



Trust

in the practice of life

TRUST
IN THE PRACTICE OF LIFE



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INTRODUCTION

The book entitled *Trust in the Practice of Life* will help apostles of the Divine Mercy to discover the good contained in the will of God (in the Decalogue and duties of one's state). At the same time, it will assist them in carrying out God's will more perfectly, which is essential to growing in the attitude of trust in God and union with Him.

Trust is neither an emotional nor an intellectual acceptance of the truths of faith, but a lifelong personal relation with God which is expressed in fulfilling His will. The will of God is a gift of His merciful love, given to man for his temporal and eternal happiness. Revealed in the commandments, Beatitudes, evangelical counsels, duties of one's state, as well as in the discerned inspirations of the Holy Spirit, it is a light and signpost along the path to heaven. It protects man's good in this earthly life and in view of eternal life.

Nowadays, the Decalogue is rarely seen as a gift of God's mercy. That is why it is looked at from a negative point of view; typically, emphasis is not put on the good contained in it, but rather on what is forbidden. If we wish to understand God's design contained in the commandments and carry them out faithfully, we must know how to see them as a gift; we must recognize the good that God intends through them.

The conferences contained in this collection aim at pointing out the good which God safeguards for our happiness in

probing into the will of God regarding man, we should consider His design, which was conceived in the eternal mercy of the Holy Trinity and revealed in Jesus Christ; we should ponder the way of fulfilling this design, the way that God Himself marked out. For we ought to remember that God does not content Himself with “wanting,” but He acts and accomplishes everything according to the intention of His will (cf. Eph 1:11). The intention itself already contains the way of its fulfillment. Everything that God has planned in relation to man and what He has done for him throughout the history of events flows from His infinite mercy and is imbued with it; therefore, generally speaking, God’s will is identified with the plan of the Divine Mercy. It is a gift for man, a gift of God full of mercy.

Thus, wishing to know what God’s will towards man is, we need to answer two essential questions: What is the eternal plan of the merciful love of God towards man, revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:9-10); and what is the way of accomplishing this plan, marked out by God Himself?

2. The plan of the merciful love of God towards man

The eternal design of God towards man is shown by St. Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians: *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (...) chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise and glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace* (Eph 1:3-7).

This is God’s will and His eternal design: the sanctification and salvation of man (cf. 1 Thes 4:3). Saint Paul writes clearly that *God wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of*

the truth (1 Tm 2:4). Consequently, this desire and the action of God, which flows from it, lead to a specific goal. This goal, established in God's thought from time immemorial, includes two principal aspects: salvation in Christ and the salvation of all people. Jesus speaks about this in a significant way in Saint Faustina's *Diary*: *Urge all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all. On the cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls – no one have I excluded!* (Diary 1182).

Thus, God calls each person – without exception – to eternal happiness and to holiness. This vocation is attained in the will of God in eternity and is an everlasting act of the merciful love of God. The revelation of man's final end, which is God Himself, man's call into existence and, moreover, his destiny to participate in the life and happiness of God Himself – all these are an expression of His unfathomable mercy; it is a free and unmerited gift to man. Saint Faustina understood this very well as she wrote: *God, who in Your mercy have deigned to call man from nothingness into being, generously You bestowed upon him nature and grace. But that seemed too little for Your infinite goodness. In Your mercy, O Lord, You have given us everlasting life. And You do this solely out of Your mercy. You bestow on us the gift of Your grace, only because You are good and full of love. You had no need of us at all to be happy, but You, O Lord, want to share Your own happiness with us* (Diary 1743). Hence, God's action toward man – according to Saint Faustina – always has His mercy as its source; it is always for the good and happiness of man. By the resolution of His will and from time immemorial, God desired man for Himself and God Himself leads man throughout history.

God is faithful to His decision. Even when man disappointed Him and was unfaithful to Him by sinning, the mercy of God does not end. Rather, it manifests itself with greater power. *It is an incomprehensible abyss of Your compassion* – writes Sister

Faustina – *that You did not punish us as we deserved. May Your mercy be glorified, O Lord* (Diary 1743). This faithfulness to the decision of His will, taken before all ages, is the expression of His unfathomable mercy. This is why Sister Faustina says that the will of God is *love and mercy itself* (Diary 1264).

3. The way of fulfilling the plan of God's mercy for man

Eternal happiness, which consists in the clear vision of God *face to face* (1 Cor 13:12) and in union with Him, is forever the goal that surpasses the capabilities of a created being; as a creature, man cannot attain it by his natural powers.¹

Knowing this, God Himself comes to man's aid: He gradually reveals His will, showing him the way of attaining this end and leading him along it. This will – which shows the way to eternal happiness and is marked out by God Himself – manifests itself to us in a twofold aspect: a) as a moral norm of man's actions, showing him clearly and distinctly how he should act to attain the goal of his life, lest his life end in a disaster; b) as the ruling principle that governs all creation, directing the course of events and history – including the history of each person's life – so as to make them work together for the glory of God and the salvation of men. The first is called the *signified* will of God, whereas the second is called God's will of *good pleasure*.

a. The signified will of God

The signified will of God – clearly showing what we must do to attain eternal happiness – is embodied in the command-

¹ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, q. 5, art. 5.

ments, the Beatitudes, the evangelical counsels, the duties of our state in life, and in the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Speaking about these concrete manifestations of God’s will revealed to man, we should strive to recognize that they are the expression and the gift of God’s mercy. We should consider them together with the salvific will of God and the final end of man, for they are closely connected with each other, just as the goal is linked to the means, or the goal to the way that leads to it.

The Commandments

*The gift of the Commandments is the gift of God himself and of his holy will (CCC 2059). A close connection is made between eternal life and obedience to God’s commandments: God’s commandments show man the path of life and they lead to it.*² Jesus Himself definitely confirms them and proposes them to us as the way and condition of salvation. For when the rich young man asks Him what he must do to attain eternal life, Jesus answers: *If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments (Mt 19:17).* On another occasion, when a teacher of the Law asks a similar question, Jesus refers him to the commandments of love of God and love of neighbor. He reminds him that only by observing them will he have eternal life, because they lead to it: *Do this, and you will live (cf. Lk 10:25-28).* Hence, each commandment of the Decalogue is essentially only a detailed articulation of the only and greatest commandment: the love of God and neighbor (cf. Mt 22:38; Mk 12:28-34). *The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, [namely] “You shall love your*

² John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 12.

neighbor as yourself.” Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:9-10).

The commandments of God’s Law should be interpreted and understood in the light of this two-fold yet single commandment of love, for *the whole law and the prophets* depend on these two commandments (cf. Mt 22:40). One should pay special attention to the first sentence of that commandment: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!* (Dt 6:4). These words bid us to acknowledge God as the only Lord and to worship Him alone. «*Acknowledging the Lord as God is the very core, the heart of the Law,*» from which the particular precepts flow and towards which they are ordered.³ In this context, we should also interpret the first words of the Decalogue found in the *Book of Exodus: I, the Lord, am your God* (Ex 20:2). For they constitute its foundation and the key to the correct understanding of the following commandments. *I, the Lord, am your God:* I must want Him to be my God; not only Abraham’s, Jacob’s, Isaac’s, or Saint Faustina’s God, but my God, who speaks to me personally. I ought to desire meeting the *Living God* as “my God,” who chose to reveal Himself to me, as well as His will in the gift of the Law. One cannot separate the gift from the Giver. The closer the person, from whom we receive it, is to us and the more we love that person, the more precious the gift is to us. The mutual bond between the Giver and the recipient is thus the determining factor of the greatness and the meaning of the gift. If God is someone very important to me; if He is “my” God, and I know that He loves me, that everything He does for me is an expression of His merciful love towards me, and that He sincerely desires my happiness, then I accept His commandments as a gift given for my own good. In that case, they will not be a soulless collection of rules handed down by Moses hundreds of years ago; instead,

³ Ibid., no. 11.

they will be the living word of my God, a request full of love, addressed directly to me. Then, the commandments will not be a nuisance, an incomprehensible burden, but I will appreciate them as a wonderful and concrete task, designed for me by God Himself. And its fulfillment will lead to my temporal and eternal happiness, to union with “my God.” At that point, I will understand the expression “commandment” not only as a command, an order, or as instructions and rules to be carried out; but I will see its biblical meaning, according to which the commandments of God express His kindness. They signify a gift, an inestimable endowment – and its knowledge is grace (cf. Ps 147:19-20). Then, I will understand that observing the commandments neither limits my freedom nor makes me dependent. It is not a humiliation but an honor, a road to life, a participation in the wisdom of God, and a blessing (cf. Bar 4:1).

The model of observing the Father’s commandments, thus understood, is Christ. Through this “observance of the commandments of His Father,” He shows His love for Him and His entrustment to His will. In Christ the perfect submission to the will of God and His love for Him are one and the same: *The world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me* (Jn 14:31). Furthermore, this is how every Christian should interpret and fulfill the commandments – with personal love for the Father.

Nowadays, there is a tendency to speak about the negative aspect of the Decalogue or to emphasize what is forbidden, since the Decalogue is not seen as a gift of God’s mercy to man. There also appears the claim to change the Law of God as well as the objection that the Church, in requiring the observance of the commandments, does not understand contemporary man. Only an irrational person *can judge that the path to happiness is a change of the Law of God. The wise person knows that this path – and this one only – is possible in the perfect observance of the Law of God. The Church will never change the Law of God.*

*She was established precisely to guard this Law, to remind us of it, and to help people observe it. The Church has to point out the path to happiness, and not to hell.*⁴

The keeping of the commandments is the path to eternal life, the way marked out by God Himself. God's Law (the Decalogue) is given to man and at the same time for man, for his good. Each commandment guards a certain value, something good for man; it is a light and signpost along the road to temporal and eternal happiness. Not taking heed of this light or ignoring these signposts from God is inevitably a departure from the path of life: it means to miss the goal of one's existence, of one's happiness and salvation. When man turns away from the commandments, he enslaves himself. He strikes a blow at his own freedom, since freedom in the Christian sense is that freedom, for which Christ sets us free (Gal 5:1), freedom from sin, the freedom of the children of God. The essence of freedom is not the implied possibility to do or say everything, even evil (I do whatever I want, whatever I like), because such a freedom would be slavery. The commandments are the safeguard of true freedom, freedom in Christ.

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes, which Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-12), also show us – besides the Decalogue – the path to the heavenly kingdom, the way of attaining eternal life. They constitute an integral part of the path that leads to the ultimate end. The model of the Beatitudes is Christ Himself. His way is summed up in the Beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit; they who mourn; the meek;

⁴ E. Staniek, *W trosce o sumienie* [In Concern for the Conscience], Kraków 1987, p. 18.

they who hunger and thirst for righteousness; the merciful; the clean of heart; the peacemakers; and they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. From the moment Christ proclaimed the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, each one of us is invited to take part in this way, to follow the one and only way to happiness, which the heart of man desires. The Beatitudes *respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart* (CCC 1725). The fulfillment of the counsels of the Beatitudes – in addition to the Decalogue – are indispensable to enter into the happiness of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, everyone must make an effort not only to keep the commandments, but also strive to live the spirit of the Beatitudes.

*The Beatitudes are not specifically concerned with certain particular rules of behavior. Rather, they speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life and therefore they do not coincide exactly with the commandments. On the other hand, there is no separation or opposition between the Beatitudes and the commandments: both refer to the good, to eternal life. (...) In this sense it can be said that the Beatitudes are also relevant to the answer given by Jesus to the young man's question: "What good must I do to have eternal life?" Indeed, each of the Beatitudes promises, from a particular viewpoint, that very "good" which opens man up to eternal life, and indeed is eternal life.*⁵

The Evangelical Counsels

The will of God – showing us the path to eternal life – is manifested in the evangelical counsels as well. The counsels are linked with the life and teaching of Christ, so it is not surprising that they conform a Christian's life to that of Christ.

⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 16.

The practice of the evangelical counsels allows us to imitate Christ “more closely.” They are a gift of God that helps us to overcome the threefold concupiscence (the concupiscence of the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life), because the fires of concupiscence are the source of sin. The counsels, then, are the same path as that of the commandments and Beatitudes; they form the path of ever greater freedom from evil that leads to eternal happiness. For there is only one way – the way of the commandments, the Beatitudes, the counsels – and only on this path can all the disciples of Christ attain eternal life. The evangelical counsels cannot be separated from the commandments: *The traditional distinction between God’s commandments and the evangelical counsels is drawn in relation to charity, the perfection of Christian life. The precepts are intended to remove whatever is incompatible with charity. The aim of the counsels is to remove whatever might hinder the development of charity, even if it is not contrary to it* (CCC 1974). The essence of perfection is the love of God and neighbor. The counsels point out the more direct ways, the readier means, and are to be practiced in keeping with the vocation of each Christian in order to attain it (cf. CCC 1974).

Jesus’ call to follow Him entails the invitation to keep the commandments; moreover, it involves the call to poverty and chastity (cf. Mt 19:6-12; 21; 23-29). In colloquial language, the words “counsel,” “advice,” or “encouragement” suggest that we are dealing with a matter that is not obligatory, that the decision to choose or not to choose it bears no grave consequences. (...) [Yet,] is Christ’s way of life, which we call counsels, a matter of simple encouragement? According to theologians, the evangelical counsels cannot be something optional. Certainly, it is to some extent a “friendly” invitation; hence, it is a proposition, not a mandate. Not accepting it, however, hinders one’s understanding with the friend as well as one’s insight into the true meaning

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The conferences contained in this collection aim at pointing out the good which God safeguards for our happiness in each commandment and in the duties of our state. As we come to know this good, we will better understand God's merciful love for man; this makes our attitude of trust toward Him, and thereby the fulfillment of His will, easier.



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