "in obedience I am certain of the will of God, whereas I am by no means so certain of it in any other exercise." [Cepar. c. 5.]

According to all spiritual masters, it is better to leave off any devout exercise through obedience, than to continue it without obedience. The Most Blessed Virgin Mary revealed once to St. Bridget, [Rev. l. 4, c, 26.] that he who relinquishes some mortification through obedience reaps a twofold profit; since he has already obtained the merit of the mortification by the good-will to do it, and he also gains the merit of obedience by foregoing it.

One day the famous Father Francis Arias went to see the Venerable Father John of Avila, his intimate friend, and he found him pensive and sad; he asked him the reason, and received this answer: "O happy you, who live under obedience, and are sure of doing the will of God. As for me, who shall warrant me whether I do a thing more pleasing to God in going from village to village, catechizing the poor peasants, or in remaining stationary in the confessional, to hear everyone that presents himself? Whereas he that is living under obedience is always sure that whatever he performs by obedience is according to the will of God, or rather that it is what is most acceptable to God."

Let this serve as a consolation for all those who live under obedience. For obedience to be perfect, we must obey with the will and with the judgment. To obey with the will signifies to obey willingly, and not by constraint, after the fashion of slaves; to obey with the judgment means to conform our judgment to that of the Superior, without examining what is commanded.

St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi remarks on this: "Perfect obedience demands a soul without judgment." To the like purpose, St. Philip Neri said that, in order to obey with perfection, it was not enough to execute the thing commanded, but it must be done without reasoning on it; taking it for certain that what is commanded us is for us the most perfect thing we can do, although the opposite might be better before God. [Bacci, l. I, c. 20.]

This holds good not merely for religious, but likewise for seculars living under obedience

to their spiritual directors. Let them request their director to prescribe them rules for the guidance of their affairs, both spiritual and temporal; and so they will make sure of doing what is best. St. Philip Neri said: "Let those who are desirous of progressing in the way of God submit themselves to a prudent confessor, whom they should obey as in God's place. By so doing, we are certain of not having to render an account to God of the actions we perform." [Ibid.] He said, moreover, "that we must place faith in the confessor, because the Lord will not permit him to err; that nothing is so sure of cutting off all the snares of the devil as to do the will of others in the performance of good; and that there is nothing more dangerous than to wish to direct ourselves according to our private fancy."

In like manner. St. Francis de Sales says, in speaking of the direction of the spiritual Father as a means of walking securely in the path of perfection, "This is the maxim of all maxims." [Intro. p. 1 c. 4.] "Seek as you will," says the devout Avila, "you will never so surely find the will of God as in the way of this humble obedience, so much recommended and so practiced by all the ancient servants of God."

The same thing is affirmed by St. Bernard, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Antoninus, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, John Gerson, and all theologians and masters of the spiritual life; and St. John of the Cross said, that to call this truth in question is almost to doubt of the faith. The words of the Saint are, "not to be satisfied with what the confessor says, is arrogance, and a want of faith."

Among the maxims of St. Francis de Sales are the two following, most consolatory for scrupulous souls: "First, a truly obedient soul was never yet lost; secondly, we ought to be satisfied on being told by our spiritual director that we are going on well, without seeking to be convinced of it ourselves."

It is the teaching of many Doctors, as of Gerson, St. Antoninus, Cajetanus, Navarrus, Sanchez, Bonacina, Cordovius, Castropalao, and the Doctors of Salamanca, with others, that the scrupulous person is bound, under strict obligation, to act in opposition to scruples, when from such scruples there is reason to apprehend grievous harm happening to soul or body, such as the loss of health, or of intellect; wherefore scrupulous persons ought to have greater scruple at not obeying the confessor than at acting in opposition to their scruples.

To sum up, therefore, all that has been said in this chapter, our salvation and perfection consist: 1. In denying ourselves; 2. In following the will of God; 3. In praying Him always to give us strength to do both one and the other.

### **Affections and Prayers**

What have I in Heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. [Ps. lxxii. 25.] My beloved Redeemer, infinitely amiable, since Thou hast come down from Heaven to give Thyself wholly to me, what else shall I seek for on earth or in Heaven besides Thee, Who art the

sovereign good, the only good worthy to be loved?

Be Thou, then, the sole Lord of my heart, do Thou possess it entirely: may my soul love Thee alone, obey Thee alone, and seek to please no other than Thee. Let others enjoy the riches of this world, I wish only for Thee: Thou art and shalt ever be my treasure in this life and in eternity.

Wherefore I give Thee, O my Jesus, my whole heart and all my will. It was at one time, alas! a rebel against Thee; but now I dedicate it wholly to Thee. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? [Acts, ix. 6.]

Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and lend me Thy assistance; for I will leave nothing undone.

Dispose of me, and of all that concerns me, as Thou pleasest; I accept of all, and resign myself to all.

O Love deserving of infinite love, Thou hast loved me so as even to die for me; I love Thee with my whole heart, I love Thee more than myself, and into Thy hands I abandon [www.basilica.org](http://www.basilica.org) my soul.

On this very day I bid farewell to every worldly affection, I take leave of everything created, and I give myself without reserve to Thee; Through the merits of Thy Passion receive me, and make me faithful unto death. My Jesus, my Jesus, from this day forward I will live only for Thee, I will love none but Thee, I will seek nothing else than to do Thy blessed will.

Aid me by Thy grace, and aid me, too, by thy protection, O Mary my hope.